

Interconnecting Vipassana with Human Health and School Curriculum

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Abstract

A desk review was done to analyze the relevance of Vipassana with the overall dimensions of health and to find out its interconnection with the school curriculum for enhancing the education sector and shifting the paradigm. Secondary data were collected via an internet online portal and analyzed by making a theme. Literature shows that Vipassana has a tremendous positive impact on human health dimensions like physical, mental, social, psychological, and spiritual health. Vipassana with its moral code and precepts is found to help in fostering peaceful feelings, equanimity, and compassion, thus assisting social integrity. Relying on this fact, there is a great possibility of interconnecting Vipassana with the school curriculum. No review has been found on social well-being and spiritual health in a collaborative form which could be a future recommendation.

Keywords: *Vipassana, health, compassion, meditators*

Introduction

The major aim of “interconnecting Vipassana with human health and school curriculum” is to explore the way of describing the implications of the Vipassana technique that has been hidden for a millennium, handed over by Siddhartha “Gautam Buddha”, and its relevance to human physical, mental, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. Furthermore, the review will be to investigate how this technique can be integrated into the school curriculum for the benefit of humankind producing moral and healthy students in the present chaotic world scenario where humanity is in threatened condition.

According to Goenka (1980), Vipassana meditation is the technique of self-observation where there is an experience of mental-physical phenomenon directly. Many reviewers claimed that meditation is important in bringing about a generalized reduction in many physiological systems (Shapiro & Walsh, 1984). In support of this, one can see the enlightened Buddha as a consequence of the regular practice of Vipassana along with many more Buddhist monks who are socially and spiritually in a state of well-being. According to Fleischman (2015), it is a ten-day silent meditation technique taught by S. N. Goenka guided by assistant teachers, and is purely the path of equanimity for attaining *Nibbana*. This has distinctly given the great bonding relation

between *Guru* and *Sisya*. It can be linked with the present modern educational curriculum where the teaching and learning process go with the teachers' and students' interactions.

In the form of good cultural adaptation and preservation of religious tolerance, Vipassana could be the best solution that can be adopted in the context of Nepal. It consequently builds a great foundation for upcoming generation students making them physically, mentally, and socially healthy. Due to the transitional age factor basically among adolescents, children are at a high risk of performing hostility and anti-social activities in the school. It seems to be in immense need of the present school curriculum to address the behavioral and social problems among adolescents.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this desk review were to analyze the relevance of Vipassana with overall dimensions of health and to review the interconnection of Vipassana with school curricula for enhancing the education sector and shifting the paradigm.

Methods

In this desk review, I collected the secondary data via the internet. Literature reviews based on Vipassana, health, and education were done from the related journal articles, research papers, books, theses, online portals, electronic libraries, and institutional documents (VRI). Finally, the collected documents were rigorously reviewed and only some literature with higher citations from renowned sites like Pubmed, Science hub, and Google scholar were analyzed.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of the study was to analyze the relevance of Vipassana with social well-being, quality of life, and physical and mental health constituting different dimensions of health along with its possibilities to interconnect with the school curriculum. More than fifty kinds of literature were reviewed and among them, twenty-four of them purely based on the topic were taken into account. Ongoing through the different dimensions of health like physical, mental, social, and psychological health (WHO, 1946), the reviewed literature showed tremendous impact on these dimensions.

A mindfulness qualitative study done with six Australian health care practitioners by Dar by and Bevan (2017) found that five out of six participants develop new skills in acceptance increasing interoceptive awareness and triggering self-judgment and anxiety. The participants developed equanimity leading to the improvement in personal and workplace situations. Moreover, five out of six had better emotional regulations showing sound interpersonal relationships with family members and close friends.

It was found all six participants enjoyed loving kindness. All the participants reported their difficulties as opportunities instead of threats. The study was conducted on 21 subjects in 1994 who were the victim of psychiatric disorders in the Tihar jail of India. They attended a ten-day residential course of Vipassana in the jail. After the course, a significant reduction in depression and anxiety was found where 70% showed a clinical improvement and did not need treatment. Similarly, on 120 inmates PGI well-being scale was used before and after Vipassana.

It was further found to be an unexpected increase in well-being like satisfaction, emotional control, cheerfulness, and freedom from worry and illness (Chandiramani et al., 1998). Similarly, Chandiramani, et al. (1994) studied the impact of Vipassana meditation on the Jail inmates on the aspects like personality, anti-social tendencies, and certain psychological aspects such as well-being, hostility, hope, and nakedness. They found a significant decrease in the neurotic tendency, aggression, hostility, and mind set of helplessness reported by the 120 prisoners meanwhile the wisdom of hope and well-being were improved following Vipassana courses engaging themselves in the productive work. According to Jail Superintendent Vora (n.d.), the relationship between the prisoners and the jail staff improved due to the Vipassana courses conducted in Baroda Central Jail.

Vipassana in Social well-being and Quality life

According to Hetherington (2003), Vipassana is an ancient meditation technique of India. The Buddha discovered it, attained full enlightenment using it, and made it the essence of teachings, the paradigm has changed and a huge population marched towards the path of non-violence in search of peace and happiness. Hetherington concludes that friendship born of compassion is at the heart of Vipassana, instead of hurting others, have I started helping them? How am I behaving in an unwanted situation? Am I becoming more balance or reacting as before? These could be the best features for the people to social integrity, helping friends' community and neighborhood, mutual co-operation, and religious tolerance.

This could strengthen the relationship bond in family, friends, and relatives and overall love to all. It can enhance satisfaction in the relationship. Moreover, it increases humanitarian feelings of gratitude towards society. Mindfulness meditation which is Vipassana fosters positive interpersonal connections through the process of compassion (Dibert, 2009). For the students, this increased compassion could assist in the improvement of personal relationships, friendship collaboration, and concentration on the learning process that could enhance their academic careers. We cannot stop the flow of events but we can change the direction, we try to purify morality, concentration, and purification of mind.

The findings from Sivasai (2014), Pagis (2015), and Marques & Dhiman (2009) showed that the practice of Vipassana meditation helps to gain a peacefulness feeling and equanimity and thus reduces stress. The results advocate Vipassana meditation is a helpful means for improving quality of life and available to everyone with no cost and no adverse effect.

Vipassana in Physical and Mental Health

Courses conducted at the Central Jail, in Gujarat from 1991 to 1992 (Unnithan & Ahuja, 1977) have revealed many positive changes in inmates. In psychiatric disorders and drug addiction, some studies are there documenting the efficacy of Vipassana (Hammersley & Cregan, 1986). This revealed the mental processing and purification of the mind. The action is oriented by the order of mind; if the mind is free from anxiety and depression it can direct itself towards positive actions for the benefit of one and all. A huge number of researchers suggest that yoga and meditation can enhance physical and psychological health as they have a direct impact on human psychology biochemistry, and physiology (Walsh, 2001). Moreover, it can cope with chronic illness and patients can control their pain (Petersen & La Cour, 2016).

Radhi (2002) discusses that: the five precepts (*Silas*) are: to abstain from taking the life of sentient beings, to abstain from taking possession of anything that has not been given by its owner, to abstain from sexual misconduct, to abstain from lying or evil speech, and to abstain from intoxicating drinks. These are the codes for proper social well-being. Meditators take the vows of compassion and commit to practice for the well-being of others (Anderson, 2001). This can lead to personal development and fulfillment as it ensures creativity, learning, moving towards particular goals seeking the meaning of life. Regular Vipassana practitioners have positive relations with others (Josefsson & Larsman, 2011; Crowley & Munk, 2017).

Goenka (2014) says, "It is a method of self-transformation through self-observation which focuses on the deep interconnection between mind and body". Goenka concludes that Vipassana can be practiced by all. Everyone suffers in life which is a universal problem and it requires a universal remedy, not a sectarian one. Vipassana is a universal path by which it is possible to free the mind from negativities. Vipassana and the numinous interconnection handed a well-off and touching encounter offering messages for healing, transformation, deep spirituality, and consequently, the competency to observe the cosmos and all creatures as sacred (Farhadzadeh, 2014).

Vipassana sees things as they are in the real sense where one begins self-observation of the natural breath to concentrate the mind and purify it aiming for the highest spiritual goal of full enlightenment (Goenka, 2001). It decreases dysfunctional beliefs and ruminative thinking leading to creative performance (Ching & Chen, 2015; Newton, 2015; Xiaoqian, 2014). This can increase personal performance, increase personal qualities, and improve learning performance in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, it enhances curiosity, loving-kindness, and compassion.

Possibilities of Vipassana in School Curriculum

The government has started teaching yoga, naturopathy, Ayurveda, and herbs in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th classes under separate optional subjects. CTEVT has also started offering three-year diploma courses in yoga and naturopathy for those who have passed SEE. Catching this trend, Tribhuvan University has also started one year PG Diploma under Sanskrit Department. The postgraduate yoga course is also in the final stages of development (Hari, 2022). In this way, stakeholders are wondering if something can be done in yoga from the educational field. As it is operated as an optional subject, it has not flourished its importance so the students are not pulled by that gravity. It should be interlinked or integrated with other compulsory subjects like health and science in primary and secondary school level curricula. Stakeholders are constantly working to have a yoga department in every university in the near future and have also decided to make yoga a university so that even foreigners can come and study there. Now the idea of adding yoga to education has been formed. From the government's slogan for this year's National Yoga Day (Magh 1), many things have become clear, "Yoga for all-round development". Yes, let's all do yoga and develop all-around. Furthermore, he concluded that: Yoga is a vibrant art culture and science that Nepal can spread around the world as its national epistemology. Many people may wonder, is yoga a national science of Nepal? To find the answer, one has to study the three great civilizations of Nepal, Shiva, Janak, and Buddha. So, instead of claiming Buddha was born in Nepal, it's time to show the world what Buddha had taught! The culture of inner engineering "Vipassana".

Gold et al. (2009) found that breathing technique based on meditation was a cost-effective way to combat teacher stress. This could probably demand the Vipassana meditation technique for teachers of basic and secondary levels. Similarly, Roeser et al. (2012) noted mindfulness technique enhances teachers occupational burn out and decreases giving up the educational profession due to stress. Furthermore, Vipassana meditation has assisted the adolescents in making them calmer, less violent and angry, and more focused on studies (Radhi, 2002). So, there is an immense need for Vipassana meditation in the school curriculum to make a peaceful school environment and improve academic progress along with healthy manpower.

Vipassana improves the interpersonal relationship increasing social harmony, and religious tolerance as teachers dedicatedly demonstrate and teach wise life choices (Fleischman, 2015). On the behalf of this to build a milestone in the curriculum, this could be the best experimented with non-sectarian technique between teachers and students that can be implemented in the Nepalese educational system.

Organizational development and innovativeness along with personal physical, mental and social relationships are enhanced by Vipassana (Fung Kei, 2016). In the context of Nepal, the Curriculum Development Centre can apply this technique for its organizational development and may bring innovations in the educational sector as it can foster the physical, mental, and social well-being of the students and teachers. Mental silence can bring a great positive impact on occupational health. It reduces self-clinging and overconfidence as a whole taken as a blind belief. It focuses on the impermanence of life and seeking the purpose of life (Fleischman, 2015). This can focus the school students towards the reality of life being mentally sound and is a must because adolescence is an unstable period in the life of adolescents aged 10 to 19 years.

Conclusion

Physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions of health have been seen positively influenced by the mediation technique “Vipassana”. The majority of the research shows its positive impact upon physical, mental, and psychological dimensions. It actually sees things when people begin a reflection of natural breathing to focus and purify the mind, with the goal of achieving the ultimate spiritual goal of full enlightenment. Looking at its universality, this desk review recommends interconnecting Vipassana with the social and spiritual health of people and linking it to the school curriculum for better health and learning among the students, basically the adolescents.

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