

Neo-Humanism in Practice Stimulating Physico- psychic Environment: A Case Study of Neo- Humanist Schools

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Abstract:

The present study deals with the physico-psychic environment of Neohumanist Schools. The teaching learning process of school creates proper physical culture. The entire curricular practice is re-oriented according to Neohumanism philosophy. The study also identifies different dimensions of Neohumanist Education whether developed among the students. Observation schedule, rating scale and semi-structured interview were used to collect the data. Three schools run on Neohumanism were selected randomly from three different districts of West Bengal, India. Different dimensions of Neohumanism prevail in the school were explored. The important aspects which have been identified are: cultivation of healthy habits, expression of positive emotions, maintaining harmony with others and with the self, service spirit, concept of rationality and positive inter-personal relationship. Socio-emotional development and development of mature moral structures are the unique features which have been reported in Neohumanist schools. Mature moral orientations are incorporated in curriculum which initiates the development of moral structure. The moral structure guides children to take mature moral decision. The study finds that harmony with self and harmony with others, universal love, sense of Omnipotent's presence, service spirit, social welfare and desire for collective good are the main basis of moral development of children. The principles of harmony and universal love are embedded in curriculum both as content and as practice. The

students avoid such actions and thoughts that cause harm to others even if these bring self pleasure.

Key words: Neohumanism, rationality, physico-psychic environment, harmony, emotional support.

INTRODUCTION

The ultimate aim of education is to develop the quality of life of the students. Primary education is the base of laying the foundation of the pyramid of education to achieve all round development of children. Primary education is the first phase of man- making. Whatever children learn at this young age will guide him/ her throughout the life. If one received fundamentals of education in the formative period of life, one will keep oneself alright even in the odd situation. Education lays the foundation for all-round development of the child-physical, intellectual, moral, emotional, social and spiritual. True education does not mean only providing facts and information; neither has it relied solely on intellectual training. Primary education should meet the basic needs of an individual. It consists of receiving basic knowledge, imbibing norms and values of society, acquiring life skills, possessing right attitudes and developing strength of character which in turn guides an individual to become a self-satisfying and socially productive member of the society.

Neo-humanism- a psycho-spiritual philosophy. Neohumanism is a reinterpretation of Humanism. In Neo-humanism, P. R. Sarkar (1921-1990) integrates spiritual, psycho-social and environmental perspectives. The Neohumanists schools are mainly based on the combination of Idealism and Pragmatism. That means let the child realizing the essence of Idealism through regular practice and experience. Along with the intellectual development, this school tries to strengthen psychic power and intuitional and

transcendental knowledge. Yoga for health, quiet time exercise, moral teaching, morning circle and control of breathing, music, dance, drama, service projects all are incorporated in the school curriculum along with the content knowledge. NHE curriculum is framed to balance in three strata-physical, psychic and spiritual. Early intervention for moral development is another important aspect of this school. Instead of rote learning, these schools create a physic psychic environment that arouses thirst for knowledge among the students. Neo-humanist Education (NHE) suggests integrated and inter-disciplinary curriculum so that the different layers of mind remain engaged simultaneously. NHE curriculum incorporates the spiritual and moral practice of Astaunga Yoga for development of integrated personality. Along with cognitive development, proper physical development, development of rationality, socio-emotional development and moral and spiritual development are the main focus of these schools.

The environment of Neohumanist Schools maintain a balance in the individual and social needs of children. The environment is physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabling. Lifelong love of learning is to be inculcated in each student and reflected by everyone associated with the school. The child feels safe, encouraged and looks forward to attending school as a results of this psycho-social approach to education. Children should learn about the self, the dietary insight, the ecological dimensions of the body, and the nature around them, the role they have to play in the society, their interconnectedness with other living and non living beings and above all a strong feeling of a connecting link between self and the Supreme Entity.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The very purpose of primary education is not only to acquire the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Primary

education is considered as a major vehicle for inculcation of values among children. It is the right time to build the character. The purpose of primary education is to develop an integrated personality of children through addressing physical, mental, social, moral and spiritual levels of an individual. Present day primary school curriculum is information centric, knowledge centric and skills centric. There is little scope for harmonious development. Exploring spiritual potentiality is totally missing in the curriculum. The classroom environment are designed in such a way, where the teachers' role is very active and children remain passive listener and they are swallowing the information like quinine pill. Intellectual ability may be enhanced through this curriculum but other dimensions of personality like, social, emotional, behavioural, moral and spiritual sides are totally neglected in our curriculum.

The different dimensions of integrated personality according to Neohumanist education are: physical well being, mental maturity, emotional stability, and proper social orientation of students. The Neo-humanist education aims to help every child to develop integrated personality. In Neo-humanist education, integrated personality development is enhanced. Neo-humanist education supports an integral education at the physical, psychic and spiritual level which is both knowledge and experience based. It is based on the principles such as; respect other people and self, to promote mental expansion, to develop the spirit of unity, to awaken universal love-a potential to love all forms of existence. Integrating ancient wisdom with modern science, it offers a simple and effective programme to build character. According to NHE children should learn about the self, the ecological dimensions of the body and the nature around them, the role they have to play in the society, their interconnectedness with other living and non living beings and above all a strong feeling of a connecting self and the Supreme Entity. It suggests

integrated curriculum of morality, humanity, creativity, spirituality and universal love.

Neohumanist Schools across the world are established to bring the philosophy of Neo-humanism in the practical field. The main purpose of these schools are to develop a Neo humanist society. The physico-psychic environment, curriculum, the curriculum transaction, the role of teachers all together create a physico-psycho-spiritual environment that helps in developing a integrated personality of the children. Neohumanist Education provides the social, emotional, moral, ethical, academic, spiritual and physical building blocks to enhance their learning experience.

Recently, many research have taken interest on studying the reflection of Neohumanism in Schools and their impacts on integrated personality development of children. Researchers have conducted studies on the role of NHE on socio- emotional and cognitive development of children. Some of the relevant studies are discussed in the following paragraph.

Ratanadevansnda (2003) in his study 'what are schools for' found that conducive learning environment is enhanced in Neohumanist schools. Bussey (2009) critically analysed the place of Causal layered pedagogy in Ananda Marga schools. Brim and A. Rama (2010) critically analyzed the NHE curriculum and emphasized that Astaunga Yoga is the core subject of NHE curriculum for the development of integrated personality. Pelanda and Liana (2011) conducted a study of application of principles of Neo-humanist education on childhood and found that psycho-social environment of Ananda Marga school is essential for development of positive self image. Ac Shambhusivananda (2011) theoretically analyzed the roots of societal transformation and the role of inner ecology and outer ecology in total transformation of a child. Greis (2013) thoroughly studied the curriculum transaction and found that story telling, dance, drama, arts and music and theatre are all important tools of integrated personality development in

childhood. Jacobson (2013) critically analyzed the interaction between individual and environment. Werakul (2014) found that the moral principles of Neo-Humanist education are effective in developing and enhancing ethics. Neohumanist Education (NHE) attempts to develop three aspects using specific guidelines in each area such as: yoga and diet in the physical, developing awakened conscience in the mental, and meditation in the spiritual.

The above discussed research studies reveal that attempts have been made by researchers to explore Neohumanism philosophy in practice, to examine the extent at which components of Neohumanism are being reflected in practical field. Effectiveness of NHE curriculum and curriculum transaction in promoting personality in pre-primary and training programme for adult has been studied abroad. But no empirical research has been reported in India to examine the extent to which the principles of NHE is reflected in Neohumanist schools which are popularly known as Ananda Marga School.

In this context, the investigator has raised the following research questions for investigation:

1. To what extent the principles of Neo-humanist philosophy are translated into the practical field (school)?
2. What are the different dimensions of Neohumanism being fostered in social system of school?
3. To what extent the essence of philosophy of Neohumanism is reflected in the physico-psychic environment of Neohumanist School?
4. To what extent the school environment brings the change in socio-emotional status of students?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present problem would be stated as “Neo-Humanism in Practice Stimulating Physico- psychic Environment: Empirical evidences from institutional case study.”

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the different dimensions of Neohumanism developed among the students
2. To explore the physico-psychic environment of Neohumanist Schools
3. To study the effect of physico-psychic environment on socio-emotional development of students
4. To study the traits of morality developed among the students

METHODOLOGY

The institutional case study methods were adopted from three different institutions to explore the physico-psychic environment of schools. The institutions chosen are the primary schools based on Neohumanism which are also popularly known as Ananda Marga School. Three schools were selected randomly from three different districts of West Bengal namely, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and South Dinajpur. The schools are up to primary level and follow NHE principles in its curriculum, teaching, evaluation and other activities. The principal of the school is saffron (Nun). Both boys and girls are studying in the age group of 5 to 10. All the teachers, students, parents and other members of schools are involved in this study as sample.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

To achieve the first objective, self- developed observation schedule and rating scales were used to identify different dimensions of Neohumanism developed among the students. In case of second objective, observation schedule was prepared to study different co-curricular activities and teaching learning approaches in school. Semi-structured interview schedule was used for students, teachers and parents to collect data in fulfilling the third objective, role of NHE school in socio-emotional development of the children. In order to explore the fourth objective, semi structured interview, reasoning for moral dilemma and bibliotherapy were used to collect data. All the tools are validated by taking expert comments on relevance of items. The investigator also recorded qualitative data by observing, writing in diary, voice recording, taking photographs and notes on special behavior.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A. Dimensions of Neohumanism Developed among the students

Table 1: Scores of rating scales indicating presence of Dimensions of Neohumanism

Dimensions	Average score	Percentage	Total Score on Scale
Physical	Sch1-25	26.86	89.53
	Sch2-27.6		
	Sch3-28		
Emotional	Sch1-28.5	28.5	95
	Sch2-29		
	Sch3-27		
Harmony with others	Sch1-28.8	28.93	96.43
	Sch2-28		
	Sch3-30		
Harmony with self	Sch1-23	22.2	74
	Sch2-19.5		
	Sch3-24		
Inter-personal	Sch1-26	25.8	86
	Sch2- 27.5		
	Sch3-24		

Rational	Sch1-14.5 Sch2- 18 Sch3-19	} 17.2	57.3	30
Social	Sch1-25 Sch2- 26.6 Sch3-28		} 26.53	88.43
Environmental Awareness	Sch1-29 Sch2- 27 Sch3-26	} 27.3		91

Table 2: Average scores of eight dimensions prominent among the students

Dimensions	Average Scores in Three schools	Total
Physical	26.9	30
Emotional	28.5	30
Harmony with others	28.9	30
Harmony with self	22.2	30
Interpersonal	25.8	30
Rational	17.2	30
Social	26.5	30
Environmental	27.3	30

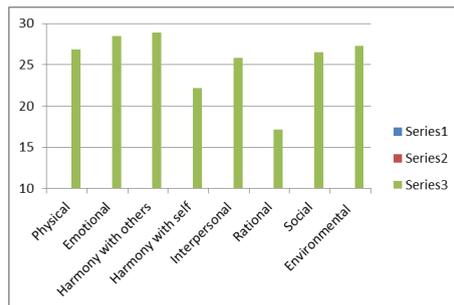


Fig 1: Graphical presentation showing comparison among the different Dimensions found among the students

The various dimensions emphasized in Neohumanist Education are: Physical, emotional, moral, inter personal, rational, social and environmental. Hence the primary curriculum both in content and as practice incorporates these dimensions integrated personality development of students. Moral trait has two significant parts: harmony with others and harmony with self. The above graph shows that the two dimensions namely,

emotional and harmony with others is very prominent in all the three schools. The trait of rationality is significantly less developed among the students. It has been noticed that the young children are emotionally more motivated than rationality.

B. Physico-psychic Environment of Neuhumanist Schools

The environment of school plays a significant role in developing the child as a whole. It is the place where the learning process, both formal and informal takes place. “The knowledge that a human acquires in touch with physicality is in its first stage physico-psychic. And when this physico-psychic knowledge becomes established in the mind, it is known as “psychic knowledge”. The psychic knowledge when is translated into the external world it is psycho-physical. In Neohumanist education system both the knowledge are emphasized. Different curricular inputs and practices in school create a physical world that would be considered as a microcosm of what the world can be like. While practicing all curricular inputs in school, the students gain knowledge through motor organs and sense organs. This type of knowledge is physico-psychic.

Different aspects of physico-psychic environment which are found in Ananda Marga School are as follows:

- Fearless learning environment
- Emotional support
- Social Relationship
- Joyful learning
- Sense of Aesthetics
- Cultivation of Healthy Habits
- Cultivation of Morality
- Spiritual Vibration

Each dimension consists of many characteristics indicating the physical culture and psychic environment of school.

Table 3: showing scores in Physico-psychic environment in three schools

Sl No.	Name of School	Scores on Physico-psychic aspects	Total Scores on scale
1	School1	27	30
2	School 2	24	30
3	School 3	24	30

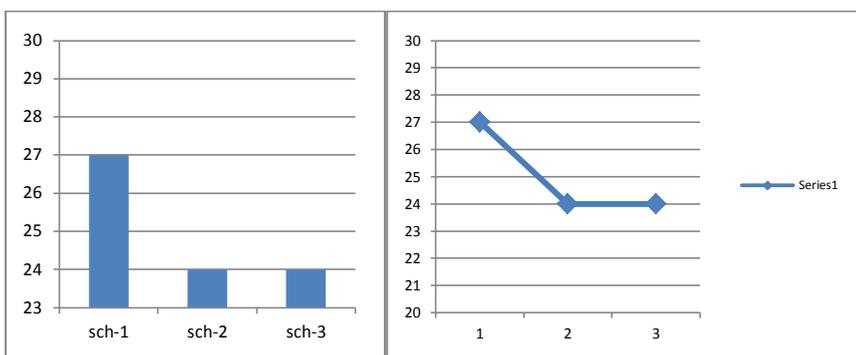


Figure 2: Graph showing comparison of Physico- psychic environment among three schools

Table 3 indicates the unique features of physical world as well as psychic field prominent in three schools. The researches have observed many aspects of Neohumanism which are prominent in the school environment.

Fearless learning environment

Learning in a free and fearless environment is one of the most important factors in Neohumanist education. The researcher has directly observed the atmosphere of school and has tried to explore the extent to which the school environment is fear free. While discussion with parents, it has been found that children never cry to come to school rather cry for coming to school. About ninety percent of the parents told that their children come to school in happy mood. They enjoy in coming to school. A

child of 4 years age told, “...it was raining from the morning and mother told there is only one umbrella at home, so let your elder sister to go to school. I told no, let didi staying at home, I am going to school with this umbrella. Finally, mummy brought both of us in school.”

Students enjoy different activities in school. They themselves choose the activities as per their interest and also organize and manage those activities. Students’ choice is given priority. They are free to put their opinion; they can take decision and finally can execute the activities. It indicates the free atmosphere outside the classroom.

Emotional Support by the Teachers

Classroom observation revealed that children get constant positive comments from teacher. Teachers provide progressive feedback individually. For example, teacher says to a Std III student, “very nice! But you are slightly below expectations, try little, I know you can”. Free learning environment is there inside the classroom. Students are emotionally secured. They are allowed to take help from their peers and teachers when required. Frequent peer interactions are allowed inside the classroom. The teachers’ positive comments would create an emotionally enabling classroom environment. Emotional support has been emphasized in NHE. Teacher should not show unnecessary sullenness to the students. Teachers’ constant positive and constructive feedbacks intrinsically motivate students.

The following table would categorize different comments made by the teachers in specific classes.

Table 4 : Categorization Matrix

	Nursery	KG	STD I	STD II	STD III	STD IV
What type of comments and communications teachers have for different classes	Empathy and praising	Empathy and praising	Empathy, praising and encouragement	Empathy praising and re-assurance	Empathy praising, advice and encouragement for self learning	Encouragement Reassurance, not only hollow praising but with hints and clue for self learning

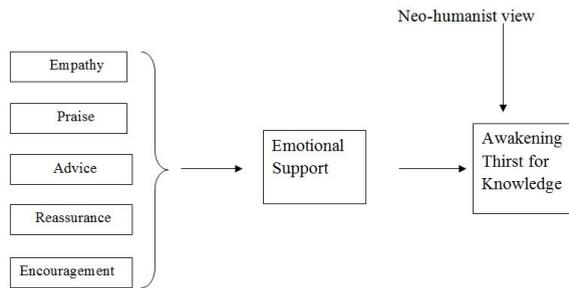


Fig: 3. The relationship between NHE view and Classroom environment regarding Emotional Support.

Joyful learning

Therefore, it can be concluded that the emotionally enabling atmosphere and creating thirst for knowledge of NHE have been reflected prominently in the school culture.

Neohumanist Education supports environment conducive for learning. The positive emotional bonding between teachers and students enhances learning by arousing thirsts for knowledge. Positive social and emotional development occurs when students feel that the teacher cares about them. This is an essential factor in Neohumanist education. The socio-emotional relationship between teacher and student is important in Neohumanism philosophy. Teachers often hug the students and have shown physical proximity to increase the unconditional love. Learning becomes joyful when it gets infused with fun, games and play. Attention is given to meet the emotional needs of each child. Child thinks that they are the important part of the entire teaching-learning process. Students' decisions are given priority. For example, students can decide where to sit and whom to sit with in class-room. In morning assembly, few students wanted to perform Kaushiki (a 18 matra rhythmic dance). Principal allowed them to perform. Teachers allowed students to study as per their own pace and interest. Individual style of learning is encouraged. It has been observed that in order to make learning joyful, the teacher

integrates role play, rhymes with actions and other interesting activities.

Teachers infuse the relationship with fun and joy. Following are some the examples of such relationship that are observed in the school:

- Teachers use laughter in class that makes children laugh
- Teachers take part in fun and games with the children
- Teachers integrate dance, drama and song in their class to make learning joyful. For example, teacher of KG class imitate the sounds of different animals and ask children to identify those animals. This type of environment enhances learning and also makes learning full of fun.
- Classroom observation revealed that the teachers create a positive climate inside the classroom that fosters joyful learning.

It has been noticed that students enjoy learning when their teachers equally participating in fun and games with them.

Cultivation of Morality

Researcher has found that the teachers always apply logic to clarify students' doubt. There is no rigidity of obeying anything that teachers want. Students' query regarding 'Why' and 'How' are met through logic. Teachers always encourage studying good books like life history of great heroes, autobiography of noble persons etc. The study finds are the main basis of moral development of children. The principles of harmony and universal love are embedded in curriculum both as content and as practice. The students avoid such actions and thoughts that cause harm to others even if these bring self pleasure. Fowling are some of the moral aspects found among students:

- Harmony with self
- Maintaining good relationship with others,

- Ahimsa or non harming
 - Love for animals and plants-
 - Not hurt with words or actions
- Universal love,
- Sense of Omnipotent's presence,
- Service spirit,
- Social welfare and
- Desire for collective good

Spiritual Vibration

Cultivation of spiritual values and spiritual nourishment are the main focus of NHE curriculum. The researcher has observed that the spiritual vibration is very prominent in Ananda Marga Schools. In the schools, average 1hr 30 mins for lower primary and 45 mins for upper primary have been spent for morning circle. Morning circle includes many spiritual activities like collective prayer, collective oath taking and quiet time meditation. Another important aspect is the nun and monk participating all spiritual activities along with the students and also guided and supervised the activities. Teachers explain the content with examples from gurukul system. Story of Aruni, Vedas and Upanishadas are often illustrated in the classroom that reflect the spiritual aspect.

From the above discussion , a model of physico – psychic knowledge can be drawn. This model is the blending of Neohumanist education and the data collecting from the school –the place of practice of this theory.

C. Effect of Physico-psychic Environment on Socio-emotional Development of Students

It has been observed that students of A. M. School show positive emotions and inter- and intra-personal skills. Inter and intra- personal skills are closely related with morality. Practice of morality is one of the important aspects of NHE principles.

Formal and informal interactions with adults provide learning opportunities whereby children can strengthen their morality.

The curricular and co curricular practices in Neohumanist Schools help in promoting emotional balance. Morning Circle is one of the important aspects of socio-emotional development in NHE Schools. It helps in nurturing positive emotions. The physico-psycho-spiritual atmosphere of morning circle and aesthetic environment help in promoting emotional balance. Yoga based physical exercise, high energy level rhythmic dance gradually slows down to stable state are one of the main activities of morning circle. It is the best way to channelize students' energy in a desirable way. This is helpful in both Physical body co-ordination and emotional balance. Morning circle is a dynamic integration of music, drama, dance, yoga and guided meditation. The mind flows along with both the idea and the rhythm of the poem.

The collective rhythmic activities, yoga and guided meditation regulate the interaction among mental propensities, hormones and nerve cells and their effects on child's behavior. All these activities also regulate the secretion of the endocrine system which is most important for expression of different types of emotions and other mental propensities.

The second objective is to find out the role of NHE in developing social skills. The table 6 of inter and intrapersonal skills have given the idea that children are adopting good social skills directly imitating from the teachers. Qualitative table showed the direct verbatim of children how they copy their loving teacher. The practices of NHE focuses on interconnectedness with oneself and feelings of belongingness to the Supreme consciousness. Both of these are essential in developing social skill.

Some of the inter-personal skills observed are-i) non harming ii) seeing the bright sides of everybody iii) praising others iv) moderation v) benevolent

Intra-personal skills are: i) control over aggressive behavior ii) mental resilience iii) contentment iv) sacrifice v) cosmic shelter. Children possessed with high rate of positive emotion will show more intra- and inter-personal skills. Neo-humanist education inculcates such values through its integrated curriculum of morality, creativity, spirituality and universal love. NHE specifically suggests ten moral principles for inter- and intra-personal skill development.

D. Development of Specific Moral traits in Neohumanist Schools

Neohumanist curriculum mainly covers two broad aspects of morality: harmony with others and harmony with self. The concept of harmony is the basis of morality. Some of the valuable moral aspects found in Neohumanist school children are: Non Harming, Benevolent truth, Non Stealing, Universal love, Moderation, Mental and physical cleanliness, service spirit, Wisdom study and Cosmic Shelter. The study has shown that regular practice of moral principles in schools help in developing conscience and higher mind of the students. The moral concept developed in students is: a) Avoiding doing harm to anybody with words, thoughts or actions. b) Avoiding the exploitation of others c) Not motivated always for selfish pleasure and most importantly, d) the sense of Omnipotent's presence everywhere. Neohumanist school has significant role in developing rational and logical mind of the students which in turn help students in reasoning of moral dilemmas and taking wise decision for the welfare of the society.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. It has been noticed that the unique features emphasized by Neohumanism have been prominent in Neohumanist Schools. The dimensions are: physical and moral

development, maintaining positive and healthy inter personal relationship, development of rational and logical thinking, socio emotional maturity and environmental awareness.

2. It is found that the school creates proper physical culture through cultivation of various activities. The unique features of this culture are characterized by fearless and joyful learning environment, emotional support and self esteem, physical exercise and yoga, spiritual vibration, healthy diet and healthy habits, cultivation of aesthetics through dance drama, music and other self choice and adult supervised activities. This physico-psychic environment fosters thirst for knowledge among the students.
3. Neohumanist curriculum helps in promoting emotional balance among children. The activities carried out in morning circle and the aesthetic environment of classroom help in promoting emotional balance. NHE based teaching helps to develop inter and intra personal skills among children.
4. The unique moral traits found among the students of Neohumanist Schools are maintaining harmony with others and maintaining harmony with self. The data analysis revealed that early intervention in schools help in developing some basic moral concepts which are: a) Avoiding doing harm to anybody with words, thoughts or actions. b) Avoiding the exploitation of others c) Not motivated always for selfish pleasure and most importantly, d) the sense of Omnipotent's presence everywhere.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION

1. The primary education needs to be relooked in the light of Neohumanism. The curriculum needs to be re oriented as per

the philosophy of Neohumanism. Different dimensions of Neohumanism need to be incorporated for integrated personality development of students at primary level.

2. The values embedded in the physico -psychic environment of the institutions mainly address three basic things which are considered to be the foundation of an individual and these are: knowledge of self, knowledge of others and knowledge of Environment. Hence the entire teaching learning methodology needs to be reframed.

3. In our present day society, strength of character among students are not developed well, as a result, behavior disorder becomes a common factor in adolescents. Neohumanist institutions carry out the early intervention for character building and moral practice. General Primary education should incorporate all these vital issues both as theory and as practice.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Observation Schedule of Neohumanist dimensions developed among the students

	Healthy Habits
1	Wash hands before Tiffin
2	Cut nails regularly
3	Put off shoes outside the prayer room
4	Do not like to take part in morning circle
5	Saying Namaskar to everybody
6	Behave orderly in class
7	Do not spit anywhere
8	Never take stale food

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	Morality-1
1	Tear plant parts or uproot plants
2	Feed animals
3	Selfless service
4	Take belongings from others' bag
5	Remember that God will get hurt if I cause harm to anybody

	Morality-2
1	Maintain cleanliness
2	Never sit silently in meditation
3	Remember God is watching everything
4	Enthusiastically participating in meditation
5	Show satisfaction

	Social Aspect
1	Participate in games and sports
2	Participate in school cultural program
3	Sit alone in class
4	Play alone in Tiffin period
5	Take care of friends when getting hurt

	Inter personal Aspect
1	Share happy moments with friends
2	Never accept foul play
3	Fight with friend
4	Praise friend
5	Share things with partner

	Emotional Aspect
1	Sit calm and quite in meditation
2	Easily melt with others' pain
3	Like to serve people
4	Remember the ideation of Great
5	Respect elders

	Rational Aspect
1	Accept teacher's scolding for wrong
2	Stop shouting if neighbor is seek
3	Never take other's belongings
4	Argue to establish wrong deeds
5	Stealing is wrong even if it saves life
	Environmental Aspect
1	Using dustbin for throwing garbage
2	Avoid spitting anywhere

3	Taking care of animals and plants
4	Conscious about wastage of water
5	Avoid using plastic

Table-2: Scales of physic psychic environment of schools

Characteristics		Existing in School		
Sl No		Very Prominent	Prominent	Less prominent
1	Fearless environment			
2	Emotional support			
3	Social Relationship			
4	Joyful learning			
5	Sense of Aesthetics			
6	Cultivation of Healthy habits			
7	Cultivation of Morality			
8	Spiritual vibration			

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