

MENTAL HEALTH: A SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERN

by:

Ronaldo A. Punla

School Principal I, Tubo-Tubo Integrated School

Mental health and psychosocial well-being are foundational elements of overall health and well-being, and they have a profound impact on various aspects of a person's life from childhood through to adulthood. Recognizing and addressing mental health is essential for promoting healthy individuals and thriving communities. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of mental, emotional, and social well-being with other dimensions of health and life outcomes.

In a Briefing Note for National Governments released by the [unicef.org](https://www.unicef.org), it identified Five essential pillars for promoting and protecting mental health and psychosocial well-being in schools and learning environments. (UNICEF, 2022)

Pillar 1: Create an enabling learning environment for positive mental health and well-being

Pillar 2: Guarantee access to early intervention and mental health services and support.

Pillar 3: Promote teacher well-being.

Pillar 4: Enhance MHPSS capacity in the education workforce.

Pillar 5: Ensure meaningful collaboration between the school, family, and community to build a safe and nurturing learning environment

These pillars should be seen as the basic components of a mental health and psychosocial support in schools policy that governments must mainstream within

existing education policies, plans, and budgets, including more targeted interventions for children with developmental delays and disabilities (UNICEF, 2022)

As School Administrator, one must recognize the importance of mainstreaming so as to make interventions more inclusive and gender responsive.

So, what does it mean to mainstream?

According to (UNESCO, 2021) Mainstreaming is the inclusion 'of learners with special needs into general educational settings or regular schools' (IBE-UNESCO, n.d.). Mainstream education settings should ensure that the needs of all students are addressed and that all barriers which can potentially hinder their participation be removed. Thus, inclusive mainstream settings should provide inclusive and accessible school infrastructure, learning methods and pedagogies, as well as teaching and learning materials, among others (IIEP-UNESCO, 2019).

By mainstreaming, School Administrator is investing in the mental health and psychosocial well-being of learners not only to address immediate concerns but also to set the stage for a more positive, inclusive, and supportive educational experience. It acknowledges the multifaceted nature of well-being and emphasizes the profound impact that mental health has on various aspects of a student's educational journey.

By investing in the mental health and psychosocial well-being of learners has significant positive implications for teachers, it creates a healthier and more supportive work environment for teachers. The interconnectedness of well-being within the educational setting emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that considers the needs of both students and educators. A holistic approach to well-being sets the foundation for long-term positive outcomes, influencing not only the immediate educational experience but also the lifelong well-being of individuals.

Here are some key aspects of this holistic approach:

Mutual Impact: The well-being of students and educators is interconnected, and the state of one can influence the other. A positive and supportive environment benefits everyone in the educational community. (Monteiro, Carvalho, & Santos, 2021)

Healthy School Culture: A holistic approach fosters a healthy school culture where the mental health and well-being of both students and educators are valued and prioritized.

Positive Learning Environment: When the well-being of both students and educators is considered, it contributes to the creation of a positive learning environment. This environment is characterized by mutual respect, understanding, and support.

Modeling Behavior: Educators, as role models, play a significant role in shaping the culture of the learning environment. Prioritizing their well-being sets an example for students, encouraging them to do the same.

Effective Teaching and Learning: Teachers who are emotionally and mentally well are more likely to be effective in their teaching roles, facilitating better learning experiences for students.

Reduced Stress and Burnout: Addressing the well-being of both students and educators contributes to a reduction in stress and burnout, fostering a more sustainable and positive educational environment.

Community and Support Networks: A holistic approach encourages the development of supportive communities and networks within the educational setting, where both students and educators feel a sense of belonging and connection.

Collaborative Efforts: By recognizing the interconnectedness of well-being, schools can implement collaborative efforts that involve both students and educators in initiatives that promote mental health and a positive school culture.

Shared Responsibility: The well-being of students and educators becomes a shared responsibility within the school community. This collective approach reinforces a sense of shared purpose and support.

Long-term Positive Outcomes: In essence, a holistic approach acknowledges that the well-being of students and educators is intertwined and that creating a supportive environment requires addressing the needs of both groups. This approach contributes to the development of a thriving and positive educational community where everyone has the opportunity to flourish.

So, Mental Health is Indeed a School Administrator Concern.

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