

# **Integrated Approach to Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience & Wellbeing in HEIs**

## **A. Background**

Adolescents & youth are the most important assets of any country and a crucial human resource for overall development. They are the future nation-builders. Universities are one of the key settings outside home where adolescents and youth can acquire newer knowledge, attitudes and skills to grow into productive and capable citizens, who can be involved to support and help their communities to grow and prosper.

NEP 2020 focuses on promoting student wellness such as their fitness, good health, psychosocial well-being, and sound ethical grounding, which is non-negotiable for high-quality learning. It further states that professional academic and career counselling should be made available to all students, as well as counsellors to ensure physical, psychological and socio-emotional well-being. HEIs have a strong influence on the long-term development of the cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural domains leading to effective adaptation and adjustment. Health promoting Universities are robust settings where education and wellbeing simultaneously promote resilience with enrichment of life skills for lifelong learning and coping with various challenges in the journey ahead.

**Over the years there is enough scientific evidence which strongly propagates the view that there must be a consistent strong linkage between education and mental health paradigm.**

## **B. Strengthening of Support Mechanism**

While the above measures by way of guidelines, advisories and orientation programs have been taken, there is a need to develop some strategic intervention in the area of psychosocial wellbeing of the students in the HEIs.

This is a '**life-span**' approach to promote healthy behaviours among youth. Many of the leading causes of disease and disability can be significantly reduced by preventing behaviors that is initiated during youth, through a broad spectrum of health education, understanding and motivation fostered by effective social support and newer policies.

Almost all adolescents & youth who attend HEIs spend around 7-10 hours every day in the learning environment. Incorporating a strong wellbeing domain into the HEIs can have substantial influence on best practices of holistic health education. Such integration can best be achieved by recognizing and addressing the specific unmet psychosocial and learning needs of adolescents & youth, by effective and active involvement and collaboration of faculty, students and parents etc. Sustainable service models that integrate promotion, early detection and timely intervention are the need of today.

HEIs can therefore facilitate the health of staff, families and community members along with the wellbeing of adolescents & youth.

IIT Delhi, IIT Gandhinagar, IIT Madras and IIT Guwahati organized Workshops on Mental Wellness & Stress Management, on 30th May, 2023, 9-10th June, 2023, 12th May, 2023 and 26<sup>th</sup> August 2023 respectively. More recently Inter IIT Wellness Meet was organized by IIT Roorkee on 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> February, 2024 to come together and address pressing mental health

challenges in academic institutes and ways to resolve them. Also Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IITGN) hosted a two-day workshop on students' mental wellbeing titled 'Building Scalable Systems for Student Wellbeing in Residential Programs' in its campus on March 4-5, 2024.

Keeping this in view, it is realized that institutions need to regularly and frequently hold workshops and discussions to adopt and disseminate best practices in this matter, and examine the systemic gaps in their protocols, so that even a single student does not slip through the gaps.

### C. Framework for Mental Health & Wellbeing Programmes

Mind Map for Interventions			
<u>Level</u>	<u>Level of Domain</u>	<u>Stakeholders to be involved</u>	<u>Level of Intervention</u>
I	Mental Wellbeing & Climate Building	Entire Institutional Community	Mental Health & Wellbeing as an Integrated Approach
II	Mental Health Knowledge Attitudes & Behaviors	All Students and Faculty	Mental Wellbeing – Part of General Health Promotion
III	Psychosocial Concerns & Problems	Counselors, Faculty, Peer Mentors, Wardens and Citizens	Extending Additional Help to Students in Need
IV	Severe Problems/Disorders	Counselors, Institution Doctors and Other Experts	Professional Management

**Objective Levels: I and II** – *Primary prevention and health promotion*, target the causes of healthy and unhealthy conditions with interventions to promote healthy behaviours and prevent a disorder from developing.

**Objective Level: III** – *Secondary prevention* targets the population at risk to protect them against the onset of disorders.

**Objective Level: IV** – Targets the people who have developed the disorders and aims at helping in the management, reducing the impairment and preventing relapse.

Mental health and wellbeing programmes are effective in improving learning, psychosocial competency and facilitating good management of mental health conditions, are most appropriate when:

- (i) It is part of the general educational system.
- (ii) Implemented through routine health care in the CFIs.
- (iii) Supported and developed by faculty student and family partnerships.

- (iv) Facilitated through the support of institution faculty, who recognize that socio-emotional functioning enriches learning capacity and resilience of students.

At this stage, it is proposed to organize the following programmes in an integrated manner to achieve objectives corresponding to Intervention Level I & II of the 'Framework for Mental Health & Wellbeing Programmes'.

## **D. Implementation Plan**

### **D.1. Capacity Building on Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience & Wellbeing**

A program has been designed for sustained capacity building of faculty in Centrally Funded HEIs, providing a platform for sharing of best practices and collaborating with panel of experts with each institution to focus on objective levels I and II of the frameworks for mental health & wellbeing program. 'Expressions India' an organisation with expertise in this matter will be the resource partner for this capacity building program and NIEPA will be coordinating partner.

The details of the proposed workshop are as under:

- (i) **Session Mode** – 3 hours online session
- (ii) **Frequency of Session** – 2 online sessions every month
- (iii) **Eligible Institutions** – Centrally Funded Institutions under Department of Higher Education (CUs, IITs, IIMs, NITs, IIITs, IISERs, SPAs, IISc, and other CFTIs)
- (iv) **Nomination** – 10 faculty members from 12 (taking into consideration dropout) identified CFIs to be nominated for each session i.e., 20 faculty members per institution in a month (CFIs will be identified on monthly rotation basis)
- (v) **Follow Up Session** – after each session a follow up session will be organized for same set of participants of previous session providing an opportunity to seek clarification on matters pertaining to the mental health and wellbeing of students, sharing of best practices etc.

### **Instructions for Participants**

- (i) The participation for sessions shall be received only through nomination by their respective institution.
- (ii) All the participants shall receive link for online session on the email IDs sent by their institution during their nomination. It is advised that correct email ID and other details be provided by the prospective participants.

- (iii) Every participant shall ensure that their name and their institution's name is available in the Display Name on joining the online session. For e.g., **Surendra Kumar (IIT Delhi), Akanksha Gupta (University of Hyderabad)**.
- (iv) Since, it will be an interactive session participants will be allowed to seek clarification during the session by typing their questions, remarks, suggestions or viewpoints in the chat box for the Resource Person of the respective session to respond to them on appropriate occasion during the session.
- (v) The follow up session quickly after the main session will be purely for seeking clarifications, sharing of viewpoints or best practices to emerge, in which the same participants of the previous session shall join.

## **D.2. In-person Capacity Building on Mental Health and Wellbeing for Early Identification and Intervention**

NEP 2020 emphasizes creation of motivated, energized, and capable faculty. Capacity building of teachers at all levels has been one of the major thrust areas in the field of higher education. Continuous Professional Development of faculty in all disciplines is required in light of new and updated methods of pedagogy.

As central sector scheme, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT) was launched in year 2014, under which existing HEIs in CUs, IITs, State Universities, NITTTR, IISERs, NITs, Deemed Universities, and Centrally Funded HEI have been provided funds for carrying out Capacity Building training of faculty members of HEIs, by utilizing and leveraging existing resources. Currently, 116 institutions have been identified as a part of Malaviya Mission known as "Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centre (MMTTC)".

Since faculty members have crucial role in promoting positive mental health, resilience & wellbeing of students in HEI, one / half day sessions on 'Mental Health and Wellbeing for Early Identification and Intervention' will be included in the in-person Capacity Building Programme by 116 MMTTCs. Expressions India will provide Resource Persons for the sessions at 116 MMTTCs.

Two Resources Persons will visit each center in coordination with UGC. Dr. Jitendra Kumar Tripathi, JS, UGC will coordinate with MMTTCs and pool of Resource Persons from Expressions India to facilitate smooth conduct of in-person sessions at 116 MMTTCs.

## **D.3. Exemplar Visit to Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Many educational institutions have already evolved systems to address mental health and wellbeing of students in HEIs. Availability of institutional support services within the HEIs facilitated by the wellbeing centres on the campus that effectively take care of mental health and wellbeing. Such institutions may be viewed as Model Institutions for their evolved systems to promote positive mental health, resilience and wellbeing among students.

In this regard, 'Exemplar Visits' by designated team will be scheduled for the purpose of learning best practices adopted by them in addressing mental health and wellbeing of the students for other HEIs to learn from these institutions and adopt such practices. The objective of the visit will be to consolidate such best practices for wider dissemination and replication in other educational institutions. A team comprising officials of MoE, faculty members of HEIs and Senior Resource Persons from Expressions India, will carry out visit to the identified 'Model Institutions for Promotion & Sustainable Support of Mental Health and Wellbeing' engage in consolidation of best practices for dissemination and replication to other HEIs.

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