



UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Topic: Improving student well-being: The role of mental health education in schools



Committee: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Topic: Improving student well-being: The role of mental health education in schools

Director: Arely Rodríguez Ruiz

Moderator: Anahí Mar Moreno

I. Committee Background

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations, founded on November 16, 1945, with the mission of contributing to peace and security by promoting international cooperation in education, sciences, culture, and communication and information. In 2023, UNESCO led several key initiatives, including the Green Education Alliance with 82 countries, raising US\$117 million for the restoration of Mosul, protecting 10 million km² of land through heritage sites, training 50,000 Ukrainian teachers in digital pedagogy, supporting the ratification of the Global Higher Education Convention in 20 countries, and contributing to mapping 29.4% of the world's ocean floor. Despite these accomplishments, UNESCO faced significant challenges, such as 250 million children being out of school and the growing threat of misinformation, which affects 85% of the world's population. Some of the countries that are part of UNESCO include Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, and Bhutan. Through these efforts, UNESCO continues to advance its goals of fostering peace, promoting cultural diversity, and advancing global education and scientific cooperation.



II. Topic Information

Teaching mental health in schools is important for helping students become healthier and more resilient. Schools play a big role in supporting students' mental and emotional well-being. Learning about mental health helps students' spot problems early, like stress or anxiety, so they can get help in time. It also reduces stigma and encourages them to reach out when needed.

Mental health education teaches useful skills, like handling stress and using healthy coping methods. For example, students could learn relaxation exercises or ways to solve problems positively. It's important, though, that this education guides students to seek proper help instead of trying to self-diagnose or self-treat. By focusing on mental health in a balanced way, schools can support students' well-being for life.

a. History of the Topic

Concern for students' mental health is not new, but finding ways to help them in schools has grown a lot in recent years. Back in the mid-1900s, studies started showing how mental health affects learning. Since then, many programs have been created to support students, like mental health awareness events, teacher workshops, and centers that combine education and mental health care.

In recent years, countries like Canada, Finland, and the United Kingdom have led the way with helpful programs. For example, Canada holds mental health awareness weeks to encourage students to talk about their feelings. Finland has a program called "KiVa" to prevent bullying, which makes schools safer and reduces stress for students. The United Kingdom's "Every Mind Matters" campaign gives resources to help students and teachers handle stress.



UNESCO has also created plans for schools around the world, like making schools safe, welcoming places that are free from bullying or discrimination. They even suggest that schools discuss climate change, since it can affect mental health too. These programs have made it easier for students to get mental health support, making schools safer and happier places to learn.

b. Current Issues

The Mental Health Challenges in Students:

Student mental health is a growing concern and challenges mental health in students. Studies show that between 20% and 31% suffer from anxiety and depression, problems that have been intensified by the pandemic. This has shown that there is little access to adequate care and a lack of resources and staff in schools. It is important that schools not only focus on academic success, but also take care of the emotional well-being of students. Promoting an environment where students feel safe to seek help, without fear of being judged, is essential for their complete development. UNESCO has released a brief highlighting the importance of mental health support in higher education institutions (HEIs). The brief emphasizes that up to 50% of HE students experience mental health challenges, including depression and suicidal thoughts. Key recommendations for HEIs include providing free mental healthcare, diversifying support modalities, offering 24/7 crisis support, and training faculty to recognize mental health issues.

c. Bloc Positions

Countries around the world are adopting various approaches to support students' well-being and mental health education. In the United States, programs like Equity & Equality in Education and the Office of School and Community Improvement Programs (SCIP) aim to improve access to mental health services in schools. Canada reinforces emotional support through national strategies, such as the National Mental Health Strategy for Children



and Youth and initiatives like Kids Help Phone, which provide accessible counseling and resources. In Australia, initiatives such as MindMatters focus on promoting mental health awareness among students. Meanwhile, Germany is starting to integrate mental health education into its curricula. All of these efforts aim to enhance student well-being through a focus on mental health education.

III. Conclusion

UNESCO participates because it cares about the mental health of students because if they are not emotionally well they cannot perform as well. It invites them to identify their emotions, since with the right tools to manage their emotions they can feel better, a little calmer due to the support provided by teachers, parents, friends, etc. At that stage adolescents feel very stressed and overwhelmed as if nobody understands them, that is why we as a community need to work together to bring some solutions. UNESCO works to ensure that their voices are heard, and schools are a fundamental part of their mental and emotional health.

IV. Essential Questions

1. What is mental health, and why is it crucial for students' well-being and success?
2. How can schools effectively support and promote students' mental health?
3. What role do teachers play in fostering and supporting students' mental well-being?
4. What programs or initiatives are in place to address students' mental health in the country?



5. What barriers do students face when seeking help for mental health issues? What can the countries do about it?
6. How can we reduce the stigma surrounding mental well-being in schools?
7. How can schools create a safe and supportive environment for all students?

V. References

Comprehensive School-Based Mental and Behavioral Health Services and School Psychologists. (s. f.). *National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)*. Retrieved from <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/mental-and-behavioral-health/additional-resources/comprehensive-school-based-mental-and-behavioral-health-services-and-school-psychologists>

Improving mental health awareness at school. (s. f.). Retrieved from https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/resources/for-organisations/guides/improving-mental-health-awareness-at-school/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw9p24BhB_EiwA8ID5BiPe3KYfuSCFIUDaQv8MTJcUm2ozFZGTFKFQ_LRYE-8bq3YcOyC7GhoCtmYQAvD_BWE

Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Schools. (s. f.). *CDC*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health-action-guide/index.html>

Robson, L. (2024, 29 may). *Why is mental health and wellbeing important for schools? Worth-it*. Retrieved from <https://www.worthit.org.uk/blog/school-mental-health-wellbeing-important>

School based mental health | Youth.gov. (s. f.). Retrieved from <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-mental-health/school-based>