Transdisciplinary Perspectives in Educational Research 4

Ros McLellan
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Wellbeing and Schooling

Cross Cultural and Cross Disciplinary Perspectives

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Foreword

Following a couple of decades of programme development and research, we now know a good deal about wellbeing in education, such as what it means, why it matters, what it can achieve, how it can best be implemented, and what can go awry in the process. This increasingly solid foundation is reflected in this timely and cutting-edge reader. The contributors and editors are at the forefront of the field, and offer us a rich cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural conversation around many of the most salient issues.

The book contains some thoughtful deconstruction of some of the narratives around wellbeing and offers wise warnings about pitfalls and unintended consequences of naïve development. At the same time, it avoids the lapse into cynicism and relativism that such critiques can engender by also providing reflective and inspirational examples of good practice. These examples focus particularly on some of the most pressing current issues in the field, including cross cultural adaptation, diversity, inclusion, and incorporating the voices of youth. The overall balance represents a well worked example of the rising and helpful concept that has been dubbed *meta-modernism* (Stein, 2019). Meta-modernism is an attempt to find a middle way between the outdated certainties of modernism whilst avoiding the recurrent danger of undiluted postmodern analysis – cynical and paralysing relativism. This 'cultural turn' reflects a form of pragmatic idealism, asserting that, in the face of the various challenges that face us, we have to take the best informed action we possibly can, fully aware that our solutions are inevitably provisional, relative and culturally situated, and alert to the inevitable bear traps. We proceed, conscious that we are basing our actions not on certainties and 'truths' but on best guesses, on matters of the heart as well as the head, on stories as well as data, on ethics and values, and on the centrality of social engagement.

The Continued Dominance of Traditional Models of 'What Really Counts' as Education

My career spent developing programmes, reviewing evidence, and carrying out research around wellbeing in education and related areas has brought me into contact with students, teachers, programmes, policymakers, and education systems across the world. This lived experience has repeatedly demonstrated to me that an effective focus on genuine wellbeing as an intrinsic good in its own right, rather than just as a servant of what is called in the UK 'the standards agenda', is far from being the established norm.

Across most of the world, and despite sometimes an overlay of rhetoric around wellbeing, most school students still largely experience 'academic' or 'traditional' education. It might more accurately be named 'schooling', given the general absence of the transformational implications of the term 'education'. The model is of a conveyor belt or factory line, preparing students for their role as cogs in the wheel of the market economy (whilst ironically generally being around 20 years out of date, according to regular complaints from employers). The curriculum remains focused mainly on the acquisition of cognitive skills and the inculcation of predetermined knowledge about the world 'out there', and the skills to 'master' it. The process is outcomes driven, measured in individual grades and scores on tests and examinations, with the whole enterprise based on the values of competition, individualism, instrumentalism, growth, and future gains. There is a constant push within nations for 'efficiency', translated into a pressure to conform to age norms, to arrive at key points in less time, and to specialise early and obtain quick results.

The influence of the conveyor belt model is gaining ground, with increasingly young children tested and age normed. The severe mental health consequences of the limitations and restrictions of this approach and the pressure to constantly 'perform' are well documented. They are regularly and strongly voiced by students (Pascoe et al., 2020) and reflected in high rates of teacher stress, sickness, and attrition (Mental Health Foundation, 2020). These growing and toxic effects are lamented by decision makers but generally seen as unavoidable.

Meanwhile progressive, holistic, child-centred, and sometimes radical alternatives to mainstream education have existed in various times and places. Aristotle famously asserted that '*Educating the mind without educating the heart, is no education at all*'. Currently, and as this volume illustrates, examples of the cultivation of wellbeing in education abound, with numerous small-scale programmes and pilot studies in schools and districts, and some larger whole school programmes at national level – they include Mind Matters in Australia, Health Promoting Schools in Europe, and SEAL in the UK. Some national education systems currently prioritise wellbeing in schools: they include some Nordic countries, Bhutan, and, most recently, Wales.

However, as many chapters in this volume make clear, the traditional model is still the insidious default, deeply rooted, taken for granted, and continues to dominate attempts at alternatives. Policies and practices that ostensibly aim to cultivate

wellbeing are not only generally marginalised, they can, in fact, prop up the instrumental model. Work around wellbeing often unthinkingly takes for granted the inevitability of 'what counts' as education and generally offers the main rationale for its existence as boosting 'attainment'. The solution offered to the stresses and mental health problems created by the instrumental model is to encourage the development of inner capacities in individuals, such as 'resilience' and 'positive thinking'. The implication is that wellbeing is about the capacity simply to accept and cope with things as they are, rather than also to acquire the insights, skills, courage, and social supports to address the underlying causes of suffering.

The Need for Educational Transformation to Meet the Crises and Challenges that Face Us

'*Never let a good crisis go to waste*' said Winston Churchill, and for those who would like to see root and branch change, there is an opportunity right now if we can rise to it. It is increasingly clear to a growing number of people, including policymakers, that traditional schooling is not going to begin to solve the relational, connected existential, social, and environmental challenges that are facing humanity in the twenty-first century. The challenges include the continuation of poverty, social injustice, and racism, a rise in authoritarianism and extremism, a mental health epidemic particularly affecting the young, the threat of runaway technology, public health emergencies, and, most fundamentally of all, the threat to existence caused by human transgression of planetary limits. At the same time, we are experiencing dangerous counter currents that undermine humanity's ability to face these issues: these include a loss of belief in science, truth, and public organisations, accompanied by social fragmentation, extremism, intolerance, and polarisation.

Those at the heart of education are starting to wake up to the urgent need for fundamental shifts. Education is being seen at all levels, including by global organisations such as UNESCO (2020), as the single most powerful transformative force to help address these crises, to build a humane, just, and sustainable world in the face of hitherto unimaginable existential challenges. We need to construct together an education that is fit for purpose and does not just give us new versions of same problems.

New technologies are often vaunted as the way forward, but they are more likely to hinder than help if we do not also address the roots of the problem. In many ways our predicament already stems from the consequences of our own progress, such as the unbridled adoption of social media and other internet technologies. The problems inherent in the traditional model are likely to be consolidated by the rise of remote learning, online learning, and artificial intelligence; these bringing an increasing sense of passivity and isolation of individualised learners, together with a reduction in the vital elements of human and social presence and engagement, and

in physical enaction and embodiment in the now, in the present, in the real, flesh and blood, world.

Transformation of the Inner Person

Whilst strongly recognising the need for cultural sensitivity when outlining any agenda for wellbeing, there are nevertheless some suggestions we might cautiously make about the inner human capacities and values we might aim to cultivate. Whatever the list, they need to be cultivated for their own intrinsic worth as human capacities, to enable learners to engage more fully with their whole lives right now, to respond to whatever the future holds, and not only to do their best to survive the system as it is but to also the will, courage, and skills to change it.

We need the active and purposeful cultivation of the whole person and the full range of the multitudinous facets of their experience. The facets include their subjectivity and their inner life; their emotions; their attitudes, values, and meanings; their critical abilities; their creativity; and their relationships and social skills. We need to help learners develop their inner resources and capacity to navigate a world of increasing diversity, complexity, and interconnectedness. We need an education that can help us become more flexible and discerning, critical thinkers, and compassionate, caring, and socially minded citizens, with the strength and qualities that enable us to make proactive and wise choices to influence and take an active part in decision making; have courage, confidence, hope, and optimism; and survive and even flourish in the face of rapidly moving social, technological, and ecological developments.

Effective and practical ways to help learners develop these kinds of inner capacities are becoming increasingly known, as some of the chapters in this reader show. The drive is now both to move this kind of vital work to the centre and heart of education, and furthermore to join the dots between different types of promising work. We already know a good deal about the transformative power of social and emotional learning (SEL). More recent insights, practice, and research from work on mindfulness, and contemplative pedagogy, supported by psychology and neuroscience, are adding significantly to a rich resource of tools and techniques by which our subjective and relational experience can be developed (Weare & Bethune, 2021). Contemplative and mindfulness-based education is being shown to be particularly effective when combined with SEL. Neuroscience is starting to become a valuable ally, demonstrating that subjectively felt shifts are objectively reflected in observable and measurable changes in the structures and functions of the brain and the neural system. Such ‘scientific’ data can be convincing for those who want hard evidence. For example, neuroscientific investigation of even short periods of mindfulness practice suggests an increase in the density and complexity of connections in areas of the brain associated with attention regulation, meta cognition, emotional awareness, self-awareness, introspection, kindness, and compassion, and decrease activity and growth in areas involved in anxiety, hostility, hyper-vigilance,

impulsivity, and the stress response (Tang et al., 2015). These kind of changes, and the capacities they cultivate, are very much those that underlie transformative personal and social change. They present the prospect of understanding and recognising the darker side of our natures, addressing the deep-seated human impulses and habits that currently sustain the unsustainable, and develop the ability to transform ourselves and the contexts in which we live in a root and branch way (Bristow et al., 2020).

Transforming Our Settings

Alongside the development of our inner worlds, we need a parallel effort, informed by the social sciences of sociology and anthropology, to construct the kind of social settings and networks that enhance wellbeing. We have now a good deal of experience of trying to develop wellbeing at a whole school level, working with concepts such as *whole school approaches, Health Promoting Schools in Europe,* and *Bildung*. We are clear that, when well implemented, holistic approaches have proved to be more effective in producing sustainable change than individualised approaches and discrete 'interventions', and we have growing clarity on the essential components (Weare & Nind, 2011). We have some well-worked large-scale examples such as the aforementioned Health Promoting Schools in Europe, MindMatters and KidsMatters, and SEAL. However, after two decades of effort, we also know that the challenges are significant. Holistic, settings-based programmes have tended to come and go and usually fail to be sustainable. Evaluation of multifaceted approaches is particularly tricky. Whole school approaches can often fail to show impact, due to a lack of consistent and rigorous implementation, leading to dilution and confusion (Durlak et al., 2011).

The evidence suggests that successful implementation is multifaceted, nuanced, and requires balances and compromises. A key finding is that it depends crucially on school staff, being based on ongoing commitment by school leadership and management practices; staff readiness for change; dedicated time for staff training, preparation, and delivery; buy-in from staff; and support from the organisational context. A further and growing area of awareness, much discussed by the chapters in this volume, is the acknowledgement that one size does not fit all, and we need to pay open-minded and close attention to social and cultural factors, norms, beliefs, and practices, when attempting to transfer apparently successful practice into a new context. There is a clear imperative to listen carefully to the voices of the end users, their communities, and especially to the young, to ensure their authentic engagement.

Ultimately, the transformations needed are not primarily bureaucratic and organisational, they are to do with people – their capacities, attitudes, values, and emotions, and, particularly, their ability to embody and nurture a prosocial, inclusive, diverse, and caring ethos in classrooms, staffrooms, and schools. Perhaps the single most crucial shift we might make is to widen our focus from a concern largely with the wellbeing of students and take an equal interest in the wellbeing of the

hard-pressed staff who work with them. Student wellbeing is not going to be cultivated by burnt out and cynical staff, overwhelmed by pressures from having to deliver the instrumental curriculum, and ill-prepared for and resentful of their responsibility for additional new 'fads' and agendas such as wellbeing. Teacher capacity is based on being asked to do a job they fully believe in, in circumstances in which they can realistically carry it out, underpinned by sense of being understood, cared for, and valued. Only when this solid foundation is present are staff likely to be able to embody authentically the engaged, fully present, and empathic attitudes and values to which students will be most likely to respond and on which school wellbeing depends.

Ultimately, we cannot divorce the creation of positive settings from the need to recognise and cultivate the emotions and capacities of the people who jointly create them. The inner and outer worlds we are hoping to transform are connected at every level, in groups, families, classrooms, schools, localities, nations, the global community, and ultimately with all life on Earth. We are all one web, and we sink or swim together.

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Contributors

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Gerry Jeffers is an educational researcher, lecturer and writer at Maynooth University. He has worked as a second-level teacher in Ireland and Kenya, and as a guidance counsellor and school leader. In the late 1990s, he was national coordinator of the Transition Year Curriculum Support Service, responsible for the nationwide development of the TY programme. From 2000 to 2012, he was Lecturer in Education (Innovation and Development in Schools) at Maynooth University. He continues to teach on the Future Leaders programme at Maynooth. His research interests include school cultures, educational inequality, school leadership, teacher development and global citizenship education.

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Chapter 1
Wellbeing and Schooling: Why Are Cross-Cultural and Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives Needed?

Ros McLellan, Carole Faucher, and Venka Simovska

Abstract This chapter sets the scene for this edited collection. We argue that research on wellbeing in school is a relatively new field, and whilst different disciplinary perspectives have been applied, critical discussion of wellbeing in relation to children and young people from a variety of socio-cultural, political, and economic settings is still relatively sparse. This volume therefore responds to a growing necessity to revisit, challenge, and rearticulate taken for granted conceptualisations, policies and intervention frameworks and work synergistically to generate a sophisticated understanding of children's wellbeing whilst introducing fresh and context-sensitive approaches. We have tentatively identified four sections in which pre-conceived and taken-for-granted notions of wellbeing are problematised. These include: *Re-examining conceptualisations of wellbeing in education; School environments, schooling, and wellbeing; The significance of cultural contexts; and Amplifying children's voices.* The contributions in each section are introduced and summarised. Our objective is to help generate new ways of researching and thinking about wellbeing and schooling, that transcend monocultural, monodisciplinary and monomethodological strategies. It is our hope that the book as a whole can stimulate further theoretical and empirical research, as well as development of effective policies and school interventions which nuance rather than reduce complexity of both education and wellbeing.

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Wellbeing, Schooling and Educational Strategies: Why Are Cross-Cultural and Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives Needed?

Wellbeing has become centre stage in educational debate and reform in the last decade (Spratt, 2017; Thorburn, 2018). It may be somewhat surprising then that research on wellbeing in relation educational settings is a relatively new field, as indicated by a recent bibliographic analysis focusing on higher education that documented only a small trickle of publications as recently as the late 1970's. Interest in this topic has steadily grown since then and moreover there has been a veritable torrent of research published over the last decade (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020). Whilst this analysis related to higher education, a similar proliferation of interest in wellbeing has been seen across all levels of education. This body of work has revealed how wellbeing is inextricably linked with educational outcomes such as achievement motivation (Wormington & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2017), school engagement through behavioural factors such as truancy (The Children's Society, 2018) and academic achievement (Gutman & Vorhaus, 2012; Suldo et al., 2011). Furthermore, research has shown the interconnection between school and wellbeing, with supportive teacher relationships, perceived academic competence as well as satisfaction with school all being documented as linked to global life satisfaction in an early review (Suldo et al., 2006), which has been substantiated and expanded in more recent research (Huebner et al., 2014; OECD, 2017).

Discourses on wellbeing in relation to schooling are beginning to receive more attention, with questions being raised as to whether wellbeing is always a good thing and what the role of school is, or could be, in this regard. Simovska (2016; Simovska & Kousholt, 2021) has argued that rather than being transformative, wellbeing can act as tyrannical if the focus on measurement and comparison technologies is overemphasised, and if norms associated with wellbeing are overly simplified to feeling 'good' or 'happy'. Such exhortations can create an atmosphere of 'toxic positivity' particularly for children and young people whose life circumstances do not lend themselves to constant cheeriness (O'Toole, 2019). Similarly, interventions based on hegemonic constructions of wellbeing and how it can be supported, can further marginalise those they are seeking to support (Wood, 2018). Such critical discussion of wellbeing in relation to children and young people from a variety of socio-cultural, political and economic settings, however, is still relatively sparse (e.g. Fattore et al., 2016; Wright & McLeod, 2015). This volume therefore responds to a growing necessity to revisit, challenge, and rearticulate taken for granted conceptualisations, policies and intervention frameworks and work synergistically to generate a sophisticated understanding of children's wellbeing whilst introducing fresh and context-sensitive approaches.

To frame the contributions, it is helpful to set the scene by considering briefly how wellbeing has been conceptualised thus far, particularly with respect to children and young people in educational settings. This can be seen as opening Pandora's box, as many disciplines relevant to the educational context view wellbeing as part of their remit and conceptualise and operationalise it in different ways in accordance with their disciplinary perspective. Whilst these different perspectives highlight different dimensions, as will be discussed below, we will argue that each is limited in providing a rich understanding of wellbeing and that a more nuanced understanding can only be reached by critically engaging with and juxtaposing different perspectives, as is the ambition with this volume.

Starting with economists, whose work is closely tied to government policy, with education being no exception: they have historically tended to focus on objective, measurable indicators such as school enrolment figures or achievement, to operationalise wellbeing in relation to the school context (see Office for National Statistics, 2014; Roelen & Gassmann, 2014 for examples relating to the UK and Kazakhstan). Such indicators are necessarily limited, and it would seem inconceivable to take such a reductionist view of wellbeing, as indeed has been recognised in that field (Stiglitz et al., 2009). Psychologists, in contrast, have highlighted the importance of subjective experience, given the same material circumstances are experienced in different ways by different individuals (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Taking this perspective, it is not enough simply to capture objective indicators of wellbeing: self-report approaches enabling individuals to express their perceptions are also called for. A large body of work within the field of positive psychology in particular has been devoted to the development of wellbeing models and theories building on long-standing philosophical thinking on wellbeing on the assumption that there are universals underpinning the notion of wellbeing that can account for individual wellbeing experiences. Such theories can then suggest starting points for intervention to support or improve wellbeing, and indeed there are any number of initiatives and programmes based on such theories, for instance the '10 keys to happier living' promoted by Action for Happiness,[1] to give just one example.

Subjective wellbeing has been defined by psychologists as a 'broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions and global judgments of life satisfaction' (Diener et al., 1999, p. 277). This perspective has led to the development of instruments to capture affect (for instance the Positive and Negative Activation Schedule PANAS, Watson et al., 1988), domain satisfactions (such as the 10 domains, one of which is school, identified and assessed in the Good Childhood Index, data published annually in the UK in the Children's Society Good Childhood Report, Rees et al., 2010), and overall life satisfaction (for example the Satisfaction with Life Scale, Diener et al., 1985). Such theorising is premised on a hedonic view of wellbeing, considering what makes life pleasurable but gaining traction within other perspectives is that hedonic wellbeing alone is an

[1] See https://www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys-to-happier-living

insufficient conceptualisation of wellbeing and that there is a need to encompass hedonic and eudaimonic components, the latter relating to becoming oneself rather than feeling well (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993). Psychologists have started to develop eudaimonic models of wellbeing focusing on aspects such meaning and purpose and self-actualisation but with a recent article suggesting at least 45 ways of conceptualising and measuring wellbeing (Martela & Sheldon, 2019), there is clearly a lot less agreement on how best to approach this. The issue becomes more problematic when considering children and young people as much of the models relating to the more established theories focus on adults, models which may not fit children and young people's perspectives (Gao & McLellan, 2018). Thus, although psychology offers some interesting perspectives, much more work is needed to develop theoretical ideas relevant to children and young people. There are other drawbacks, beyond the underdeveloped theoretical aspects that need to be highlighted. Psychologists put the spotlight on the individual and whilst some working within this discipline have started to consider the role of setting through investigating, for instance, whether wellbeing tools perform in the same way across a range of national contexts via an examination of measurement invariance (see McLellan, 2019, for some examples), in general the environment in relation to wellbeing enaction is not problematised. This is particularly important in the light of the focus of this volume on wellbeing in schools. Focusing solely on the decontextualised individual could at best be painting an impoverished picture of wellbeing and at worst completely misrepresenting how wellbeing is shaped and enacted, pathologising those in challenging circumstances. Indeed, influential reports such as the World Bank's (2015) World Development Report drawing heavily on behavioural economics to inform development policy in the context of health interventions, have been criticised for failing to recognise the role of systemic as opposed to individual factors in lifestyle choices, with the suggestion that such approaches may appear attractive to policy-makers and offering short-cuts in dealing with politically difficult questions of power, distribution and class (Fine et al., 2016). The role of policy in shaping wellbeing in school clearly needs close scrutiny, particularly in respect to potentially individualising underpinnings.

Fortunately, there is recognition in the research literature that context is more important than just providing some sort of backdrop. Even within the medical field there is recognition that mental health, incorporating subjective wellbeing, must be defined in broad culturally-sensitive and inclusive terms (Vaillant, 2012). However, the literature is dominated by research from North America and other developed economies. The bibliometric analysis of mental health and wellbeing research over the past 45 years focusing on higher education students cited earlier (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020), for instance, revealed that over 50% of publications were from researchers based in the United States, whilst just under 6% came from those based in China (the second most prolific in terms of volume), and there were no countries

classified by the OECD[2] as less than an upper middle income country in the top 10. Studies like this have limitations, as the authors acknowledge by drawing on databases where English language publications dominate, nevertheless it is clear that the conceptualisations of wellbeing presented by the literature are largely those from Westernised nations, which will not therefore provide the culturally-sensitive and inclusive view needed. Indeed, not only might the extant field be missing diversity, but a strong argument has also been made that Western views have been exported to non-Western settings rendering local understandings invisible (Summerfield, 2013). The issue is particularly acute where indigenous understandings have been suppressed during colonialism leading to calls for the development of a body of knowledge grounded in realities in such contexts (Fernando, 2019).

Such calls resonate with the work of social anthropologists who argue that the conceptualisation of children and young people's wellbeing is largely contingent upon specific local values, norms and resources of a given community and thus entrenched in everyday life and always context-specific (see, for instance, Matthews & Izquierdo, 2009). Problematising wellbeing as embedded within a socio-cultural, political, and historical context avoids the trap of individualisation. Social anthropologists argue for exploring subjective experiences of individuals with a view of capturing worldviews and the cultural values and norms informing the organisation of everyday life. The focus is primarily on cultural meanings and processes. Wellbeing through this lens tends to be aligned with the broader concept of 'life satisfaction' with the idea that it is shaped by cultural orientations (Derné, 2009). One of the core arguments in this perspective is that, what constitutes a meaningful life varies across societies (Fisher, 2014; Matthews & Izquierdo, 2009). Interestingly, interest in the study of wellbeing is relatively new in social anthropology. Traditionally, wellbeing has been embedded in different areas of inquiries such as morality, value, human rights, and development discourse. Addressing wellbeing as a universal concept is still frowned upon by many anthropologists who see it as lacking in cross-cultural validity (Matthews & Izquierdo, 2009). In the field of education, anthropologists have studied different models of child learning beyond formal schooling. From this interest, a body of critical work addressing the impact of the expansion of formal standardised schooling across the globe on the wellbeing of children has emerged (Stevenson & Worthman, 2014). The benefits of this perspective to the study of student wellbeing are numerous, but its enduring scepticism towards any forms of cross-cultural measurements and its lack of involvement with the child's development processes are some of the limitations worth considering.

One of the cross-disciplinary perspectives that recognises the importance of context is the capabilities approach, focusing on quality of life (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993) and an individual's capability to function (Sen, 1999). Within this approach, capabilities seen as central to a life with dignity have been identified (Nussbaum, 2003). By highlighting such capabilities the focus moves beyond the individual to

[2] https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2021-flows.pdf

fundamental human rights, which is aligned with the entitlements endorsed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). This perspective avoids neglecting the social and societal forces that can be the source of unhappiness and by extension wellbeing, particularly for those in disadvantaged circumstances (Mills, 2018). Nevertheless, wellbeing within this paradigm is primarily related to fields of economic growth and international development (Nussbaum, 2011) rather than education. Thus, although valuable, this approach has limitations when it comes to thinking about wellbeing and schooling.

Another cross-disciplinary approach focusing on context, that is highly pertinent to the educational setting, is the Health Promoting Schools paradigm, dating back to the early 1990's (World Health Organization, 1998, 2020). Based on the World Health Organisation definition that a health promoting school is one that 'constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working',[3] there is no doubt the focus is on the school environment to support wellbeing. Indeed, the SHE (Schools for Health in Europe) network identify 6 components underpinning a whole school approach, based on values of equity, sustainability, inclusion, empowerment, and democracy.[4] Such values recognise the marginalised and promote an inclusive ethos. Nevertheless, a similar critique to that applied to the capability approach can be levied here: the focus in this paradigm is not specifically on wellbeing but, in this case, is targeted towards health in general, or mental health and social & emotional learning skills in particular (Barry et al., 2017; Weare, 2000). Mental health and wellbeing have a complex relationship. In the medical model, mental health has tended to be defined as absence of mental illnesses such as depression or anxiety (Westerhof & Keyes, 2010) and where a clinical assessment is made on the basis of mental health symptoms. However, there is recognition that the absence of mental health issues does not necessarily imply wellbeing, as it is possible not to be mentally ill but at the same time to be languishing rather than experiencing moderate mental health, or flourishing (Keyes, 2002), the latter being more akin to wellbeing. Whilst mental illness is undoubtedly relevant, when studying wellbeing in schools, it is important not to conflate wellbeing with mental health and to study school wellbeing in its own right.

Having thus far considered a range of (selected) disciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches, we argue that whilst each contributes a unique perspective, all have inherent limitations in providing a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing attuned to schooling. We suggest that what is missing from the approaches reviewed thus far with some notable exceptions (John-Akinola & Nic Gabhainn, 2015; Lindegaard Nordin et al., 2019; Simovska & McNamara, 2015) is a consideration of what the education context itself specifically brings to the table. Much of the above thinking considers school as merely a site for examining, or promoting, children and young people's wellbeing without linking this to the distinctiveness

[3] See https://www.who.int/school_youth_health/gshi/hps/en/#:~:text=A%20health%20promoting%20school%20is,for%20living%2C%20learning%20and%20working.

[4] See https://www.schoolsforhealth.org/

and purposes of schooling in terms of qualification, socialisation and subjectification (Biesta, 2015). In other words, there is a lack of empirically-informed educational theorising on wellbeing, problematising it directly in relation to the work of schools (Dewer, 2016; Simovska & Kousholt, 2021). This has been recognised and vehemently critiqued in one vein of literature most clearly articulated in what Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) have delineated education's therapeutic turn, where the promotion of, in particular, positive psychology ideas have been criticised amongst other things for being disconnected to the purposes of education. Along the lines of different forms of critique outlined by Langer Primdahl et al.'s (2018) review, we suggest that what is required now could be called a post-critical perspective that addresses how wellbeing in school is dynamically negotiated, (re)configured and enacted within the socio-historical cultural and material context of the school but also in the society at large. As Chapman (2015) argues, wellbeing should be viewed as a legitimate aim of education alongside equity, citizenship, economic prosperity and social cohesion.

Notes on the Contributions and Structure of the Book

The edited book that follows proposes a cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural discussion platform that reaches out to scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. The idea for the book was born as a part of the scholarship and conversations related to the research network 'Health and Wellbeing Education' within the European Educational Research Association (EERA).[5] Although under the umbrella of a 'European' association this network gathers scholars from around the world; the conversations are most intensive when we meet at the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) that takes place once a year at different Universities in Europe. The book is part of a EERA book series titled 'Transdisciplinary Perspectives in Educational Research'.[6]

We have tentatively identified four sections in which pre-conceived and taken-for-granted notions of wellbeing are problematised. These include: *Re-examining conceptualisations of wellbeing in education; School environments, schooling, and wellbeing; The significance of cultural contexts; and Amplifying children's voices.* Our objective is to help generate new ways of researching and thinking about wellbeing and schooling, that transcend monocultural, monodisciplinary and monomethodological strategies. It is our hope that the book as a whole can stimulate further theoretical and empirical research, as well as development of effective policies and school interventions which nuance rather than reduce complexity of both education and wellbeing.

[5] See https://eera-ecer.de/networks/nw08/

[6] See https://eera-ecer.de/publications/bookseries/

Part I. Re-examining Conceptualisations of Wellbeing in Education

The contributions in this section investigate and problematise the conceptualisations of wellbeing in educational research and policy, situated in different theoretical, geographical, and socio-political landscapes. Over the past years, governments worldwide have been increasingly showing a genuine interest in the prospect of incorporating notions of wellbeing in their policy framework (Bache & Scott, 2018). However, the theoretical groundwork seems to be lagging behind; the aspirations to research, measure and promote wellbeing in schools are characterised by inconsistent and often contradictory use of theory. Furthermore, tensions and contradictions were bound to emerge between policy intentions and implementation, between the conceptual logics, the objectives set by policymakers and the actual improvement of student wellbeing. This is the case, for example, when neoliberal educational policies purporting to target student wellbeing are primarily designed to accommodate the instrumental objective of increasing academic performance (Clarke, 2020). The chapters in this section underline the need for critical engagement with educational theorising and policy discourses related to school wellbeing. The chapters deploy different disciplinary frameworks, such as educational psychology, educational theory, and historical sociology. The common denominator is the objective to illuminate how wellbeing relates to wider educational purposes, and to problematise the-taken-for-granted assumptions in this respect. Some of the questions addressed by the contributions of this section include: What are the dichotomies and simplifications in need of transcending when it comes to conceptualising student school-based wellbeing? What implicit and explicit assumptions underlie educational reforms aiming to increase student wellbeing? How have these assumptions, and in general, the conceptualisations and policy developments travelled over time? What are the continuities, shifts and ruptures in this respect? How are policies made operative in school? How flexible and efficient are they, and what are their consequences in terms of student subjectivities?

In Chap. 2, Catriona O'Toole and Venka Simovska argue for reclaiming 'wellbeing as an educational goal in its own right' and discuss the theoretical foundations of student wellbeing in ways that acknowledge the complexity of wellbeing as well as dynamic interdependence between wellbeing and education. Their key argument is that most contemporary theorising in the area of wellbeing draws on monological, reductionist theories, which leads to individualistic and de-contextualised wellbeing interventions in schools. In response, O'Toole and Simovska draw on neuro-cognitive theory to emphasise that students are embodied beings, profoundly entangled with the social and material environment of the school. They combine this approach with the European educational concept, Bildung, to suggest that the promotion of wellbeing in schools does entail a concern for individual wellbeing of students, but

also necessitates considering societal determinants of wellbeing, including the whole-school environment, the emergent curriculum and the totality of students' experience at school.

In Chap. 3, Monica Carlsson engages with critical policy scholarship to investigate the ideas pertaining to school wellbeing in Danish policies between 2013 and 2019. Part of her argument is that despite of the general social welfare values of Danish society as a whole, the Danish educational policy approach over the last years has been primarily driven by neoliberal logics, which envisions education as a commodity and a public good. In this framework, wellbeing is understood as a means to strengthen overall academic performance instead of an objective in its own right. Carlsson argues that this neoliberal agenda became even more apparent through the introduction of a mandatory wellbeing measurement as part of the Danish reform of primary and lower secondary education in 2014. She cautions that such a course of action may, in fact have a detrimental impact on student wellbeing.

In Chap. 4, Katie Wright, Julie McLeod, and Rachel Flenley critically investigate the Australian national policy framework on wellbeing and positive education pedagogy and its application in an elite private school in the state of Victoria. They approach wellbeing as an assemblage, defined as interconnected knowledges, discourses and practices that both constitute and address the 'problem' of wellbeing. In the chapter, the authors explore the ways in which wellbeing has been deployed as the latest approach to addressing some of the longstanding aims of schooling, for example 'educating for citizenship' and development of the 'whole person'. The theoretical example they use is positive psychology. One of their key arguments is that even though positive education has been construed as an alternative to an instrumental form of schooling, its operationalisation shows many similarities, including measurement and the use of evidence-based indicators. Their analysis points towards a significant paradox deeply entrenched in the purpose of schooling: adopting a whole-child approach in an environment where the culture of testing thrives. They urge for the need to study contradictions embedded in interventions and underlying historical patterns that have shaped them.

Part II. School Environments, Schooling, and Wellbeing

The three chapters of this section explore theoretically and empirically, how school environments, including wellbeing promotion conceptualisations and initiatives, relate to wellbeing. Some of the questions addressed here are as follows. How does students' subjective wellbeing change in the course of schooling, and how does this relate to age, gender, or social background? How do teachers legitimise their specific practices related to improving wellbeing in schools; what are the ambiguities and ambivalences in this respect? How can schools address student challenges

relating to inequalities? Are schools sufficiently equipped to protect the wellbeing and mental health of students suffering from social injustices?

In Chap. 5, Julia Morinaj and Tina Hasher discuss part of the results of a longitudinal research project conducted across primary and secondary schools in Switzerland and Luxemburg to capture the students' wellbeing as they progress through different levels of their educational trajectory. As a theoretical basis, they opted for a multidimensional wellbeing model that would capture the complex dimensions of the children's experience of everyday schooling, as they grow older. Their findings reveal that the positive attitude towards school tends to decrease in secondary school whilst students face more social problems in primary school. The study also indicates a diversity of patterns across genders and students with and without a migration background. The authors argue that schools must revisit their reductionist approach to wellbeing and endorse multidimensional models to, not only harness this diversity, but also unfold strategies to better prepare teachers for the task of creating school environments conducive to students' wellbeing of as they move through different educational stages.

The following chapter discusses the introduction of mindfulness practices in an educational setting in Denmark, as one of the responses to the Danish school reform's target of improved wellbeing for the students. In Chap. 6, Nis Langer Primdahl explores teachers' rationales for bringing mindfulness practices into the classroom in two schools. What counts here is the teachers' perspectives and interpretations of these practices. The questions this chapter addresses revolve around: What takes place when the aims and purposes of mindfulness practices meet the wider purposes of schooling: How do they relate to the complex configuration of educational purposes at play in schools today? The chapter nuances the variability in framing of mindfulness practice amongst the interviewed teachers. The conceptual distinction between instrumental and transformative objectives is deployed and critically examined. Teachers' accounts seem to challenge these limiting categories, thus Primdahl calls for reimagining the purposes of school-based mindfulness in relation to care, wellbeing and resistance without committing to either critical-transformative or purely performance-driven conceptualisations.

Chapter 7 by Catriona O'Toole presents a rigorous critique of the dominating deficit-based trauma-informed approaches to address childhood adversity and trauma in schools and emphasises the connection between adversity and poor wellbeing, health, and academic performance. She problematises two significant issues: the apparent misalignment between trauma-informed literature and educational theories and practices, and the lack of attention on school-based approaches to trauma towards social justice. She points to the potential of the socio-ecological approach characteristic of the Health Promoting Schools initiative, to develop trauma-sensitive and trauma-responsive approaches which are embedded in everyday interactions, and which take into account both cultural dimensions and structural inequalities.

Part III. The Significance of Cultural Contexts

Another issue that this book problematises is the dominance of the Eurocentric approaches to wellbeing that has permeated the promotion and transfer of programmes worldwide. Values, norms, social expectations, worldviews are intertwined with the child's ecosystem to produce alternative meanings about being well. For example, Barry and colleagues argue that concerning students' Social and Emotional Wellbeing programmes, 'There is a need to determine how different cultural and social contexts influence programme adoption, implementation, impact, and sustainability, especially across diverse educational systems, organisational frameworks and with diverse populations groups' (Barry et al., 2017, p. 437). Following this perspective, we can fairly admit that the imposition of a universalised framework to capture children's wellbeing (Spratt, 2017) is ineffective since, in such a case, different ways of defining and expressing wellbeing are systematically discarded. By simply ignoring or pushing aside existing alternative conceptual, but also onto-epistemological and ethical frameworks, there is a real danger, not only of losing the variety and richness of meanings but of implementing initiatives that are bound to fail. Questions asked in this section include: Is it possible to reach a balance between 'global' and 'local' understandings of wellbeing whilst avoiding any narrow conceptualisation? How can wellbeing programmes be constructed that are culturally sensitive and suitable to a multicultural environment? What kinds of complexity comparing the development, enactment and effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives implemented in distinct cultural contexts, bring to the body of knowledge(s)?

Chapter 8, proposed by Armanda Denston, Letitia Hoschstrasser Fickel, Rachel Martin, and Veronica O'Toole, discusses a collaborative university-schools research project aiming at co-constructing a learning environment consistent with New Zealand's cultural and linguistic fabric. The success of the project prompts the authors to suggest a more significant commitment to challenging assumptions that reflect Universalist (Westernised) views, not only of wellbeing but also on how emotions work. Their suggestion is not to discard one perspective to favour another but instead to develop nuanced frameworks that align with the specific social, cultural, and linguistic environments where socio-emotional learning occurs. This also entails producing measurement tools that are culture-sensitive and incorporate local conceptualisations of wellbeing.

Chapter 9, is based on a 3-year transdisciplinary and transcultural mixed method longitudinal research project conducted in the former soviet state of Central Asia, Kazakhstan. The project's first objective was to develop a wellbeing measurement instrument that could be used in secondary schools across the country. In this scenario, a robust assessment tool developed in the UK was used as a basis. However,

Kazakhstan's social, political, historical, and cultural landscape being drastically different from the UK, meant it was imperative to rethink the instrument to embody the distinct conceptualisation of wellbeing and address the areas of concern appropriate to the Kazakhstani educational context.

Chapter 10, authored by Aidan Clerkin, Gerry Jeffers, and Sang-Duk Choi, explores the differences and similarities between two national school-based programmes that have been carried out in significantly different cultural contexts: Ireland and South-Korea. Both initiatives, *Transition Year* (TY) in Ireland and *Free Year Programme* (FYP) in South-Korea, aim at supporting students in their last year of secondary education in their transition to the adult world by focusing on socio-emotional skills and interpersonal competencies. In these programmes, wellbeing is one of the core components, along with personal and social development. The South-Korean *Free Year Programme* has been implemented recently and was partly informed by the *Transition Year*. Even though the programmes share similarities in terms of objective, community engagement, and eudaimonic perspective towards student wellbeing, they also display responses specific to local challenges and conceptualisations of wellbeing that reflect the cultural environment of each location. Along with the other chapters in this section, this chapter too invites critical reflection related to the travel of particular initiatives and interventions across different geographical, historical, socio-cultural, and political contexts.

Part IV. Amplifying Children's Voices

Co-constructing the meaning of wellbeing also implies teaming up with children and young people, and engaging seriously with their embodied and embedded experiences, perspectives and interests related to wellbeing in school. Scholars have argued that involving children directly in research is one of the finest ways to inform meaningful wellbeing interventions (e.g. Crivello et al., 2008). One of the main arguments that this section of the book conveys is that student wellbeing cannot be appropriately conceptualised or improved without substantially engaging the main agent – the child and young person. Examples of underlying questions raised by the authors in this section are, how can researchers engage effectively with children's voice? How can children and young people be empowered in building successful partnerships during research? Can subjective experiences related to schools enhance our understanding of school violence in specific contexts?

Chapter 11, written by Bernardo Canirez, Irene Torres, and Carole Faucher, provides a fascinating example of research collaboration with children. The chapter explores children's perception of school and domestic violence in three Ecuadorian towns. In Ecuador, tensions between policy and practice connected to school safety prevent the development of effective guidelines and mechanisms to tackle school

violence. One of the consequences is that children, according to this research, feel safer at home compared to school, despite the widespread instances of domestic violence recurring across the three towns surveyed. Cautious to create favourable social conditions aligned with indigenous values, the government has enshrined into its constitution the principles of *Buen Vivir*, a complex conceptual framework regularly introduced as the Andean alternative to the Western concept of wellbeing (Guardiola & Garcia-Quero, 2014). To address issues of school violence, *Buen Vivir* emphasises harmonious co-existence and peaceful conflict resolutions. However, in practice, these principles are complicated to enact in school due to the prevailing punitive culture embodied by the Ecuadorian school system. Children in this project were invited to participate actively in the research process through the method of participatory video. By amplifying children's voices, the research helps uncover underlying social patterns connected to violence in different settings that may explain why, when added to the difficulty of implementing Buen Vivir principles in school, children still feel safer at home.

Chapter 12, by Michelle Jayman and Kyrill Potapov, considers the importance of capturing children's voices in imagining evidence-based mental wellbeing strategies under a whole school approach. The authors argue that only children can effectively present the insider's perspective, which is essential to developing successful wellbeing school policies and interventions. However, developing flourishing partnerships involving children and adults requires genuine collaboration, an ambitious project that must first address the existing asymmetric power hierarchy prevailing between teachers and pupils. Such successful teacher-pupil collaboration was established through the LifeMosaic project, an initiative centred around a personal informatics (PI) app and implemented in a school in England. LifeMosaic enables the users, in this case, the students, to express their views on critical mental wellbeing themes and the performance of everyday life activities such as eating and sleeping, using social media, and meeting with friends. The case study demonstrates how adult-children collaboration can be fostered to support mental wellbeing and develop children-centred strategies.

Concluding Reflections

Inspired by the idea of self-problematisation outlined by Bacchi (2016), the main task we endorse with this volume is revisiting the extent to which the recommended conceptualisations, policy and practice proposals featured here either reproduce, or trouble, the relations between wellbeing and schooling that sustain forms of marginalisation and domination.

This task has undoubtedly reached a new level of urgency over the 2 years we worked on this collection. The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has compelled

us, amongst other things, to reassess the role played by the school in promoting children and young people's wellbeing. The temporary closing of school buildings has had a powerful impact on the wellbeing of many children and young people who were suddenly deprived of the school every day social life, including interacting in person with classmates and teachers, enjoying school meals, and generally engaging with an environment entirely designed for learning purposes and thus impossible to reproduce at home, even for the most nurturing families. Amongst the worst affected were children living in a situation of domestic abuse (Overlien, 2020). Through such dreadful cases, the school as a site to provide safety and nurture wellbeing and mental health has become even more apparent. The crisis has notably shed light on structural inequalities and, in specific situations, pressed researchers and practitioners to see student's wellbeing as a social justice concern. This is increasingly the case when ethnicity, gender, social-class, religious affiliation, and geographical locations are part of the discussion (Kelly, 2019). The deep digital divide, notably, such as between rural and urban areas and between the middle and upper classes on the one side, and the lower classes on the other, as well as between Global North and Global South has created serious rifts amongst student communities that will be impossible to repair without properly adjusted educational policies (United Nations Children's Fund and International Telecommunication Union, 2020). The risk that inequalities could be perpetuated, even accentuated through schooling, with the distressing potentiality of profoundly affecting the wellbeing of children from lower economic strata (O'Brian, 2018) or already marginalised communities cannot be ignored. The Covid-19 Pandemic has brought to our awareness societal tensions, already in existence and reflected in our educational systems, that until recently, have barely been challenged in research on wellbeing. This book was planned at least 1 year before the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis and thus does not directly address aspects relating to it. Nevertheless, the significance of addressing children and young people's wellbeing in school as an objective in itself, and through multidisciplinary and plural, context-sensitive approaches, has become even more indisputable.

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Part I
Re-examining Conceptualisations of Wellbeing in Education

Chapter 2
Wellbeing and Education: Connecting Mind, Body and World

Catriona O'Toole and Venka Simovska

Abstract In recent years, wellbeing has become a pillar of Western educational discourse and practice. However, the current interest is wellbeing in education is not without contestation. One problem is that most contemporary theorising in the area of wellbeing draws heavily on traditional, monological and reductionist theories, which view the self as autonomous, self-contained and separable from the social and material world. This type of theorising inevitably leads to individualistic and de-contextualised wellbeing interventions in schools. A second problem is that the current wellbeing agenda in schools largely precludes consideration of the goals, purposes and transformative potential of *education* itself. In this article, we tease out these concerns and propose a framework to support renewed thinking in the area of wellbeing and education. Specifically, we draw on the work instigated by Francesco Varela, which considers human cognitive and affective processes as *enactive, embodied, embedded* and *extended*. This radical paradigm acknowledges that we exist as situated and embodied beings, profoundly entangled with the social and material environment. We then discuss this approach in light of the European educational concept, *Bildung,* in order to reclaim wellbeing as an educational goal in its own right and advance mind-body-world connections in school wellbeing initiatives.

Keywords Wellbeing · 4E · Embodied · Bildung · Health promotion

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Introduction

Given the pervasiveness of adverse childhood experiences (Felitti et al., 1998) along with the stresses of growing up in an increasingly complex world, it is no surprise that the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people has been identified as a global public health challenge (Patel et al., 2007). In an attempt to respond to this challenge, schools across much of the Western world have been identified as key sites for delivery of mental health interventions and wellbeing has become a cornerstone of national curricula across educational sectors; with the OECD a central driving force in this. Whilst a commitment to these areas is welcome, many authors have voiced concerns about the way in which this new agenda is being taken up in educational settings (O'Toole, 2017, 2019; Simovska, 2016; Spratt, 2017; Thorburn, 2018; Wright & McLeod, 2015).

In everyday usage, wellbeing is a relatively undisputed concept; it refers to being well, that is, having optimal psychological experience and functioning. However, it is also a notoriously ambiguous and fluid concept (Spratt, 2017; Simovska, 2016). As Ereaut and Whiting (2008, p. 5) point out, it has *"a 'holographic' quality…it looks like a solid construct, but when we approach it, it fragments or disappears"*. This is because it is used to refer to diverse phenomena, from psychosocial outcomes, to socioeconomic indicators and subjective experiences, each of which draws upon different disciplines from psychology, philosophy, sociology and economics, to youth and political studies. It is reasonable to suppose that each of the various perspectives have something important to contribute to the study of wellbeing, but questions need to be raised about their claims and effects within the context of present-day *educational* research and practice. There is a need to examine existing theories in light of the distinct values, goals and purposes of education, to enable new ways of thinking educationally about wellbeing and to reclaim wellbeing as an educational goal in its own right.

In order to do so, it is necessary to examine the relationship between wellbeing and education that currently dominates: On one hand, wellbeing and education are construed as close allies. Happy, resilient and confident students do better academically, and in turn, academic attainment corresponds to greater wellbeing later in life, as measured on a range of objective indicators such as employment, health, and life expectancy. On the other hand, wellbeing competes with academic subjects for time and resources, particularly in the context of high-stakes examinations, educational measurement and accountability (Hargreaves, 2017). Furthermore, wellbeing is generally considered to be about personal and subjective feelings and emotions. It is concerned with one's inner life (the world 'in here') whereas education has to do with the world beyond ourselves (the world 'out there') as represented within a carefully planned curriculum (Ergas, 2017). These points serve to illustrate that despite the recognised link between wellbeing and education – whereby one influences the other – fundamentally, they are conceived as distinct entities and separate pursuits. Conceived in these ways there is an inherent tension between the two.

In this chapter, we argue that these positionings reflect unhelpful dichotomies, which obscure a broader, more encompassing view of education – one that is necessarily concerned with wellbeing. We argue that there is a need to recognise the dynamic interdependence of wellbeing and education as well as the entanglement of the inner, subjective worlds and the outer, material, objective world. With this in mind, this chapter is divided into five sections. The first section outlines the dominance of traditional, monological theorising and discusses how this is taken up in educational settings. Taking a two-pronged approach, we argue against both a simplified feel-good/happiness agenda in schools as well as against those who would suggest that emotions/feelings have no place in education. Instead, we transcend these polarised positions by appealing to a more dialogical construct. Next, we introduce the idea, instigated by Francesco Varela, that human cognitive and affective processes are *enactive, embodied, embedded* and *extended.* This has been referred to by some as a 4E approach (Gallagher, 2017). We appeal to this work in order to support more complex and dialogical thinking about human mental processes, including those processes important for wellbeing. The third section introduces the educational concept of Bildung, which refers to the formation of inner life in ways that go beyond mere socialisation into the existing social order (Klafki, 2009). We draw on Bildung because it offers a broad and encompassing theorisation of education – one that is capable of embracing wellbeing as an educational goal. The fourth section highlights the resonances between 4E approaches and the theory of Bildung, showing how education and wellbeing are co-dependent and mutually constitutive. The article ends by providing some practical implications for future work in the area of wellbeing promotion in schools or other education settings.

Moving Beyond Monological Theorising

Just as wellbeing and education are positioned as distinct, unitary and separate (as highlighted above), there is a tendency for many other important constructs in human and social sciences to be treated in this way. The tendency to think in terms of dichotomies (e.g., self versus other, emotion versus reason/cognition, mind versus body, personal versus social etc.) points to the prevalence of what has been referred to as monological theorising (Linell, 2009), which amongst other things, involves the construction of discrete entities that are viewed as independent of, or as opposed to one another. This tendency is important to highlight because, as we aim to show, it is antithetical to the complexity of the human condition and it has little to offer in terms of progressing a theory for how we think about and promote wellbeing in and through education.

Consider for example the 'happiness agenda' in schools, which emphasises ways that individuals can adjust their everyday choices, habits, thoughts and feelings in order to achieve optimal levels of happiness and wellbeing (Seligman, 2011). Happiness interventions include activities like identifying character strengths, exercises for strengthening personal resilience, keeping a gratitude journal or a treasure

trove of happy memories. The goal is that students experience predominantly high levels of subjective wellbeing in the form of positive emotions and positive attitudes towards school (Huebner et al., 2009). Whilst this literature can undoubtedly make an important contribution to school wellbeing efforts, there are some problems with this approach that warrant consideration (Simovska, 2016). First, Wong and Roy (2017) have argued that the positive-only focus of the happiness agenda is indefensible – both conceptually and experientially – because the positive and negative aspects of our experience cannot be separated. Indeed, the idea of a set of basic positive and negative emotions, such as happiness, anger, fear, and so on, has been roundly critiqued (e.g. Cromby, 2015). Instead, it is increasingly recognised that affective phenomena can more fruitfully be regarded as dynamic complexes of bodily sensations and feelings, which sometimes coalesce into basic named emotions (e.g., happiness, anger, fear); but which can quickly dissipate and recombine with other feelings in an ongoing stream of consciousness (Burkitt, 2014). As a simplified feel-good agenda takes hold in schools, students are faced with ever-increasing exhortations to be upbeat, to persist in the face of challenges, to display a growth mindset, to be enterprising and resilient. Repeated over time this can give rise to an atmosphere of *toxic positivity,* particularly for those students whose life experiences and living conditions do not lend themselves to feelings of cheery enthusiasm (O'Toole, 2019).

This latter consideration of student's life experiences points to a second concern with the happiness agenda. It is not merely the separation of positive and negative emotional experiences that is entailed in these conceptualisations, but a far more encompassing separation of self from the wider social, material and cultural world. Researchers and scholars from diverse traditions increasingly recognise that human emotional experience needs to be understood in relation to particular situations and against a backdrop of social and personal history (Burkitt, 2014; Damasio, 2000). Nevertheless, these aspects are largely ignored in school interventions, which are frequently individualistically oriented and contain the implicit assumption that unpleasant thoughts or distressing emotions are something to be avoided, adapted and adjusted by sheer dint of personal will (O'Toole, 2017).

Instead of separating positive from negative emotional experiences, and isolating the self from the wider world, any adequate explanation of human functioning needs to incorporate an understanding of the complex patterns of emotional experiences that contribute to our survival and wellbeing; as well as ways that our personal and social-material worlds are intimately entangled. Indeed, a vast body of empirical research highlights that emotional distress is underpinned by adverse experiences like poverty, inequality, abuse, violence, as well as by the 'everyday' stress of living or growing up in an individualistic, competitive, materialistic and sexualised culture (Friedli, 2009; Johnstone et al., 2018). Within such contexts, it is understandable that children experience a range of embodied emotions including fear, shame, rage, or withdrawal. Rather than being viewed as maladaptive responses to be eliminated, managed or controlled, distressing emotions and difficult behaviours need to be understood as meaningful, intelligible and adaptive in the contexts of particular

threats encountered, since they have likely played a role in ensuring survival through difficult and traumatic life circumstances (Johnstone et al., 2018).

Of course, critique of the happiness agenda in schools is not new. Indeed, there has been vocal criticism, particularly by scholars who bemoan the so-called 'therapeutic turn' in education (e.g., Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009). These authors maintain that the focus on wellbeing, self-esteem and personal development has undermined traditional educational aspirations, leaving young people without a solid educational foundation, and has advanced, according to Hayes, '*an uninspiring vision of all children and young people as being helpless and hopeless and in need of therapy*' (Hayes, 2004, p. 180). These sentiments echo arguments set decades ago by Rieff (1966) and Lasch (1979) who suggested that the focus on emotional and psychological issues has led to a shift away from subject-based disciplines, a trivialising of the curriculum, and a dilution of academic standards. It has initiated a retreat of education from politics in favour of purely personal preoccupations. Thus, they argue that the 'wellbeing agenda' in schooling is producing self-righteous, self-absorbed and underachieving children (Stout, 2000).

Although these authors raise some important concerns, they appear to assume a clear-cut and indubitable separation between emotion and cognition, and between the personal and social realms. Their arguments suggest that schools ought to privilege cognitive advancement (rationality) over emotions and social responsibility over personal fulfilment. This serves to endorse a mind/body separation, since the view of the student that emerges from these arguments is a disembodied one: a student capable of producing rational arguments and aware of her civic responsibilities, yet detached from her own bodily feelings; unaware that it is her embodied engagement with the world – and the feelings that arise from this engagement – that will orient her in various contexts and give sense or meaning to the situations she encounters.

Paradoxically then, although the perspectives outlined above – the happiness agenda and the critique of the therapeutic turn – are on opposing sides when it comes to a place for wellbeing in education, there is a commonality in their underlying assumptions. Both positions draw heavily on traditional, monological ways of thinking that have been dominant in the Western world, particularly since the Enlightenment (Linell, 2009). The Enlightenment concern with science and empiricism, and associated values of reason, objectivity, prediction and control precipitated the carving up of concepts into dualisms or Cartesian dichotomies (emotion versus cognition, mind versus body, and so on), a great many of which need to be challenged in order to reconceptualise wellbeing.

These types of dualisms imply two entities, which are seen as independent of one another or as opposed to each other. However, in a dialogically constituted and entangled socio-material world, these concepts may more fruitfully be considered non-dualistic wholes or relations, whereby the two parts or *aspects* are recognised as empirically interdependent and conceptually intertwined (Linell, 2009). With this latter dialogical stance in mind, it makes little sense to speak of children's cognitive or academic advancement without also pre-supposing their personal, social and emotional wellbeing or vice versa. For embodied beings, there can be no

neutral, unemotional way of engaging with the world, since emotion lies at the very heart of rationality (Burkitt, 2014; Damasio, 2000).

Likewise, the sense of self that is implicated within individualistically oriented interventions to promote wellbeing in schools could be linked to a Cartesian *cogito* – a hallmark of monological thinking. As discussed by Linell (2009) the Cartesian view of the self is as a fully autonomous, rational and self-contained being, separable from the social and physical environment. Human cognitive and affective processes are thought of as internal phenomena; discussed in terms of mindsets, personal traits and behavioural dispositions, which depend on various neurophysiological structures and processes in individual brains. The external socio-material world is not theorised, but is assumed to exist prior to and independently of people's actions and discourses. This is clearly visible in many school-based psychosocial or resilience interventions, which emphasise individual change, irrespective of people's life histories or socio-cultural and material contexts (O'Toole, 2017; Simovska, 2016).

Thinking Differently About Wellbeing

Over the course of the past few decades a radically different paradigm has emerged which theorises cognition, emotion and agency as *embodied*, *embedded*, *enactive* and *extended*. Hence, this paradigm is sometimes referred to as the '4E' approach (Gallagher, 2017) and although the 4E label represents diversity of views, we use the term here as a convenient placeholder. The neuroscientist and philosopher, Francisco Varela (Varela et al., 1991; Thompson & Varela, 2001), was one of the first authors to introduce the term "embodied mind" to challenge the standard representational view of the mind. Varela and colleagues suggested that rather than represent an independent world, cognitive systems enact or bring forth their own worlds of meaning and significance (Colombetti, 2013). This idea amounts to recognition that consciousness is not merely located in the brain; instead, the cognitive and affective processes that enable us to sustain meaningful relationships with the world are distributed across mind-brain-body and extend to the wider material and social environment. As human beings, our actions, agency, thoughts and feelings depend non-trivially on the body; the body is not merely a puppet to be controlled by the brain/mind, but a whole animate system (Di Paolo et al., 2010).

Human beings then, exist intrinsically as embodied beings, and mental functions such as perception, cognition and emotion, cannot be fully understood without reference to the physical body as well as the social and material environment in which they are experienced (Varela et al., 1991). Given this profound entanglement with the social and material world, our actions are not necessarily the product of deliberated rational intentions; rather, much of our agential lives unfold at a pre-reflective level; we are often motivated by a perceptual grasp of what a given situation in a particular time and space affords (Gibson, 1979). The experience of childhood adversity or trauma serves as a useful illustration. When a child experiences trauma,

like living with an abusive parent, she holds the experience viscerally. Feelings of horror, rage, shame, alienation are registered in her body. Memory of the experience continues to held in her body shaping subsequent perceptions, thoughts and actions, even though her conscious mind lacks a narrative that can communicate the experience to herself or others (van der Kolk, 2014). This does not mean she is merely a siphon for her experiences. As an agential person, she courageously navigates her life, making sense of her experiences. In so doing, she enacts or brings forth her own world of meaning and significance. Nevertheless, what this example illustrates is that perceptions, thoughts and feelings are not merely directed from within; rather they are constituted in an *interworld* (*intermonde;* Merleau-Ponty, 1962). In essence, there is no self that can be understood separate from the flow of experiences; nor a thinking, rational mind that can be separated from a feeling, sensing body.

Amongst the predecessors to contemporary 4E approaches were Eastern contemplative traditions, as well as phenomenological thinkers (Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1962) who recognised that humans come to know the world bodily as much as intellectually or mentally. The 4E approaches also have important affinities with some key educational theorists. Indeed, the term "enactive" was used by Bruner to describe knowledge that is acquired and manifested through bodily action (Bruner, 1966). Likewise, Dewey (1929/1958) used the term 'body-mind' indicating his belief that body and mind, action and thought are inseparable; and his fellow pragmatist, William James, wrote in rich detail about how the stream of consciousness does not direct itself, but is instead influenced by our practical engagements with others and the world (James, 1894/1994). Today, the approach is garnering increased support from scholars working in multiple disciplines, most notably cognitive science, philosophy of mind, and phenomenology (e.g., Stewart et al., 2010; Gallagher, 2017); as well as, to some extent, in the field of education. For instance, scholars are recognising the implications of embodied and enactive approaches for teaching particular subject areas (especially mathematics) and as a pedagogical approach (Francesconi & Tarozzi, 2012; Kincheloe, 2008).

However, to our knowledge, 4E approaches have not yet been drawn upon to explore wellbeing in education. We argue that the general principles of the 4E approaches offer considerable promise for developing a more integrative understanding of student wellbeing. They provide the basis for a dialogical or relational ontology, with which to progress a view of the person as deeply connected and interdependent with others and the world. This suggests that the most basic conditions for our wellbeing lie in the dynamics of our relationship with ourselves, as well as with other beings and the world. It highlights the need to take seriously people's lived experiences, the personal meanings ascribed to these experiences, along with the power relations, inequalities, threats and adversities that have been encountered within particular socio-cultural, historical and political contexts. It suggests a realignment of problems away from individual brains towards greater recognition of mind-body connections and dynamic relationships with others and the world.

Wellbeing as an Educational Goal

As noted at the outset, one of the problems with the wellbeing agenda in schools is that it largely precludes consideration of the aims, goals or purposes of education. In fact, the school is often considered merely a convenient site for the rollout of wellbeing interventions. Schools are valued primarily for their capacity to reach almost entire populations of children, but there is little consideration of the rich, transformative role of *education* per se (Lindegaard Nordin et al., 2018; O'Toole, 2017). There is a need therefore, to articulate how wellbeing as a concept is attuned (or not) with educational theory and practice. To this end, we draw on educational ideas centred on the European concept of *Bildung*. Whilst we acknowledge that there are many other educational concepts that could be appealed to here, we focus specifically on Bildung because it enables us to consider educational goals in a comprehensive way and as we argue below, it is capable of embracing the co-dependence of wellbeing and education.

Bildung is a German word denoting an educational ideal that can be traced back to Antiquity (Biesta, 2002). Through the developments in Roman culture, humanism, neo-humanism and the Enlightenment it became vital in the continental educational tradition, especially Germany (Klafki, 1986) but also Scandinavia and elsewhere (Biesta, 2002). Bildung refers to the formation of the inner life in ways that go beyond moral development and socialisation towards critical reflection on the key issues in the dominant social order and engagement with the key societal issues of an epoch (Klafki, 2009). It relates to the question of what it means to be a cultivated human being and how education can respond to this question.

Klafki (1998) defines Bildung through three main, intertwined and mutually constitutive dimensions of subjectivity: self-determination, co-determination and solidarity. *Self-determination* refers to the ability and responsibility of the individual to make independent choices. *Co-determination* relates to the obligation of the individual to contribute to a given community or to society in general, and *solidarity* secures the rights and potentials of both self- and co-determination by the normative assumption that the individual members of society are able and willing to act with consideration for the others, particularly for the underprivileged members. The entanglement of these three dimensions shape the ways in which individuals are able to determine their own responsibility and independence, whilst also being responsible for the development of 'corresponding conditions'; that is, conditions for self-determination and independence of other individuals (Klafki, 1998). Within the context of wellbeing and education, this implies that the pursuit of individual goals and opportunities related to wellbeing also include collective movement towards similar ideals; an individual pursuit cannot take place without considering the pursuit of common opportunities (Simovska et al., 2020).

In this way, Bildung encompasses a broad vision of education – one that is not just about gaining particular knowledge or skill-sets, nor about being socialised into the existing social order, but about engaging with the educational experience in ways that enable *subjectification* as a quality of interaction with others and with the

world (Biesta, 2014). Subjectification is conceptualised as 'coming into the world', or 'becoming' in a socio-discursive-material world of plurality and difference (Biesta, 2014). This idea amounts to recognition that it is through deeply engaging with our experience, that we learn a bit more about ourselves and come to orient ourselves and engage in meaningful interaction with others. As we engage with others, we inevitably take in some of their 'otherness' and integrate it into who we are, in a continual dynamic and emergent process. Crucially this engagement also enables us to transcend ourselves – to connect with the world, to meet with it in our own terms and become citizens, or agents capable of transforming the world (Jensen, 2012). Fundamentally then, education informed by the concept of Bildung, engages students in questions of how they want to *be* or *become* in the world, not just what they want, or need (as prescribed by the curriculum) to *know*. It entails a transformation of the subject's attitude towards the self and offers possibilities for learning how to work together with others to transform the world (Biesta, 2002, 2014).

The concept of Bildung fell out of favour from the 1960s onwards. Following Adorno's (1962) critique, it was interpreted as being closely associated with individual rationality and autonomy. However, interest in the concept has been revived in recent years as scholars point out that far from being aligned with individualism, Bildung, like 4E approaches, starts with an understanding of the individual as already embedded in the world and conceptualises educational purposes as deeply linked to the development of an individual agential relation with the world. Indeed, Lovlies and Standish (2003, p. 3) write, "*In the world of Bildung, the self was never a lonely wanderer, but always already involved, such that the opposition between self and world is not a contingent one but expresses a necessary relation*. Similarly, for Klafki (2009), critical Bildung is not confined to a concern with individuals; it has a social and political dimension as well. By acknowledging the interplay between inner and outer worlds, Bildung avoids the kind of dichotomies that typically pervade education and wellbeing discourses. Whilst education is often constructed as being concerned with the world 'out there' and wellbeing as being concerned with one's 'inner life', Bildung recognises their profound interdependence. Similar to 4E approaches *Bildung* depends on an embodied person actively engaging with the social and material world.

Bringing It All Together

The foregoing suggests that Bildung shares many affinities with 4E approaches. Together these perspectives invite renewed thinking about the role education plays in transformation of self, society and the world, and they offer new possibilities in respect of the wellbeing agenda in education. Wellbeing promotion in education needs to be enacted as more than just the delivery of discrete psychosocial interventions that focus solely on the individual skill-sets for adapting, regulating or controlling emotions. It also needs to move on from prescriptive advice giving on how to feel well in school. Following Klafki (2009) and Biesta (2014), we need to start by

asking questions about the kinds of problems we are faced with today: What are the major personal, social and societal determinants of psychological distress, and how are these entangled? What concerns do students in particular socio-political contexts have regarding their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the others? From there we need to ask what the appropriate *educational* response to these questions might be. What kind of Bildung might be needed or might make sense in light of these concerns?

Together Bildung and 4E perspectives may facilitate more encompassing and socio-ecological responses to wellbeing concerns. Fundamentally, they highlight that to be in the world is to be in relationship, and that there is no other way to relate, other than as fully embodied, embedded, thinking, feeling, and sensing subjects. In light of this, education should not attempt to confine itself to the realm of rational thinking and narrowly defined academic attainment. Feelings and emotion need not be marginalised, but rather privileged as indispensable in supporting students' meaningful engagement with the world. It is not enough for students to rely on so-called objective knowledge prescribed in the curriculum; rather they should be supported to recognise the wisdom of their own direct experience, to appreciate how their embodied feelings orient them and shape their actions in the world, and equally how their actions affect and are affected by the world.

Implications for Educational Practice

The theoretical perspective combining the 4E and Bildung concepts suggests a need for taking into consideration the entanglement of socio-ecological determinants and students' embodied and relational experience when working educationally with wellbeing in school. It points to the importance of a curriculum that engages students in inquiry about their own minds and bodies – perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and emotions – as embodied, extended, enactive and embedded in the social and material environment of the school. This includes the need to embrace first-person (subjective) as well as third-person (objective) methods of inquiry (Ergas, 2017). Further, in order to promote wellbeing in schools it is necessary to treat the school as a dynamic setting, as endorsed, for example by the Health Promoting Schools initiative (Lindegaard Nordin et al., 2019). This entails focusing on the whole-school environment and the totality of students' educational experience – exploring affordances for students to develop their capacities, desires, will, and engagement – with a view to students becoming *who* they want to be, and *how* they want to be in relation to others and the world. We argue that this supports the process of subjectification (Biesta, 2014); the process by which students become subjects of their actions in the world.

Further, the theoretical perspective joining 4E and Bildung concepts indicate that power and politics play an important role in wellbeing. Faced with a globalised world of plurality and difference, a crisis in liberal democracy (Harari, 2018), and considerable uncertainty and anxiety amid the global Covid-19 pandemic, it is

crucial that students are supported in developing a deep sensibility about their choices and actions as global citizens. Engaging educationally with the topic of wellbeing requires supporting students to apprehend the reality of their own situations as well as the circumstances of others on the planet. This means engaging students in critical dialogue about the ways that particular ideologies have a stake in producing and maintaining certain attitudes, beliefs and emotions. It means creating pedagogical spaces for students to reflect upon aspects of the prevailing social and economic world order (such as those that increases social inequalities, materialism, competition etc.), and how these affect psychological and environmental conditions as well as people's sense of community and social connectedness. The educational response involves enabling students to think critically about possible alternatives, and to find ways to take ethically informed actions to improve their own wellbeing, the wellbeing of others, and that of the planet (O'Toole, 2019).

Finally, the conceptualisation of wellbeing we propose paves the way for educational practices to acknowledge and respond to the fact that the most acute mental suffering arises in the context of adversities, trauma and social injustices (poverty, abuse, discrimination, marginalisation, armed conflict, displacement etc.). There is a pressing need to support the capacity of educators to engage compassionately with troubling emotions and behaviours, understanding them as courageous, survival-oriented, adaptive responses to overwhelming experience, rather than signs of maladaptation or disorder (O'Toole, 2019). As discussed above, a positive-only, feel-good agenda can become oppressive, and may push students to disown the unpleasant, 'shadowy' aspects of themselves, even though these aspects are imbued with meaning and communicate important information about motives, choices and actions.

To conclude, in this chapter we have appealed to 4E and Bildung concepts, endeavouring to demonstrate that wellbeing and education are co-dependent and co-constitutive. We have argued that the promotion of wellbeing in schools entails a concern for individual wellbeing of all students, but also necessitates considering the socio-ecological determinants of wellbeing, with the whole-school setting, the emergent curriculum, and the holistic nature of students' experience at school. Whilst we recognise numerous constraints in translating theory into school practices, we hope that our analysis will prompt critical conversations and provoke fresh thinking about more promising ways of promoting wellbeing in and through education.

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Chapter 3
Reimagining Wellbeing in Neoliberal Times: School Wellbeing as an Adjunct to Academic Performance?

Monica Carlsson

Abstract The purpose of the chapter is to examine the policy ideas in the formulation of aims for and measurements of pupils' school wellbeing in the 2014 Danish school reform. The analysis draws methodological inspiration from critical policy scholarship in education, discussing wellbeing as a vehicular idea, that is, a travelling idea formulated in a somewhat vague an open-ended manner. The paper closes with a discussion of concerns stemming from the twinning of pupils' wellbeing and academic achievement in education policy, and by suggesting potential implications of the chapter's findings for educational policymakers and practitioners.

Keywords School reform · Policy · Pupils' school wellbeing · Academic achievement · Neoliberal governance

Introduction

With the 2014 Danish 'Folkeskole'[1] reform, the aim of strengthening of pupils' school wellbeing is placed high on the agenda, with close ties to the overall objective of strengthening the academic performance of Danish pupils. The school reform construes wellbeing as an educational problem, and mandatory, comparative measurements of wellbeing are included in the quality assurance processes taking place between schools, municipalities and the Ministry of Education as part of the

[1] The term 'Folkeskole' refers to the general municipal school, enrolling the majority of Danish pupils and covering the entire period of compulsory education, from the age of 6 to 16.

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solution of the problem (Carlsson, 2017).[2] Systems of auditing, accounting, monitoring and surveillance are central to neoliberal governance (Atkinson & Joyce, 2011), and comparative measurements are a core element. These systems stress performativity (a term used by Ball to describe society's obsession with statistics, testing, grades, and goals) and competitiveness as central values, whilst providing *"a mode of regulation that employs judgement, comparison and displays of data as means of incentive, control, attrition and change"* (Ball, 2006, p. 144 in Lingard, 2011, p. 365). Neoliberalism views education as a commodity to be traded in the job market, and therefore as a personal benefit, but also of critical value to the national interest as countries vie for position in the international economy (Spratt, 2017, p. 27). Within a neoliberal discourse, the market is expected to regulate education in terms of quality and efficiency, with students and parents becoming consumers in an education 'market', expected to make informed and rational choices (Lindblad & Lindblad, 2017).

The idea at the centre of the 2014 reform is based on the pragmatic assumption that pupils' wellbeing leads to better academic performance, or, as the headline at the Ministry of Education's learning portal on wellbeing formulates it *"Wellbeing is as a prerequisite for pupils to become as proficient as they can be"*. The twinning (joining together) of the two policy aims might seem to suggest a broader purpose of schooling as promoting both learning and wellbeing; i.e., it might seem that wellbeing is perceived as a goal and a value in its own right. However, as this paper will argue, the policy aim of strengthening pupils' school wellbeing is largely construed as a means to strengthen academic achievement. The question is what room this leaves for other discourses concerning wellbeing in policy, such as discourses integrating dimensions of care and learning as a unified process.

Against this background, this chapter examines the policy ideas in the formulation of aims for and measurements of pupils' school wellbeing in Danish school policy. Critical discourse analysis of wellbeing policy often uses ideology as an analytical focal point, drawing on references to well-fare liberal and neoliberal ideologies (see e.g. Atkinson & Joyce, 2011; Meyer, 2016; Spratt, 2017). In contrast to an overall focus on politics and ideology, or on a 'from policy to practice' perspective, this chapter focuses on policy content, examining the policy ideas in the formulation of school wellbeing aims and measurements. The analysis draws on Fenwick and Edwards' (2011) distinction between *policy intentions*, i.e. educational visions, values, and governance rationales about 'what works', and *policy enactment*, defined as the specific materialisation processes that make certain forms of knowledge, practice or identity visible in policy.

The chapter starts with an outline of the mobility of the idea of school wellbeing and school wellbeing measurements into Danish school policy, providing the broader policy context for the analysis. I first address policy intentions in key policy documents on school wellbeing, focusing on parliamentary agreements from 2013

[2] Wellbeing measurements have previously been used in these schools on an optional basis. The aim of strengthening school wellbeing and the implementation of wellbeing measurements is described in the 'Folkeskole Act' (§16a, §56b).

and 2019 on the development of the school. Then I address policy enactment, focusing on the ministerial guideline for schools' work with the wellbeing measurements. In the closing part of the chapter, I discuss whether the national measurements of wellbeing may further values of performativity and competitiveness in Danish education policy and practice in ways that undermine the intentions of enhancing pupils' wellbeing.

The Mobility of the Idea of School Wellbeing into Danish School Policy

The notion of policy ideas as *vehicular ideas,* formulated in a somewhat vague and open-ended manner (McLennan, 2004), makes good sense when it comes to the policy idea of school wellbeing. School wellbeing is generally described as both a means and an end in educational policy discourses: as an adjunct (and hence subordinate) to academic achievement or to health, or with connotations of care and flourishing (see e.g. Ereaut & Whiting, 2008: Kahn & Juster, 2002; Spratt, 2017). As an open-ended concept, wellbeing can be understood in many different ways and navigate between different value systems, which, as Meyer (2016) points out, can potentially help to maintain its position in policy in times of political change. Within a broad understanding, the concept of wellbeing is associated with welfare and the responsibility of societal institutions, referring to factors in our surroundings of importance for our wellbeing, as well as with expectations of self-actualisation and self-management, referring to factors focusing on subjective experiences of wellbeing, and thus with citizens' own responsibility (Atkinson & Joyce, 2011; Meyer, 2016). Atkinson and Joyce (2011) point out that, concurrent with changes to the modes of governance and welfare provision grouped under the label of neoliberalism, there has been a shift in the understanding of wellbeing from a collective attribute, mostly associated with economic wellbeing, to an individual attribute (p. 134). As such, the concept of wellbeing is largely related to a positive mental state and treated as an outcome of individual choices and actions.

What has 'moved' the idea of school wellbeing into Danish school policy? The report commissioned to inform policy decisions and support the implementation of the elements of the reform concerning wellbeing focuses on uncovering which methods and measures have an effect on the classroom environment and/or pupils' wellbeing of particular significance for pupils' learning and development (Ramboll and Clearinghouse for Educational Research, 2014). Based on results from previous studies, the authors develop a theory of change regarding overall causal mechanisms leading to a strengthening of pupils' wellbeing and academic performance (p. 14). The report points out that the evidence indicates that pupils learn more at school when they are thriving, but underlines that it is not possible to conclude that wellbeing is a prerequisite for learning, or vice versa, as they co-constitute and reinforce each other.

Although the focus in this chapter is not on politics and ideology, a brief outline of the differences in how wellbeing is situated in the parliamentary agreements of 2013 and 2019 provides some context. It was a social democratic (welfare-liberal) led coalition government that introduced the Danish school reform's aim of strengthening school wellbeing, and which set a target for results in the survey of school wellbeing (2013 Agreement). With the parliamentary agreement of 2019 developed by a centre-right led (and more neoliberally oriented) coalition government, elements of the reform were adjusted, strengthening the focus on academic achievement whilst somewhat downplaying the emphasis on wellbeing. It is argued that *"most pupils thrive"*, whilst there *"has been no significant progress in pupils' academic levels, and thus the reform's aims have not yet been achieved"* (2019 Agreement, p. 1).

The notion of policy as vehicular ideas includes the concept of 'ideas that are in motion' or 'travelling ideas' (McLennan, 2004). The idea of comparative and publicly posted measurements is supposedly a policy that works when it comes to strengthening pupils academic achievements, and has subsequently been transferred to the area of school wellbeing. What else has 'moved' the idea of school wellbeing measurements into Danish school policy? One of the characteristics of policy mobility is that policy already in place through international comparative measurements contributes to the spread of national measurements (Lindblad et al., 2015). Denmark's participation in two international comparative measurements that include wellbeing, OECD's PISA (*Program for International Student Assessment*) and WHO's HBSC *(Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children*) might thus have contributed to the mobility of the idea of wellbeing measurements into Danish school policy. The 2014 school reform's focus on a lack of 'orderliness' and insufficient improvement in pupils' academic levels can be seen in the context of the reforms following OECD's (2004) *Pilot Review of the Quality and Equity of Schooling Outcomes in Denmark*. The adoption of the School Act of 2006 was accompanied by a greater degree of political governance and steering of schools through the implementation of systematic and comparative evaluations. This provides the context for the introduction of national tests in 2010 and of the national wellbeing survey in 2015. Analyses of questions on PISA results concerning disciplinary climate and orderly classrooms that point to a correlation between disciplinary climate and pupils' academic performance (OECD, 2013) might have played a further part in establishing a rationale for including wellbeing as an aim in Danish school policy and 'orderliness' as a focus area in the survey of school wellbeing.

Considering the collective conditions of affect in ideology may point to additional layers when seeking to understand why it was seen as appealing or necessary to include wellbeing in school policy at the time of the reform. What moves us collectively and individually is also important for what moves policy (McKenzie, 2017), and the sentiments of care the term wellbeing mobilises might thus have added to the appeal of including it in Danish school policy. With few exceptions, the critical discussion in both the parliament and on the e-portal for teachers following the reform has concerned how wellbeing is measured rather than its inclusion as a

policy aim.[3] However, whilst many teachers sympathise with the view that wellbeing is part of the overall purpose of schooling, it assigns them with an additional task. Scaffolding the policy idea of strengthening school wellbeing through its integration in an accountability model, based on mandatory wellbeing measurements and ministerial guidelines for how to use these measurements, can make the spread of this policy idea more effective. The space for wellbeing in schools is thus shaped both by regulatory and guideline-based policy.

Policy Intentions and Policy Enactment

I first address policy intentions in the parliamentary agreements from 2013 and 2019 concerning the development of the school (Danish Ministry of Education, 2013, 2019a), focusing on exploring visions, values and rationales for the policy idea of school wellbeing. This is followed by a discussion of policy enactment, i.e. of the knowledge, practice or identities made visible through the analysis of the ministerial guidelines for schools' work with the wellbeing measurements (Ministry of Education, 2019b). The distinction between policy intentions and policy enactment allows an analytical focus on two different types of policy materials: on the one hand, the regulatory policy contained in parliamentary agreements; on the other hand; guideline-based policy on how to use the mandatory wellbeing measurements in schools. In relation to policy enactment, Ball points out the essence of policy as a formulation of problems and solutions, which highlights that policy intentions and enactment are closely related: *"A set of generic 'problems' which constitute the contemporary social, political and economic conditions for education and social policy making are adumbrated. The emergence of ideological and 'magical' solutions to these problems is identified (…)"* (Ball, 1998:119).

Policy Intentions

In the context of regulatory education policy, visions include both expectations of the future and declarations of objectives to guide decision-making. The title of the 2013 agreement, *"Strengthening academic achievement in the 'Folkeskole'",* formulates the overall vision of strengthening academic achievement. The major challenges are described as an insufficiently high academic level, especially when it comes to the subjects mathematics and Danish, and relatively few academically strong pupils. The objective of strengthening academic achievement is further detailed in the introductory passage (p. 1): *"(…) preparing the pupils for further*

[3] According to the documentation of these discussions in the parliament and on the e-portal for teachers, available at following websites: https://www.ft.dk; https://www.Folkeskolen.dk

education and making them want to learn more" and *"(…) it is vital that pupils have the opportunity to fully realize their potential so that we can cope with the growing international competition"*. The overall vision in the 2019 agreement is *"(…) to create an even better school and optimal frameworks for both good teaching and a good life for children, with high [levels of] academic achievement and wellbeing"* (p. 1). The 2019 document highlights barriers encountered in the implementation of the 2014 school reform, underlining that any proposed changes must make sense for the practitioners expected to implement them, and opening up for local adjustments regarding the length and organisation of the school day.

Both agreements offer examples of the twinning of welfare-liberal visions with neoliberal views. This is exemplified by the reasoning found in the above passage from the introduction to the 2013 agreement, framing the need to provide pupils with *"the opportunity to fully realize their potential"* as a national responsibility "*so that we can cope with the growing international competition"*. Here and elsewhere in the introduction, reference is made to promoting democratic qualifications as an overall purpose of the school (referring to the School Act, § 1:3): *"(…) qualifying them [pupils] to understand and participate in democratic processes"* (p. 1). As Spratt (2017) points out, such formulations resonate strongly with welfare-liberal views on education as a public good that enhances the social and democratic fabric of society. The reference to *"growing international competition"* accentuates a view of education as qualifying future citizens for the job market and, more specifically, providing opportunities to compete in the job market, resonating with a neoliberal understanding of education as a driver of economic growth.

The summary of policy intentions related to wellbeing in Table 3.1 below illustrates the shifts in the references to school wellbeing in the parliamentary agreements of 2013 and 2019.

In the 2013 agreement, the need for strengthening pupils' school wellbeing is presented as one of three overall aims: *"wellbeing must be strengthened through respect for professional knowledge and practice"* (p. 2). There is here a reference to 'orderliness'; in another excerpt, working with wellbeing is described as a means to reduce classroom disruptions and thereby support pupils' academic development and readiness to learn (p. 3). Wellbeing is closely related to the aim of strengthening academic achievement, and primarily construed as a means of fulfilling this aim. For example: *"(…) to work systematically towards the goal of strengthening pupils' wellbeing in relation to their academic development"* (p. 17); *"(…) to work with classroom environment and wellbeing in order to (…) support pupils' social and academic development"* (p. 17). What is noticeable in the summary of policy intentions is furthermore the constant pairing of wellbeing and academic achievement, without detailing the relation between the two: *"(…) work with elements of importance for the pupils' academic skills, learning and wellbeing"* (p. 2); *"(…) work with elements of importance for the pupils' academic skills, motivation and wellbeing"* (p. 3).

The 2013 agreement introduces a focus on performance, standards and outcomes that is operationalised in targets for strengthening pupil's academic achievement and wellbeing: *"At least 80% of pupils should be 'good' at reading and calculation*

Table 3.1 Policy intentions in parliamentary agreements of 2013 and 2019 (numbers refer to pages in documents)

The parliamentary agreement of 2013	The parliamentary agreement of 2019
wellbeing must be strengthened through respect for professional knowledge and practice (2)	all pupils should thrive and be challenged to become proficient (1)
work with elements that of importance for pupils' academic skills, learning and wellbeing (2)	most pupils thrive (1)
work with elements of importance for pupils' academic skills, motivation and wellbeing (3)	to create a better school and optimal frames for both good teaching and a good children's life with high academic achievement and wellbeing (1)
to develop pupils' readiness to learn by working with their social competences, versatile development, motivation and wellbeing (p. 3)	positive relation between the use of physical activity in teaching and pupils' academic and general wellbeing (2)
to work with teaching environment and wellbeing in order to diminish classroom disruption and support pupils' social and academic development (17)	interventions that should support the work to strengthen pupils' wellbeing (4)
to work systematically towards the goal of strengthening pupils' wellbeing in relation to their academic development (17)	strengthening pupils' readiness to learn, social competences, versatile development, motivation and wellbeing (5).
municipalities and schools should monitor classroom disruption using the wellbeing survey (18)	wellbeing is mentioned as an indicator when following up on the use of staff resources (6)
develop clear and mandatory indicators for teaching environment, pupils' wellbeing and non-disruptive, orderly classrooms (23)	
the wellbeing target leads to existing wellbeing measurements being further developed and made mandatory (32)	
targets are a focal point for dialogue and follow-up efforts regarding the development of pupils' academic level and wellbeing (32)	

[as measured] in the national tests" (p. 31). It is stated that *"pupils' wellbeing should be strengthened"*, with targets set in reference to the results of the previous wellbeing survey indicating the percentage of pupils who are happy at school (p. 31). Here, as well as in the arguments for focusing on the mandatory indicators and targets when following up on measurements (p. 18, 23, 32), there are references to a preference within policy for quantitative data, emphasising performativity as a central value. Critical policy scholarship in education has suggested that rationales claiming that educational quality and the development of educational policy are dependent on a specific type of data use are a central element of neoliberal governance, enabling the monitoring and surveillance of educational quality by the authorities through standardised indicators and performance targets (see e.g. Davies, 2015; Wyatt-Smith et al., 2019).

The 2019 agreement refers to the 2014 school reform's aim that *"all pupils should thrive and be challenged to become proficient"* (p. 1), as well as to the policy aims in the 2013 agreement. The assessment of that *"most pupils thrive"* (p. 1) accentuates that wellbeing as a policy aim on the same level as academic achievement is somewhat downplayed in comparison with the formulations in the 2013 agreement. However, just as in the 2013 agreement, the aims of wellbeing and academic achievement are consistently linked, such as references to the pursuit of *"high [levels of] academic achievement and wellbeing"* (p. 1) and *"pupils' academic and general wellbeing"* (p. 2). In the section elaborating on the use of 'supporting teaching activities', the need for a clearer framework for the organisation of the school day is accentuated. Wellbeing is here linked to the integration of physical activity in teaching (p. 2), and to 'supporting teaching activities' that are directly related to mandatory subjects and aimed at *"strengthening pupils' readiness to learn, social competences, all-round development, motivation and wellbeing"* (p. 5). The description of the means of and resources for reaching the policy aims suggests that data concerning school wellbeing play a central role in school governance, including utilisation as an overall parameter for monitoring the use of staff resources (p. 6).

The wellbeing survey is (from a governance perspective) one of the tools in evaluations focusing on answering the policy question: Is the 2014 school reform making an impact? The assessment that "most pupils thrive", with reference to the annual ministerial summaries of the results of measurements of school wellbeing, seems to provide a rationale for not focusing on improving school wellbeing in the 2019 agreement. Nonetheless, the annual summaries of the results of wellbeing measurements, as well as the overall general evaluation of the school reform (Nielsen et al., 2020), find no significant change in pupils' school wellbeing since the implementation of the wellbeing measurements in 2014. This reveals that not only has there been *"no significant progress in pupils' academic levels"* (p. 1), the policy aim of strengthening pupil's school wellbeing has not been achieved either. Policy ideas can be described as *"ways of problem-solving and moving things on"* (McLennan, 2004). The main argument for introducing measurements and targets for school wellbeing in the agreement of 2013 seems to be based on the supposition that strengthening wellbeing reduces classroom disruption and, in turn, improves academic performance. Wellbeing thus becomes a way of problem-solving and moving things on in pursuit of the overall educational vision in the agreement of *"preparing the pupils for further education and making them want to learn more"*.

Policy Enactment

As well as presenting the regulations concerning the wellbeing survey specified in the 2013 and 2019 agreements the ministerial guidelines for its use in schools set out which forms of knowledge and professional practice are considered desirable. Moos (2009) describe this twinning of rule-based and guideline-based policy, the

latter steering education through persuasion rather than regulation, as a general tendency in Danish school policy. Reference to the expert group report (Holstein et al., 2014) in the ministerial guidelines, providing authority to the selection of key indicators and questions in the survey (Danish Ministry of Education, 2019b, p. 4) can furthermore be viewed as an element in the enactment of the school wellbeing policy.

The key question when it comes to evidence-based policy is, as Pawson (2006) points out, 'evidence for what purpose and for whom'. The purpose of the wellbeing survey is described in the guidelines as *"to monitor the development in pupils' wellbeing on a national level"* and *"to function as a tool for the schools and municipalities to measure, follow up and work with the wellbeing of pupils through local interventions on a municipal-, school- and class-level"* (Danish Ministry of Education, 2019b, p. 5). As such, the survey has to generate valid and useful knowledge for actors on four levels. The suggestions in the guidelines regarding how to use the results of the survey for comparative purposes furthermore highlight competitiveness as a central value. This is underlined, for instance, in the suggestion that teachers should select focus areas in the results of the survey, which can be compared with previous measurements of wellbeing at the class level, and with aggregate results at the municipal and school levels.

The guidelines for schools' use of the wellbeing measurements is structured by the holistic image of 'the implementation wheel' (Danish Ministry of Education, 2019b, p. 9), which comprises preparation, implementation, assessment and follow-up (including developing an action plan based on survey results) and evaluation phases. This positions the guidelines as a central element in the enactment of the policy, where the description of the phases highlights certain forms of knowledge and practice by elaborating on what is desirable and recommended. The assessment and follow-up phase requires skills in analysing survey results and using them to develop an action plan. The guidelines' potential to contribute to a development of professional practice in schools depends on staff having certain competences, which is questionable as working with implementation models and analysis of data displays is not generally a part of professional practice in Danish schools (Carlsson, 2017).

My analysis here does not focus on the content of the wellbeing survey, but, as it can be seen as a central element in the enactment of school wellbeing policy, I will here give a brief account of the survey tool.[4] The school wellbeing survey includes four indicators (academic wellbeing, social wellbeing, support and inspiration, and orderliness), supplemented by the 'general school wellbeing' indicator, which summarises the results from these four indicators. The following questions and statements related to academic wellbeing in the survey for Years 4–9 (age 10–15) exemplify its powerful potential in terms of the socialisation of pupils, promoting particular ways of being and doing:

[4] https://www.uvm.dk/folkeskolen/elevplaner-nationale-test--trivselsmaaling-og-sprogproever/trivselsmaaling

‘Are you successful in learning what you want to learn in school?’
‘How often can you do what you decide you want to do?’
‘How often can you find a solution to problems if you try hard enough?’
‘I’m doing well in school’
‘I’m making good progress in school’.

These questions and statements can be described as emphasising certain norms, prescribing appropriate actions and feelings. Wellbeing is here associated with self-efficacy, self-actualisation and positive attitudes towards schooling, which can be seen as elements in a process of character formation that can reinforce performativity as a central value (Carlsson, 2020). The processes of preparing for, implementing and following up on the survey provide the time and space for moulding the practices and identities of both teachers and pupils towards the overall policy vision of strengthening pupils’ academic achievement.

Including pupils and professionals’ perspectives on wellbeing could contribute to the development of a broader and more locally contextualised and value-bounded foundation for teachers’ work with wellbeing in schools. In the ministerial guidelines, there is some acknowledgement that the results of the survey *“do not tell about the whole story as to what is going on in class”*, and one of the suggestions is therefore *“to investigate the underlying causes of the results as they appear*”, through e.g. follow-up conversations with the class (p. 11). Despite this acknowledgement, the guidelines do not encourage teachers to include information from other sources or information that concerns other themes than those included in the mandatory measurements. The results of the national measurements of wellbeing can make it possible, within the parameters set by the chosen indicators and questions, to follow developments in pupils’ wellbeing on a national level, detecting progress or stagnation in relation to the target of strengthening wellbeing. However, there might be certain limitations in relation to supporting the development of actionable knowledge for practice.

Concluding Discussion

Scrutinising the policy intentions in the parliamentary agreements of 2013 and 2019 shows that school wellbeing is primarily described as an adjunct to academic performance. Furthermore, although the agreements include welfare-liberal visions of education as a public good, these are twinned with neoliberal views, values and governance rationales in ways that emphasise performativity and competitiveness. The twinning of pupils’ wellbeing and academic achievement thus leaves little room for alternative discourses integrating dimensions of care and learning as a unified process, or for seeing wellbeing as a goal and value in its own right. Appeals to wellbeing have often been used to criticise the competitive culture of neoliberal societies. Although wellbeing at first sight might not appear like an example of neoliberalism, both competitiveness and wellbeing represent values that can be used to evaluate educational institutions (Davies, 2015). Davies notes that the

development of individual wellbeing focusing on satisfying societal (and markets) needs and demands represents the spirit of a rival form of neoliberalism, accompanied by its own set of measures and tests. He also points out that *"the current crisis of neoliberalism could possibly involve a shift from a privileging of competitiveness to a privileging of wellbeing"* (Davies, 2015, p. 20), arguing for the need to look at competitiveness and wellbeing as rival orders of worth (values) side by side.

Construed as a resource that can strengthen performativity and competitiveness, wellbeing has become a central element in neoliberal approaches to quality assurance within education. Abstract summaries of data, in the form of an abundance of figures, graphs and tables, are intended to give the impression of stringency, authority and scientific precision, presenting the ambiguous as indisputable facts (Meyer, 2016). Meyer points out that such measurements are anchored in positivist science and in quasi-experimental and quantitative approaches where concepts are defined and questions formulated based on what can be measured, disregarding alternative views of what might constitute a good life and society. The multiple perspectives on wellbeing discussed in the expert group report can illustrate what is excluded that could potentially have been included in a methodological approach allowing an inclusion of views that regard wellbeing as a goal in its own right (Holstein et al., 2014). With references to conceptualisations of wellbeing linked to the opportunity to live a healthy life and the prevention of illness later in life, anchored in visions where the purpose of schooling includes the ethics of care, the report underlines the ethical responsibility of the school as a societal institution to promote wellbeing amongst children.

On one hand, the focus on performativity in neoliberal educational governance opens up for holding the government accountable for the failures of educational systems and programmes, which, as Lingard (2011) points out, is essential to the critical scrutiny of authority. On the other hand, performativity reframes the political ambitions of education as subsumed under and dependent on test and measurement results (Lindblad & Lindblad, 2017). Technologies such as performance ranking across schools and municipalities might steer school behaviour towards trying to achieve 'good numbers/data' and avoid 'bad numbers/data', i.e. data-driven policy tools leading to data-driven educational practices, making schools accountable to data production rather than student learning and wellbeing (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011). The over-reliance on digital assessments and big data can have a disruptive effect on teachers' identities and work, including a risk of de-professionalisation, unless teachers are given the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to analyse data and transform it into pedagogical action (Wyatt-Smith et al., 2019). The data displays used in the wellbeing survey, where teachers can see the results in relation to wellbeing indicators on class and school levels, can give an overview of pupils' wellbeing. However, they also enrol educational practices in reading and responding to pupil performance data presented in what Lingard (2011) and Wyatt-Smith et al. (2019) describe as simplified forms of educational accountability, which could risk a depletion of the educational resources that the wellbeing survey is meant to enhance. The focus on the neoliberal values of performativity and competitiveness as part of the enactment of the policy could furthermore impair

pupils' wellbeing, e.g. through a negative reaction to the experience of being placed at the lower end of a list ranking survey results across schools or classes (Carlsson, 2017). As pointed out in several reports following up on international comparative surveys in schools that include a focus on wellbeing (see e.g. OECD, 2016; Inchley et al., 2016), competitiveness mainly seems to lead to a division of 'winners' and 'losers', which reinforces inequality, which in turn impacts wellbeing.

What could be an alternative to the wellbeing survey in its current form, where its formative use in schools and classrooms is somewhat subordinate to its administrative and summative use by municipalities and the Ministry? Might less focus on the survey's summative function and more on its formative function and use open up for another form of knowledge and practice? Ozga (2009, 2011) describes both challenges and possibilities relating to the shift within UK educational governance from regulation and the use of measurements for comparative purposes to self-evaluation focusing on formative use. On the one hand, she suggests that the focus on processes rather than on outcomes in formative evaluation can strengthen the usability for school professionals. On the other hand, she points out that the latter can be used as a tool to encode school knowledge - a coding that enables seemingly soft governance whilst further co-opting schools into new networks of knowledge production. Whilst the responsibility for knowledge production related to the wellbeing measurements in Denmark currently is divided between national, municipal and school levels, a shift from the use of measurements for comparative purposes to self-evaluation focusing on formative use could lead to a demand on schools to constantly self-monitor and improve their performance.

Although comparative measurements of educational outcomes can generally be linked to a performance discourse and to economic steering, they operate alongside a range of different factors, where differences in how policies are implemented over time and space are leading to differences in the use of comparative measurements in educational governance (Hansen, 2009). Some schools might thus be able to focus on a more formative use of the measurements. It is vital that this possibility be explored by future research that also addresses the concerns that have been raised regarding the narrow view of wellbeing as an adjunct to academic performance, both in terms of how this approach might impair the development of actionable knowledge for school and classroom-level practice and in relation to the possible impact on pedagogical practice of the governance technologies connected to the wellbeing survey.

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Chapter 4
Positive Education, Schooling and the Wellbeing Assemblage: Old and New Approaches to Educating the Whole Child

Katie Wright, Julie McLeod, and Rachel Flenley

Abstract This chapter examines wellbeing policies and the take-up of positive education in Australian schools and communities. Our methodological and conceptual approach brings together critical policy studies, the analytic strategy of problematisation, and historical sociology of concept formation. We explicate a wellbeing assemblage, comprising intersecting knowledges, discourses and practices, and explore its effects from two vantage points. The first considers the intersection of wellbeing with student engagement and achievement, and the second examines wellbeing in reference to positive education and social and emotional learning. Across both, we explore how wellbeing has been adopted (or co-opted) as the latest approach to addressing some of the longstanding aims of schooling: in this instance, education for future citizenship and education of and for the whole child. We argue that whilst positive education is promoted as an alternative to narrow, instrumental forms of schooling, our analysis of its underpinning logics and techniques shows how it nevertheless operates on a similar register, making it potentially more of the same, in the guise of making a difference.

Keywords Genealogy of concepts · Positive psychology · Social and emotional learning · Student engagement · Wellbeing

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Introduction

Wellbeing as a concept, an idealised state of being, and as something to strive for has been widely embraced in social policies and in public discourse, and now features as a prominent aim of education internationally. In Australia, as elsewhere, schooling is a key site for the promotion of wellbeing. Late in 2018 the *Australian Student Wellbeing Framework* was launched, articulating an overarching vision that 'affirms children's rights to education, safety and wellbeing' (Education Council, 2018, p. 3). This national framework feeds into state-level initiatives, and each of its five key elements – leadership, inclusion, student voice, partnerships and support – aligns with the objectives of promoting wellbeing, fostering engagement and achievement, and supporting the social and emotional development of young people. Whilst wellbeing has become a buzzword, with interventions directed to a broad range of target groups, young people in schools receive particular attention. Australia's national framework is one instance of a widely dispersed assemblage of wellbeing policies and programs currently in place at all levels of government and across many institutional settings.

Whilst the vision of the national framework is shared across the country, state priorities vary. The New South Wales (NSW) state government's *Wellbeing Framework for Schools* aims to create educational environments 'that enable students to be healthy, happy, engaged and successful'. It emphasises an approach to wellbeing that considers the whole person and is 'driven by the themes of Connect, Succeed and Thrive' (NSW Government, 2015, 2021). South Australia's *Wellbeing for Learning and Life Framework* similarly adopts a whole child approach (South Australian Government, 2016, p. 5). In Victoria the 'health and wellbeing' focus is broad, encompassing concerns from child protection, homelessness and family violence to bullying, healthy eating and mental health (Victorian Government, 2020). In Queensland wellbeing is closely allied to mental health on the department of education's website (Queensland Government, 2020), whilst its alignment with the curriculum is enacted through its *Learning and Wellbeing Framework* (Queensland Government, 2017). The local enactment of these state frameworks also varies, and here we focus on the uptake and operationalisation of positive education in wellbeing strategies at school and municipal levels in the state of Victoria.

This chapter builds a critical interrogation of wellbeing policies in schools and communities. First, we map our methodological and conceptual approach to analysing wellbeing and positive education, noting the social and personal diagnoses and ameliorative strategies it evokes. From two vantage points we explore what we identify as a wellbeing assemblage – conceived as interconnected knowledges, discourses and practices that both constitute and address the 'problem' of wellbeing. The first vantage point considers the intersection of wellbeing with student engagement and achievement, and the second examines wellbeing in reference to positive education and social and emotional learning. Across both, we explore the ways in which wellbeing has been adopted (or co-opted) as the latest approach to addressing some of the longstanding aims of schooling; in this instance we focus on aspirations

for future citizenship and education of and for the whole person. We then examine how wellbeing and positive education are embraced locally. Finally, we argue that whilst positive education is promoted as an alternative to narrow, instrumental forms of schooling, our analysis of its underpinning logics and techniques suggests that it nevertheless operates on a similar register. This argument is elaborated by problematising the ways in which new learner-centred approaches, fuelled by positive education principles, construct contemporary norms of the whole child and elevate particular pedagogical strategies. These are characterised by a reliance on assessment tools and checklists that provide seemingly scientific and objective evidence of indicators for understanding the 'nature' of the child/student, indirectly invoking discourses about the broader social purposes of education in shaping fully rounded future citizens.

What's the Problem? Positive Education, Wellbeing and Engagement

Proponents of wellbeing and positive education highlight the value of adopting a scientific and evidence-based approach to wellbeing and human flourishing (Seligman et al., 2009), despite the highly contextual and subjective ways in which they are experienced. Rather than a deficit-based model, which has historically dominated the discipline of psychology (Wright & Buchanan, 2020), positive psychology and its offshoot, positive education, offer a strength-based approach that focuses on 'positive' emotions and dispositions. It is an alluring idea. As we have asked elsewhere, 'what could be wrong with aspirations to improve student wellbeing [and] enhance life and learning through techniques that foster a different way of being in the world?' (McLeod & Wright, 2020, p. 96). In response, we have elaborated a methodological approach to problematising what, at first glance, may appear to be unproblematic. Drawing on critical policy studies and historical sociology, we examine positive education as an increasingly influential instantiation of wellbeing agendas in education, and as part of a broader wellbeing assemblage.

Building on our previous work (McLeod & Wright, 2016, 2020), the methodological approach we employ begins with the analytic strategy of problematisation, drawing on Foucauldian scholarship and employing Bacchi's (2009) *What's the Problem Represented to Be?* (WPR) approach. WPR entails examining how particular issues are defined and made problematic, asking what exactly is being invoked as the *problem* for which wellbeing is the *solution*, and then analysing the character and effects of the proposed solutions. Our second analytic strategy is an historicising one, informed by Somers' (2008) historical sociology of concept formation, which involves genealogical investigation of entangled conceptual networks. We have adapted this approach to examine the conceptual networks that frame the formulation of wellbeing problems and solutions, including the influence of positive psychology/education in schools. In addressing this assemblage of discourses,

histories, aspirations and techniques, we acknowledge the mixed effects of wellbeing agendas and the associated growing influence of positive education.

Substantial scholarship exists on how wellbeing initiatives are embedded in longer histories of therapeutic culture and the entanglement of schooling and psy-knowledges (Brunila, 2012; Wright, 2014). Building on this, we seek to develop a different line of analysis that looks to wellbeing agendas as also positioned at the convergence of humanistic discourses of the whole child and neoliberal policy discourses that valorise metrics, big data and scientific evidence. Of particular significance, we argue, is the effects of these converging discourses and educational philosophical traditions in current formulations of wellbeing agendas. On the one hand, they give expression to time-honoured aspirations to attend to the whole child, evoking progressive and liberal discourses regarding the purposes of education. On the other, the value of wellbeing is demonstrated through instrumentalising discourses (enhancing academic performance and assessment outcomes) and quasi-scientific measures, tests and checklists. This lends a powerful and authorising evidence base to wellbeing initiatives, one that, we suggest, paradoxically aligns it with the logic of the very testing regimes and narrow purposes of education to which it purportedly stands in contrast.

In the following sections we explore two interconnected components of the wellbeing assemblage – first considering older debates about educating the whole child and then more recent learning approaches in which positive education is influential. We illustrate our argument about these interconnected registers through examining the uptake of positive education in an Australian region – turning first to municipal initiatives and then their enactment in schools. This allows exploration of how wellbeing discourse is formulated and operationalised across domains – including local government and individual schools. In contrast to more diffuse or vague instantiations of wellbeing discourse, wellbeing embedded in positive education appears more precisely defined and delineated. Its strength is represented as deriving from its foundational scientific approach, which, proponents suggest, reinforces its capacity to enhance development of the whole person – helping young people flourish in education and in life beyond school (Seligman et al., 2009; Slemp et al., 2017).

Educating the Whole Child: Wellbeing, Engagement and Achievement

The wellbeing assemblage, with its multifaceted knowledges and techniques, is an important recent addition to a longstanding repertoire of initiatives concerned with educating the whole child. Long before wellbeing was articulated as a goal for schooling, curriculum aspirations to educate the whole child abounded, often expressed in aims that schools foster moral and civic values that were in turn

embedded in normative constructions of the good student (McLeod, 2019). Since the late nineteenth century, for example, education for citizenship has involved the cultivation of 'character as well as capacity' (Meredyth & Thomas, 1999, p. 2) and this has been enacted in different historical periods through subject areas such as English, Civics, or Health education (McLeod & Wright, 2013). Commitments to educate the whole child, as prerequisite for future, socially responsible citizenship, find expression in educational discussions across the first half of the twentieth century and beyond and, famously, in progressive education's child-centred philosophy (e.g., Dewey, 1916). However, this takes on a different character as governments start to formally itemise such aspirations through policy frameworks and statements on the aspirations and outcomes of education. This leads, we suggest, to a more narrowly codified approach, characterised by new forms of measuring and documenting aims and outcomes, including 'less tangible qualities such as social and emotional growth' (ACER, 2020).

Whilst acknowledging the broader philosophical debates on educational aims and purposes – from social justice to vocational preparation – we draw out aims related to education of the whole child and for citizenship because of their dominance in contemporary popular educational discourse and because they touch on key points for proponents of positive education. In the first half of the twentieth century in Australia there was general acceptance that the purposes of education covered a set of key principles: knowledge acquisition; transmission of cultural heritage; character formation; vocational preparation; inculcating moral and ethical values; and religious purpose (Barcan, 1993, p. 138). However, by the 1960s and 1970s, these broadly agreed upon purposes were called into question as formal statements of educational aims emerged. These increasingly emphasised 'development of the individual' (Barcan, 1993, p. 139), recasting the longstanding concern with educating the whole child into a more psychologised and individualised form. This opened a space for reframing how educational purposes were articulated, encouraging less attention to broader ethical and social dimensions and more attention to individual attainment, and to students' psychological and emotional health and development (Wright, 2014).

A brief look at shifts in educational aims is instructive. In the late 1980s *The Hobart Declaration on Schooling* identified 'self-confidence, optimism and self-esteem' high on its list of educational objectives (AEC, 1989) and this was reaffirmed a decade later with the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* (MCEETYA, 1999). In the early 2000s, the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008), moved away from self-esteem and embraced the concept of wellbeing, discursively linked to another prominent theme in the *Melbourne Declaration* – schooling's role in shaping future citizens. Building on these earlier statements, the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (2019) retains a strong focus on wellbeing, noting that 'Education plays a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians' (Education Council, 2019, p. 2).

Across many of these frameworks, the alignment of wellbeing with learning illustrates close links to concerns about academic achievement (e.g., test performance), evident too in the related focus on student engagement. Wellbeing, achievement and engagement appear most often as a reflexive triad. For example, the NSW *Wellbeing Framework for Schools*, states that 'Achievement contributes positively to a student's wellbeing … [it] fosters positive emotions which can build further engagement and effort' (NSW Government, 2015, p. 3). In contemporary education policy, engagement typically refers to students' attitudes to and involvement in learning, school attendance, and behaviour, whilst wellbeing signals a focus on mental and physical health. However, the two concepts – wellbeing and engagement – meet at common affective coordinates, such as belonging (e.g., De Bortoli, 2018) and in behavioural concerns, such as bullying (e.g., Victorian Government, 2020). Together, they provide a distinctive lens for understanding schooling as a holistic endeavour, with academic achievement only one marker of success.

To illustrate, since the early 2010s annual wellbeing and engagement 'check-ups' have been administered to Australian students. In Tasmania, students respond to questions about feelings of love and safety, physical and mental health, access to material basics, learning and participation, and sense of culture and identity. The 2019 survey found that whilst students felt positive about and connected to school, 78% did not report high levels of engagement and 90% fell in the low to medium range for resilience (Tasmanian Government, 2019a). These trends are borne out in the recently released 2020 data (Tasmanian Government, 2020). Such findings are significant, as the survey's purpose is to generate data for future planning (Tasmanian Government, 2019b), with schools required to act on them at a local level, including by better engaging the whole learner. As well as directing the work of educators, such measurement exercises reinforce the importance of a psychologised, individualised, measurable form of wellbeing, further embedding this in the design of school evaluation and reporting frameworks and in the common sense of what counts as a good education.

Social and Emotional Learning, and Positive Education

The teaching of social and emotional skills as a pathway to wellbeing has been embraced in curriculum policies at the state and federal level in Australia (Freeman & Strong, 2017). Driving this is increasing attention to linkages between social and emotional development and academic outcomes on the one hand and wellbeing and mental health indicators on the other (Collie et al., 2017), capturing another instance of the wellbeing assemblage in education. From the 1990s, social and emotional learning and mental health promotion were supported through policy and the widely adopted *KidsMatter* and *MindMatters* frameworks (Humphrey, 2013). *KidsMatter Primary* emphasised the importance of equipping children with the knowledge and skills to manage feelings and relationships as an important

foundation of mental health. For older students, *MindMatters* focused more explicitly on prevention and mental health promotion. In 2018 *Be You*, a nationwide mental health initiative for educators, was introduced, which aims to promote positive mental health at every stage of learning (Beyond Blue, 2020). As these frameworks reveal, a mental health focus has underpinned the promotion of child and youth wellbeing in Australia, with educational settings the primary site for intervention. Yet, wellbeing initiatives and social and emotional learning have also entered schools via other means.

Of particular note is recent developments in the field of positive education, which incorporates social and emotional learning. Colloquially known as PosEd, this approach is defined as 'education for both traditional skills and for happiness' (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 293). Framed by a legitimising discourse of science, a feature of psychology since its inception (Wright & Buchanan, 2020), positive education is the application of the principles of positive psychology to the domain of education (Waters, 2017). It aims to enhance both wellbeing and academic performance by employing 'reasonably well-validated' interventions and through measures that assess both academic performance and happiness (Seligman & Adler, 2018, p. 4). Positive education in Australia is valued for two key reasons. The first is the high prevalence of youth mental health disorders. The second is the narrowing of curricula to core subjects 'at the expense of holistic learning' as a result of standardised testing and global ranking systems (Slemp et al., 2017, p. 102). Seligman argues that wellbeing should be taught for three reasons: 'as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking' (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 295). Positive education promises ameliorative strategies and employs interventions that purport to promote wellbeing and prevent future mental ill health, whilst at the same time bolstering academic achievement. Importantly, as with wellbeing and engagement check-ups, positive education is undergirded by standardised psychological measures.

This points to what we identify as a tension or paradox in many contemporary rationales and enactments of wellbeing initiatives in Australian schools. On the one hand, wellbeing is represented as an antidote to narrow forms of schooling that focus on test results or achievement ratings at the expense of addressing the social and emotional needs of the child; suggesting, in some respects, a continuation of fundamental concerns that go to the heart of humanist and progressive debates about the purposes of education (Biesta, 2006). On the other hand, however, the mobilisation of wellbeing and allied agendas rely upon and are frequently legitimated through their own tests, surveys and reporting mechanisms that mimic the logic of achievement informing testing regimes. In turn, this can inadvertently render wellbeing a policy checklist item, inscribing its therapeutic ambitions with performative metrics and producing yet another governmentalising norm of the good student with its own distinctive self-regulating disciplinary techniques. This has not lessened the appeal of such agendas; in fact, it has arguable enhanced their popularity, as is evident in the take-up by community groups and municipal governments.

Community Embrace of Wellbeing and Positive Education

In addition to the top-down wellbeing push from governments, there has been bottom-up pressures from schools and communities (Whatman et al., 2019). As a result, wellbeing programs are in place in most Australian schools (Robinson, 2017). We turn now to the ways in which wellbeing is operationalised, considering first community-level initiatives and then their enactment in schools. Here we see an instantiation of the wellbeing assemblage that embraces positive education in community transformation, illustrating how locally driven wellbeing agendas are being advanced through educational strategies. We take a close-up look at Maroondah, a municipality with a population of 110,000 across more than 10 suburbs on the outer eastern metropolitan fringe of the city of Melbourne, Victoria. Maroondah ranks in the 78th percentile of relative socio-economic advantage in the state, suggesting relative comfort. Yet there is considerable disparity. Some suburbs in the area rank in the 100th percentile, whilst others are below the 40th (ABS, 2016).

Municipalities across Victoria place wellbeing at the core of future visions for their communities, although the form that wellbeing takes varies. *Maroondah 2040 Community Vision* is a strategic plan developed following extensive consultation (Maroondah City Council, 2014). Residents were asked what they loved about their community and what they wanted to change. A number of indicators were developed (safety, sustainability, accessibility, prosperity, inclusion). Leading the list of aspirations was 'for people of all ages and abilities to have high levels of social, emotional and physical wellbeing' (Maroondah City Council, 2014, p. 7). Thus, promoting wellbeing was identified as a priority, with indicators of progress developed, including 'average community rating of subjective wellbeing' (Maroondah City Council, 2014, p. 21). A 'City of Wellbeing Project' was established and a 'Health and Wellbeing Plan' developed to promote population health and wellbeing through evidence-based initiatives. (Maroondah City Council, 2017, p. 5). Mapping Seligman's 'scientific theory of happiness' onto a social model of health, the plan states: 'When introduced effectively, positive psychology provides strong scientific evidence about what works to improve wellbeing at both an individual and community level' (Maroondah City Council, 2017, p. 16). Here we see an enthusiastic embrace of the scientific authority of positive psychology to achieve wellbeing outcomes. This is evident in the municipality's overarching future vision statement, youth strategy, and health and wellbeing plan.

An important way in which Seligman's work has been operationalised in schools is through the Maroondah Positive Education Network, a partnership between local council, school principals, the education department, University of Melbourne and the Institute of Positive Education. The latter is based at Geelong Grammar (2020), an elite, 165-year-old private school in Victoria catering for the economically privileged classes with a record of glittering alumni. Its name stands for prestige and a boutique education, where students receive the very best tuition and are exposed to an enormous range of extracurricular activities that equips them to become well-rounded and successful future members of society. The school's support for and

promotion of positive education aligns with its focus on providing the best education for its students, part of creating self-actualising, resilient and fully rounded individuals.

In Victoria at least, the take-up of positive education is entangled in such webs of educational provision and privilege. Its extension to schools and communities like Maroondah with very different socio-economic profiles and histories represents a significant move. As we speculate below, the historical association of positive education with private schooling, class advantage and social privilege potentially conflates the securing of wellbeing with aspirations for social mobility and educational success. This is significant, given plans for the expansion of positive education programs across the state that build on initiatives undertaken in Maroondah, including the 'Student Wellbeing Profiler' survey (Chin et al., 2016). The survey rollout was noted as one of the Network's key achievements. Results were used to develop recommendations for action in municipalities and schools, using positive education principles to improve wellbeing across a variety of domains and address declining levels of wellbeing throughout adolescence (Chin et al., 2016).

Embracing Positive Education and Wellbeing in Schools

Positive education has been activated across Maroondah using the 'Learn It, Live It, Teach It, Embed It' implementation strategy, drawing on Seligman's positive education model (Geelong Grammar School, 2020). One large-scale commitment is to generate family buy-in. Throughout 2020 parents have been invited to participate in 'Flourishing Families' seminars, exploring key principles of positive education, including character strengths, growth mindset, positive emotions, and positive relationships. Sharing the 'common language of wellbeing', the aim is to help parents 'enhance their own wellbeing' as well as that of their children so that the community might 'thrive and flourish both individually and collectively' (Bayswater Primary School, 2020b). Reporting their first session on social media, Bayswater Primary School (2020a) noted the 'amazing turn out' with 'over 50 [families] attending live on ZOOM'. This turnout, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning, suggests a strong level of interest in positive education and its precepts, perhaps also reflecting a desire to tap into its association with social privilege and its protections. Expressions of the character strength, 'zest' – a key marker of engagement in the positive psychology lexicon – compiled for a 'Feel Good Friday' video at Bayswater Primary School (2020c) provide further evidence of this commitment.

The development of character strengths is typical of many localised enactments of positive education, particularly at primary schools. These strengths derive in the main from the 'Character Strengths and Virtues' taxonomy, the classification system developed by Seligman and Peterson as a 'positive counterpart' to the influential *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which in the minds of positive education advocates, delineates deficiencies and pathologies rather than

more affirming sources of emotional and psychological strength. In Maroondah, nominees for annual Youth Awards include three 'signature strengths' – bravery, love of learning and perseverance – in their biographies. However, it is the softer strengths such as kindness and gratitude that are regarded as having collective value at the school level. For instance, in 2019 kindness was the selected strength for Mullum Primary School (2020), with a 'kindness garden' constructed as its environmental representation. This prioritisation holds normative implications for students, suggesting that ideals of the whole child should take a particular and, we suggest, compliant shape, for example, in demonstrations of kindness rather than through critical thinking or ingenuity.

Complementary social and emotional learning programs reinforce not only the importance of character development for its protective effects, but also add another layer of metrics. To illustrate, students at Kalinda Primary School are involved in regular role-play and game-based activities through a program called 'Play is the Way' (PITW). Students practise social-emotional skills, enabling them to be 'the master, not the victim of their feelings' (Kalinda Primary School, 2018). A PITW 'self-mastery checklist' enables students to track themselves against this ideal. Here we see the reductive paradox created by a scientised version of the whole child. Whilst purportedly expanding what is valued in young people, the danger is that they are reduced to what can be checked off the identified strengths in the positive education taxonomy.

The take-up of positive education is less immediately obvious at the secondary school level, which is not to say that wellbeing is not prioritised. Ringwood Secondary College (2020), for example, offers a suite of wellbeing resources for students and parents on a dedicated website, with 'PosEd principles' informing its collection of counselling, intervention, and support materials. Commitment to positive education and wellbeing is likewise apparent in staffing allocations. Heathmont Secondary College (2020) employs a Head of Wellbeing, Head of Positive Education, psychologist, social worker and chaplain. The development of a multimillion dollar 'Integrated Wellbeing Centre' is also in progress. It will become an annex of the Institute of Positive Education at Geelong Grammar, strengthening connections between Maroondah and the models at this elite school, further embedding positive education in Victoria. Wellbeing, as part of the wellbeing-engagement-achievement triad, also shapes organisational structures, with 'research showing that a sense of belonging plays a major role in student wellbeing – and in academic performance' (Furze, 2019). Heathmont Secondary has implemented vertical mentor groups within a house system. As of 2019, the first 15 min of each day are spent in these groups. As the network coordinator reports, 'they're just focussing on connection … once that happens, and we have that connection, we can then teach them anything' (Furze, 2019). The 'paradigm shift' created by positive education promises improvements in both educational capacity and personal wellbeing (Chin, cited in Furze, 2019), demonstrating the 'well roundedness' of being 'well' in Maroondah.

New Answers to Old Questions

The examples discussed above show the crisscrossing ways in which wellbeing and positive education have increasingly become part of educational and community settings. These are shaping how educators and the wider community view the risks and challenges facing children and young people today, and the type of proactive psy-strategies needed to prevent or minimise harm by promoting strengths-based orientations. In some respects, this summary conveys observations that could apply to the gamut of therapeutic regimes that characterise contemporary education, and indeed social life more broadly. However, concerns with wellbeing, and warding off its antithesis, are pronounced in the schooling sector, where the structuring logic of development and of young people in the making (becoming someone, making transitions from one stage of life to another) focuses attention on the circumstances enabling them to flourish now and into the future.

The orientation to self and future possibilities also creates an intensified focus on recognising and understanding the whole child. This has been a persistent concern for educational philosophers and practitioners alike, often deliberated in reference to calls for curriculum that fosters the formation of fully rounded students and in contrast to narrow vocational curricula that looks to schools to make students job-ready. Positive education both invokes and reframes these debates, positioning itself as aligned with knowing and empowering the whole child and counteracting instrumental forms of schooling. In this way, positive education promises to deliver a more comprehensive educational experience and a fully rounded subject. Yet, paradoxically, positive education legitimates its own claims through logics and techniques that are similar to the narrow testing ethos that marks contemporary schooling, aided by familiar appeals to scientific methods and data-driven solutions.

The education of future citizens is another ‘old question’ to which positive education provides seemingly new responses. Schooling has long been charged with responsibilities for citizenship formation; not only citizenship as a political and legal category but also the forging of civic-mindedness and social responsibility – connected to and belonging to communities, both local and global (Osler & Starkey, 2005). This is articulated at various levels, from UNESCO’s (2018) vision to ‘instil in learners the values, attitudes and behaviours that support responsible global citizenship’ to Australian declarations that give priority to education that creates ‘active and informed citizens’ and ‘responsible local and global citizens’ (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9). Whilst these laudable aspirations may well be interrogated for being too high-level and abstract, the emphasis is clearly outward looking, on social connection and responsibility to others, signalling important qualities schools are expected to foster.

Finally, a common observation of positive education and other therapeutic interventions is that they present a highly personalised vision, and whilst community connections and social relations are noted as important – as we see in municipal and school activities examined above – the individual arguably remains at the heart of wellbeing and positive education endeavours. The focus is inwards, from cognition,

emotions and the body, to relationships and responsibilities to self, rather than to the larger polity, which has been the direction of relational responsibility typically implied in schooling's role in shaping future citizens. The testing, checklists and claims of scientific authority accompanying positive education tend to amplify this orientation to the personal, calibrating the performance of individuals at the same time as critiquing a narrow focus of achievement testing and presenting as an antidote to narrow instrumentalised forms of education. Moreover, positive education's quest for a kind of universal wellbeing solution tends to ignore the economic and structural conditions that might impede some people achieving this state of mind. At the same time, the classed associations of wellbeing and positive education operate in subtle yet powerful ways, symbolically linking positive education initiatives with wider cultural aspirations for self-improvement and social mobility through its foundations in elite private schooling. Whilst school-based programs for engagement are tied as much to concerns about disengagement and lack of achievement – concerns often mediated in socially stratified ways – positive education insists on creating the conditions that enable 'the best possible you', which, despite the affirmative inflection, might potentially also serve to fuel a culture of restless insecurity and self-doubt, the never quite good enough child of positive education.

Conclusion

The enormous popularity of wellbeing initiatives and the rise of positive education pedagogies warrant critical attention, not simply because of the enticing invitation to deconstruct their underlying assumptions and their place in the complex lineage of psy-knowledge expertise and more recently in elite education. This only tells one part of the story. For, as we have suggested, these agendas are powerfully reframing understandings of the purposes of schooling and potentially resetting relations between families, communities and schools, united in a collective effort to ensure wellbeing and lead with strength-based solutions. Tracing the multiple effects of these interventions – unintended, mixed and contradictory – is crucial. We have also shown the value in historicising the ways in which educational problems are represented, in this case taking as one beginning point the already well-documented position of wellbeing and positive education in the history of therapeutic education and psy-expertise. Our focus here, however, has also been on imaginaries of the whole child/person evoked in positive education and the underlying hopes to form or empower fully rounded people. Positive education also connects and speaks to longer histories and struggles over the purposes of education and the shaping of future citizens. Whilst the genealogy of positive education thus does not reduce to the history of psy-knowledges only, it presents a powerful elaboration of those knowledges for contemporary schooling. Promising to open up new ways of seeing and valuing the self and richer ways of doing school, it simultaneously advances the same logics of testing culture and evidence-based interventions that have come to dominate schooling in Australia, making it more of the same in the guise of making a difference.

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Part II
School Environments, Schooling, and Wellbeing

Chapter 5
Wellbeing of Primary and Secondary School Students in Switzerland: A Longitudinal Perspective

Julia Morinaj and Tina Hascher

Abstract Although previous research on wellbeing has predominantly focused on wellbeing of adults, in recent years the focus has shifted to wellbeing of children and young adolescents. Most young people spend large amounts of time in the school environment; therefore, more rigorous research that monitors children and young adolescents' reported wellbeing in schools over time appears to be particularly important in identifying the underlying mechanisms behind student wellbeing and particularly vulnerable areas at different developmental stages. The present study investigated the development of student wellbeing amongst primary and secondary school students, using the multidimensional model of student wellbeing. Data from 406 primary school students in grades 4–6 and 403 secondary school students in grades 7–9 was used. The results revealed that secondary school students reported less positive attitudes towards school, less enjoyment in school, lower academic self-concept, more worries in school, and more physical complaints in school compared to primary school students. However, primary school students experienced more social problems in school. Significant differences were also found across gender and students with and without a migration background. Understanding students' wellbeing as they move through different educational stages is crucial to creating an appropriate educational environment for positive student functioning.

Keywords Student wellbeing · Primary education · Secondary education · Longitudinal design · Gender differences · Migration background

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Introduction

Children and adolescents spend a large part of their day in schools, where they acquire not only skills of academic achievement, but also social and emotional skills. Along with individual and socio-cultural influences, student success in both school and life therefore depends on how well schools support students in facilitating cognitive as well as non-cognitive outcomes (OECD, 2017). School environments that promote students' academic goals along with their social and emotional wellbeing may contribute significantly to building healthier and more satisfied societies (Seligman et al., 2009; Waters, 2011). A fair and supportive school environment enriched by trusting and higher-quality social relationships is consistently associated with student wellbeing (SWB) and satisfaction with life (Hall-Lande et al., 2007; Hascher, 2003; Roffey, 2015). Positive perceptions of the school environment can serve as a protective factor that facilitates SWB and resilience, whilst a negative school experience is considered as a risk factor and may cause a variety of ill effects, such as low SWB, disruptive and health-damaging behaviours, and other psychological and emotional problems (Bond et al., 2007). SWB is becoming an increasingly important concept in the educational milieu, especially in the secondary school environments, characterised by psychological need thwarting and less personal social interactions (Drexler, 2010; Eccles et al., 1993; Gunnell et al., 2013), and an essential part of education policy in many countries (OECD, 2017).

Based on the UNICEF report, in 2014 Switzerland ranked 12th out of 41 countries in child's good health and wellbeing, measured by the rates of neonatal mortality, adolescent suicide, mental health symptoms, drunkenness, and teenage births, with 21% of Swiss adolescents reporting two or more psychological symptoms (feeling low, feeling irritable, feeling nervous, or having sleeping difficulties) more than once a week (UNICEF Office of Research, 2017). The report also showed that the frequency of adolescent mental health issues increased in the majority of countries between 2010 and 2014, including Switzerland. Just recently, Hascher and Hagenauer (2020) found that although Swiss adolescent students generally showed high wellbeing in school, they also reported reduced enjoyment and a prevalence of worries in school. Despite growing research on SWB, there is a paucity of research regarding its development. Our study seeks to investigate children's and adolescents' wellbeing as they move through different educational stages—primary and secondary schooling—with the aim to bridge this gap and to provide a more comprehensive view of SWB that may inform research, practice, and policy with new insights and a practical guide to action.

Student Wellbeing (SWB)

There appears to be a shared consensus that SWB can be considered both as an enabling condition for successful learning in school and as an important outcome of education (OECD, 2017; Slee & Skrzypiec, 2016). On the one hand, SWB can be viewed as a resource for promoting better learning outcomes and educational opportunities. Students with greater wellbeing in school generally have higher levels of academic achievement and motivation to learn (Gutman & Vorhaus, 2012; Hascher, 2004; Noble et al., 2008). It can also serve as a protective factor in dealing with learning difficulties and problems in school (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2011). On the other hand, SWB can be considered as an outcome of successful learning and students' satisfaction with their school experiences, including the quality of instruction and social interactions at school (Eccles et al., 1991; Gutman et al., 2010; Hall-Lande et al., 2007; Wentzel, 2009). Despite mounting evidence of the benefits of SWB and the extensive literature based on the topic, there is a lack of consensus on its conceptualisation and measurement. As a consequence, the education sector has to deal with an ironic paradox: there is widely accepted importance to respond and monitor SWB and yet little consensus on what SWB at its core is (Powell & Graham, 2017; Soutter, 2011).

Based on our review of the literature explicitly focused on wellbeing in school, we suggest to differentiate between three approaches towards defining the concept of SWB. First, SWB can be seen as an expression of individual feelings and functioning in the school context. For example, De Fraine et al. (2005, p. 297) defines SWB as "the degree to which a student feels good in the school environment." (see also Fraillon, 2004; Holfve-Sabel, 2014). The second approach reflects one's interaction with the environment and describes SWB as "a positive emotional life which is the result of harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand and the personal needs and expectations of pupils vis-à-vis the school on the other" (Engels et al., 2004, p. 128). SWB is no longer reduced to individual feelings, but is rather an essential outcome of mutual influence of students' needs and school environment (see also Eccles & Midgley, 1989). The third approach, the one that corresponds to the theoretical construct of general wellbeing (see Diener, 2000; Diener & Lucas, 2000), provides a more holistic view of SWB integrating both positive and negative aspects of school life, including affective, cognitive, and physical elements (Hascher, 2007). According to Hascher (2003, p. 129), SWB can be conceptualised as "a quality of experience characterised by the dominance of positive feelings and cognitions towards school, persons in school and the school context in comparison to negative feelings and cognitions towards school life." Experiencing higher levels of wellbeing in school may fuel psychological resilience and lessen the resonance of any particular negative event (see also Fredrickson, 2001). In the current study, we align with this approach and argue that to understand and explain SWB it is crucial to not only concentrate on students' disorders or deficits, but also to examine students' strengths and positive attributes, which could help regulate their experiences of negative emotions.

Most scholars broadly agree that various elements constitute SWB (e.g., Borgonovi & Pál, 2016; Fraillon, 2004; Hascher, 2004; Soutter et al., 2014). Based upon grounded conceptualisations of wellbeing of adolescents (e.g., Grob et al., 1996) and adults (e.g., Ryff & Keyes, 1995), Hascher (2004) introduced a multidimensional model of SWB in school (see Fig. 5.1), taking the complexity of the construct into account (see also Bornstein et al., 2003). Three positive and three negative dimensions represent particular aspects of SWB and can be used as indicator categories. For the development of SWB, it is important that students suffer as little as possible from worries (e.g., worries about school grades), physical complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches), and social problems in school (e.g., problems with classmates). As such, a high level of SWB indicates the dominance of positive experiences and evaluations (i.e., positive attitudes towards school, enjoyment in school, positive academic self-concept) over the negative ones. This model has already been applied in several empirical studies (e.g., Donat et al., 2016; Hascher, 2004; Hascher & Hagenauer, 2011; Morinaj & Hascher, 2018; Urhahne & Zhu, 2015).

Based on previous findings and PISA 2015 results, the majority of students in Swiss schools appear to be reasonably satisfied with school (Hascher, 2004; OECD, 2017). However, there remains a fairly large number of students (21% of 15-year-old students in 2015) who are not or moderately satisfied with their lives (OECD, 2017). Thus far, it has been found that SWB decreases as students progress in grade level (Burke & Minton, 2019; Hascher, 2004, 2007; Inchley et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2016). Starting from childhood, some primary school children may experience declining or low levels of wellbeing (Gutman et al., 2010). Previous research has also reported a decrease in SWB during adolescence, with students reaching the end of compulsory education experiencing the lowest levels of wellbeing (Tomyn & Cummins, 2011). Declines in SWB may be at least partially attributed to the transition from childhood to adolescence and challenges during the period of adolescence, including heavier academic workload, higher academic pressure,

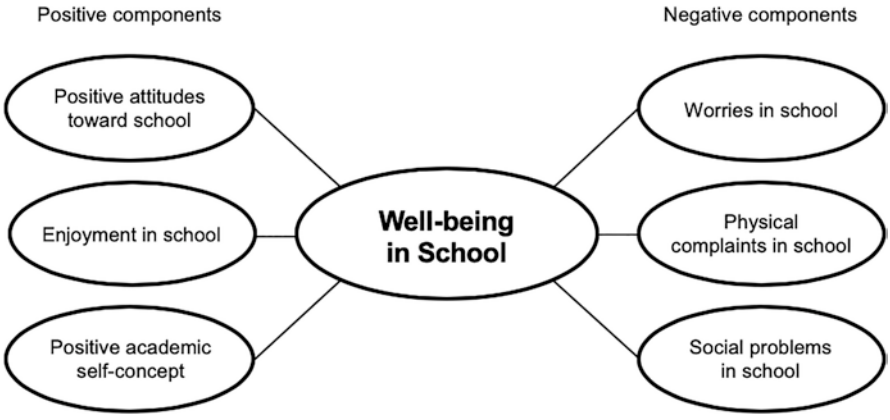

Fig. 5.1 A six-dimensional model of SWB. (Based on Hascher, 2004, p. 151)

psychological need thwarting, and less personal social interactions in school (Drexler, 2010; Gunnell et al., 2013; Gutman & Eccles, 2007; Levitin, 2015; Virtanen et al., 2019). The quality of SWB can also be affected by students' characteristics such as gender and migration history. The findings regarding gender differences are heterogeneous and thus have to be viewed critically. Some studies indicated that girls generally have lower levels of wellbeing than boys (Burke & Minton, 2019; Gestsdottir et al., 2015). Girls tend to experience more physical complaints than boys, perceive themselves more negatively than boys do, express more anxiety and worries in regard to their school performance than boys (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2020; Morinaj & Hascher, 2017; Pomerantz et al., 2002). At the same time, girls exhibit higher levels of school liking and school satisfaction than boys (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2020; Inchley et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2016). It can be thus concluded that females experience both positive and negative aspects of wellbeing more intensively (Eder, 2007). Other studies indicated no systematic gender differences in regard to SWB (e.g., Boulton et al., 2011; Hascher, 2007). It was also found that emotional dispositions and attitudes towards school worsen over school years for both male and female students (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2011).

With respect to migration background, results from PISA 2015 showed that in Switzerland students without a migration background reported higher life satisfaction and stronger sense of belonging at school compared to students with a migration background that may be at least partially attributable to teachers' expectations and judgments (Glock et al., 2013; OECD, 2017). However, both first-generation students (both students and their parents born outside Switzerland) and second-generation students (students born in Switzerland, but parents born in another country) expressed a greater achievement motivation than students without a migration background (see OECD, 2017, p. 314), which can be attributed to an ambition to succeed and higher levels of academic self-concept (Stanat & Christensen, 2006). Considering that more and more people migrate across the world, the importance of investigating the wellbeing of students with a migration background becomes paramount. In Switzerland in 2018, about 38% of the permanent resident population aged 15 or over has a migration background (30.2% 1st generation, 7.3% 2nd generation) (Federal Statistical Office (FSO), 2018). Taking all of this into consideration, the aim of the current study was twofold: to shed light on the development of SWB in Swiss primary and secondary schools and to examine the prevalence of SWB according to educational stage, gender, and migration background.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

A review of existing theory and recent research on SWB provided an opportunity to address specific research questions. The following four research questions were addressed:

1. What are the developmental trends in SWB amongst Swiss primary (Grades 4–6) and secondary (Grades 7–9) school students?

   We assumed a decrease in positive dimensions of SWB and an increase in negative dimensions of SWB in both primary and secondary school (Hypothesis 1).
2. How do Swiss primary and secondary school students differ in their wellbeing?

   We expected that secondary school students would exhibit lower wellbeing compared to primary school students (i.e., higher scores on negative wellbeing dimensions and lower scores on positive wellbeing dimensions) (Hypothesis 2).
3. What are the gender differences in wellbeing scores of Swiss primary and secondary school students?

   We assumed that female students would report more positive attitudes towards school and higher level of enjoyment in school, but also lower scores in academic self-concept, more worries, more physical complaints, and more social problems in school compared to male students, in both primary and secondary schools (Hypothesis 3).
4. What are the differences in wellbeing scores between students with and without a migration background in Swiss primary and secondary schools?

   We expected that students with a migration background would exhibit lower wellbeing compared to their native counterparts, in both primary and secondary schools (i.e., higher scores on negative wellbeing dimensions and lower scores on positive wellbeing dimensions) (Hypothesis 4).

Method

Participants and Procedure

The present study used data from the longitudinal research project **"**School Alienation in Switzerland and Luxembourg" (SASAL, 2015–2019). Two cohorts—primary and secondary school students—were assessed annually for 3 years, starting in Grade 4 and Grade 7. The sample included 406 primary school students (t_1: 46.3% male; M_{age} = 10.3 years [*SD* = .99]; t_1: Grade 4, t_2: Grade 5, t_3: Grade 6) and 403 secondary school students (44.3% male; M_{age} t_1 = 13.0 years [*SD* = .54]; t_1: Grade 7, t_2: Grade 8, t_3: Grade 9) from the Swiss canton of Bern who participated in all three waves of the study. Fifty-two percent of the primary school students and 45% of the secondary school students had a migration background (at least the child and/or one parent not born in Switzerland). The self-report questionnaire was voluntarily and anonymously completed by students in their classrooms during regular school time.

Measures

Student wellbeing was assessed with the 19-item SWB questionnaire (Hascher, 2007), including six distinct dimensions of wellbeing in school: (1) positive attitudes towards school (PAS, 3 items; e.g., "I like to go to school"), (2) enjoyment in school (EIS, 3 items; e.g., "Have you experienced joy because of teachers' friendliness in the past few weeks?"), (3) positive academic self-concept (PASC, 3 items; e.g., "I don't have problems mastering school tasks"), (4) worries in school (WIS, 3 items; e.g., "Have you been worried about your school grades in the past few weeks?"), (5) physical complaints in school (PCS, 4 items; e.g., "Have you had a severe headache in school in the past few weeks?"), and (6) social problems in school (SPS, 3 items; e.g., "Have you had problems with your classmates in the past few weeks?"). Participants indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *never/disagree,* 6 = *very often/agree*). A confirmatory factor analysis supported the six-factor structure of the scale (Hascher, 2007). In both the primary and secondary school samples, the internal reliability at all three measurement points was very good (McDonald's ωs = .70–.89 for primary school and McDonald's ωs = .73–.85 for secondary school) (see Table 5.1).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, and internal reliability for the six SWB dimensions are presented in Table 5.1. The intercorrelations between the three positive dimensions and between the three negative dimensions of SWB were positive and low to moderate, indicating that the dimensions are interrelated, but conceptually distinct (bivariate correlations between SWB dimensions can be obtained from the authors upon request).

Developmental Trends in SWB

To investigate developmental trends in SWB amongst primary (Grades 4–6) and secondary (Grades 7–9) school students (Hypothesis 1), we conducted a repeated measures ANOVA. In addition, for all results we reported effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) to provide information about the magnitude of the findings, with $d = 0.20$ representing small effect size, $d = 0.50$ representing medium effect size, and $d = 0.80$ representing large effect size (Kampenes et al., 2007). In primary school, post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction revealed that students' positive attitudes towards school

Table 5.1 Descriptive statistics for SWB dimensions at three time points

	Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Multiple comparisons	
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	ω	*M* (*SD*)	ω	*M* (*SD*)	ω	Grade difference	Cohen's *d*
Primary school								
PAS	4.84 (1.05)	.74	4.82 (.99)	.76	4.70 (1.03)	.81	4 > 6 5 > 6	0.13 0.12
EIS	4.79 (1.07)	.76	4.64 (1.05)	.74	4.47 (1.17)	.81	4 > 5 4 > 6 5 > 6	0.14 0.28 0.15
PASC	4.69 (.94)	.70	4.56 (1.02)	.77	4.47 (1.01)	.78	4 > 6	0.19
WIS	2.85 (1.48)	.78	3.02 (1.54)	.81	3.29 (1.48)	.80	4 > 6 5 > 6	0.29 0.17
PCS	1.79 (1.08)	.78	1.93 (1.22)	.83	1.99 (1.24)	.82	4 > 6	0.16
SPS	1.77 (1.05)	.83	1.76 (1.15)	.89	1.79 (1.13)	.85	–	–
Secondary school								
Variable	Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9		Multiple comparisons	
	M (*SD*)	ω	*M* (*SD*)	ω	*M* (*SD*)	ω	Grade difference	Cohen's *d*
PAS	4.50 (.97)	.77	4.44 (1.00)	.79	4.42 (1.00)	.78	7 > 8 7 > 9	0.18 0.27
EIS	4.22 (1.09)	.75	4.01 (1.18)	.81	3.91 (1.24)	.81	–	–
PASC	4.36 (.91)	.80	4.42 (.90)	.81	4.38 (.88)	.73	–	–
WIS	3.21 (1.36)	.77	3.55 (1.40)	.79	3.27 (1.46)	.79	7 < 8 8 > 9	0.24 0.19
PCS	2.07 (1.13)	.75	2.05 (1.17)	.82	2.00 (1.11)	.79	–	–
SPS	1.63 (.90)	.82	1.57 (.93)	.85	1.59 (.95)	.85	–	–

PAS positive attitudes to school, *EIS* enjoyment in school, *PASC* positive academic self-concept, *WIS* worries in school, *PCS* physical complaints in school, *SPS* social problems in school, *Range* min 1, max 6, ω McDonald's omega

slightly decreased from Grade 4 to Grade 6 and from Grade 5 to Grade 6 (see Table 5.1 for primary school). Students also experienced less enjoyment in school over time: They reported less enjoyment in school in Grades 5 and 6 compared to Grade 4 and in Grade 6 compared to Grade 5. Students' academic self-concept was lower in Grade 6 compared to Grade 4. Furthermore, students exhibited more worries in school in Grade 6 compared to Grade 4 and in Grade 6 compared to Grade 5. In regard to physical complaints, primary school students reported more physical complaints in school in Grade 6 compared to Grade 4. There was no significant difference in self-reported social problems in school across time ($p > 0.05$). In secondary school, the results demonstrated that students' enjoyment in school significantly decreased from Grade 7 to Grades 8 and 9 (see Table 5.1 for secondary school). Secondary school students also reported more worries in school in Grade 8 compared to Grade 7; however, they experienced less worries in school in Grade 9 compared to Grade 8. No significant changes were found with respect to other SWB dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

Group Differences in SWB

We were further interested whether there were differences in SWB dimensions between particular student subgroups. Having multiple dependent variables (i.e., SWB dimensions) and independent variables consisting of two independent groups, the one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to specify group differences in SWB between Swiss primary and secondary school students (Hypothesis 2), male and female students (Hypothesis 3), and students with and without a migration background (Hypothesis 4). The third and fourth hypotheses were addressed separately for the primary and secondary school samples.

Educational Stage (Primary vs. Secondary) Regarding the second hypothesis, the results revealed that at each of the three time points primary school students reported more positive attitudes towards school, more enjoyment in school, and more social problems in school compared to secondary school students (see Table 5.2). In addition, students from primary school exhibited higher academic self-concept at t_1 and t_2. Secondary school students experienced more worries in school at t_1 and t_2 and more physical complaints in school at t_1 compared to primary school students.

Table 5.2 Differences in SWB between primary and secondary school students

	Primary school	Secondary school	Group comparisons		
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	Grade difference	Cohen's *d*	*p*
$PASt_1$	4.84 (1.05)	4.50 (.97)	4 > 7	0.34	<.001
$PASt_2$	4.82 (.99)	4.44 (1.00)	5 > 8	0.38	<.001
$PASt_3$	4.70 (1.03)	4.42 (1.00)	6 > 9	0.28	<.001
$EISt_1$	4.79 (1.07)	4.22 (1.09)	4 > 7	0.53	<.001
$EISt_2$	4.64 (1.05)	4.01 (1.18)	5 > 8	0.56	<.001
$EISt_3$	4.47 (1.17)	3.91 (1.24)	6 > 9	0.46	<.001
$PASCt_1$	4.69 (.94)	4.36 (.91)	4 > 7	0.36	<.001
$PASCt_2$	4.56 (1.02)	4.42 (.90)	5 > 8	0.15	<.05
$PASCt_3$	4.47 (1.01)	4.38 (.88)	–	–	–
$WISt_1$	2.85 (1.48)	3.21 (1.36)	4 > 7	0.25	<.001
$WISt_2$	3.02 (1.54)	3.55 (1.40)	5 > 8	0.36	<.001
$WISt_3$	3.29 (1.48)	3.27 (1.46)	–	–	–
$PCSt_1$	1.79 (1.08)	2.07 (1.13)	4 > 7	0.25	<.001
$PCSt_2$	1.93 (1.22)	2.05 (1.17)	–	–	–
$PCSt_3$	1.99 (1.24)	2.00 (1.11)	–	–	–
$SPSt_1$	1.77 (1.05)	1.63 (.90)	4 > 7	0.14	<.05
$SPSt_2$	1.76 (1.15)	1.57 (.93)	5 > 8	0.18	<.05
$SPSt_3$	1.79 (1.13)	1.59 (.95)	6 > 9	0.19	<.01

PAS positive attitudes to school, *EIS* enjoyment in school, *PASC* positive academic self-concept, *WIS* worries in school, *PCS* physical complaints in school, *SPS* social problems in school, *Range* min 1, max 6, t_1 wave 1, t_2 wave 2, t_3 wave 3

Gender (Male vs. Female) With regard to the third hypothesis, in primary school, girls reported more positive attitudes towards school and more enjoyment in school in Grade 6. However, girls also exhibited more worries in school in Grades 5 and 6 as well as more physical complaints and social problems in school than boys in Grades 4–6 (see Table 5.3 for primary school).

In secondary school, female participants reported more positive attitudes towards school than male students in Grade 9. They also reported more worries in school in Grade 9, more physical complaints in school in Grades 7–9, and more social problems in Grade 9 than male students (see Table 5.3 for secondary school). No systematic gender differences were found with respect to other SWB dimensions.

Migration Background (With vs. Without a Migration Background) Regarding the fourth hypothesis, in primary school, students with a migration background reported more positive attitudes towards school in Grades 4 and 5 and more enjoyment in school in Grade 4 compared to their native counterparts (see Table 5.4 for primary school). They also exhibited evidently more worries in school and physical complaints in school in Grades 4–6 compared to students without a migration background. The students did not differ significantly in terms of their academic self-concept or the experienced amount of social problems in school ($p > .05$).

In secondary school, students with a migration background experienced more positive attitudes towards school in Grade 7. They also exhibited more worries and physical complaints in school in Grades 7–9 compared to students without a migration background (see Table 5.4 for secondary school). Enjoyment in school, academic self-concept, and the occurrence of social problems in school did not differ significantly between the two groups ($p > .05$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to, first, examine the development of SWB in primary and secondary schools across time, and second, investigate the prevalence of wellbeing according to educational stage, gender, and migration history. Data were collected from Swiss primary and secondary school students annually for 3 years, starting in Grade 4 and Grade 7. By studying the change in children's and adolescents' wellbeing over the course of 3 years, our study provides empirical evidence for educators, school authorities, and researchers. Of particular significance in the current study is the finding that Swiss primary and secondary school students generally have high levels of wellbeing in school, indicating that students are exposed to a school environment that supports their socio-emotional, cognitive, and physical functioning that students need to enjoy a fulfilling life within school walls.

In primary school, the developmental trend in SWB was as expected: positive attitudes towards school, enjoyment in school, and academic self-concept decreased from Grade 4 to Grade 6, whilst worries in school and physical complaints increased

Table 5.3 Differences in SWB between male and female students in primary and secondary school

	Male (M)	Female (F)	Group comparisons		
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	Gender difference	Cohen's *d*	*p*
Primary school					
$PASt_1$	4.82 (1.03)	4.86 (1.05)	–	–	–
$PASt_2$	4.77 (.97)	4.87 (1.01)	–	–	–
$PASt_3$	4.58 (1.06)	4.80 (1.00)	M < F	0.22	<.05
$EISt_1$	4.75 (1.05)	4.80 (1.11)	–	–	–
$EISt_2$	4.65 (.99)	4.64 (1.10)	–	–	–
$EISt_3$	4.34 (1.17)	4.57 (1.16)	M < F	0.20	<.05
$PASCt_1$	4.69 (.94)	4.71 (.94)	–	–	–
$PASCt_2$	4.60 (.94)	4.54 (1.07)	–	–	–
$PASCt_3$	4.48 (.97)	4.45 (1.05)	–	–	–
$WISt_1$	2.75 (1.41)	2.93 (1.52)	–	–	–
$WISt_2$	2.79 (1.45)	3.22 (1.60)	M < F	0.28	<.01
$WISt_3$	3.01 (1.48)	3.53 (1.45)	M < F	0.35	<.001
$PCSt_1$	1.56 (.87)	1.97 (1.17)	M < F	0.40	<.001
$PCSt_2$	1.69 (1.04)	2.12 (1.32)	M < F	0.36	<.001
$PCSt_3$	1.67 (1.04)	2.27 (1.33)	M < F	0.50	<.001
$SPSt_1$	1.64 (.95)	1.89 (1.13)	M < F	0.25	<.05
$SPSt_2$	1.63 (1.05)	1.87 (1.22)	M < F	0.21	<.05
$SPSt_3$	1.68 (.91)	1.90 (1.29)	M < F	0.21	<.05
Secondary school					
$PASt_1$	4.47 (1.05)	4.53 (.92)	–	–	–
$PASt_2$	4.40 (1.05)	4.47 (.96)	–	–	–
$PASt_3$	4.29 (1.03)	4.52 (.96)	M < F	0.23	<.05
$EISt_1$	4.27 (1.20)	4.18 (1.01)	–	–	–
$EISt_2$	4.02 (1.27)	3.99 (1.11)	–	–	–
$EISt_3$	3.82 (1.24)	3.99 (1.24)	–	–	–
$PASCt_1$	4.42 (.92)	4.33 (.90)	–	–	–
$PASCt_2$	4.50 (.87)	4.36 (.92)	–	–	–
$PASCt_3$	4.35 (.89)	4.41 (.87)	–	–	–
$WISt_1$	3.10 (1.40)	3.34 (1.32)	–	–	–
$WISt_2$	3.40 (1.43)	3.66 (1.37)	–	–	–
$WISt_3$	3.12 (1.42)	3.41 (1.47)	M < F	0.21	<.05
$PCSt_1$	1.89 (1.05)	2.22 (1.18)	M < F	0.29	<.01
$PCSt_2$	1.74 (1.04)	2.30 (1.22)	M < F	0.49	<.001
$PCSt_3$	1.71 (.97)	2.25 (1.17)	M < F	0.50	<.001
$SPSt_1$	1.59 (.82)	1.67 (.97)	–	–	–
$SPSt_2$	1.54 (.90)	1.61 (.97)	–	–	–
$SPSt_3$	1.49 (.88)	1.68 (1.01)	M < F	0.20	<.05

PAS positive attitudes to school, *EIS* enjoyment in school, *PASC* positive academic self-concept, *WIS* worries in school, *PCS* physical complaints in school, *SPS* social problems in school, *Range* min 1, max 6, t_1 wave 1, t_2 wave 2, t_3 wave 3

Table 5.4 Differences in SWB between students with and without a migration background in primary and secondary school

	MB	No MB	Group comparisons		
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	MB difference	Cohen's *d*	*p*
Primary school					
$PASt_1$	5.02 (.99)	4.67 (1.08)	MB > No MB	0.34	<.01
$PASt_2$	4.94 (.96)	4.73 (1.00)	MB > No MB	0.20	<.05
$PASt_3$	4.74 (1.07)	4.71 (.99)	–	–	–
$EISt_1$	4.92 (1.00)	4.67 (1.11)	MB > No MB	0.24	<.05
$EISt_2$	4.73 (1.07)	4.57 (1.03)	–	–	–
$EISt_3$	4.44 (1.25)	4.49 (1.09)	–	–	–
$PASCt_1$	4.69 (.93)	4.69 (.96)	–	–	–
$PASCt_2$	4.58 (.99)	4.54 (1.04)	–	–	–
$PASCt_3$	4.45 1.02)	4.52 (.98)	–	–	–
$WISt_1$	3.30 (1.56)	2.36 (1.23)	MB > No MB	0.66	<.001
$WISt_2$	3.48 (1.55)	2.55 (1.39)	MB > No MB	0.63	< .001
$WISt_3$	3.77 (1.49)	2.78 (1.31)	MB > No MB	0.71	<.001
$PCSt_1$	2.03 (1.24)	1.56 (.86)	MB > No MB	0.44	<.001
$PCSt_2$	2.24 (1.38)	1.59 (.91)	MB > No MB	0.57	<.001
$PCSt_3$	2.30 (1.35)	1.68 (1.02)	MB > No MB	0.52	<.001
$SPSt_1$	1.71 (.98)	1.84 (1.10)	–	–	–
$SPSt_2$	1.84 (1.25)	1.68 (1.05)	–	–	–
$SPSt_3$	1.75 (1.10)	1.83 (1.15)	–	–	–
Secondary school					
$PASt_1$	4.61 (.93)	4.42 (1.00)	MB > No MB	0.20	<.05
$PASt_2$	4.50 (1.02)	4.40 (.99)	–	–	–
$PASt_3$	4.48 (1.00)	4.36 (.99)	–	–	–
$EISt_1$	4.29 (1.04)	4.17 (1.13)	–	–	–
$EISt_2$	4.06 (1.17)	3.96 (1.20)	–	–	–
$EISt_3$	3.88 (1.33)	3.92 (1.17)	–	–	–
$PASCt_1$	4.34 (.95)	4.39 (.88)	–	–	–
$PASCt_2$	4.50 (.87)	4.36 (.92)	–	–	–
$PASCt_3$	4.36 (.87)	4.41 (.89)	–	–	–
$WISt_1$	3.58 (1.38)	2.93 (1.28)	MB > No MB	0.49	<.001
$WISt_2$	3.94 (1.40)	3.25 (1.33)	MB > No MB	0.51	<.001
$WISt_3$	3.66 (1.34)	2.97 (1.48)	MB > No MB	0.49	<.001
$PCSt_1$	2.28 (1.16)	1.90 (1.08)	MB > No MB	0.34	<.01
$PCSt_2$	1.25 (1.23)	1.90 (1.11)	MB > No MB	0.30	<.01
$PCSt_3$	2.17 (1.17)	1.89 (1.06)	MB > No MB	0.25	<.05
$SPSt_1$	1.65 (.93)	1.60 (.88)	–	–	–
$SPSt_2$	1.53 (.91)	1.63 (.97)	–	–	–
$SPSt_3$	1.63 (.98)	1.57 (.94)	–	–	–

MB migration background, *PAS* positive attitudes to school, *EIS* enjoyment in school, *PASC* positive academic self-concept, *WIS* worries in school, *PCS* physical complaints in school, *SPS* social problems in school, *Range* min 1, max 6, t_1 wave 1, t_2 wave 2, t_3 wave 3

with grade level. Amongst secondary school students, the developmental trends were not consistent across all components of wellbeing, offering partial support for Hypothesis 1. For example, students' enjoyment in school significantly decreased from Grade 7 to Grade 9, although no significant change occurred in students' (positive) attitudes towards school or (positive) academic self-concept. It has also been found that secondary school students experienced more school-related worries in Grade 8 compared to Grade 7, 1 year after the transition to a tier of lower secondary education; however, they had less worries in school in Grade 9 compared to Grade 8. The transition from primary to lower secondary education is accompanied by crucial changes, including students' adaptation to a new class and school context and increasing achievement pressure (Eccles et al., 2008; Schunk & Meece, 2005). In addition, students in Switzerland start in Grade 8 to prepare for upper secondary education and undergo a selection either to general education program or vocational education and training program based on their grades, individual characteristics as well as institutional restrictions (i.e., school type at lower secondary level) (Glauser & Becker, 2016). Students are confronted with the necessity to choose a profession and obtain an apprenticeship place or decide which school they want to attend at upper secondary level. This important phase of students' professional identity development seems to be mirrored in more pronounced worries in Grade 8. It may be that towards the end of lower secondary education the transition effects have already manifested themselves, contributing to academic adjustment, and most students have reached a crucial step in shaping their future career pathway. Moreover, students could develop positive and stable interpersonal relationships, fulfilling the basic need for relatedness and enhancing socio-emotional adjustment (Holfve-Sabel, 2014; Jose et al., 2012). In both primary and secondary schools, no significant changes in self-reported social problems in school could be detected over time. This pattern of findings may be associated with only minor changes in the classroom composition and thus relatively little disruption of social networks, except for Grade 7. Although casual contacts with peers might decrease after the transition from primary school to the first year of lower secondary school, they tend to recover by the end of the year (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). This finding might also be affected by a self-report format.

Secondary school students scored lower than primary school students on all positive dimensions of SWB and higher on the negative dimensions of SWB, offering support for Hypothesis 2. The only exception to this general pattern was the scores on social problems in school, mainly reflecting students' relationship with their class fellows, with higher scores amongst primary school students. At the primary level, teacher–student relationships are usually more personal, supportive, and friendly than in secondary schools, because teachers know their students well due to teaching the same class for several years (Eccles et al., 1991). It could be therefore argued that close relations with teachers may be more important for primary school students' development (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Although children's relationships with classmates can also operate as a source of support, previous research shows that they may also be a reason for stress, behaviour problems, and loneliness in school when students are rejected by their classmates (Demanet & Van Houtte,

2012; Ladd, 1990). Our findings suggest that social problems with classmates remained stable during the primary school years. During the turbulent time of later adolescence, the quality of teacher–student relationship weakens and students become increasingly focused on peers (Furman & Collins, 2009; McGrath & Noble, 2010). Secondary school students invest in building and maintaining supportive and trusting interpersonal peer relations to satisfy their needs for acceptance and belonging. In addition, secure and more stable relationship with peers may be viewed as a protective factor, buffering against psychosocial and environmental difficulties. These age-related differences (i.e., a more important role of peers, less personal relations with teachers) could imply that relationships with class fellows are more important for secondary school students than primary school children, resulting in lower incidence of social problems with classmates and no increase in the frequency of social problems over time.

Another finding in the present study was that boys' SWB was higher compared to girls' SWB. Consistent with previous research on gender differences in wellbeing (Gestsdottir et al., 2015; Hascher, 2004; Morinaj & Hascher, 2017; Morinaj & Hascher, 2019), female students exhibited more worries, more physical complaints, and more social problems in school than male students in both primary and secondary school. At the same time, however, school liking was greater amongst girls (Inchley et al., 2016; Ireson & Hallam, 2005; Liu et al., 2016; in the present study, a significant effect was found only at t_3 in primary and secondary school). Boys tend to have more negative relationships with their teachers and more negative attitudes towards school that may result in lower liking for school than girls (Ireson & Hallam, 2005; Rice et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2008). Another study demonstrated that poor social relations, school fear, and deviant peer association were linked to school dislike amongst boys (Rönkä et al., 2017). Considering that gender differences are not consistent across all dimensions of SWB, these findings emphasise the importance of promoting socio-emotional, cognitive, and physical functioning of students of both sexes and providing opportunities for both boys and girls to like school. In contrast to some previous studies (e.g., Sullivan, 2009), the results showed that a gender difference in academic self-concept was not significant, neither in primary nor in secondary school, suggesting that the academic self-concept of students in our sample was not affected by gender, offering partial support for Hypothesis 3.

In line with previous studies (e.g., OECD, 2017; Stanat & Christensen, 2006), SWB appears to vary between students with and without a migration background. Students with a migration background showed more worries and more physical complaints in school compared to students without a migration background in both primary and secondary school. Students with a migration background come from relatively less advantaged backgrounds, typically perform less well, and are more frequently allocated to lower school tracks compared to students without a migration background (Caro et al., 2009; Dee, 2005). Furthermore, teacher attitudes and expectations towards ethnic minority students may influence academic performance of students with a migration background as well as the quality of teacher–student

relationships (Glock et al., 2013; van den Bergh et al., 2010). This could imply that teachers may interact with students without a migration background more positively. Therefore, it seems important to support pre-service and in-service teachers in preparing instructional repertoire to teaching students from migrant families. Despite these challenges, students with a migration background appear to have more positive attitudes towards school in primary school and at the beginning of lower secondary education compared to their native peers. Immigrant parents are likely to possess high academic expectations and aspirations for their children (Areepattamannil & Lee, 2014), to overcome many challenges and struggles that immigrant families confront with. The importance of receiving good grades and pursuing further education, transmitted to children by their parents, may in turn intensify students' worries about not being able to succeed in school and fulfil parental expectations. Higher motivation, positive attitudes, and positive emotions of students with a migration background may act as a buffer against the academic challenges they face (e.g., poor grades, increased risk of dropping out of school). Helping students, especially those with a migration background, to link their positive attitudes and high motivation to academic achievement is likely to reduce their school-related anxiety and improve their performance. Educational success of students with a migration background may also benefit from quality relationships with teachers who can promote students' learning directly (Hadjar et al., 2015) and mitigate students' challenges in school (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2010). Also, it may be encouraging that students with a migration background did not appear to experience significantly more social problems in school, offering partial support for Hypothesis 4. Students with a migration background showed similar levels of academic self-concept compared to students without a migration background.

The current study provides a comprehensive picture of children's and young adolescents' wellbeing as they progress through the grades. This research supports the multidimensional nature of SWB construct, consisting of several distinct but related dimensions, suggesting that the SWB questionnaire might be a useful indicator for teachers and schools to monitor their students' wellbeing. Careful monitoring of SWB taking into account students' educational stage would seem to be essential. Similarly, schools might find it useful to examine SWB over time, providing an opportunity to design the most suitable interventions for improving wellbeing of young people. Our findings indicate that SWB may vary by gender and a migration background. Future research should also investigate other factors that may contribute to the development of SWB applying a multi-causal and multi-level perspective (i.e., individual, classroom, school, societal), because multiple factors at different levels may contribute to this process (Hascher, 2010, 2012). Considering the significant differences in regard to gender and migration background, the study illuminates the importance of taking these differences into account when designing positive psychology and classroom interventions. Using longitudinal data, the results also indicated that SWB decreases with age, suggesting that it is necessary to promote the development of wellbeing skills as early as during the primary school age years.

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Chapter 6
Taking a Break from the 'School Machine': Understanding the Intended Purposes of School-Based Mindfulness Amongst Teachers

Nis Langer Primdahl

Abstract From the outset, research on school-based mindfulness has mainly been occupied with the question of effect; of whether mindfulness is effective in fulfilling a preconceived purpose or purposes (e.g. stress reduction). This raises the question of how to determine the purpose of school-based mindfulness in the first place – where and how can one locate this purpose? This article explores the intentions and purposes of introducing mindfulness in schools amongst teachers who have integrated mindfulness in their teaching. Based on a qualitative study comprising interviews with 16 Danish teachers and participant observation of 2 month-long mindfulness courses, the article contextualises and explores the intended purposes of applications of mindfulness in educational settings such as schools. The analysis is carried out by employing a conceptual distinction between instrumental purposes on one side and transformative purposes on the other. It is argued that, whilst such a distinction can be applied analytically, teachers show a clear ambivalence in their understandings of this schism as a condition for bringing mindfulness into schools – an ambivalence that has implications when rethinking the relationship between mindfulness and students' wellbeing.

Keywords Mindfulness · School-based mindfulness · Mindfulness-based interventions · Schooling · Wellbeing · Educational purposes

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Introduction

'You hear about it on the radio, on TV; it's for everyone now, everyone talks about it. It's not "mumbo-jumbo" anymore. It's become mainstream.' These are the words of Dorte, a teacher at a Danish public school, who teaches mindfulness and yoga to a class of students aged 14–16. For Dorte, the fact that a 'few old monks somewhere had done it for thousands of years' was not reason enough to introduce mindfulness in schools, but now that there was 'scientific proof' of its effects, its increased expansion into schools was befitting. From her perspective, over the course of a few years, school-based mindfulness had changed from being an object of widespread scepticism to a fully accepted educational practice with the support of school management, parents, students and colleagues.

Dorte's account captures the recent expansion of mindfulness and related contemplative practices (e.g. yoga, meditation) into educational domains, becoming increasingly common in schools since the beginning of the 1990s (Cheek et al., 2017; Brown, 2019. This expansion parallels a more general emergence of wellbeing as a key focus in schools, both within educational research and policy (Wright & McLeod, 2015; Spratt, 2017). The aim of improving the wellbeing of actors in school environments (e.g. teachers and students) has been at the centre of national mindfulness programmes such as .b (dot-be) and MindUP, which have been implemented in the UK and US respectively (Weare, 2013). Mindfulness has also been the subject of growing attention and optimism amongst policymakers in the Scandinavian countries, where the present study was conducted (Herskind & Nielsen, 2011; Nielsen & Kolmos, 2013).

In Denmark, there has been a dramatic rise in the use of mindfulness in schools within the last 5–7 years – a development that is aligned with a substantial reform of public schools in 2014 (Ministry of Children and Education, 2015). Amongst other changes, this reform introduced longer school days and revised the curriculum in accordance with predefined goals related to students' wellbeing (or thriving) at school. Indeed, wellbeing was emphasised as one of the reform's three pillars, with the others being educational attainment and inclusion, with public schools in Denmark required to conduct annual wellbeing surveys amongst all students (age 6–16). This is in line with the emergence internationally of wellbeing as a central concern of school policy over the last 10–15 years (Simovska & Kousholt, 2021; Spratt, 2017). In general, policymakers perceive mindfulness as a useful tool to reduce students' stress and improve their wellbeing, which, in turn, is expected to have a positive impact on academic achievement. In 2017, the Danish government allocated DKK 12 million to train 200–300 schoolteachers in mindfulness as part of a project to reduce stress amongst students.

Parallel to the rise of public discourses related to wellbeing and schooling, research interest in the specific field of school-based mindfulness has also surged, and the increase in the number of studies shows no signs of stagnation (Felver et al., 2016; McKeering & Hwang, 2019). The majority of this scholarly attention has sought to explore the effects of teaching mindfulness to students in relation to one

or more specific objectives (e.g. improving the attention span of students and/or reducing their stress levels) (Felver et al., 2016). This reflects broader currents within educational research, where rationales linked to distinct notions of evidence and effect increasingly form the basis for policy decisions (Weare, 2013). Specifically, the focus has been on evaluating and improving practice by testing the effects of mindfulness interventions (e.g. Juul et al., 2021). Consequently, the questions of 'how' and 'why' such practices are introduced have remained largely unexamined in an empirical context. This gap in the research is linked to a mismatch between the rapid adoption of mindfulness practices across various domains and the slower pace of research (Davidson & Kaszniak, 2015; Renshaw & Cook, 2017). As a consequence, the particular field of school-based mindfulness research has lost track of its object in the sense that theoretical and analytical conceptualisations within this field and its relation to other research fields, such as wellbeing, have lagged behind the rapid rate of implementation in classrooms.

Related to the expansion of and increased focus on mindfulness in schools is the question of how to translate the early 'clinical' (i.e. bio-medical) paradigm that typified the first waves of research on mindfulness in the 1980s into a socio-ecological paradigm oriented towards educational settings. Crawford et al. (2021) and Ergas (2018) argue that, generally speaking, research on school-based mindfulness is limited by its inadequate conceptualisation of the school as an *educational* setting – as not just a neutral physical location for interventions but also a context that frames a broad array of pedagogical practices. This critique is related to the decontextualisation of school-based mindfulness and serves as background for the present study.

My main interest in this chapter is examining what takes place when the aims and purposes of mindfulness practices meet the wider purposes of schooling: How do they relate to the complex configuration of educational purposes at play in schools today? In agreement with Ergas (2019a) and Langer et al. (2020), my approach emphasises the school as context and the potential of school-based mindfulness to undertake a re-contextualisation in terms of its educational meaning (Hyland, 2016).

The aim is to empirically investigate the heterogeneity of school-based mindfulness practices by focusing on the intended purposes from the teachers' perspective. The main question is whether school-based mindfulness is to be understood 'instrumentally', as a tool to improve academic performance, or 'transformatively', as a formative developmental path for students.

I explore the reasons given by teachers for practising mindfulness in various school contexts and what takes place inside what Schonert-Reichl and Roeser (2016, p. 14) have designated 'the black-box of mindfulness interventions.' This entails an attempt to render transparent the intentions when introducing mindfulness in schools. As argued by Wigelsworth and Quinn (2020), previous studies fail to include teachers' perspectives. Kirk (2020) has pointed out that mindfulness programmes are often introduced from the bottom up, with teachers becoming aware of such programmes through word of mouth. This corresponds to the situation in Denmark where, at the time of writing, almost no public schools have introduced mindfulness through a top-down process, i.e. as school policy. Instead, individual

teachers have brought mindfulness practices into the classroom; practices which have then spread to their colleagues' classrooms. This makes it interesting to unpack teachers' rationales regarding their own practices involving mindfulness in schools. Thus, instead of working from a predefined concept of mindfulness or formulations in a specific curriculum, I draw on Ergas (2019a), who points out that the 'tradition of mindfulness practice involves the diverse interpretations of an agreed core of the practice, which can emerge from various frameworks of interpretation' (Ergas, 2019a, p. 1491ff). Rather than evaluating whether mindfulness is practised 'properly' according to a preconceived notion, the focus of the study is on the 'why' of school-based mindfulness from the teachers' point of view.

In the following, I begin by providing some background on the emergence of school-based mindfulness, both as practice and as research field, in the context of a broader growth in Westernised mindfulness during the last three decades. I then discuss the study's methodological considerations and conceptual framework. In the analysis, I highlight the range of intended purposes of school-based mindfulness outlined by teachers. I conclude with a discussion of the schism between instrumental and transformative conceptualisations of school-based mindfulness as reflected in the teachers' perspectives.

The Heterogeneity of School-Based Mindfulness

Westernised mindfulness was originally developed in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn as a form of treatment within the research paradigm of medical science (Wilson, 2014). Mindfulness as practice was encapsulated in a clinical logic: to improve the health of individuals facing serious illness, with a general aim of helping people in life situations 'without hope' (Ergas, 2014). Today, however, mindfulness has spawned into a far wider range of domains, including education, where hope and an openness towards the future are key elements. As such, it is necessary to understand the purposes of mindfulness within these new horizons by looking beyond notions of 'treatment' or 'hope.'

Following the expansion of mindfulness from clinical domains into education, the last decade has seen a steep rise in research publications on school-based mindfulness. The scope of this research has also widened, reflecting the increasingly diverse educational contexts in which mindfulness has been introduced; what was described in 2009 as an 'emergent field' (Burke, 2010) with a narrow set of aims and purposes has evolved into a multitude of discourses on mindfulness in educational policy, practice and theory (Ergas, 2019b). However, as noted by McCaw (2020), the question of what constitutes mindfulness is highly contested both across and within the different fields and contexts, which is one of the challenges when investigating school-based mindfulness. Several scholars have highlighted the term's 'conceptual slippage' or semantic inaccuracy, which points both to the shift of current mindfulness practices away from the original Buddhist tradition and to

the multitude of definitions floating around within research and broader public discourse (Albrecht et al., 2012; Hyland, 2016; Van Dam et al., 2018).

The definitions of mindfulness proposed by Kabat-Zinn as 'paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally' (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4) and by Bishop et al. as '[a] kind of non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centred awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is' (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 232) have been highly influential in research. However, they – perhaps with full intent – remain rather broad and abstract as they are not limited to a specific form of bodily or material practice, thereby making them applicable in various both clinical and non-clinical contexts. Within educational research, the approach to mindfulness has been dominated by psychological and behaviourist conceptualisations with an emphasis on improving emotional wellbeing, social-emotional learning and attention (Zenner et al., 2014). Felver and Jennings (2016) argue that two key objectives of school-based mindfulness are to improve (a) mental health and (b) academic performance. But as Sellman and Buttarazzi (2020) argue, this psychological and interventionist notion of educational mindfulness is too narrow, neglecting the broader educational aspects of its context. What is called for are perspectives that consider how school-based mindfulness plays into ideas of the nature and wider purposes of education. This is where the present study contributes to the debate, as well as to the broader field of school wellbeing.

Research Design

The empirical material was generated as part of a larger research project exploring the use of contemplative practices in Danish public schools.[1] I employed a qualitative approach within the interpretive research paradigm (Schwandt, 1994). Qualitative studies of school-based mindfulness are outnumbered by studies with a quantitative focus, but the former have recently been on the rise (Reindl et al., 2020; Sapthiang et al., 2019). Data generation consisted of five months of fieldwork at two Danish schools (September 2019–January 2020), which included participant observation of mindfulness classes and interviews with teachers and students. Following Crawford et al. (2021), this approach was adopted because of my interest in understanding the specific views and experiences of teachers regarding the intended purposes of their mindfulness practices.

The selection of respondents and locations for participant observation was based on the different ways mindfulness practices were integrated into teaching activities. For example, teachers at some schools offered mindfulness as an elective course

[1] The study was part of a Ph.D.-project on the uses of contemplative practices in Danish public schools. The project was funded by the Graduate School of Arts, Aarhus University together with a travel grant from the Elite Research Initiative by the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education.

90 min per week, whilst others had integrated brief mindfulness exercises as part of normal lessons in Danish or maths.

Figure 6.1 illustrates the different phases in the data generation process. Data were produced through semi-structured interviews with 16 teachers across all regions of Denmark, both urban and rural, and participant observation at two public schools. Interview and observation guides were based on a pilot stage consisting of three interviews and observation of two mindfulness sessions.

As shown in Fig. 6.1, during the first stage following the pilot stage, I conducted nine interviews. Recruitment took place through various channels, with a third of the interviewed teachers recruited through two-day mindfulness courses at teacher training colleges. Additional recruitment was carried out via e-mail or social media, or by searching local newspaper databases for schools that had introduced mindfulness in recent years. The interviews revolved around concrete practices, experiences, intentions and purposes of the contemplative practice in classrooms. In stage two, I selected two schools at which to conduct participant observation on the basis of the first round of interviews. Observations were conducted parallel to the completion of seven further interviews with teachers. During the third and final stage, a follow-up interview with each of the two observed teachers allowed me to explore questions that emerged during the observations.

Table 6.1 presents the interviewed teachers: their gender and educational background, the year in which they began teaching mindfulness, the age of their students, and whether the school is located in an urban or rural part of Denmark. All names are anonymised.

Around half of the participating teachers had a bachelor's degree in teaching; the other half had a bachelor's degree in pedagogy/early childhood education. All teachers were employed at public schools. The criteria for inclusion were that the contemplative practices involved mindfulness and that the teacher was employed by the school rather than being an external instructor.

The selection of the two schools for observation was based on the different methods of implementing mindfulness at each school; the teacher at one school (Lakeside) conducted designated classes in mindfulness, whereas the teacher at the other school (Hillside) had chosen to integrate mindfulness into her everyday teaching in other subjects.

At the first of the two schools, 'Lakeside', the teacher had introduced mindfulness in her teaching 5 years earlier. The mindfulness sessions took place separately from other school activities in a room dedicated to mindfulness – an otherwise unused room in the school's basement. This room had been remodelled according to the teacher's wishes, with school management providing support, both financially and administratively. The room was decorated with pictures and artificial candles,

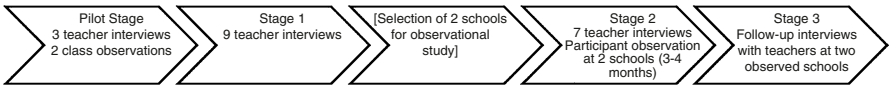

Fig. 6.1 Phases in the data generation process

Table 6.1 Interviewed teachers

Name	Gender	Education (type of degree)	Began teaching mindfulness (year)	Student age	School type
Emilie	Female	Pedagogy	2015–	6–7, 10–11	Rural
Rikke	Female	Pedagogy	2017–	14–17	Rural
Vibeke	Female	Pedagogy	2015–	6–13	Rural
Hanne	Female	Pedagogy/Psychology	2015–	9–16	Rural
Pernille	Female	Teaching	2017–	9–12	Urban
Susanne	Female	Teaching	2017–	13–16	Urban
Vibe	Female	Pedagogy	2015–	6–16	Urban
Marianne	Female	Pedagogy	2012–	6–11	Urban
Jakob	Male	Teaching	2012–	13–16	Rural
Dorte	Female	Teaching	2013–	13–15	Urban
Sara	Female	Teaching	2015–	13–16	Urban
Karen	Female	Pedagogy	2013–	11–16	Urban
René	Male	Teaching	2014–	13–16	Urban
Anne	Female	Teaching	2012–	13–16	Urban
Yasmin	Female	–	2017–	13–16	Rural
Mette	Female	Pedagogy	2013–	6–7, 11–12	Urban

with a large open space to practise both mindfulness and yoga. Students usually came in groups of 10–20, taking part in approximately 8 sessions over a period of 2–3 months (90 min per week).

At 'Hillside', the teacher had introduced mindfulness with little support from management. She integrated mindfulness into her everyday teaching in the subjects Danish and English, placing small sessions (each lasting 1–10 min) between learning activities; e.g. between a group discussion of a book and spelling exercises. The teacher also taught *assisted learning*, which is a compulsory weekly lesson aimed at improving skills, wellbeing and learning amongst students. The teacher had decided to spread these lessons across her other lessons, thereby creating time for mindfulness activities in class.

The research was registered with and approved by the Danish Data Protection Agency. Following the research ethics guidelines, participants gave their informed consent and were advised of their right to withdraw their participation at any time.

Conceptual Framework

As mentioned previously, research on school-based mindfulness is still in its infancy. Whilst most discussions have been caught in a schism, arguing either for or against introducing mindfulness in schools, in recent years, there have been attempts to gain a deeper conceptual understanding of the field and to develop theoretical

instruments to study these practices. Examples of such attempts are Baker (2017), Ergas (2018, 2019a, b), Harrington and Dunne (2015) and McCaw (2020). They represent a shared ambition to overcome polarising discussions of mindfulness by formulating constructive attempts to rethink the concept within the context of education. Critics of mindfulness in schools, such as Forbes (2019), Purser (2019) and Reveley (2016), have also attempted to distinguish between various forms of school-based mindfulness and the extent to which they are aligned with or contrary to broader political agendas promoted in schools (Primdahl, 2021).

Whilst the constructive theorising and the critical discussion have been driven by different rationales, I want to highlight a common distinction that is often either implicitly or explicitly present within these discussions. This distinction concerns the more general teleological question of school-based mindfulness as having either instrumental or transformative purposes. *Instrumental* purposes refer to the use of mindfulness as a means or *tool* to fulfil objectives regarding individual students or entire classes, e.g. improving academic or emotional skills, improving wellbeing, reducing stress (Ergas, 2019b). *Transformative* purposes are related to an understanding of mindfulness as a *path* to individual students' transformation, e.g. formation of the self in relation to society and other human beings. In continental educational theory, this is often linked to the notion of *Bildung*, which refers to the formation or subjectification of students (Biesta, 2002; Klafki, 1998; O'Toole & Simovska, this volume). This analytical schism is synthesised from a range of attempts made in recent years to interpret and conceptualise the increased diversity in the aims and purposes of mindfulness in educational settings. As such, the present study should be seen as engaging with what Ergas (2019a) designates a dialogical encounter between contemplative and educational practices.

In this respect, I also draw on McCaw's (2020) categories of *thin* and *thick* mindfulness, where the *thin* category refers to ethically neutral, psychological forms of educational mindfulness aimed at improving specific skills of the individual. *Thick* mindfulness, on the other hand, is concerned with a socio-ecological personal transformation that transcends the mental training of thin mindfulness.

Also relevant is Ergas and Hadar's (2019) and Ergas' (2019b) distinction between mindfulness *in* education and *as/of* education. Although this distinction is more complex, it is essentially based on the same notion of a performance-oriented, instrumental approach contra a deeper, often Buddhist, spiritual variant of mindfulness. This distinction is also thematised by both Forbes (2019) and Purser (2019), although they do not associate the latter transformative variant with religious or spiritual transformation, but rather with political virtues or societally relevant revolutionary aspirations. However, the above characterisations are not empirically based, as McCaw notes:

> While the thick/thin distinction is proposed here at a conceptual level, it remains an open question how or whether this distinction operates at the level of actual mindfulness practices (…) How do thick or thin formal definitions of mindfulness play out in the actual content of specific school-based MBIs [mindfulness-based interventions], and what implications does this have for the experiences and outcomes for the students and teachers involved? (McCaw, 2020, p. 171)

The following empirical analysis is guided by the question formulated here by McCaw. I do not adopt the thin-thick distinction directly, but allow the analysis to be informed by the general distinction between instrumental and transformative purposes as discussed by McCaw (2020), Ergas (2019b) and Purser (2019). Central to my analysis is the relation between the concrete practices of teachers and the intended purposes and desired outcomes. I analyse interview transcripts and field notes from participant observations and describe how the various purposes are presented and emerge in the material. I view the teacher as a crucial point of access, offering a window into the intended purposes, and seek to illuminate the ways in which their words and actions in the classroom are linked to the purposes of mindfulness activities. Abductively, I make use of the distinction between instrumental and transformative purposes of mindfulness to thematically analyse emerging patterns and variations in the empirical material and discuss how different purposes relate to one another internally (e.g. how learning relates to wellbeing).

Findings and Discussion

No universal or singular purpose of school-based mindfulness stands out amongst the many perspectives expressed by the interviewed teachers. When asked to describe what mindfulness is, their definitions appear rather uniform in the initial analysis, echoing the standard definition of being attentive in the present moment in a specific way and non-judgmentally. The link between mindfulness and wellbeing was accentuated in most interviews, with wellbeing primarily understood as a form of thriving in school. However, the homogeneity of the teachers' conceptualisations of mindfulness does not translate into a uniformity in their accounts regarding the purposes of introducing mindfulness practices in schools. Teachers described and interpreted the aims of school-based mindfulness in a multitude of ways – addressing both general societal tendencies that point to the need for mindfulness (e.g. increased stress amongst young people) and developments within education, such as changes in the school's culture (e.g. greater focus on academic achievement and international comparisons) and structure (e.g. shorter breaks between lessons and longer school days).

In the first part of my analysis, I categorise the range of purposes expressed by teachers, as outlined in Fig. 6.2. In the second part, I discuss these categories in terms of the previously discussed conceptual distinction between instrumentality and transformation. The figure depicts a condensed representation of teachers' interpretations of what mindfulness should achieve – its aims and purposes – when practised in schools.

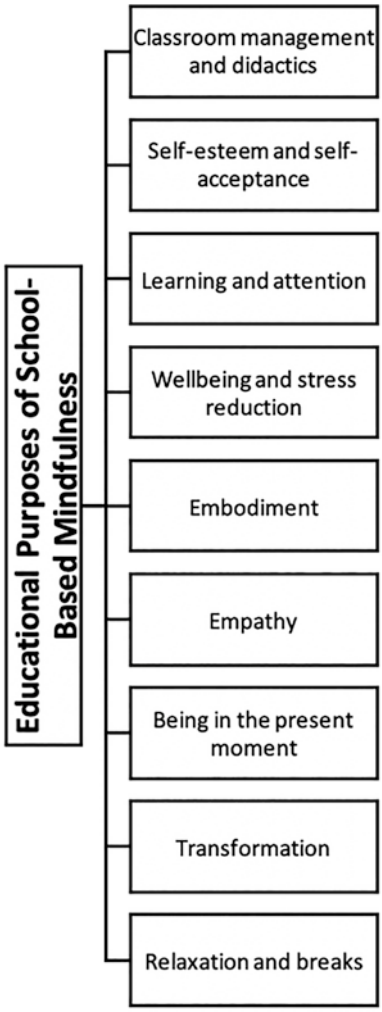

Fig. 6.2 Teachers' accounts of the intended purposes of school-based mindfulness

Classroom Management and Didactics

The use of mindfulness to maintain order in the classroom was brought up by teachers during interviews and was evident during participant observations. This objective was centred on supporting classroom management, primarily by balancing and switching between different learning activities. During an interview, one teacher elaborated on this intended purpose:

> Pernille: The way I teach mindfulness is as a tool for classroom management. For example, when the children have breaks or are going home, I instruct them to adopt the 'Mountain Pose', in which they stand up straight. (…) I then carry out a quick body scan and tap each student, after which they are allowed to exit the room quietly.

The exercises in this category functioned as small breaks between, for example, a birthday celebration and a spelling exercise, when, as the teacher described to me, the students needed to shift focus. This teacher, Pernille, further explained how mindfulness would 'pep students up' when she had been speaking for a long time or when returning after a lengthy group session in need of a little 'invigoration'. During the follow-up interview, the teacher explained that mindfulness practices were used with the purpose of creating structure and discipline during lessons and ensuring 'peace and quiet' – not in the sense of students' inner peace, but an 'orderly classroom'. The intended purpose revolved around creating an optimal learning environment that can accommodate a large number of shifts between activities during the school day.

Self-Esteem and Self-Acceptance

Moving from the socio-material environment of the classroom to the self-relation of the students themselves, the following category of purposes involved self-esteem and self-acceptance. Jakob, who teaches mindfulness in grades 7–9, described this purpose as follows: 'Mindfulness strengthens the ego; it boosts self-esteem'. Another teacher, Dorte, also touched upon this in her description of how one of the purposes of mindfulness is to teach students self-acceptance. In her own words: 'Mindfulness gives a greater acceptance of yourself. You don't try to change yourself. You're just the way you are.' In both these teachers' statements, mindfulness is framed as an inner practice that seeks to set aside negative thoughts and emotions and focus on the positive. To be able to distance oneself from and externalise your negative emotions, to adopt a non-judgmental attitude towards these emotions, is presented as a key skill, requiring 'positive affirmation'. The interview excerpt below illustrates this point:

> Interviewer: Does mindfulness affect how students relate to themselves?
>
> Yasmin: Yes, I really believe it does; I think it raises their self-esteem. It's about practising positive affirmation; by doing that, you give them [students] a strong foundation, making them believe in themselves and that they can achieve all sorts of things.

In this account, the teacher highlights how her understanding of purpose is linked to what several teachers referred to as 'positive affirmation', where students were asked to repeat phrases such as 'I can do this' or 'I am good enough'. The objective of this exercise was to give students a form of refrain or mantra – a foundation they could draw upon in difficult situations. The teachers perceived this as an instrument for improving students' individual resilience and psychological thriving with a view to improving their performance at school. As such, the educational purpose concerns an improvement of individual traits in a way that can be categorised as instrumental or 'thin', rather than transformative, because the objective is directly linked to students' sense of self-efficacy in a school context.

Learning and Attention

Improving students' academic skills was brought up by teachers as a reason for introducing mindfulness in the classroom in terms of maximising test and exam performance, as well as, more broadly, as a general instrument to optimise students' cognitive functioning (e.g. their concentration and attention span). As Vibeke, who taught primary and middle school students, put it, it is essential that students learned the following:

> Vibeke: Now, we are right here in the moment. They have to put things like Fortnite [a video game] aside. That's for another time. This [mindfulness practices] makes them pay attention to what is happening in class; mindfulness has an academic aim and that is about attentiveness.

As this extract shows, mindfulness is construed as a way to improve students' ability to be fully present in class, defined as paying attention to what is going on during lessons. It also concerns the ability to focus one's attention on a specific task, in contrast to multitasking:

> Dorte: You teach the brain not to be doing ten things, but just one. That helps with learning and exams by being able to steady your nerves.

This was echoed by another teacher, Mette:

> Mette: It [mindfulness] is about creating inner peace, it is something you can bring with you (…) I think, as you grow older and get nervous when taking exams, or become sad as a teenager, it gives you the ability to gain inner peace and relax.

Central to these intended purposes is the idea that a mindful student is able to enter a temporary state where nervousness, anxiety and other inner states are seen as constraints and set aside to improve academic performance. As such, this category can also be understood as primarily instrumental.

Wellbeing and Stress Reduction

Teachers seem to perceive wellbeing and learning as closely interlinked. They framed the purposes of mindfulness in terms of wellbeing and learning in a number of different contexts. Although both can each also be understood as distinct educational phenomena, the teachers accentuated their close connection when framing the purposes of mindfulness. An instrumental view of purpose was evident in teachers' accounts related to using mindfulness as a means to cultivate both learning and wellbeing as reciprocal conditions. As Susanne, who taught mindfulness to students in grades 7–9 (aged 13–16), explained:

> Susanne: Wellbeing has been the number one priority since I arrived here. It's always been a school with the core principle that if students do not thrive, they can't learn. One thing first and then the next will follow. But the demands are increasing. We have tended to pressure them out of their [state of] wellbeing in pursuit of the other thing [learning].

Through her understanding of wellbeing as thriving, Susanne expresses her belief that wellbeing is a prerequisite for learning and should therefore be prioritised. She also emphasises that in recent years – particularly since the school reform in 2014 – an increased focus on learning outcomes has become dominant. Further, Susanne describes the ambivalence of the relationship between inner peace and personal growth on the one side and achievement-centred demands in schools on the other. In her description, the purpose of mindfulness (inner peace) is also to boost energy and improve learning. During mindfulness exercises, students suspend their everyday state of being, giving them a break and an opportunity to find inner calm; however, this is with the end goal of returning to class in a more energised state, prepared to learn better and achieve more. Evidently, wellbeing, understood as thriving, and being able to perform academically are considered reciprocal and as such frame an instrumental logic. A conflation of purposes can be said to take place here, with emotional resources linked to individual wellbeing, and even individuation, but this is mobilised as a tool to improve academic performance.

Embodiment

This category of purposes of mindfulness practice in schools concerns the distinction between bodily and cognitive ways of being. 'It's about giving them [the students] a new-found awareness of their bodies', as one teacher notes. This ambition implies that being at school typically means 'being in your head', as another teacher puts it. The purpose of mindfulness in this context is to support students in their attempt to gain access to emotions and to the self as a whole by getting 'from the head into the body'. The following interview excerpt illustrates this point:

> Interviewer: What do the exercises do?
>
> Yasmin: Create calmness in their bodies, an ability to be in the present moment, being able to feel themselves. A lot of children are not in touch with their feelings or the needs they have. That you're so outside of your own space that you don't have a sense of 'what do I need?'

The notion of 'space' in the teacher's account above refers to an inner domain, a form of inner home constituted by the body (Hedegaard, 2020). The teachers' accounts show that they view a typical student as not being in contact with her own feelings. But at the same time, this space is a place they can 'return' to by turning inwards through the practice of mindfulness. This 'turn inwards' also has a temporal aspect – that is, the students are taught to remain in the present moment, which constitutes the next category of purposes.

Being in the Present Moment

Temporality plays a significant role in teachers' descriptions of the purposes of mindfulness, with many of the interviewed teachers emphasising the importance of being in the present moment. However, more than one temporal modality is evident in the empirical material. Being in the present moment is not only about suspending the past and the future, but also about working with the students' ability to 'slow things down', as the account below highlights:

> Jakob: They arrive in the classroom at 140 mph, coming straight from another class. So we always need to settle. That's what mindfulness is about, being in the present moment. They have to let go of the things they bring with them from earlier and focus on the here and now.

This excerpt points to the double-sidedness of this category of purposes of mindfulness in school: the purpose is to both slow down and let go of the past. In this case, the notion of suspension works on more than one level: accelerated daily life is suspended in exchange for slowness, and the past and future are suspended in favour of the present moment.

Empathy

Pro-social behaviour in the form of the ability to empathise with peers is a topic that was frequently brought up by teachers. During the fieldwork at both schools, I observed how teachers would shift between mindfulness activities that were conditioned by social relations (e.g. massage, hugging) and activities where the students were cut off from interpersonal contact, for example by turning off the lights, closing their eyes or listening to slow instrumental music. Yasmin notes that mindfulness is about 'seeing others from the heart, without being judgmental'. In this category, the purpose of mindfulness is understood as learning to be considerate of others by suspending personal judgement. This is perceived as important, because, as another teacher explains in the excerpt below, social skills are closely linked to learning and achievement:

> Interviewer: How do you explain why students should do mindfulness?
>
> Vibe: It's to improve their school capabilities. They get faster at learning things. They become better friends; one does not fall out with people one touches, hugs or performs massage on. During mindfulness, we practise massage. These are the reasons why we prioritise it at this school.

The account also illustrates overlap between the different categories of purposes. Improving learning and achievement is mentioned here too, but the focus seems to be on the temporal accounts of purposes (maintaining friendships in the future due to the specific interactions learned in mindfulness lessons), as well as on empathy (a better understanding of others, exercising a non-judgmental attitude towards others). As with the previous categories, this category of purposes can be interpreted as

primarily instrumental, because the objective is to scaffold the educational environment by improving social relation which is then linked to the ensuring of better academic outcomes.

Transformation

When asked about the possible relation between mindfulness practices and the notion of personal development linked to the notion of 'Bildung' or 'dannelse' in Danish [critical formation] (Klafki, 1998; Simovska et al., 2020), teachers contrasted this purpose to the discourse of narrow learning outcomes or a simple qualification for entering further education or the labour market (Biesta, 2010) as general purpose of schooling. As one teacher, Vibe, states: 'It's the story of the chicken and the egg. What comes first: Bildung'. In this sense, the cultivation of Bildung through mindfulness was understood as closely linked with, and even prior to, other purposes of education – a point which Susanne, another teacher, elaborated on:

> Susanne: To me, it's [mindfulness] mostly about the students as human beings. If that's in order, then everything else will follow. You cannot do it the other way around. If you're not in a good place as a child or young person, you won't be receptive to teaching. (…) But the pressure from above, all the tests, exams and such, it becomes an obstacle in a way…

Both accounts juxtapose the instrumental logic of academic performance with the logic of transformation or holistic development when explaining the reasoning behind their mindfulness practices. For the teachers who prioritised transformative aspects in their reflections on the purpose of mindfulness, it was evident that mindfulness was intended to improve students' character and virtue, rather than just being a tool for optimising academic performance. This discourse also involves suspension of the demands concerning academic performance that, according to the teachers, dominate schools today. Such demands hinder students' development as unique beings in the face of plurality and difference embedded in the notion of Bildung and updated in Biesta's discussion of qualification, socialisation and subjectification, as purposes of education in general (Biesta, 2010).

Relaxation and Time Outs

The final category of purposes shares a number of similarities with several of the above categorisations by centring on giving students breaks or time outs. However, the described purposes in this category are not oriented towards preparing or re-energising students for a subsequent activity, but towards creating spaces where students can relax, even sleep, and ultimately cultivate their freedom from an educational system or 'school machine' that, according to the teachers who prioritised this category of purposes, increasingly colonises such free spaces. One teacher,

René, who taught mindfulness as an elective module for students aged 13–16, recounted how the popularity of the class could be explained by its ability to fulfil students' desire to 'take a break from the school machine'. The same teacher went on to explain the choice of the term 'machine' by referring to the school as a place where students normally had to perform academically, whilst the mindfulness sessions serve as a peaceful space, free from strict achievement-related demands. Other teachers used similar metaphors of 'gearing down', 'taking a time out' or 'giving oneself a breather' to describe the purposes of mindfulness in schools. It is implied that mindfulness is a temporary space for escaping and setting aside the demands of everyday school life. One way of framing this purpose is to regard mindfulness as a 'bubble for relaxation', as a sphere for 'de-stressing' or as a pure form of 'relaxation'. A side-effect of such organised breaks, as noted by several teachers, was that students of all ages would tend to fall asleep during mindfulness sessions, something that teachers approved of. Here, mindfulness was understood as a clean break from the school's learning-outcome-focused logics. In this sense mindfulness maintained its instrumental character but with an alternative aim: resisting or rejecting demands for self-improvement and academic achievement. Mindfulness served a purpose of antagonising the machine-like nature of school and challenging the inevitability of the reciprocal relationship between wellbeing and learning evident in all the other categories of purposes.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed school-based mindfulness by empirically exploring how teachers frame and enact the purposes of their mindfulness practices in schools. Situated within the general discourse of promoting wellbeing in schools, and based on a conceptual distinction between instrumental and transformative objectives, I identified a wide range of purposes specific to mindfulness practices in the context of education. It should be noted, however, that despite this heterogeneity, the notion of mindfulness as beneficial in terms of fulfilling academic performance-oriented educational aims dominated teachers' framings of their practices. In other words, to use the conceptual distinction inspired by McCaw (2020) and Ergas (2019b), it could be argued that most of these intended purposes veered towards instrumental rather than transformative understandings of these practices.

McCaw poses the important question of whether a sharp differentiation between thin and thick conceptualisations of mindfulness can be maintained when carrying out an empirical study. The answer is complex. As my analysis has shown, a number of teachers upheld the distinction between performance-optimising and transformative purposes of mindfulness. At the same time, these two objectives were ultimately linked through, for instance, the intertwinement of learning and wellbeing goals. Consequently, an ambivalence could be traced in how teachers viewed the relation between the two poles of the conceptual schism: instrumental and

transformative understandings of mindfulness were not seen as in sharp opposition to each other, but rather as reciprocal.

Furthermore, the rigidity of the outlined conceptual distinction was challenged by teachers' accounts, which were opposed to what they saw as the academic performance and optimisation logics linked to contemporary educational systems in general. As mentioned earlier, one of the interviewed teachers referred to the school as a machine. This use of mindfulness in schools indicates instrumental purposes beyond or even counter to supporting learning or academic performance, such as providing relaxation breaks without any expectation that students will return in a more energised state. In this way, school-based mindfulness becomes a method for teachers to care for their students – not by adapting or regulating them to better cope with the systemic logics of the school, but by confronting these dynamics by giving breaks. This points to a re-configuration of the instrumentality of mindfulness, where the above breaks are not being directed at anything other than the intrinsic caring for the students. Mindfulness thereby provides a space in schools which is neither governed by expectations of academic achievement nor the close reciprocal link between wellbeing and learning; instead, mindfulness is deployed as a suspension of the everyday school life, a tool aimed not at optimising the 'machine' but rather to provide a break from it.

Whilst critics such as Forbes (2019), Purser (2019) and Reveley (2016) view the current practice of school-based mindfulness as a component of this machine, helping students cope but neglecting the structural causes of students' stress and lack of thriving, the purposes linked to what I categorise as relaxation and breaks in my analysis point towards an additional layer in understanding the 'why' of mindfulness in schools. For future research, one prospect of this opening is the analytical potential to rethink instrumental purposes of school-based mindfulness in relation to care, wellbeing and resistance without committing to either transformative or purely performance-driven conceptualisations of purpose. How this prospect is aligned (or not) with schooling remains an open question.

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Chapter 7
Childhood Adversity and Education: Integrating Trauma-Informed Practice Within School Wellbeing and Health Promotion Frameworks

Catriona O'Toole

Abstract Childhood adversity and trauma are so prevalent and so damaging they are increasingly being referred to as a public health epidemic. In response, trauma-informed approaches have become popular in education systems around the world. However, a number of concerns about these approaches have been expressed. One relates to an apparent disconnect between trauma-informed literature and educational theory and practice. Another centres on the lack of attention paid to social injustices, which are a major contributor to the experience of adversity at family and community level, and therefore increasing the likelihood of exposure to adversity for particular children. In this chapter I argue that embedding trauma-awareness within school wellbeing and health promoting frameworks would go some way to addressing both of these concerns. The Health Promoting Schools (HPS) framework, advocated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), seeks to promote the health, wellbeing and educational outcomes of all members of the school community, in ways that take account of social determinants and attend to the school as a complex and dynamic system. Integrating trauma-awareness within HPS frameworks could prompt more responsive health and wellbeing practices, whilst also ensuring that childhood adversity is contextualised within the broader socioeconomic and political landscape.

Keywords Childhood adversity · Trauma-informed · School · Wellbeing · Health promotion

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The Nature, Prevalence, and Impact of Childhood Adversity

The seminal Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study identified 10 types of adversity: abuse (physical, emotional and sexual abuse); trauma in the child's home (domestic violence, parental separation, incarceration, addiction and mental illness); and physical and emotional neglect. The study revealed alarming prevalence rates. Examining the life histories of over 17,000 mostly white, middle-class Americans, the authors found that approximately two thirds had experienced at least one ACE and around 12% experienced four or more (Felitti et al., 1998). Similar studies in other high-income countries, as well as in low- and middle-income countries worldwide have also reported extremely high prevalence of ACEs (e.g., Bellis et al., 2015; Kessler et al., 2010; Manyema & Richter, 2019; Soares et al., 2016). Indeed, van der Kolk (2014) described childhood adversity as one of the world's most urgent public health challenges.

The original ACE study has been criticised for overlooking other adversities beyond the 10 originally identified (Kelly-Irving & Delpierre, 2019; McEwen & Gregerson, 2019). It failed to acknowledge adversities associated with inequalities, such as being a member of a marginalised or oppressed social group, experiencing racism, poverty or homelessness, living in or having to escape conflict or war zones, experiencing or witnessing community or school violence, and being taken into care. Nor did it include experiences like the death of a family member, peer victimisation, and living with a chronic illness or disability (Johnstone et al., 2018). When these experiences are also taken into account, the widespread nature of childhood adversity is even more apparent. These events also highlight that adversities are not always wholly individual experiences; many are experienced collectively by members of communities or particular social groups. Whilst individual trauma was the primary focus of ACE research, there is now growing interest in recognising collective and intergenerational trauma, especially in the context of school and community development efforts. The causes of collective or community trauma lie in historic and ongoing social inequities, including poverty, racism, sexism, oppression, erasure of culture and ethnic identity, forced displacement or entrapment and other imbalances of power (Falkenberger et al., 2018). These experiences are harmful in their own right, and they increase the likelihood of exposure to abuse, violence and other traumatic experiences for particular children (Gherardi et al., 2020).

An extremely robust and consistent body of evidence strongly links childhood adversity to negative outcomes across the lifespan including, anxiety and very low mood, drug and alcohol problems, antisocial behaviour, low educational achievement, relationship problems, self-harm and suicide (Bebbington et al., 2004, 2009; Felitti et al., 1998; Dube et al., 2001). Childhood adversity also correlates with a range of physical health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and chronic respiratory diseases (Felitti et al., 1998; Gilbert et al., 2015; Scott et al., 2011). A 'dose-response effect' is noted in that the more severe the adversity or the more types experienced, then the more severe the outcome. For instance, people who have

experienced five or more ACEs are seven to 10 times more likely to report illicit drug use and addiction (Felitti et al., 1998).

More is now known about the processes that account for the links between adversity and poor wellbeing, health and academic outcomes. These processes range from neurobiological, psychological to sociocultural. For instance, polyvagal theory describes how threat and danger stimulates the neurophysiological stress system responsible for the body's fight, flight or freeze response (Porges, 2009). Repeated activation of the stress response system takes a toll on the body's immune system, which can lead to a host of physical health conditions (O'Neill et al., 2015). Growing up in unsafe, threatening or relationally impoverished environments also means that children are often flooded with distressing sensations, images, or implicit body memories. They are likely to have a narrow *window of tolerance* (Siegel, 1999), meaning that they have a lower threshold for high-intensity emotion, which can cause them to become hypo-aroused (dissociate, withdraw or shut down) or hyper-aroused (distraught, panicked, or enraged). Both states interfere with children's ability to autonomously regulate their emotions and reduce their capacity to concentrate, process and store information, with obvious implications for school performance and relationships (Perry & Szalavitz, 2017). Other common behaviour patterns seen in children exposed to trauma and adversity include hyper-vigilance, aggression, controlling or rejecting behaviours, sexual or overly familiar behaviours, overly compliant and anxious behaviours, withdrawal and dissociation, risky, self-destructive and self-soothing behaviours (Treisman, 2017). Whilst these behaviours are often considered as "symptoms" of "disorder" or "maladaption", it is important to recognise that they emerge as self-protective coping strategies, helping ensure children's survival in harsh and unsafe environments (Johnstone et al., 2018; Treisman, 2017).

It is not inevitable that children who have faced adversities will experience negative outcomes in later life. Recent decades have seen advances in our understanding of the conditions that foster hope, healing and transformation. Whilst specific therapeutic support is important, successive studies have demonstrated that the single most important factor in healing from trauma is having a good network of support (Herman, 1992; Perry & Szalavitz, 2017; van der Kolk, 2014). Traumatised children recover in the context of relationships with family members and loved ones in their communities. They need ongoing, repeated exposure to healthy relationships, characterised by safety, trust and reciprocity (Perry & Szalavitz, 2017). They also need the root causes in structural inequalities to be addressed (Metzler et al., 2017). Children who experience interpersonal trauma (e.g., child abuse, neglect, domestic violence) face a very formidable challenge, since this type of trauma is inflicted by those who are supposed to offer love and protection (Courtois & Ford, 2009). When children's intimate relationships are the source of harm rather than safety, the role of the wider community, especially the school, becomes vital.

Schools, of course, are first and foremost educational institutions, they cannot be expected to take ultimate responsibility for supporting children's recovery from trauma, nor is it feasible for schools to address underlying structural inequalities – clearly a collective, coordinated and multi-sectoral response is needed. Nevertheless,

if schools are committed to ensuring the wellbeing, health and educational outcomes of all students, then there is a need for educationalists to take seriously the reality of childhood trauma and adversity. This prompts questions about what the appropriate educational response might be. At present there is considerable interest in progressing trauma-informed approaches in schools. In the next section, I provide an overview of these approaches and then highlight some concerns that warrant further attention.

Trauma-Informed Schools: Current Research and Practice

Given the prevalence and impact of childhood trauma and adversity, there is now considerable interest in introducing trauma-informed practice across many public health and human service settings, including schools. Harris and Fallot (2001) described trauma-informed practice as a strengths-based approach that is based on knowledge and understanding of how trauma affects people's lives. It integrates an understanding of the pervasive biological, psychological, and social consequences of trauma with the ultimate aim of ameliorating, rather than exacerbating, their effects (SAMHSA, 2014). In contrast to *trauma-specific practice* in therapeutic or clinical settings, any human service setting, regardless of its primary goal, can become trauma-informed (Harris & Fallot, 2001). The core principles of trauma-informed practice have been identified as: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and respect for diversity (Fallot & Harris, 2009). In essence, being trauma-informed means being aware that the experience of adversity/trauma is a very real possibility; it is about creating environments that foster a felt sense of safety; understanding the effects of trauma on the whole person, understanding how troubling behaviours/responses may reflect courageous attempts to cope with trauma; it is about maximising a sense of agency by offering choices, collaborating, validating and supporting, whilst being mindful of cultural, historical, and gender issues. Becoming trauma-informed, in this sense, entails a shift in the culture of organisations, to include changes in how they think about trauma itself, about people who have experienced trauma, about relationships, and about policies and procedures (Fallot & Harris, 2008).

Adopting trauma-informed approaches in school settings have been deemed important for a number of reasons. The responses of trauma-affected children may appear bizarre or incomprehensible to those who do not understand how abuse and trauma impacts mind, body and behaviour. Children may appear 'spaced-out' and inattentive, angry and disruptive, confused and disengaged. These responses to trauma often get children into trouble in school, as classroom staff may interpret them as wilful defiance, a lack of respect or as 'moral weakness' (Jensen, 2009; Thomas et al., 2019). Punitive confrontations can trigger painful memories, which can be re-traumatising and often serve to reinforce children's very negative opinions of themselves (Anderson et al., 2015). In fact, school discipline practices are often not effective, precisely because children's 'problem behaviours' are automatic

responses that are retriggered by punitive confrontations. From a trauma-informed perspective then, children's behavioural outbursts and/or withdrawals are not seen as conscious acts of defiance, but as social–emotional responses to overwhelming stress and anxiety (Anderson et al., 2015; Ko et al., 2008).

Another rationale for trauma-informed approaches is the recognition that working with children who have experienced trauma often takes a toll on the wellbeing of teachers and other school staff (Howard, 2019; Thomas et al., 2019). Educators working with traumatised children on a regular basis may find their empathy beginning to wane. This is variously known as *secondary traumatic stress*, *compassion fatigue* or *vicarious trauma*. It can cause considerable distress, burnout and it is a common reason for teachers exiting the profession. Thus, trauma-informed approaches typically incorporate a strong emphasis on self-care in an effort to mitigate against secondary traumatic stress. It is also recognised that there needs to be greater systemic supports and appreciation for the emotional work that teachers engage in (Education Support, 2019; Howard, 2019; Thomas et al., 2019).

School-based trauma informed approaches are being advocated in a number of countries around the world (e.g., Australian Childhood Foundation, 2010; Massachusetts Advocates for Children). Terminology varies greatly and there is a wide variation in the depth and breadth of engagement with trauma-informed work (Thomas et al., 2019). Nevertheless, in a review of trauma-informed approaches in schools, Thomas et al. (2019) identified three features common to all approaches. These are: (1) building knowledge to support teachers' understanding of the impact of trauma, for instance integrating neurophysiological knowledge about the body's fight, flight or freeze responses; (2) shifting perspectives and building emotionally healthy school cultures, which means shifting away from viewing a student's behaviour as inherently oppositional or defiant, to viewing each student as being affected in some way by their experience; and (3) self-care for educators, which involves acknowledging the possibility of secondary traumatic stress and the importance of paying specific attention to the health and wellbeing of teachers and other school staff.

Empirical research on the impact and effectiveness of trauma-informed approaches is in its infancy. Whilst studies have reported positive effects for discrete school-based interventions (Jaycox et al., 2009; Mendelson et al., 2015) and for multi-tiered systems of support (Berger, 2019; Dorado et al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2015, Perry & Daniels, 2016; McConnico et al., 2016; Stokes & Thurnbull, 2016); overall the evidence is limited. In a systematic review of school-based trauma-informed approaches, Maynard and colleagues (2019) reported that no studies met the criteria for delivering the types of systemic and programmatic changes intended by proponents of trauma-informed principles. Whilst further empirical research is required, there are also substantive issues that require attention. Specifically, concerns have been raised about the tendency to view childhood adversity within an individualistic frame and to overlook the role of structural inequalities such as poverty, racism and community violence (McEwen & Gregerson, 2019). In addition, given the deleterious impact of adversity on children's health, wellbeing and academic achievement, it is remarkable that to date, educational researchers interested

in wellbeing and health promotion in schools, have had little to say on issues of childhood adversity or trauma-informed practice. The next section deals with these gaps and highlights some recent developments in the area.

Childhood Adversity and Global Health Priorities

An international commitment to addressing childhood adversity has been slow to emerge. If it is not prioritised within global health promotion agendas, then it is unlikely to be prioritised by governments/districts charged with developing school wellbeing and health promotion policies. However, there is evidence that childhood adversity is gaining increased attention on a global stage. As noted above, many of the world's leading trauma experts and health researchers have stressed that childhood adversity is so common and the effects so devastating that it needs to be considered as a global health epidemic (Anda et al., 2010; Maté, 2003; van der Kolk, 2014). Further, epidemiologists now recognise that childhood adversity is a major determinant of ill-health and there have been calls to have it explicitly named by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a risk factor in the onset of both mental health conditions and non-communicable diseases (Scott et al., 2011; Stein et al., 2019). With increased evidence about the health risks associated with childhood adversity and its prioritisation by global health organisations, it seems important that researchers and scholars in education consider the implications for school wellbeing and health promotion initiatives.

The WHO developed the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) framework in the 1980s, underpinned by the values set out in the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986). A Health Promoting School is envisaged as a place where all members of the school community work, learn, live and play together to promote the health and wellbeing of learners, staff, parents and the wider community (WHO, 1991). HPS initiatives incorporate any activity undertaken to improve and/or protect health and wellbeing. It includes provisions and activities relating to school policies, the school's physical and social environment, the knowledge, skills and action competencies developed through pedagogical and curriculum initiatives, and it emphasises the importance of relationships, both within the school and between the school and surrounding community (Langford et al., 2014; Lindegaard Nordin et al., 2018; Turunen et al., 2017, WHO, 2017). In attending to the full gamut of school structures, policies and processes, HPS seems the ideal basis from which to embed trauma-awareness and responsiveness, in order to achieve a shift in culture as envisaged by Harris and Fallot (2001). Further, HPS seeks to overcome the limited success of traditional 'health education', establishing instead a holistic and salutogenic approach to promoting health in schools (Langford et al., 2014). Researchers and scholars in the field of health education are keen to challenge traditional discourses of health promotion, which focus narrowly on students' knowledge, skills and behaviour; instead, they tend to critically explore socio-cultural and other contextual determinants that influence health and wellbeing, including the barriers and potentials

related to student participation in health promoting initiatives (Leahy et al., 2020; Simovska & McNamara, 2015). This kind of orientation is also needed in trauma-informed research in order to develop practices in more equitable ways.

Equally, a trauma-informed lens that supports educators in appreciating the nature and consequences of adversity could significantly support, enhance and/or re-orient health and wellbeing promotion activities in schools. For instance, as noted above, young people who have experienced trauma sometimes engage in behaviours that jeopardise their health (such as using drugs or alcohol, under/over-eating, engaging in risky sexual behaviours). They do so not because they are unaware of the risks, but because of the intense need to self-soothe, gain acceptance, numb or regulate intolerable feelings. In the absence of a trauma lens, it remains all too probable that such young people will be blamed and shamed for their 'poor choices' and 'risky behaviours'. Rather than resort to this kind of (usually inadvertent) victim blaming, a health promoting school that is infused with trauma knowledge and understanding, will be more likely to honour children's resilience, strengths and survival strategies, whilst using their policies and relationships (with the student, the family, other agencies/services) to sensitively support or intervene as appropriate.

Addressing Adversity Through Curriculum, Pedagogy and Whole-School Approaches

The foregoing section highlights that macro-level policies are needed to support schools in prioritising trauma-sensitive and trauma-responsive practices. However, we also need to grapple with how trauma-responsiveness can be infused into the cut and trust of teacher's everyday practice. In their review of trauma-informed practices in schools, Thomas et al. (2019) note a dearth of empirical work describing how teachers use their craft – teaching – as a component of trauma-informed care. Whilst there are many guidelines and resources developed to raise awareness of trauma, these do not typically extend to supporting teachers to identify ways to respond through their ongoing pedagogical practices or curriculum innovations. This presents considerable problems because trauma-informed practice can easily be seen as an 'add-on', yet another demand on teacher's time, yet another 'problem' for schools to deal with.

There are some notable exceptions. Morgan et al. (2015) explored connections between trauma-informed practice, relational pedagogy and teachers' professional identity. Within the context of a network of flexi schools serving disenfranchised youth in Australia, the authors argue that relational pedagogy can redress the impact of trauma and social exclusion experienced by young people. Relational pedagogy requires mutual respect between students, peers and teachers and recognises that cognitive and affective dimensions are inseparable in knowledge construction (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006). Morgan et al. (2015) argue that a commitment to

trauma-informed practice and relational pedagogy requires educator identities to be co-constructed and negotiated in relationship with young people and colleagues, as well as a willingness to embrace the emotional dimension of teaching and learning.

As previously noted, trauma-informed approaches in schools have been criticised for overlooking structural inequalities such as poverty, racism and other forms of discrimination. The work of Shawn Ginwright represents an attempt to redress this situation. Ginwright (2016, 2018) refers to *radical healing* and *healing-centred engagement* (as opposed to trauma-informed practice) to describe practices that nurture wellbeing whilst also supporting people's capacity to act upon their environment in ways that contribute to the common good. In his work with African American young men, Ginwright highlights that trauma is often collectively experienced within communities, which necessitates addressing the root causes in neighbourhoods, families, and schools. Healing-centred engagement draws on the values of community psychology and is explicitly political, emphasising awareness of the conditions of oppression, combined with social action, such as protests, community organising or school walkouts, that can contribute to an overall sense of wellbeing, hopefulness and optimism. It also emphasises spirituality, rituals and other culturally-grounded practices to restore wellbeing.

Teachers and researchers have used Ginwright's work to explore opportunities for healing through curriculum and pedagogical practices (e.g., Cariaga, 2018; Kokka, 2019). For instance, Kokka (2019) drew on Ginwright's healing-centred engagement and Harvey's (1996) ecological understanding of trauma, to explore how one middle school mathematics classroom offered students opportunities to engage in radical healing practices through the use of Social Justice Mathematics. In Kokka's study, math problems were used to raise awareness of systemic issues, such as the inequitable distribution of wealth and resources. Students were given space to reflect on how such inequalities connected to their own lives and experiences, with attention paid to help prevent youth from blaming themselves for their own conditions. For example, students learned about fractions by engaging with the real-life scenario of a single mother struggling to pay her bills. They identified and discussed their emotional reactions (sadness, anger, and worry) and then considered the scenario in relation to wider systemic inequalities. This prompted students to make suggestions for government supports, to resist negative stereotypes and to recognise people's common humanity.

With a similar social justice orientation, Alvaraz (2017) presents a case study of how one teacher – Mr. Sellers – responded to the needs of his students in a marginalised and racially diverse urban community in America. Critical in this account is the rich contextual understanding that Mr. Sellers possessed; he was intimately connected to the community and had a nuanced understanding of the adversities and social injustices experienced by his students. His approach was to offer students a space for healing by providing the resources and strategies to cope, whilst also recognising the structural and systemic inequities that students faced. Alvaraz (2017) argues that generic understandings of trauma and its consequences are important, but it is also necessary for teachers to have an understanding of trauma that is

grounded in context, including knowledge of the socio-political and historical context related to the communities where teachers work.

The work outlined above represents a push back against pathologising and deficit-based narratives that frequently surround marginalised groups, as well as a desire to move away from generic guidelines on trauma-informed care that are framed within an individualistic perspective. Of course, in addition to innovations in curriculum and pedagogy, there are other aspects of the school environment that need consideration in order to advance equitable and culturally responsive engagement with trauma-informed approaches. The bottom-up approaches of individual teachers' needs to be met with top-down cultural shift within the organisation as a whole. Treisman (2017) highlights that trauma sensitivity and responsiveness requires a whole school approach, which means attending to organisational dynamics, leadership, the social milieu, school structures, policies and procedures, and so on. She also notes that each school is unique, with its own culture, history, philosophy, identity, values, norms and rules. This suggests that generic trauma-informed guidelines are not enough, rather schools need to think creatively and strategically about how to become trauma-responsive, keeping their own context and in mind.

The pedagogical and curricular innovations outlined by authors above, along with this acknowledgement of the school as a dynamic, multi-layered system, have important resonances with the HPS framework. As highlighted above, HPS advocates a whole-school, setting-based approach to health and wellbeing and it has been developed with the specific goals and purposes of schools in mind. It tends not to offer prescriptive guidance; instead, individual schools or school districts make decisions based on local needs and priorities, within the general HPS principles and values. In all these ways, HPS offers an ideal framework for thinking about meaningful ways to embed and infuse trauma sensitivity and trauma responsiveness into all aspects of school processes and structures.

Conclusion

Understanding and adequately responding to what happens when children are exposed to traumatic experiences is a basic requirement of a healthy school and society. The diverse but convergent body of research reviewed in this chapter suggests that enormous benefits could accrue from integrating trauma-informed principles with school wellbeing and health promoting frameworks. Realising these benefits requires a high-level commitment to addressing childhood adversity as well as systematic changes in many current school practices. Challenges will remain in ensuring that trauma-informed practices are developed as more than merely a set of tick-box guidelines; that they are embodied in everyday interactions and infused into all aspects of school structures and processes in culturally responsive ways. Further empirical and conceptual work is needed in order to advance the breadth and depth of school trauma-informed work in these ways.

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Part III
The Significance of Cultural Contexts

Chapter 8
Laying the Foundation for Wellbeing in Youth in New Zealand: Developing Socio-Emotional Understandings in Students, Families, and Teachers Through a Co-constructed Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Framework

Amanda Denston, Letitia Hochstrasser Fickel, Rachel Martin, and Veronica O'Toole

Abstract In this chapter, we consider how a collaborative research project between a university and two schools is contributing to global dialogue around socio-emotional wellbeing in schools, through the development of a coconstructed culturally and linguistically sustaining socio-emotional learning framework that is responsive to the New Zealand context. This research acknowledges the centrality of te reo Māori (Māori language), and the status of Māori as tāngata whenua (indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand). The use of te reo Māori within the project, and our descriptions of our work, aligns with te Tiriti o Waitangi (Māori version of the Treaty of Waitangi) and is an expected, and accepted discourse practice within educational contexts in New Zealand. At times, we forefront te reo Māori to acknowledge knowledge generated by, for, and with a Māori worldview to reflect this positionality. In this chapter we describe how we engaged with teachers and extended family groups to gather their culturally grounded views on social emotional wellbeing. We examine how this collaborative relationship has enabled teachers to draw upon these co-constructed understandings to develop pedagogical practices to promote the social emotional wellbeing of students. We conclude with reflections that can inform other international contexts.

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Keywords Socio-emotional wellbeing · Cultural and linguistic responsiveness · Pedagogical actions · Children · Indigenous cultures

Introduction

There is a growing concern for the health and wellbeing of individuals, with many European countries experiencing decreasing levels of mental wellbeing amongst early adolescence (Council of European Union, 2015; UNICEF, 2017). In response, policy makers and educationalists have advocated a more holistic approach to education that includes attention to socio-emotional learning alongside cognitive development (OECD, 2010). Responses within the European context have varied but have sought to enhance socio-emotional wellbeing through educational programmes in schools, by fostering psychosocial skills, prevention of adversity, and adjustment skills (Hatzichristou & Lianos, 2016). In examining the landscape of socio-emotional learning in Europe, there is a noted lack of rigorous evaluation of the transferability of socio-emotional learning programmes across different social and cultural contexts and a dearth of interventions and empirical evidence that reflects the European context (Barry et al., 2017). This in itself has been influenced by ambiguity and confusion in literature around the processes that foster socio-emotional learning across borders and between cultures (Bowles et al., 2017; Hoffman, 2009). In New Zealand, the wellbeing of our young has become increasingly important. Many students are not experiencing desired outcomes for wellbeing at school and there is high variability in the ability of schools to promote and respond to issues related to wellbeing (ERO, 2015a, b). Decreasing levels of wellbeing are often accompanied by lower rates of student achievement and increased rates of stand-downs and suspensions, undermining engagement in learning and potential academic achievement. This notably affects Māori, the indigenous peoples of New Zealand, and other marginalised youth. These effects extend beyond education to influence outcomes across the lifespan.

In this chapter, we share our experience of co-constructing a socially, culturally, and linguistically responsive framework for socio-emotional learning that is reflective of the unique context of New Zealand. The chapter seeks to share our understandings with European and global colleagues interested in undertaking similar work within their own local contexts. Throughout our research we draw from a socio-cultural lens that affirms the relationship of culture and identity to socio-emotional wellbeing. Māori history has been deeply embedded within oral traditions related to socio-emotional learning (Macfarlane et al., 2017), which was lost during colonisation causing intergenerational trauma for individual and Māori tribal groups (O'Toole & Martin, 2019). The role of culture and identity has been recognised as highly conditioning in the development of emotions (Hoffman, 2009), including differences in the interpretation of emotional experiences. We outline how we worked with families, teachers, and deputy principals to support teachers to draw out aspects related to socio-emotional wellbeing in students, in order to bring

about socio-emotional learning, rather than use it as a behavioural tool. We detail the first series of wānanga (sharing of knowledges), which were held with teachers and deputy principals and the second series of wānanga, which were held with families and how these contributed to the development of a socio-emotional framework and subsequent pedagogical practices. We give particular consideration to Māori given our context, however, similarities can be drawn across cultures as work is undertaken across different contexts, including with indigenous people.

Conceptual Frameworks That Guide Our Work

The concept of socio-emotional wellbeing is an essential element in education. As such, continued growth in the development of socio-emotional learning (SEL) programmes has occurred with much research supporting the efficacy of these programmes for students (Corcoran et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2017). Socio-emotional wellbeing has been linked with increased academic outcomes, along with improved attitudes, behaviour, and student engagement (Corcoran et al., 2018; Durlak, et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Enhanced socio-emotional wellbeing also has academic benefits, including within specific learning areas, such as reading and maths. Best practice is considered to include the implementation of evidence-based programmes; however, such programmes have been critiqued for several reasons, including the emphasis on manual-based implementation, and the stringent requirements for delivery to achieve fidelity. Furthermore, not all programmes are effective (Corcoran et al., 2018) and school sites offer challenges to the implementation of programmes (Green et al., 2018). Programmes can often fail to see the needs of the students (Berkel et al., 2011) and the temporal, situational, and cultural contexts in which students exist (Reiceher, 2010). As such, the role of the student and their community in the development of socio-emotional wellbeing is often disregarded. Scant attention has been given to research that examines the role of emotions within pedagogical practices across cultures, thus, raising doubts about the universality of such programmes (Loinaz, 2019). Some research has sought to adapt programmes to include local settings (see Green et al., 2018); however, such adaptations need to move beyond logistical (i.e. timing) and intentional (i.e. content-related) adaptations to ensure programmes are culturally and linguistically responsive.

Programmes seeking to develop socio-emotional wellbeing in students that are culturally and linguistically responsive, challenge long-held assumptions regarding notions of wellbeing that are often underpinned by Eurocentric beliefs of how emotions work. This has been reflected in socio-emotional learning that often relates to developing skills aimed at controlling emotions, and often behaviour, at an individual level, disregarding that how one experiences, expresses, and regulates their emotions is learned through culture (Hoffman, 2009). In New Zealand, since colonisation, Western streams of knowledge and epistemologies have been actively privileged and have underpinned ways of being, thinking, and acting (Macfarlane et al., 2015). Western streams of knowledge have also underpinned efforts to address

traditional Māori knowledge and aspirations, including within education (Harris, 2008). Recent change, such as the introduction of *Our Code Our Standards* (Education Council, 2017) that honours te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi), as the founding document of New Zealand and its implications to teaching practice, has repositioned Māori ideologies, which has been instrumental to reclaiming Māori constructs within education.

In our project, we drew on three frameworks to rationalise our understanding of conceptual and theoretical assumptions and the relationship between culture and place in socio-emotional wellbeing. These included: te whare tapa whā (a model of health and wellbeing) (see Durie, 1998), the Collaborative for Academic, Social, & Emotional Learning (CASEL) model of socio-emotional learning (CASEL, 2020), and he awa whiria (a braided river) (Macfarlane et al., 2015).

Te whare tapa whā is symbolised (see Fig. 8.1) by a wharenui (meeting house) and four elements integral to Māori health and wellness. The elements include; taha tinana (physical health), taha wairua (spiritual health), taha whānau (family health), taha hinengaro (mental health). The elements hold equal importance and are grounded through he tātai whenua, the connection to the environment that includes socio-historical and political contexts. All elements must be balanced to remain

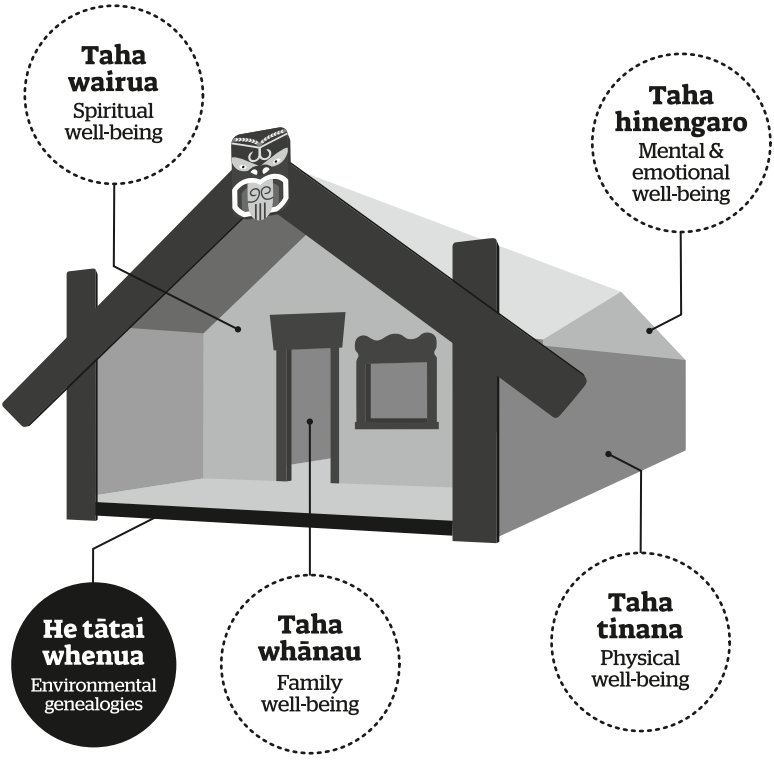

Fig. 8.1 Te whare tapa whā model

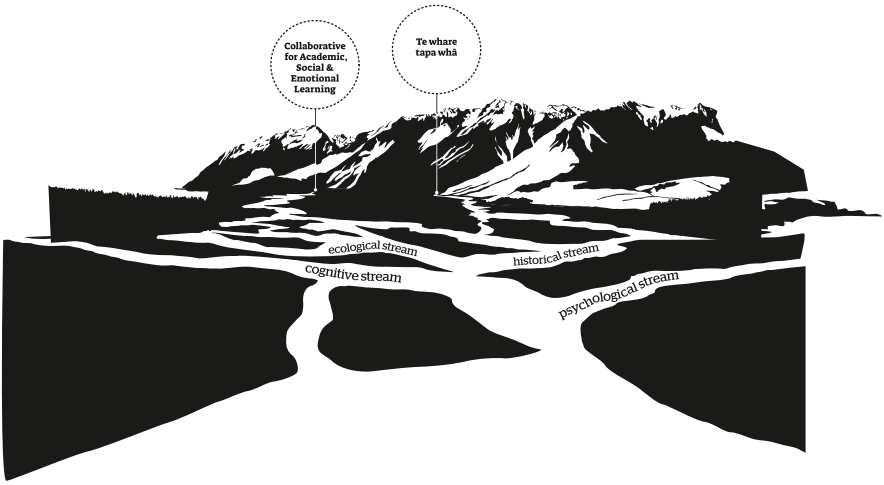

Fig. 8.2 He awa whiria (A braided rivers approach)

healthy; as such, if one element becomes unbalanced or damaged, the individual and/or their collective may become unwell (see Jackson et al., 2018 for a detailed explanation).

The CASEL model is underpinned by five skills that include; self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision making. These skills develop an individual's ability to recognise, be aware, and accurately assess oneself, whilst also developing capacities relating to others and the wider world, such as effective communication, relationships, as well as, awareness of culture, emotions, and beliefs. The development of these skills has been argued to have short-term and long-term outcomes that extend beyond socio-emotional competencies (see Ross & Tolan, 2018).

He awa whiria merges te whare tapa whā, as an indigenous knowledge stream, and CASEL, as a Western knowledge stream, (Macfarlane et al., 2017). These streams of knowledge converge to become interconnected as he awa whiria (see Fig. 8.2). Within New Zealand's te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) partnership, these streams are more powerful together, than when acting independently, because they create a negotiated space for new knowledge to be created, thus moving us forward as one (Macfarlane et al., 2015).

Our Approach

The aim of the current research was to support the development of understandings of socio-emotional wellbeing in schools by working directly with teachers, deputy principals, and family to challenge and reposition how socio-emotional wellbeing was being viewed and taught within schools. As a collaborative research team,

we adopted a community-focused participatory action research stance (Noffke & Somekh, 2009). This stance was guided by te Tiriti o Waitangi[1] and Kaupapa Māori principles that acknowledged the centrality and legitimacy of te reo Māori (Māori language), tīkanga (culture and customs) and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledges) in research (Smith, 2012). Thus, theoretically, our research was guided by a socio-cultural framework interwoven with Māori world views and perspectives, integral to the cultural values of New Zealand (Macfarlane et al., 2015, 2017). The socio-cultural framework was grounded in research on socio-emotional learning as an essential foundation for developing wellbeing in primary and secondary school students (Bowles et al., 2017). The research recognised that teachers who develop their understandings of identities, languages, and worldviews and their knowledge of and empathy for students are likely to foster socio-emotional learning and wellbeing in their students, especially indigenous Māori (Macfarlane et al., 2017).

In addition to being collaborative research, our project involved professional learning and development for teachers that encompassed an action research spiral of inquiry. Action research, interwoven with Kaupapa Māori research principles, is a means by which culturally responses practices can be enacted (Macfarlane et al., 2014). Fundamental to action research was the notion of improved practice, via research that was socially situated. This was viewed as a means by which teachers could develop their understanding of practices and the situations in which practices occur (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This approach enabled researchers to act collectively, and emphasised on-going reflection throughout the project, as the spiral of inquiry.

Data were collected over a series of wānanga with teachers and families of students from the classrooms of teachers. Wānanga are gatherings that are underpinned by in-depth discussion and sharing amongst all individuals. They are safe spaces that enable individuals to share their own cultural and linguistic knowledges. Wānanga enabled us to co-construct knowledge using joint meaning making; thus, all participants were situated as learners across multiple contexts.

In the first wānanga series, five teachers, as co-researchers, examined and analysed their own experiences related to socio-emotional wellbeing and learning. Teachers were from two urban schools in the South Island of New Zealand. One school was a contributing primary school. In New Zealand a contributing primary school has students from Year 0/1 to Year 6 (age range of 5–12 years). Two teachers were from the primary school. In the New Zealand education system, bilingual education (English/te reo Māori) is government funded and is offered across different levels according to the different percentages of targeted instruction in te reo Māori. Māori-medium education occurs across Levels 1 and 2, whilst Levels 3–5 are considered culturally immersive programmes (Hill, 2017). Outside of these levels, schools may offer no te reo Māori or rudimentary use, such as basic vocabulary, phrases, and songs (Ministry of Education, 2020). Bilingual education can be offered by Māori or non-Māori teachers. One teacher, fluent in te reo Māori, taught

[1] In upholding the principles of our research, local indigenous iwi (tribal groups) and hapū (sub-tribal groups) were also included in the research process.

within a Level 2 immersion te reo Māori context with students from Years 4 to 6 (approximately 9 to 12 years old). In this context, students are taught in te reo Māori between 51% and 80% of their classroom time. The second teacher taught Year 6 students (approximately 11–12 years old). The second school was a high school, with students ranging from Year 7 to 13 (approximately 12 to 18 years old). Three teachers participated from the high school. Two teachers taught students in Years 7 and 8 (approximately 12 to 13 years of age). The third teacher was a deputy principal, holding a dual leadership/teaching role.

Co-constructing of Socio-Emotional Practice

In the first wānanga, the perspectives, experiences, and understandings of teachers and the language that teachers used in relation to socio-emotional wellbeing were explored. The elicitation of perspectives, experiences, and understandings was supported by discussing a range of topics (see Table 8.1). During these discussions, information was recorded by a member of the research team for each teacher, which became qualitative field notes. Wānanga are underpinned by the agreement of the information gathered during the sharing time itself; therefore, no subsequent review of data were required before analysis. Subsequent wānanga involved the analysis of data using an inductive, grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2011). Teachers independently interpreted the field notes, identifying points of difference that could include aspects of practice, on sticky notes that were placed alongside field notes. These points were then analysed by the research team collectively to identify commonalities and connections, resulting in the construction of common themes. Several common themes were identified, with the most prominent theme being relationships. This included relationships with one's self, cultural and linguistic differences, as well as, learning about relationships. Teachers identified that quality listening skills, communication, emotions vocabulary, ako (to both teach and learn), and reframing experiences were integral to understanding socio-emotional wellbeing in themselves and their students.

Table 8.1 Topics to elicit current understandings of socio-emotional learning and wellbeing from kaiako

What is socio-emotional learning?
Current models of wellbeing – Te whare tapa whā, CASEL
Synergies between Western socio-emotional learning and Māori views of mental health
What are emotions? What are the functions of emotions?
Historical views of emotion from a Western perspective
Colonisation of Māori emotions
Living as Māori and emotional regulation
Indigenous ways of learning and healing
Culturally responsive educational practices
Cultural narratives

In the second series of wānanga, families of the students were invited to attend one of several possible wānanga, held at the co-research schools. A total of 11 family members attended five wānanga across a two-week period. Each wānanga lasted for around 90 min and focused on families sharing their understandings of socio-emotional wellbeing, via a series of guided but open questions. The importance of families sharing their time with the research team was recognised by whakawhanaungatanga; an important process where relationships are established with others. During the wānanga, information was recorded by a member of the research team, which became qualitative field notes. These were reviewed with families as the wānanga progressed. Open questions focused on eliciting from families their understandings around socio-emotional learning and wellbeing (see Table 8.2). The data were analysed in the same manner as above; field notes were independently interpreted by the research team, who identified points of difference. These points were then analysed for commonalities and connections, resulting in the construction of common themes. The common themes identified from the family data included: relationships with self, others, and learning; identities; histories; aspirations for children; expressions of emotions; as well as, strategy-based development related to relationships that fostered connections with others.

Overall, the findings suggested that for teachers and families, developing and maintaining relationships were viewed as key to fostering socio-emotional wellbeing in children. Other identified themes included communication, particularly the ability to express emotions, and having the capacity to do so, via having an understanding of emotions. Following the wānanga, the research team co-constructed the common themes into a framework for learning. The framework enabled the identification and development of pedagogical practices that could be integrated into classroom teaching and learning programmes. According to Bailey et al. (2019) a model for the development of socio-emotional skills should identify which skills lay the foundation for other skills and that such skills should be developed during salient periods of times. As such, identified themes and pedagogical practices were

Table 8.2 Topics to elicit current understandings of socio-emotional learning and wellbeing from families

What does socio-emotional wellbeing look like for you? How would you describe it?
What does socio-emotional wellbeing sound like?
What does socio-emotional wellbeing look like, in your child/ren?
What can interfere in your child/ren's wellbeing?
What does it mean when your child/ren's wellbeing is disrupted?
What are some of the things that tell us that our children's wellbeing has been comprised? (temporal, spatial, contextual)
What exists in your community that help to support the wellbeing of others, when negative experiences are occurring?
How does negative wellbeing get resolved? How do you encourage shifting back or developing positive wellbeing? What have you seen or tried or what have others shared with you?
What exists in your community that help to support the development of wellbeing in children? How do you keep encouraging the development of positive wellbeing? What have you seen or what have you tried or what have others shared with you?

not viewed as a curriculum to be implemented in a sequential and regimented manner, but rather in a flexible manner that allowed teachers to enact the strategy that met the needs of their students. The approach taken to developing pedagogical practices, which reflected the development of specific themes, was as follows:

1. Practices support teachers in their implementation of strategies
2. Practices were culturally and linguistically responsive
3. Practices acknowledge developmental differences of students, from indigenous Māori and Western perspectives (see Macfarlane, 2004)

The prominent theme that was identified was emotions, specifically students being able to have an understanding of a variety of emotions. Teachers viewed this theme as fundamental to the ability of students to communicate, develop and maintain relationships with others.

Two approaches were taken to developing emotional understandings through pedagogical practices. The first approach involved developing a pedagogical practice that could be enacted by all teachers that was related to the identified theme. This ensured ongoing dialogue and support during the implementation process. The second approach involved teachers identifying a pedagogical practice to enact independently. This was fundamental to ensuring that the expertise of individual teachers was acknowledged, and the pedagogies were responsive to the students, both culturally and linguistically, and reflected their ways of being.

The collective strategy included the use of the pedagogical tool of reflection. The purpose of the tool was to provide students with a means to enact student voice and to apply their developing understanding of emotions. Teachers incorporated reflection into their teaching and learning programmes on a weekly basis. Students were asked to respond to one or more questions of their choice (see Fig. 8.3), using a range of media, such as pen and paper or online platform. Reflections were kept private between students and their teacher, although based on the reflection, teachers could follow up with students. The follow up varied; it could consist of a statement to foster positivity or a discussion around their reflection. Subsequent meetings for the research group enabled teachers to discuss developing understandings, which supported the shared approach. Interestingly, teachers reported developing understandings about themselves as they discovered challenges to their own existing assumptions around social emotional wellbeing, and its cultural and linguistic underpinnings. They viewed that these understandings led to increasingly authentic interactions with students. Reflections also provided an important glimpse into the life of students, which supported the development of relationships between teachers, students and their families.

The practices that teachers implemented independently varied and included such strategies as the incorporation of restorative circles or narrative stories that focused on developing understandings around emotions, and their individual responses to these. Below we share the independent practice implemented by Heather, the teacher from the immersion te reo Māori context, to convey how cultural and linguistic responsiveness underpinned the development of socio-emotional wellbeing in students.

Fig. 8.3 Weekly reflection questions for students

Heather's Story – Waitaiki – Kōhatu Mauri (Mauri Stone)

Our kōhatu mauri symbolises the life force of the classroom, the energy, the guardian, and the eyes that see everything. The beautiful piece of unpolished pounamu (greenstone/jade) resides in a specially woven kete (basket) and when children feel they need a little top up of goodness, they can touch it and rub it.

We call her Waitaiki, and we always personify her. She is always there for any one of us, at any time. As a collective we have a responsibility to keep her energy topped up. She holds the thoughts of all children who have passed through our learning space over the years, so she has history and whakapapa (lineage). She is a wonderful tool for lifting the wellbeing of children. She celebrates our families' successes; she is a taonga (treasure) and she provides us with a physical connection to te taha hinengaro (mental and emotional wellbeing) and te taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing) within te whare tapa whā. She is a place to reflect. She reminds us of the importance of whanaungatanga (kinship), working together and supporting each other, aroha (loving yourself, others and our environment), even when it is difficult. She reminds us of the importance of tino rangatiratanga (self-control and direction

over your decisions and pathways) and because she is a treasure that has been around for many centuries, she provides children with certainty and strength and guidance to achieve whatever they want to.

We use her at the beginning of the year, the return of the term, or after some incident where we need a top up of energy and a clear pathway going forward. I often refer to her in conversation with children if the week has been fantastic, drama free, and children are feeling positive and confident. I might say "Wow, our kōhatu mauri will be all topped up this week, we have had such an amazing week of learning and kinship".

Children recognise that she is a place they can go and touch something physical and transfer their thoughts to her, whatever they may be. The process is simple; you close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing this, place your hand on her and think. She becomes the holder of thoughts; she seizes the sad or dark thoughts and feelings and replaces them with a fresh start. She provides happy thoughts and warm loving feelings, and this is how we keep her energy topped up.

Children understand in their own way, the power of such symbolism that allows them to pause and adjust. It allows them space to take responsibility for their thoughts and actions and change them if need be. They do not need to ask if they can touch her as she belongs to us all, they know to be gentle and always handle her carefully. She has been forged and hardened in the depths of Papatūānuku (Earth mother) and then had her character shaped by the rivers of Te Tai Poutini (the coastal sea area along the West Coast of the South Island, New Zealand) for millennia, so she is robust.

If there has been a classroom incident or some unrest amongst children after unpacking and discussing what we need to do, or how we could return to our normal, we will sit in a circle and pass her around with each student taking the time to place their hand on her, close their eyes, and affirm their contribution to the resolution. It is all done in silence; no one speaks. This means that all contributions by children are valid. This process provides a calm, thinking, and supportive space where children can reflect internally without feeling external pressure.

If there has been a serious incident, we will unpack it to restore the classroom to a neutral space and each student is encouraged to make an affirmation of what they will be changing moving forward; all done in silence as they place their hand on her. She will always end this journey where she began, with me and I will reaffirm the next step forward and end on a positive note. With our positive energy now filled, our kōhatu mauri is returned to her kete (basket) on the table.

Moving Forward

Culture, language, and connections to place are important aspects of social emotional learning, yet in New Zealand, research (ERO, 2015a, b) suggests that these aspects are often absent or have been silenced in the development of socio-emotional wellbeing. Engagement with a theoretical framework that merged Western

and indigenous knowledges and practices, enabled engagement with teachers and families who identified relationships as key to the development of social emotional wellbeing in students. The approach enabled us to identify the rich and varied understandings related to social and emotional wellbeing and also enabled us to understand how these groups sought to foster such understandings in their children. Explicit attention to culture and ways of being through shared and individual pedagogical practices contributed to fostering the understanding of emotions in children. Importantly, positive spinoff effects were also noted in terms of changes to how teachers understood themselves and their relationships with students and their families. Overall, it appears that fostering an understanding of emotions, contributes to interpersonal connections and relationships between teachers and students, between students, and with families. These are all likely to be of vital importance in reaching desired levels of social emotional wellbeing in our children.

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Chapter 9
Developing a Culturally Appropriate Tool to Assess Young People's Wellbeing in Kazakhstan: A Derived Etic Approach

Ros McLellan, Carole Faucher, and Liz Winter

Abstract This chapter focuses on the process of developing a concise but conceptually-grounded young people's wellbeing measure for use in educational practice with secondary-aged students in Kazakhstan. Assessment of young people's wellbeing is a relatively new field and research has primarily been conducted in western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic contexts. The available literature suggests that tools developed in such contexts cannot be applied unproblematically in other contexts, as whilst there may be some commonalities across all contexts, there are nuanced differences in how wellbeing is conceptualised related to cultural setting. This necessitates an adjustment of commonly used assessment tools to ensure they are culturally appropriate. We suggest that a derived etic approach can be deployed to successfully modify wellbeing measurement tools to make them fit for context and illustrate how this can be achieved through outlining the process we undertook in our work in Kazakhstan. Such an approach is challenging, thus some of the lessons we have learned are shared to empower researchers wishing to take this approach.

Keywords Assessment · Wellbeing instrument · Wellbeing model · Derived-etic approach · Cultural setting · Iterative-longitudinal mixed-method approach

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Introduction

Childhood wellbeing is known to be influenced by a range of contextual factors, including those associated with school such as relationships and school connectedness (Patalay & Fitzsimons, 2016). Schools, therefore, have a crucial role in shaping but also potentially intervening to improve young people's wellbeing either on an individual or whole-school basis. However, to inform their work, educational stakeholders need reliable and valid tools at their disposal to assess wellbeing; tools that capture young people's perceptions of wellbeing in relation to aspects of life that are meaningful to them (Fattore et al., 2007). Such tools also need to be relatively short and easy to interpret to be of practical use in educational settings. Here we focus on the process of developing a concise but conceptually-grounded young people's wellbeing measure for use in educational practice with secondary-aged students in Kazakhstan in a collaboration between a higher education institution in the UK and Kazakhstan.[1]

As will be outlined below, assessment of young people's wellbeing is a comparatively recent area of enquiry. Furthermore, as will be discussed, tools have primarily been developed through research in what has been termed WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic) nations (Henrich et al., 2010). This chapter will argue that whilst there are some commonalities across contexts, there are nuanced differences in how wellbeing is conceptualised related to cultural setting, and this necessitates an adjustment of commonly used assessment tools to ensure they are culturally appropriate. We suggest that a derived etic approach (Berry, 1989) can be deployed to successfully modify wellbeing measurement tools and illustrate how this can be achieved through outlining the process we undertook in our work in Kazakhstan. According to Berry (1989, 1999) this involves a three step 'imposed etic – emic – derived etic' procedure whereby a concept derived from the researcher's context, in this case wellbeing, is transported to another culture and tested (imposed-etic), then explored further in that culture to discover new aspects (emic), before integrating what has been learned from the first two steps through comparison, often with the goal of generating a more universal understanding (derived-etic). In our work this entailed an iterative 4-phase mixed methods study involving quantitative and qualitative data generation at each stage with the findings from qualitative work in one phase informing subsequent quantitative data collection in the following phase. Such an approach is challenging and the lessons we have learned and share here will be of use to researchers in the field.

To set the scene, we first give a brief overview of the Kazakhstan context to illustrate how this diverges politically, socially, and culturally from the WEIRD contexts where the majority of published wellbeing research has thus far been conducted. We review what little is known about young people's wellbeing in Kazakhstan in comparison to the UK. The paper then provides a narrative of the process

[1] This was one of the objectives of a British Council Newton Fund and Al Farabi Foundation funded Institutional Links research project that began work in 2015.

undertaken in applying a derived etic approach through imposed-etic, emic, and derived-etic steps. Possible tools are explored to justify the starting point taken. Issues raised by an imposed etic approach are outlined. How the derived-etic approach was operationalised is detailed. The paper closes with some reflections on the challenges of undertaking such work.

Kazakhstan Context

A key feature is the geopolitical and societal changes that have taken place over recent years with Kazakhstan being one of the five Central Asian countries to emerge from the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. It is culturally diverse, with a majority of Kazakhs, who are Turkic speakers, a strong minority of ethnic Russians and a diversity of officially recognised minority groups spread throughout the vast territory. There are all together 125 groups represented. Linguistically Kazakhstan is split between a majority of Russified Kazakhs, ethnic Russians, and minority Slavonic speakers in the North and Kazakh speakers in other parts, with important communities of Turkic speakers such as Uighurs and Uzbeks in the South and Southeast. The State, which is highly centralised, has adopted a nation-building framework that gives authority to the language, norms and values connected to the eponym group represented by the Kazakhs, thus the development of a national identity including instatement and elevation of Kazakh to coexist alongside Russian as an official language has been accomplished in a single generation (Sharipova, 2020). However, the Soviet cultural legacy remains solidly entrenched in everyday life as well as in official administration and is especially enduring at all levels of the educational system as in other parts of Central Asia (CohenMiller et al., 2017; Johnson, 2008; Silova, 2011).

Emergence of a national identity whilst mindful of a need to sustain social cohesion and fiscal stability have been mainstay ambitions for Kazakhstan since independence (Narottum, 2006). Underpinning this has been First President Nazarbayev's commitment to social and educational programmes that develop human capital in line with global trends without which the nation's economy would be vulnerable (Nechayeva & Upabekov, 2016). Indeed, First President Nazarbayev has personally advanced opportunities for international scholarships (Perna et al., 2014) and modernisation of the state education system (Bridges, 2014). This has engendered a forward-looking approach where young people are central to the future of Kazakhstan but created a divide between past and current generations' attitudes towards personal responsibility (Davies, 2019). The transition from parents' and grandparents' expectations of what school constitutes to the current generation's experiences of a revised school system have included navigating a collective to individualistic purpose to education (Ilimkhanova et al., 2014). Principles of individual advancement are not new in Kazakhstan as indicated by the Olympiad programmes of before and now. However, rewards and support for these were very much at a community level so the responsibility for success and failure in a

competition was shared across teachers, the resources available to support the application and not just at the competitor's door (Jeltova & Balchin, 2009; Lövheim, 2021; Wirszup, 1963).

Measuring Young People's Wellbeing: Starting Point for Development of a Tool for Kazakhstan

We did not start this project from scratch, as the first author had previously developed a short instrument to assess children and young people's wellbeing in and outside of school in the context of an evaluation of the impact on wellbeing of a national scheme bringing artists into English schools (McLellan et al., 2012). The measure developed through that project will be outlined further below and had been found to be robust in the UK context (McLellan & Steward, 2015). However, given the different national context of Kazakhstan, and with developments in the measurement field since that project had started, we needed to consider whether a different starting point would be more optimal. Economists have called for wellbeing to be assessed at national levels to generate a comprehensive picture of wellbeing (Layard, 2005), thus we started by exploring whether there had been any work at national level in Kazakhstan and also what might be drawn from well-established measurement programmes elsewhere. We then moved on to look at developments in tools developed by researchers since our previous study.

National Measurement Programmes and Their Limitations

Kazakhstan, in common with many other contexts, did not have a comprehensive regular national wellbeing measurement programme at the point at which the research was commissioned, although interestingly, at the time of writing a new initiative to create a child wellbeing index has just been announced (April 2021).[2] We did, however, identify one national survey of child wellbeing in Kazakhstan, discussed further below. We then looked to see if anything might be learned from national measurement programmes in other contexts. The UK, as a relatively early adopter of such an approach having launched its national wellbeing assessment programme in 2010 through the Office for National Statistics[3] can be regarded as nation that has made a substantial and sustained investment to develop a robust childhood wellbeing index, therefore we felt it would be instructive to see how self-perceptions of wellbeing were represented in this index.

[2] See https://www.unicef.org/kazakhstan/en/press-releases/child-well-being-index-project-launched-kazakhstan

[3] ONS see https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing

To the best of our knowledge, the only information available at national level in Kazakhstan was the 2012 UNICEF report on child wellbeing (Roelen & Gassmann, 2012). This utilised data collected by the Agency of Statistics in Kazakhstan as part of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, an international household survey initiative coordinated by UNICEF enabling countries to monitor progress.[4] The wellbeing domains covered by the report included nutrition, education, health, housing, water and sanitation, and social inclusion and protection. Looking more closely at the indicators deployed for education, these included: firstly for younger children not yet at school, adult confirmation of whether the child has (a) engaged in learning activities with an adult in the household and (b) has at least one book/picture book; and secondly for older children pre-school or school enrolment. These indicators seem narrow in scope in terms of capturing the complexity of wellbeing in relation to the school context, and can be regarded as objective in nature, the same being true for the other domains reported upon. Objective indicators have been criticised for failing to accurately reflect individuals' wellbeing experiences (Diener & Suh, 1997), and as the latter was at the heart of our research, these measures were of limited to use to us.

The report authors note in a later publication, it is important that the analysis of wellbeing reflects the countries objectives and context, thus domains such as nutrition were included following consultation with stakeholders and consideration of key policy documents such as the vision for 2030 and the country's strategic development plan (Roelen & Gassmann, 2014). Subjective wellbeing has been conceptualised as emotional responses, domain satisfactions and global judgments of life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999), thus it is important to capture people's satisfaction with relevant domains. However, there is no evidence that this consultation included young people, which given that young people have their own concerns and priorities (James et al., 1998) means there are no guarantees that these domains are meaningful to them (Fattore et al., 2007). Thus, whilst this report was an important first step in charting the territory of child wellbeing in Kazakhstan, it is clearly of limited value in developing a comprehensive wellbeing measure reflecting children and young people's views of their wellbeing.

Turning now to the UK, the recently published 'state of the nation' report (Department for Education, 2020) includes the latest national data on school-aged children and young people over 31 indicators.[5] Indicators cover the areas of personal wellbeing, mental and physical health, education and skills, relationships, personal finance, activities and time use, and home and the environment, with figures for each indicator being compiled from a range of existing panel surveys and national databases. Unlike those reported on in Kazakhstan, these domains have been established as important to children and young people through consultation in research commissioned by the Children's Society (Rees et al., 2010). Interestingly,

[4] See https://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_24302.html

[5] See https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/childrenswellbeingmeasures for the 31 indicators.

whilst there are some overlaps in domains covered in the UK and Kazakhstan, there are clear differences, with things such as nutrition and sanitation not covered in the UK index. The UK index includes a mix of objective and subjective indicators, the latter of which include assessment of overall satisfaction with life and some elements of affect, as well as domain satisfactions. Whether they adequately capture the complexity of subjective wellbeing is questionable, as not only is negative affect missing, but the items overall are fairly limited, with, for instance, only two subjectively oriented items relating to education and skills.[6]

Furthermore, there is growing recognition that an individual's experience of wellbeing is more than just feeling well, a hedonic conception (Kahneman et al., 1999) but should also incorporate the notion of eudaimonia, based on the Aristotelian view of a good life being ethical activity expressing virtue, interpreted by contemporary writers as relating to meaning and purpose in life and self-actualisation (see Waterman, 1993): in other words, functioning well. Although a number of theories and models have been developed to conceptualise eudaimonic wellbeing, such as Ryff's (1989) 6-dimensional model that in addition to meaning and purpose, covers mastery, personal growth, self-acceptance, and autonomy, how best to conceptualise eudaimonic wellbeing is still an open question with 8 overlapping approaches having been documented in a recent review (Martela & Sheldon, 2019). How well these approaches reflect the eudaimonic wellbeing of children and young people is even less certain as models haven't always stood up to scrutiny in empirical work with young people (see, for example, Gao & McLellan, 2018 for a test of Ryff's model with Chinese adolescents). Nevertheless, the fact that the ONS index includes a sole indicator of this nature, capturing opinion of how worthwhile things people do are, would suggest the index is very limited in this respect.

If the existing index in Kazakhstan did not capture subjective wellbeing, and well-developed indices such as those deployed in the UK also had considerable limitations it was necessary to move away from national level indices. The Kazakhstan report suggested some domains that may be relevant to young people there, that might be included in an assessment of subjective wellbeing, but as these were somewhat different and more limited than the one's identified as important to young people in the UK, it was clear that young people in Kazakhstan would need to be consulted. However, wellbeing encompasses life satisfaction and affect more generally, as well as eudaimonic elements in addition to domain satisfactions. How best to capture these various context-free aspects could be considered by examining the various existing measures related to the different conceptual wellbeing models. This work had been done in the first author's previous work (McLellan & Steward, 2015). Although a number of measures capturing aspects of wellbeing have been developed in the last three decades, such as the widely used Satisfaction with Life Scale (see Pavot & Diener, 1993 for validation details) that generates over 3000 hits in a search of the ERIC database, surprisingly few scales have been validated for use

[6] These being (1) percentage of 10–15 year-old children relatively happy with the school they go to, and (2) percentage of 10–15 year-old children expressing the wish to go on to further full-time education.

with children and young people. As no measure at the time the previous research was conducted in 2012 was felt to be sufficiently comprehensive encompassing both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of wellbeing and being sufficiently concise for practical for use in the classroom with a focus on the school domain, this had led to the development of a new tool. The review of the field and details of this tool are detailed fully in McLellan & Steward (2015). Thus, the procedure undertaken for this project was to consider any new developments in the field since this previous research was undertaken.

Developments in Conceptually Derived Childhood Wellbeing Scales

One reasonably well-known instrument in the UK, that is now being used more widely is the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale (WEMWBS). Developed for use with adults, this purports to cover both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of wellbeing (Tennant et al., 2007), and has the advantage of being a fairly concise scale available in 7 and 14-item versions. There was emerging evidence at the time this project started that it might be used with younger people with the publication of a validation study on 13–16 year-olds (Clarke et al., 2011), although this wasn't yet common practice.

We also considered measures used in the 'Children's Worlds' project,[7] an international survey of wellbeing of children aged 8–12 years-old that started in 2009 as a collaboration between six countries. Three waves of data collection deploying an extensive tool have now been undertaken with the latest involving 40 countries, although not including Kazakhstan. Findings from the first wave had been published since our earlier study (Dinisman & Rees, 2014). Context-free measures to capture hedonic wellbeing are included covering life satisfaction and affect, although not eudaimonic wellbeing.[8] On closer inspection only the 7-item Student Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1991) is used as a full measure of overall life satisfaction.[9] There is also a short 6-item measure capturing affect called Russell's Core Affect. The actual items only cover positive affect and the reference provided (Russell, 2003) is to a theoretical article on affect. Further investigation suggested the items had been developed specifically for this questionnaire but without any information about the scale validity we only used these for reference.[10]

[7] See https://isciweb.org/

[8] There is an optional section on the version for 12-year-olds that includes 8 items purporting to measure eudaimonic wellbeing, but the source is not referenced see https://isciweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ISCWeB_Parts-of-the-questionnaire1.pdf

[9] There is an additional single item of overall life satisfaction, but single item measures are best avoided given problems with measurement error are accentuated with single item scales.

[10] A much more recent article has provided some validation data (Casas et al., 2020) but this wasn't available to us at the time.

These investigations suggested that there weren't new well-validated instruments available. As outlined in McLellan & Steward (2015), in developing our previous tool, we had drawn on instruments capturing life satisfaction (The Satisfaction with Life Scale – see Diener et al., 1985) and affect (Positive and Negative Activation Schedule (PANAS) – see Watson et al., 1988) to capture subjective wellbeing. Although we hadn't specifically drawn on the Student Life Satisfaction Scale, as our tool contained similar items, had a clear subscale relating to life satisfaction and demonstrated reasonable psychometric properties we didn't feel it necessary to add this scale in the first instance. Similarly, although we had drawn on PANAS, there didn't appear to be anything to be gained from inclusion of the Russell Core Affect scale, particularly when it did not appear to be validated. New tools to capture young people's eudaimonic wellbeing, which had been a particular area of interest given the lack of consensus on conceptualisation in the literature, had not been identified, with the exception of WEMWBS. In the previous UK study, we had largely drawn on measures developed from conceptual models primarily for an adult audience including Ryff's psychological wellbeing model (Ryff & Singer, 2006), need satisfaction in self-determination theory (Baard et al., 2004), as well as considering the items used in a module on wellbeing in the European Social Survey which explicitly considered elements of eudaimonic as well as hedonic wellbeing (see Huppert et al., 2009). Taking from all of these meant the coverage was broad and we couldn't be sure it represented the core of the construct, although the two subscales capturing these elements (perceived competence and interpersonal wellbeing) appeared robust. Whilst WEMWBS potentially offered new aspects (for instance in feelings of usefulness), in the first instance we decided not to add additional items given we had already established the integrity of our existing scales. Thus, our existing 21-item instrument comprising the 4 subscales noted above appeared the best starting point for the measurement tool for this project.

Issues with WEIRD Tools and the Derived Etic Approach

The difficulty with starting with our existing measure developed in the UK context and imposing this as a model of childhood wellbeing, is that this is assuming understandings of wellbeing are universal, in other words it is taking an etic approach (Berry, 1969). But as we have already highlighted, from looking at the only national study on childhood wellbeing in Kazakhstan, and noting the very different social histories of Kazakhstan and the UK, different elements have been emphasised in terms of domain specifications when comparing Kazakhstan to the UK, thus an etic approach could be problematic. Domain under-representation, or the failure to include aspects that are important in a particular context in the measure is one issue (Smith et al., 2013). But the issue goes deeper than this, as there is no guarantee that the other elements highlighted within hedonic and eudaimonic models of wellbeing developed in Western contexts would be understood in the same way in Kazakhstan. We could not be certain, therefore, whether our UK-derived instrument would really

capture wellbeing as it is constructed or understood in Kazakhstan, and if it didn't this undermines the validity of the tool in this context.

One way of establishing whether wellbeing models hold the same meaning in different contexts is to examine whether an instrument works in the same way across contexts by looking at measurement invariance. If there is measurement invariance across contexts, then the underlying model is understood in the same way in all contexts. At the time we began this project, this type of analysis was just beginning to be seen in the wellbeing field, although it is still relatively rare as it requires relatively large datasets across multiple contexts. A paper derived from the Children's Worlds project had been published examining measurement equivalence of the Student Life Satisfaction Scale based on a dataset of nearly 17,000 12-year-olds from the 11 countries participating in the first pilot wave (Casas & Rees, 2015). They had demonstrated through a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis that comparisons across countries are not straightforward, as only metric and not scaler invariance could be achieved from a reduced scale of 4 of the 7 items and including only 9 or the 11 countries. As we argue elsewhere (McLellan, 2019), there are a number of potential problems that could have led to this interpretation paradox, i.e. the difficulty in accounting for statistical model differences across contexts (Van de Vijver & Leung, 2000), related to sampling, administration and instrument translation, many of which are acknowledged. Nevertheless, the lack of scaler invariance in the Casas & Rees (2015) study suggests that even the aspects of wellbeing that aren't tied to specific domains may not be interpreted in the same way in different contexts. Their work suggests use of the 4-item reduced life satisfaction scale might be appropriate for Kazakhstan as these items have identical relationships with the latent construct of life satisfaction across 9 countries in their study (metric invariance i.e. an increase in the latent variable is associated by the same increase in the observed or measured variable) but there is some element of uniform item bias given that there are some relative differences between contexts that are not accounted for by the underlying construct (i.e. the starting point is not the same across contexts, which is what scaler equivalence means). This means for the 9 countries the wellbeing model conceptually is the same, but it is not appropriate to compare absolute scales values across contexts. If this is the case, given we wished to develop a scale for use within Kazakhstan rather than to compare Kazakhstan with say the UK, then this would not be problematic. But Kazakhstan could be like the two countries that had to be discarded from Casas & Rees (2015) analysis as not fitting the model. Actually, the UK was one of the countries Casas & Rees discarded suggesting life satisfaction may be interpreted slightly differently where our starting instrument was developed. Thus, the empirical evidence indicated that imposing our UK-derived wellbeing instrument with its underlying wellbeing model was risky at best and potentially invalid.

Behavioural science in general has been criticised for its propensity to make broad claims about humanity based on statistical samples derived from Western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic (WEIRD) societies which it has been argued are amongst the least representative samples possible (Henrich et al., 2010). Given all of the conceptual models and nearly all the assessment tools referred to

here have been developed by North American-based researchers, this criticism can clearly be levelled in the wellbeing field. As we have already demonstrated, Kazakhstan is a very different context to North America, politically, socially and culturally even if there is a move away from collective to individual responsibility (Ilimkhanova et al., 2014) such that it may be becoming more westernised in thinking, especially in highly populated urban areas like the capital, Nur Sultan, or the economic centre, Almaty.

Given the problems with an etic approach, it might be argued therefore that an emic approach where meaning is derived locally (Berry, 1969), might be more appropriate. Such work where meaning is understood as historically and culturally embedded in discourse (McNess et al., 2015, p. 300), would suggest a different starting point, potentially by taking for instance an ethnographic, grounded theory or phenomenological approach where prior assumptions are suspended or bracketed (Moustakas, 1994). Research in this vein would explore in detail understandings and subjective experiences of wellbeing in the daily life of Kazakhstani students and school staff providing thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) most likely through some combination of interviews and observations and potentially other data collection methods. Such work would give voice to those from different regions and ethnic groups capturing diversity and plurality. Cultural anthropologists, such as Izquierdo, see wellbeing as 'derived, maintained, shaped and challenged by the cultural systems and specific environments from which is originated' (2005, p. 768), thus capturing local understandings through an emic approach seems highly apt. Emic studies generally make no assumptions about cultural generality; their concern is on the construction of meanings and world views in a single socio-cultural setting (Beals et al., 2020).

Focus on the local resonates with postmodern relational thinking, which as Gergen (1994) points out is an 'invitation to reflexivity, encouraging one to consider all propositional realities and dictates as local, provisional, and political' (p. 414). The fluid and dynamic nature of wellbeing constructions proposed through such understandings might not be seen as compatible with our aim to develop a tool that would be useful across Kazakhstan. However, Berry (1989) has argued that it is possible to deploy emic work within a post-positivist framework when the aim of the work is to develop testable propositions, and indeed underpinning epistemological positions may not be as irreconcilable as supposed (Holtz, 2020). In developing an instrument that could be used across a diverse school population we were assuming that the underlying wellbeing model was the same for all within the Kazakhstan context and were intending to establish this was the case. Thus, we wished to move from a starting position of an imposed-etic in applying our original UK tool to a derived-etic approach, through the 3-step process Berry (1989) outlines. Smith et al. (2013) identify Schwartz's (1992) cross-cultural study of values as the best example of a derived-etic measure, thus we aimed to take a similar approach. In Schwartz's study a survey that developed in the USA (Rokeach, 1973) was the starting point, but values from instruments developed in a range of other contexts were added and collaborators and scholars in local contexts were asked to add additional values

relevant to the local context to develop a new instrument that was subsequently tested. How we adapted this approach for our work is described further below.

The Derived Etic Approach in Action

Taking our existing instrument as a starting point, we worked through an iterative process drawing on local nuanced understandings of wellbeing to develop and refine the tool to ensure it reflected fully on how wellbeing is conceptualised in Kazakhstan beyond the initial overly-simplistic feedback that wellbeing was construed simply as being fiscally secure, or in relation to physical health. This is summarised in Fig. 9.1.

The first phase involved administering the original 21-item instrument encompassing the dimensions of life satisfaction, affect, perceived competence and interpersonal wellbeing in and outside of school to a relatively large sample of over 2000 young people aged 13–18 years in 9 schools across 4 different areas of Kazakhstan. The purpose of this was primarily to establish how well, if at all, the UK-derived wellbeing model fitted the Kazakhstan context (i.e. an imposed-etic starting point). Given the size of Kazakhstan it was not possible to visit all regions to ensure a fully representative sample but the areas included were selected purposefully to capture different geographical regions, which is important given the greater preponderance of Kazakhs in the south and ethnic Russians in the north of the country. Separate Kazakh and Russian versions of the questionnaire were created so respondents could choose the version they felt most comfortable completing, although generally whole classes completed one or the other in accordance with their usual language of instruction in school. The original questionnaire was translated from English into Kazakh and Russian by Kazakhstani nationals in the broader research team based in

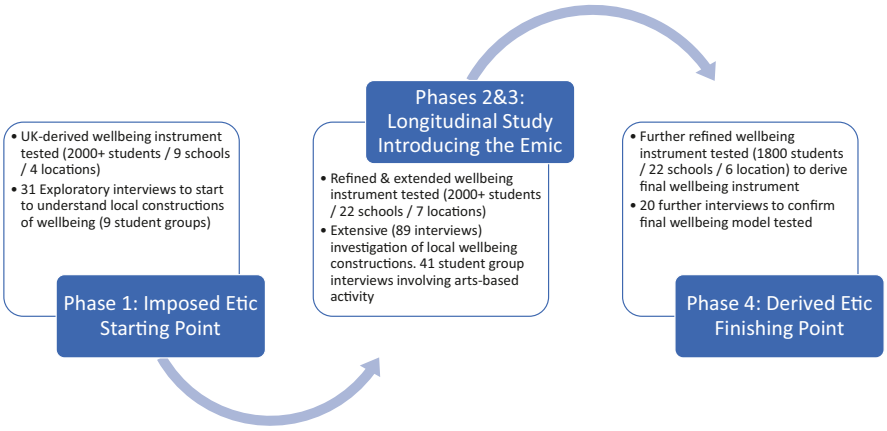

Fig. 9.1 Overview of 3-Step Imposed-etic, emic, derived-etic process

Kazakhstan who were fluent in all three languages. Back-translation and decentring (i.e. using a conceptually similar phrase rather than a direct translation) techniques were used to avoid translation bias (Brislin et al., 1973), although this did pose some difficulties as wellbeing itself is difficult to translate as the nearest translations refer to physical wellbeing and financial prosperity. Thus, there needed to be considerable discussion within the team to ensure a common conceptual understanding with the Kazakhstan nationals in particular providing extensive feedback to ensure consistency of translation across the different questionnaire versions.

Confirmatory factor analysis was deployed, applying the model derived from the UK sample, to determine how well this model fitted the context of Kazakhstan. The model overall showed promise. Three items including 'feeling happy', which we had had difficulties translating, had to be discarded, and the fit indices derived from the remaining 18 items were in most cases on the cusp of what might be regarded as acceptable with some items having relatively low loadings (see McLellan et al., 2016). Interestingly, we learnt that since Kazakh is an agglutinative language, the Kazakh verb suffixes describing 'feeling' could be ambiguously interpreted to refer to the person completing the survey or not. Hence, we were encouraged in the view that an etic-imposed approach to construction of our scale needed constant scrutiny including taking closer regard to constructional differences between the three languages that made items unstable, whilst also needing to expand the initial scale beyond the school domain to develop a more comprehensive measure of wellbeing.

We had also undertaken a number of interviews in phase 1, to start to understand what wellbeing meant and how this might manifest in school and other domains in Kazakhstan. The 31 interviews conducted across schools included group interviews with students with different year groups, group interviews with teachers, individual interviews with senior leadership including Vice Principals with responsibility for 'upbringing',[11] and a smaller number of interviews with school psychologists. These interviews were conducted in the language of the participants' choice by two of the authors supported by a member of the broader research team fluent in Kazakh and/or Russian. In the first instance we paid more attention to the 9 group interviews with students, as we felt more weight needed to be given to their perceptions in line with our conceptualisation of subjective wellbeing and this was in keeping with the more emic approach we wanted to introduce. Unfortunately, these particular interviews were not evenly distributed across contexts and were largely undertaken in urban and in some cases selective schools, largely due to the limited time available during the main fieldwork visit by the UK team. Our initial analysis of these interviews suggested that whilst some interesting themes were emerging, for instance the importance of relationships with peers and teachers and sense of school belonging, and the role of the environment and concerns about health and healthy behaviours, we did not feel that we had generated a comprehensive view of which domains might be of importance in all contexts or had gained a deep understanding of how

[11] This is a pastoral role which involves looking after the physical and emotional welfare of students.

young people perceived wellbeing. Thus, the interviews with students and others would be more usefully regarded as contextual background as a starting point for a more emic approach, in particular they helped us to develop a knowledge of who else to speak with and the interview protocol for the next phase.

The second and third phases of the study were linked, as one project aim was to gather some longitudinal data on wellbeing, thus involved the same sample tested 6 months apart. But this necessitated refining the phase 1 instrument, drawing to some extent on what we had learned from the interviews to create a new version for use in phases 2 & 3. Given that issues such as social support and the environment had been highlighted, we re-considered the literature in this light, drawing on the developmental assets framework (Leffert et al., 1998) to consider external as well as internal assets, given our existing measure focused largely on internal resources. Reports from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Study (Currie et al., 2008; Inchley et al., 2016) indicated social support from peers, teachers and family should be included, which reflected what young people had told us in the interviews. A European Union initiative collecting statistics on quality of life published in an online Eurostat publication[12] highlighted the importance of safety, living conditions and the natural environment, themes which not only reflected issues discussed in interviews but resonated with the prior UNICEF report on child wellbeing in Kazakhstan (Roelen & Gassmann, 2012). The HBSC survey also clearly distinguished health outcomes and behaviours that directly linked to student testimony about health concerns. Drawing on these sources, we tested a wider wellbeing model to include what we now termed psychological wellbeing, resources for wellbeing and physical wellbeing.

We retained well-loading items from the original instrument for psychological wellbeing but supplemented with additional items from sources such as WEMWBS as well as sources consulted in the development of the original scale such as the general form of the Basic Psychological Needs Scale (Deci & Ryan, 2000) to bolster areas that either weren't initially well represented (such as meaning and purpose) or where items had been deleted (for instance around competence). We drew on the Adolescent Health Attitudes and Behaviour Survey (Reininger et al., 2003) and the Multidimensional Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner & Gilman, 2002) to capture social support, whilst items on environmental resources largely came from the World Health Organization's Quality of Life (WHOQOL) Index (World Health Organization, 1995). To capture physical wellbeing in terms of both perceived outcomes and behaviours we drew on another instrument the first author had developed in a previous project (McLellan et al., 2015) in addition to WHOQOL. Although these instruments had not been used in Kazakhstan we were drawing on them specifically as our interview data suggested they were important, thus the approach taken was emic to reflect local understandings despite drawing on existing instruments. As we were testing a new substantially extended model, we ensured we had a relatively large battery of items, 68 in total, in recognition that

[12] See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Quality_of_life_indicators

these would be whittled down on the basis of their performance in the subsequent statistical analysis.

In addition to administrating the revised and extended instrument to a much broader sample of 22 schools that encompassed small rural to large urban non-selective schools, selective lyceums, and those for gifted students across 7 locations involving over 2000 young people, we also conducted a considerably larger number of interviews. 41 of these 89 interviews were with groups of young people across the 22 schools. To gain a more nuanced and contextualised understanding of wellbeing perceptions and given the difficulties we'd had with the translation of wellbeing, we started these interviews by asking young people to draw or write down five things that make them feel good and separately a similar representation for things that made them feel bad and used this as the basis for the conversation in the first instance before following up on the topic areas introduced into the phase 2 questionnaire. Artefacts (drawings and writing) were collected and recorded as part of the data corpus. Such an approach had successfully been used in a previous study by the first author in Slovakia (Janik Blaskova & McLellan, 2017). The resultant analysis identified three main themes embracing a number of subthemes as encapsulating wellbeing: sense of self and self-worth, relationships, and external factors such as the climate and physical environment, employment prospects and local amenities. These themes confirmed to a large degree that the areas we had added into the model were appropriate but also extended it to incorporate both additional aspects such as the lack of local opportunities, and to place greater emphasis on some elements already incorporated such as the negative impact of living in the harsh climate (Brown Hajdukova et al., 2017).

As expected, the extended model from phase 2 & 3, where a large number of additional items had been included required considerable refinement but this process, like the analysis of the phase 1 statistical data, gave a clear steer on items that could be retained and helped to crystalise domains of concern with respect to subjective wellbeing. The analysis from the student interview data particularly from the emergent subthemes provided further guidance on what else required to be incorporated in the final model to be tested in phase 4. A similar process to that used in developing the phase 2/3 instrument was undertaken, although new items around some of the emergent elements needed to be constructed when existing items or scales were not apparent. For instance, an item on satisfaction with place of residence in terms of physical environment, social and employment opportunities had to be constructed, reflecting the shift towards a more emic approach through the project. Again, a longer instrument than that envisaged for the final version was tested in phase 4 with a new sample of just under 2000 students from 22 different schools across 6 locations, only one of which was the same as that visited in phases 2 & 3. Statistical analysis of phase 4 data lead to further refinement of the model and the tool, resulting in a final model of wellbeing comprising psychological wellbeing, physical wellbeing, environs and resources, and social support, assessed via a 39-item instrument. Thus, through these connected phases gathering quantitative and qualitative data, starting from an imposed-etic, we increasingly drew on a more emic approach to ultimately produce a new derived-etic instrument.

Challenges of Applying a Derived Etic Approach and Concluding Thoughts

As we have tried to convey in outlining the process above, applying a derived etic approach requires considerable resource and time, which would be difficult to achieve without external funding and an extensive research team. But beyond this, we have learned quite a lot on our research journey which is worth sharing for those that intend following a similar path.

There is no doubt that it is difficult to rigorously analyse an extensive qualitative dataset to fully inform the development of a quantitative tool over successive waves of a project and we certainly didn't allow sufficient time for this when fieldwork visits were roughly 6 months apart. Some elements of the data collected are still to be analysed and much is still to be fully written-up even although the project has finished. But also, there is always a tension in reconciling the philosophical positioning of such work. The first author's background in psychology is more attuned to post-positivism and ultimately this does unpin the idea of developing a tool to assess the latent construct of wellbeing taking an etic approach, even if it is a derived etic approach. The second author's background in social anthropology, on the other hand, meant she takes more of an interpretivist position which resonates with the emic aspects. Sociological and educational perspectives were also brought into the frame by other team members. We needed to take an interdisciplinary approach (Moran, 2010) to integrate these different perspectives which required constant discussion and negotiation which is not easy with a large team located in two very different contexts but overall, this came down to taking a broadly pragmatic stance (Murphy, 1990). In addition to this we had to navigate the linguistic and sociocultural context. Although two of the three UK-based team members had been involved in research and development work in Kazakhstan for 3 years prior to the start of the project, neither spoke Russian or Kazakh. Similarly, not all of the Kazakhstan-based team spoke Russian or Kazakh as the institution at which they are based uses English as a medium of instruction. As we indicated above, different cultural traditions predominate in different regions in Kazakhstan, and we needed to increase our awareness and understanding of this context. This required a careful consideration of positionality at all times, which had to permeate all stages of the research from the initial design to collecting the data, to the final stages of dissemination. A schematic representation of the interdisciplinary working we adopted incorporating cross cultural awareness, together with the elements relating to trust and positionality are outlined further in CohenMiller et al. (2017).

Although our broader team involved research assistants who were Kazakhstani nationals who advised us on matters of cultural sensitivities and we met regularly as a team via videoconferencing which helped us pre-empt many potential issues, some emerged that we needed to address on the way. For instance, in the first phase, the interviews with young people were conducted by the two of the UK team with a Kazakhstani research assistant helping with translation. Due to the need for translation in situ to both pose questions and understand responses, it wasn't apparent

during the interviews that the young people were being reticent, as translations necessarily had at times to be a synopsis rather than a literal account so as to avoid disrupting the flow of the conversation more than was necessary. Thus, it was not until we looked at the translated interview transcripts that it became evident that young people weren't fully opening up to us about their wellbeing perceptions and concerns. The introduction of an arts-based activity in the second phase and ensuring these interviews were conducted by a Russian or Kazakh speaker resulted in much richer data being gathered. In contrast it was important for the UK team members to interview the Vice Principals and other senior teachers as a mark of respect.

Despite all of these challenges, as we look back at the overall approach we have taken, we are confident that we have achieved our main objective of developing a valid model and accompanying measurement tool that reflects how young people conceptualise wellbeing, which will be of use to those in educational settings in Kazakhstan. We anticipate it can be used as a reflective tool to open up conversations with young people about their wellbeing and may be of use for school-based staff in helping to identify potential wellbeing issues more broadly in their context perhaps as a springboard for action and further investigation. We believe that the derived-etic approach we took is the only way we could have reached our goal as neither an etic nor emic approach alone would enable the development a valid tool usable in different school contexts across Kazakhstan. We hope by sharing our experience and detailing the process, as well as highlighting some potential areas of difficulty, that others interested in following us down this path will do so in a more enlightened manner.

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Chapter 10
Wellbeing in Personal Development: Lessons from National School-Based Programmes in Ireland and South Korea

Aidan Clerkin, Gerry Jeffers, and Sang-Duk Choi

Abstract This chapter describes two programmes, with significant similarities and differences, that have been available in Ireland since 1974 (*Transition Year*; TY) and South Korea since 2013 (*Free Year Programme*; FYP). TY takes place over one full year as an integrated part of mainstream secondary education. TY students engage in developmental activities, vocational work experience, and increased interaction with the adult world. These experiences are intended to facilitate enhanced maturity and broadened horizons, supporting young people in becoming fulfilled citizens. Although TY is well-established within Ireland, it is an unusual innovation internationally. However, 2013 saw the introduction of FYP, which was partially informed by TY. South Korean policy-makers recognised concern about student wellbeing and stress in a high-stakes academic environment, and challenges relating to students' readiness for the working world. FYP is a response to those concerns. This chapter offers an overview and comparisons between the two programmes. We argue that both are founded on a eudaimonic view of wellbeing in education, aiming for more holistic and rounded student development. Significantly, both programmes emphasise community engagement and interpersonal development, alongside personal development and self-directed learning. The challenges and practices identified offer lessons for educators in Ireland, South Korea, and other jurisdictions.

Keywords Personal development · Maturity · Career exploration · Community · Social development · Citizenship

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Policy Interest in Personal Development and Wellbeing in School Settings

Recent years have seen a burgeoning use of phrases such as '21st century skills', 'non-cognitive abilities', and 'social-emotional competencies' amongst policy-makers, think tanks, and in media discussion of educational outcomes (see, for example, Fadel, 2008; OECD, n.d.; Schleicher, 2018). Such discussion is usually in the context of claims that an education system is in need of modernisation by placing more emphasis on critical thinking and interpersonal characteristics, which are seen as being more important for current and future cohorts of students than has been the case for previous generations. As well as exerting pressure on governments to bring their national curricula into line with these '21st century' norms, this has contributed to the development of a variety of school-based programmes, including interventions targeted at particular groups and universal programmes, that are intended to enhance students' social and emotional learning (Belfield et al., 2015; Bywater & Sharples, 2012; Durlak et al., 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

In parallel, a policy-level focus on wellbeing amongst young people has become prominent over the last decade. A variety of initiatives can be seen across jurisdictions and amongst non-governmental think tanks (e.g., NEF, 2011; NICE, 2009; OECD, 2011). In Ireland, the development of a dedicated Wellbeing strand was a major component of significant reforms to junior cycle education (Grades 7–9), alongside broader changes which were collectively aimed at encouraging a more holistic and less exam-driven educational experience (DES, 2015; NCCA, 2017). These reforms were built on earlier consultation and advocacy, fuelled by a growing emphasis on monitoring various indicators of wellbeing both in school settings and in broader society (Brooks & Hanafin, 2005; DCYA, 2014; NESC, 2009). However, it should be recognised that schools themselves – in their structures, curricula and practices – can add to young people's stress. Therefore, an ongoing challenge is to ensure that structures, curricula and practices nurture wellbeing in realistic and sustainable ways.

It should also be recognised that despite this policy attention, contention remains over how best to conceptualise and operationalise wellbeing in schools. Spratt (2016) has identified four distinct themes in policy discourse around wellbeing: *physical health promotion* (drawing from a medical perspective of wellbeing), *social and emotional literacy* (drawing from a psychological perspective), *care* (drawing from a social care perspective), and *flourishing* (drawing from philosophical and liberal education perspectives). This disjointed landscape suggests that intentions of supporting the wellbeing and holistic development of young people could be undermined by a lack of clarity in focus, or mismatch in approach, between various agencies or between agencies and practitioners. The fuzziness inherent in the term 'wellbeing' prohibits an easy summary by a single indicator or perspective, but also more appropriately (and necessarily) represents wellbeing as a multidimensional construct.

There are two main goals of this chapter. The first is to provide a detailed description of two policy-led programmes that seek to support the development of students' socioemotional skills and interpersonal competencies in a structured way within regular formal educational settings. The second goal is to identify lessons that can be drawn from the implementation of both programmes in their two different cultural and educational contexts, which may be used to inform the development and implementation of programmes with similar aims in other jurisdictions or in other contexts.

One of the programmes discussed here (the *Transition Year programme*, or **TY**)[1] has been running in Irish post-primary schools for almost 50 years, and the other (the *Free Semester Program*,[2] which is in the process of becoming the *Free Year Program*, henceforth **FSP/FYP**) is a newer programme that has been introduced gradually into South Korean middle schools since 2013.[3] FYP shares some features with TY, but also exhibits some important differences.

To the degree that such efforts are successful, both programmes would be expected to contribute to students' wellbeing under a eudaimonic[4] conception of the term (i.e., with an emphasis on 'flourishing', as an individual and socially, rather than on individual 'happiness' or on the mere absence of ill-being). Mapped onto the themes in wellbeing discourse described by Spratt (2016), these programmes assume aspects of each of the four themes, most clearly in relation to care (both in terms of student-teacher relations, and in an awakening of care for others in the community), the psychological (social skill and emotional literacy), and the holistic education (flourishing as a whole person, beyond narrow instrumental consideration) conceptions of wellbeing.

As described in the following section, student wellbeing has become a key focus of debate in Ireland in recent years amid an ongoing review of education for senior students (aged approximately 15–18). TY has featured prominently in this discussion with respect to specific features that are seen as enhancing students' wellbeing in TY but lacking to one degree or another at other grade levels. In particular, TY is regarded as helping to promote wellbeing, or flourishing, both individually (greater maturity, competence, confidence, reflectiveness) and interpersonally (stronger relationships with teachers and peers, greater involvement with the school and wider community).

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[1] See https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Transition-Year-/Transition-Year.html and https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/programmes-and-key-skills/transition-year

[2] Although 'programme' is the spelling used in relation to TY and generally throughout this chapter, 'program' is maintained as the convention used in South Korea in direct reference to FSP/FYP.

[3] See http://english.moe.go.kr/sub/info.do?m=040101&s=english and http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130530000379

[4] The concept of *eudaimonia* as one conception of wellbeing –in contrast to *hedonic* conceptions of wellbeing – is often attributed to Aristotle (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics). Whilst hedonic wellbeing focuses on experienced happiness or pleasure, eudaimonic conceptions incorporate an ethical dimension and give more weight to the process of working towards a 'life well-lived' or a 'good life', rather than happiness as an outcome.

This view of flourishing emphasises active participation in community life as both a source and an indicator of healthy individual development, in a reciprocal virtuous circle. That is, it rejects a narrow view of wellbeing as a collection of states of affect and attitudes, such as happiness or feelings of being included. Instead, wellbeing is understood as a multidimensional and relational process, with individual students' wellbeing inseparable from their interactions with the social systems of which they are part, such as their peer group, school community, and wider society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; NCCA, 2017). The role of schools in this regard is to "enable children and young people, individually and collectively, to develop their personalities, talents and abilities, and to live a full and satisfying life within society" (DCYA, 2014, p. 65), including especially students who, for various reasons, may need additional supports to do so (DCYA, 2014).

Some differences in conceptions of education and wellbeing may be expected in two countries as disparate as South Korea and Ireland, given previous findings of variation between West Europeans/North Americans and East Asians with regard to cognitive processes and conceptions of the self (Nisbett, 2003), attitudes and values towards education (Li et al., 2017), and attributions of subjective wellbeing (Layous et al., 2013; Wirtz et al., 2009).[5] Nonetheless, the centrality of interpersonal relationships and social participation espoused in this view of wellbeing differentiates TY from other grade levels in Ireland and in many other European education systems, aligning to a degree with the more typically East Asian conception of the individual as a more closely-integrated part of the wider society (Choi et al., 2020; Nisbett, 2003). Reflecting this perspective, Choi et al. (2020) argue for a wider consideration of community wellbeing, as opposed to subjective or objective wellbeing, and demonstrate its value by estimating community wellbeing for several districts in a number of Korean cities (using indicators of human capital, natural capital, cultural capital, economic capital, and infrastructure).

A key policy issue in South Korea is concern over the very high levels of stress and anxiety reported amongst young people. This has been linked to the dominant focus in schools on academic achievement and high-stakes examination, which leaves little opportunity for students to develop their "full potential beyond cognitive skills" (OECD, 2016, p. 4) or to reflect on, for example, their own interests and their preferred courses of study or careers after school (Kwon et al., 2017). In particular, academic stress has been identified as a significant factor contributing to Korean adolescents' suicide ideation and suicide attempts (Juon et al., 1994). This has led to calls for reform of the high-stakes examination system and the resulting backwash effects throughout the education system (Kwon et al., 2017). The FSP/FYP is one response to these concerns – intended to facilitate greater personal reflection, career exploration, collaboration, and artistic and creative education, driven by a desire amongst policymakers to increase happiness amongst young people in Korean schools.

[5] However, note that much of this research has been conducted with small samples, American university students, or with Asian-Americans representing all of Eastern Asia, which means that generalised conclusions should be interpreted cautiously.

The next two sections present a brief overview of TY and of FSP/FYP. The final section draws out key observations arising from the implementation of the two programmes.

Transition Year

The stated function of TY, which is offered in Grade 10, is to provide students – during a sensitive developmental period in mid-adolescence – with the opportunity to broaden their horizons and to develop personally, socially, intellectually, and vocationally in the absence of high-stakes examination pressure. The *TY Guidelines* (Dept. of Education, 1993) set out three main goals:

1. Education for maturity, with the emphasis on personal development, including social awareness and increased social competence;
2. The promotion of general, technical and academic skills with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and self-directed learning;
3. Education through experience of adult and working life as a basis for personal development and maturity.

In the original vision, TY was intended to be an opportunity for students to "'stand and stare', to discover the kind of person he [sic] is, the kind of society he will be living in and, in due course, contributing to; [and to learn about society's] shortcomings and its good points" (Burke, 1974; cited in Jeffers, 2007). Both in conception and in operationalisation, then, TY seeks to promote wellbeing and personal development within a holistic and society-oriented framework.

The underlying thrust of TY is outward- and forward-looking, beyond the school towards working life, the wider society and active citizenship, locally and globally. Individual wellbeing is seen as being enhanced through social engagement, whether as a team member in school-based projects, as a participant in adult work environments through work experience placements, or as an active citizen through community service activities. In this vision, a student should emerge from TY as a more rounded, confident, competent, and socially participatory individual.

The latter aspect is important to note even though the long-term effects of TY participation are often absent from discussion of the programme. Figure 10.1 depicts a conceptual framework within which students' experiences and characteristics prior to, during, and after TY may be interpreted.[6] As well as immediate school-based outcomes, it highlights the intended relevance of TY to more distal outcomes such as vocational and career choices, personal goals, civic awareness, and active participation in civic society.

[6] 'Junior Cycle' corresponds to Grades 7–9 and 'Senior Cycle' to Grades 10–12. TY corresponds to Grade 10, but is not taken by all students. At the end of Grade 12, students sit a high-stakes terminal examination known as the Leaving Certificate.

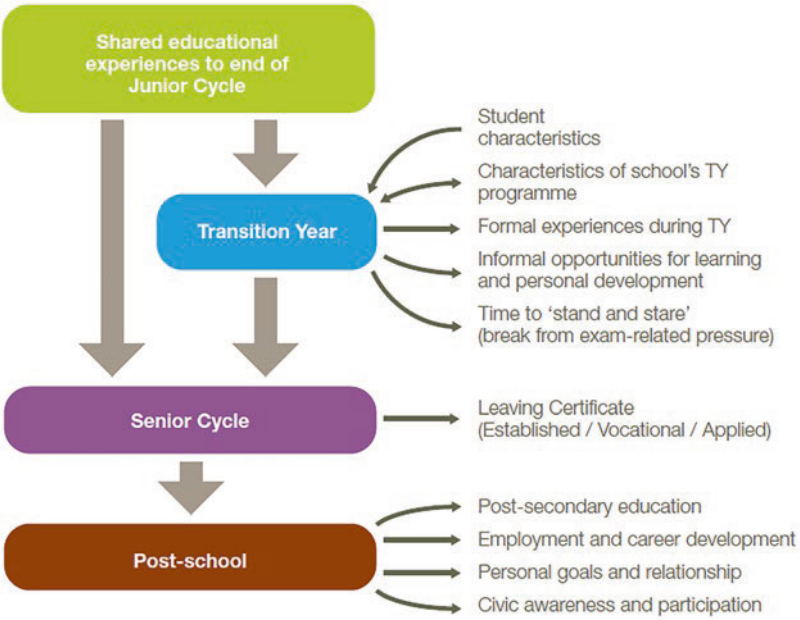

Fig. 10.1 Conceptual framework for the role of Transition Year in Irish education. (Reproduced with permission from Clerkin, 2019a)

The research evidence is clear that TY is generally positively regarded by students, as well as by their teachers and their parents. Initial findings (Egan & O'Reilly, 1979) that, through TY, students become more self-aware, more confident in social settings, better informed about the world outside school, and surer about the careers they might follow have been reinforced by subsequent research (Clerkin, 2012, 2019a; Jeffers, 2007; Smyth et al., 2004). Most TY participants report that they enjoyed their time in TY and found it to be a useful experience, with – notably – some students going so far as to describe it as a life-changing experience (Clerkin, 2019a). Positive reports of TY are often linked to students' participation in work experience placements, which can clarify vocational intentions and subject choices for senior cycle or third-level education, as well as other aspects of community involvement outside school, and more active, experiential learning methods in class.

Students and teachers both also report that student-teacher relationships are strengthened during TY and that a more mature and respectful relationship develops, which then carries through into Grades 11 and 12. The formation of strong friendships and new friendship groups amongst TY classmates is also common. In addition (and reminiscent of the rationale for introducing FSP/FYP in South Korea), students appreciate the freedom to develop their interests and to try new skills both within and outside school in a less stressful environment and with less pressure to study for important examinations. Finally, TY participants tend to achieve significantly higher scores than non-participants in examinations at the end of post-primary school, even controlling for prior performance (Millar & Kelly, 1999; Smyth

et al., 2004). Although the factors or mechanisms behind this difference remain unclear, such findings have been regarded as reassuring by parents, teachers, school leaders, and policy-makers.

As Jeffers (2010, 2011) has shown, schools tend to 'domesticate' the TY programme, shaping TY to their own specific contexts. This has a positive function in the sense that schools can be responsive to the needs and interests of specific cohorts and individual students or teachers in the school, which is likely to be a contributory factor towards the stronger student-teacher relationships and levels of school involvement often noted in TY. However, domestication can also imply some downplaying or even omitting some of the more challenging features of TY, such as interdisciplinary work, a wide range of teaching/learning methodologies, a co-ordinating team, whole-school programme planning, appropriate assessment aligned with methodologies, and meaningful consultation with parents. In addition, in an examination-dominated system, TY is at risk of being colonised by the two years of the senior examination cycle. Anecdotal evidence of schools operating 'a three-year [course]', particularly in some subjects, is widespread, highlighting the constant risk that more instrumentalist concerns may infringe on the intended use of TY as a space for personal and social development. The challenge for TY to be continually refreshed (Jeffers, 2015) should not be underestimated.

TY has proved to be a popular innovation. Provision of TY by schools and uptake rates amongst students have increased consistently in recent decades (Fig. 10.2). More recently, 93% of schools offered TY and 72% of eligible students were enrolled in 2017/18 (Jeffers, 2018).

The issue of TY provision raises serious questions regarding equity of access to any benefits that may arise from TY participation. For example, in some cases students may wish to take part in work experience placements or community activities, but are reluctant to commit to a full additional year at school or cannot afford the

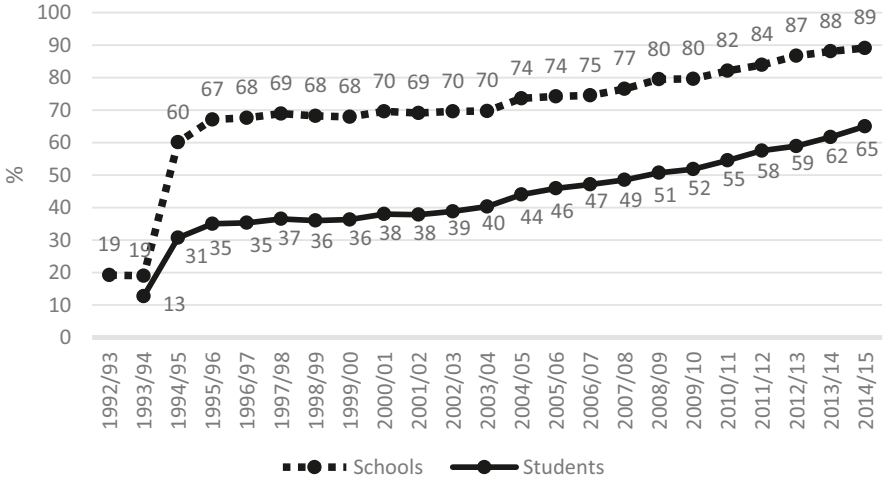

Fig. 10.2 Rates of (school-level) provision and (student-level) uptake of Transition Year, 1992–2015. (Reproduced from Clerkin, 2018a)

extra expense (Clerkin, 2019a). Disparities in TY uptake by students' home language background, educational and vocational aspirations, and their prior levels of engagement in school have also been noted (Clerkin, 2018b).

Questions such as these have formed a major point of discussion during a wide-ranging review of senior cycle education in Ireland that has been ongoing since 2016, with a final report expected in 2022 (NCCA, 2019a, b, c; Smyth, 2019). This review includes a major consultation exercise, with stakeholders in the education system – students, teachers, and parents – asked for their views on an iterative basis. It takes place in the context, noted in the introduction, of a growing awareness of mental health and wellbeing in school settings.

Although a final report of the review is not available at the time of writing, the indications emerging from interim reports are that TY is seen by all stakeholders as a very valuable feature of the current system (NCCA, 2019a, b, c; Smyth, 2019), particularly from the dual perspectives of personal development (e.g., increased maturity) and wellbeing. Many junior cycle students "were negative [about their school experience] apart from their views on TY" (Banks et al., 2018, p. 34), which was seen as "the most exciting part of senior cycle" (p. 37). Banks et al. add that "many of those interviewed in senior cycle spoke positively about TY and the impact it had on them" (p. 38). In the same study, parents who had experience of TY were largely complimentary about it: "they felt their son/daughter had benefitted greatly from participating in the programme, and noted the impact that the programme had on their personal development and maturity, in creating more positive relationships with their teachers and providing them with a valuable opportunity to try a diverse range of subject areas, enabling more informed subject choice [in subsequent years]" (Banks et al., 2018, p. 52). In all these respects, the capacity for TY to support student wellbeing is noted. As a result, there have been suggestions that aspects of TY (such as work experience and a more sustained focus on holistic development of the student) may become more prominent at other grade levels in any forthcoming reforms.

For a more comprehensive review of the extant literature on TY, please see Clerkin (2018a, 2019b) and, for case studies of TY practice in schools, see Jeffers (2015).

Free Year Program

The experience of South Korea, with a population more than 10 times greater than Ireland, offers both striking contrasts and similarities between TY and what is now known as the Free Year Program (FYP). Despite consistently high levels of school participation and achievement in Korea, as seen for example in TIMSS and PISA results, young people's wellbeing, mental health and general happiness has been a persistent concern (Choi, 2014; Lim et al., 2017).

With echoes of TY (as a response to schools as 'academic treadmills' (Burke, 1974)), the impetus in 2013 for what was first introduced as a 'Free Learning

Semester' and then as a 'Free Semester Program' (FSP) was a disquiet that many young people were not happy at school and that the education system itself jeopardised their wellbeing (Ji-Yeon, 2013). Rising rates of school violence, youth suicide, and anxiety about further education, combined with low levels of career exploration, were significant factors in prompting the initiative (Ji-Yeon, 2013). Furthermore, the voices of industry were loud in contending that the education system did not sufficiently develop core competencies such as creative thinking which are seen as essential to an innovative economy (Choi et al., 2014b).

The FSP was piloted amongst Grade 7 students (age 12–13) in 42 middle schools in 2013. In 2014, 38 more schools took part, including 29 that focused on Grade 8 students. By 2017, three of the 17 regional Offices of Education had adopted FYP (i.e., with the Free Semester extending to a Free Year). In 2018 almost half of Korea's 3713 middle schools were implementing FYP.

The overarching goals of FYP are to provide opportunities for students to explore their 'dreams and talents' and to develop '21st century competencies including creativity, character building, social skills, and self-directed learning' (MOE, 2013). The FYP framework addresses wellbeing by a curriculum that includes core and elective dimensions (Fig. 10.3). The term 'free' should not be seen as exclusively referring to an 'exam-free' programme. The more proactive meaning of the word implies the centrality of widening opportunities for young people, for nurturing their capabilities and enabling them to experience 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) in learning by exploring their own interests.

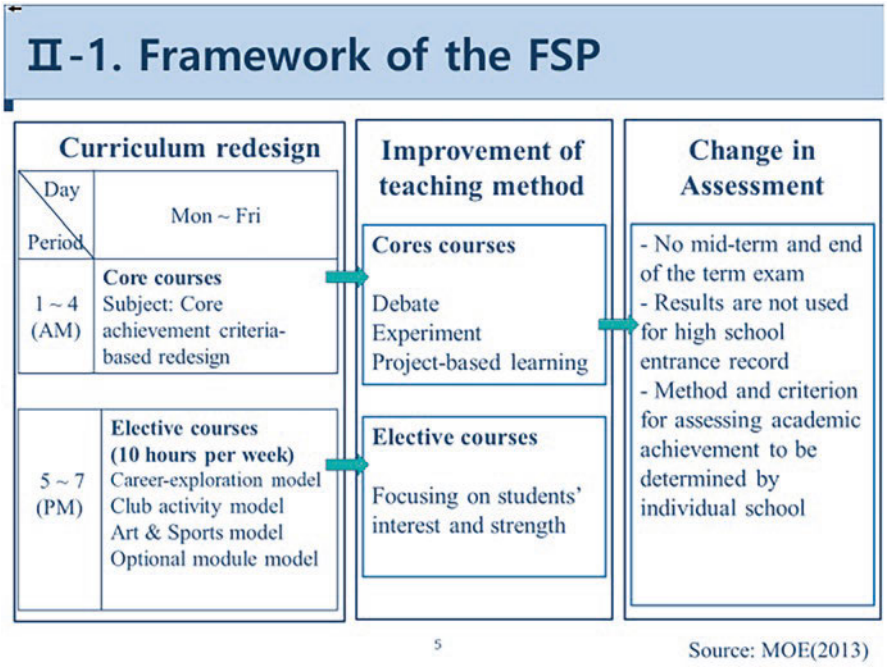

Fig. 10.3 Framework for Free Semester Program curriculum and assessment. (From Choi, 2019)

Career exploration and a general focus on students' interests and strengths are features of the 10 hours per week devoted to elective courses. From a teaching point of view, again with echoes of TY's emphasis on a wide range of teaching/learning methodologies, debates, experiments and project-based learning are encouraged. Importantly, in an educational system dominated by examinations, FYP does not have mid-term or end-of-term examinations; each school has the freedom to devise its own assessment system, although results cannot be used for high school entrance. Building partnerships between schools offering FYP and external agencies – including government ministries, local authorities, employers, the media and parents – has enabled the development of a learning ecosystem to support successful implementation of FYP (Choi, 2014, 2019).

Korean policy makers built their programme by learning from initiatives to enhance young people's wellbeing in other jurisdictions. For example, the Korean Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training organised a conference in 2013 with guest speakers explaining the development, strengths and weaknesses of: the 'Gap Year' in the United Kingdom; the Folk High Schools,[7] the 'After-School' residential programme[8] and the '10th Class'[9] in Denmark; and Ireland's TY (KRIVET, 2013).

Careful and regular monitoring of the FSP/FYP, including surveys of students, teachers and parents, has been led by the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) since 2013. Results suggest a notable increase in young people's satisfaction with schooling (Choi, 2019), especially the shift to more student-centred learning. Increasingly, phrases such as 'joyful learning', 'self-directed learning experience', 'knowing oneself whilst learning', 'learning together', and 'doing rather than knowing' are associated with the innovation (Lim et al., 2017). These researchers also found the programme enhances the possibilities of lifelong learning.

As with Burke's (1974) initial vision of TY and recent discussion of TY by Kelly (2014), FYP sees itself as benefitting teachers as well as students. FYP aims to increase teachers' professional autonomy and nurture their development by encouraging innovative teaching and learning methodologies. Teachers report an increase in their self-efficacy, professionalism, co-operation with colleagues and an appreciation of the greater sense of autonomy FYP brings to schools. Emerging links between schools and various local community resources is also a positive outcome, whilst additional funding – between $20,000 and $35,000 per school – is seen as a

[7] The Folk High School offers residential adult education across a variety of subjects, depending on individuals' interests, mostly for students aged 18–24 years old. The typical stay at a Folk High School is four months, although students can attend for longer or shorter periods. The Schools focus on personal and professional development. There are no exams but students receive a diploma to certify attendance.

[8] The After-School is a residential school where students aged 14–18 years old can attend for 1, 2, or 3 years in order to complete primary education. They seek to provide a general education, but with an awareness of encouraging democratic citizenship and personal development.

[9] Tenth Class is intended for students who have completed primary education but need further qualifications, time, or support in making choices for their further education. It includes short tasters of difference educational tracks and the option of attendance at short voluntary training courses.

valuable support. Reported difficulties encountered by teachers with the FYP include limited awareness of the rationale for change, lack of support for new teaching methods, absence of a clear alternative assessment system, extra workload, and an unease about academic achievement (Choi et al., 2014b, c). Links between the FYP and learning in other school semesters has also been a challenge for its wider adoption. For further insights into FYP readers are referred to Choi et al. (2014a, b, c, 2015) and Choi and Hong (2016).

Lessons from Transition Year and Free Year Program

The experiences of educators, policy-makers, and students in South Korea and Ireland described in this chapter suggest a number of insights that may be useful to programme developers in other countries. The history and development of TY and FSP/FYP make clear that there are some common points of success, some common problematic features, and some points of difference in the respective goals and approach of each programme.

Despite policy-level supports, the status of programmes such as FSP/FYP and TY may be more precarious in practice. Parents (and teachers) are sometimes wary of diverting time, and students' focus, from traditional academic activities towards 'softer' approaches with less easily-measurable outcomes, not least claims to support wellbeing and (inter)personal growth. For example, reservations about the introduction of FSP were initially expressed by a number of Korean teacher unions (*Korea Times*, 9 December 2014). As noted above, these tensions have also been observed clearly in some instances in Ireland, where a school's TY programme has become 'colonised' through pressure to cover examination material over three years (including the year in TY) rather than two. A constant reinvigoration of commitment to the intended goals is needed from school leadership in order to guard against creep in the types of activities or methods that are given priority during (what is supposed to be) a dedicated developmental programme.

Another risk factor is simple inertia or status quo bias, which can manifest as resistance to the introduction or expansion of innovative programmes. O'Toole (2017) notes, in the context of school-based mental health interventions, that such programmes tend to be "more successful when programmes are embedded within a whole-school approach, rather than implemented as a curriculum 'add-on'" (p. 458). A similar observation has been made by Smyth et al. (2004) and Jeffers (2007) in relation to TY. In fact, the intended conception of the programme explicitly advocates for a whole-school ethos with involvement from all school staff (Department of Education, 1993, 1996).

However, achieving a coherent whole-school approach to a programme such as FYP or TY requires ongoing work and leadership within the school. For example, it is not enough to prepare a programme outline once, to be re-used in future years. The risk of 'fossilisation' in such a scenario is high. This would undermine the programme given that part of its function is to facilitate student growth by providing

hands-on opportunities to explore their interests and skills. In practice, this means that teachers must be able to respond to the changing needs of individual cohorts and changes in the broader school, community, or societal contexts by 'freshening up' or even customising their teaching materials year-on-year – a responsibility which Kelly (2014) notes is often grasped enthusiastically by teachers who are eager to rejuvenate their lessons and share their own interests with students.

The micro-political climate amongst school staff or between 'competing' schools in a locality, which can either encourage fragmentation of subject areas or facilitate their coherence, can also pose challenges to the embedding of good practice within schools (Jeffers, 2007, 2010). Jeffers and Smyth et al. (2004) have identified a range of views towards TY, from highly positive to dismissive, amongst school staff in Ireland. In South Korea, a high level of satisfaction amongst teachers was reported following the initial implementation of FSP in 42 pilot schools (Choi, 2014). Teachers reported satisfaction with the level of autonomy granted to them to engage in re-designing teaching methods, assessment, and curriculum, despite the additional workload entailed by these tasks (Choi, 2014). Whilst the initial feedback from Korean teachers is encouraging is this respect, follow-up evaluations in the coming years will help to determine whether a broader range of views emerge as the programme becomes embedded in all schools in South Korea. The issue of re-designing, or refreshing, instructional and cross-curricular materials and methods is also likely to become more prominent as time goes on and as teachers and students gain experience within the programme. A comparison of schools' organisational practices in Ireland and South Korea within the next 5–10 years would be instructive.

In terms of key aspects of programme content that are highlighted by students as positively impacting their experience of school and their own maturation, it is clear that students appreciate the opportunities provided for sustained engagement with adults and with the wider community beyond school – work experience placements, community involvement (e.g., teaching IT skills to retirees), cultural activities, and so on (Clerkin, 2019a; Jeffers, 2007; Smyth et al., 2004). In broader terms, the more experiential and active learning methodologies that characterise TY and FSP/FYP provide a welcome respite from an otherwise-omnipresent focus on written examinations and narrower modes of learning, and a chance to develop new skills. Similarly, opportunities for collaborative and creative work with classmates and teachers in FSP/FYP and TY offer a change from highly-pressurised individual work at other grade levels. In this more collaborative environment, students learn to work within a team, and gain confidence and competence as leaders and contributors. As a result, students report emerging from these programmes with greater maturity and a greater appreciation for the wider social context in which they participate (Clerkin 2019a; Jeffers, 2007; Lim et al., 2017).

Teachers can also contribute to the development of students' attitudes and behaviours (Blazar & Kraft, 2017), and many teachers do appreciate the opportunity to work with their students in a more holistic fashion in FSP/FYP and TY (Choi, 2014; Jeffers, 2007; Smyth et al., 2004). Teachers in South Korea have reported a renewed appreciation for the strengths and potential of their students in the context of FYP, and the freedom afforded for students to develop their interests (Choi, 2014). More

active cooperation between teachers and students, and an increased ability to seek to engage students who had previously been disengaging during 'regular' semesters, are also noted. Similarly, many Irish teachers note TY as being their favourite grade level to teach and view it as a de facto opportunity for professional development, citing the freedom (or requirement) to be creative in developing modules and teaching materials, a wider variety of teaching methods, and connecting with their students in a more positive and constructive manner (Jeffers, 2007, 2015; Smyth et al., 2004). These features combine to reinforce a more interactive, creative approach to teaching and learning, underpinned by strong and respectful student-teacher and peer-to-peer relationships.

An important difference between FYP and TY is the issue of compulsory or optional participation. Schools in South Korea that provide FYP do so on a universal basis; that is, all students in the relevant middle school cohort take part. This is also the case in a minority of schools in Ireland that offer TY (the proportion of schools falling into this category is unknown, but may be around one-quarter; Smyth et al., 2004). However, in most Irish schools, TY is provided on an optional basis.[10] Students who wish to take part in TY must actively enrol in the programme, or make the choice to skip it to continue to the final two years of secondary education. There are several reasons why a school might prefer to provide TY on a compulsory basis. However, students in schools where participation is compulsory tend to report more negative views of their time in TY (Clerkin, 2019a; Smyth et al., 2004), suggesting that this decision is not without trade-offs.

There will not be a simple one-size-fits-all answer to these issues, particularly in cultural and educational contexts as distinct as South Korea and Ireland. However, ambitions to provide comprehensive, holistic, and constructive programmes to young people – supporting wellbeing, personal development, and social development – in any context are hindered by gaps in knowledge and an uneven research base. This means that we do not always have clear answers to questions such as "how do we know that students gain what we want them to gain from participation?" or "what aspects of the programme are most (in)effective – or are effective in which contexts?" (see Clerkin, 2019b).

These gaps would ideally be addressed through ongoing focused research programmes, with stakeholder consultation to inform the identification of priority questions. An immediate step could be the introduction of a formal evaluation structure with the aims of highlighting and sharing best practice and addressing potential problems as they arise. Using TY as an example, this could be done via an annual review of a sampling of TY programmes across a range of school contexts. The Department of Education could consider initiating annual reviews, perhaps in conjunction with other education agencies, with a view to enhancing the implementation of TY in future. An annual self-evaluation of the programme within each

[10]And, as noted earlier, there is a small percentage of schools in which TY is not available to students.

school, as recommended by the TY Guidelines, would provide a starting point from which to build.

Through the engagement and commitment of enthusiastic teachers, TY has progressed significantly over the last 45 years, and a wide range of resources have been developed by teachers that can be shared with other schools. However, this teacher-led progression, and the school-level variation it entails, also means that the overarching goals of TY have evolved in a relatively atheoretical manner (Clerkin, 2018a). The success of TY despite a firm theoretical grounding highlights the importance of having a committed group of teachers to lead a programme of this nature within schools, and nationally. It also suggests one reason for the uneven evidence base – namely, a lack of cohesion in programme goals and methods, leading to a wide range of disparate outcomes through a variety of pathways.

In establishing FYP and scaling it up rapidly, South Korea provides a useful point of contrast. FYP has spread to all schools quickly as part of a universal reform to the national curriculum. Since 2013, equity has been one of the major issues that has arisen as a point of discussion in implementing FSP. In particular, there has been concern about the relative lack of infrastructure in agricultural and fishing villages when compared to big cities. Therefore, the Ministry of Education has made efforts to support more funding and infrastructure for small village schools in order to ensure that the curricular reforms take root in the system and are implemented as intended. In contrast, no special provision or funding for TY is made available to smaller schools, schools in rural areas, or more socially-disadvantaged schools in Ireland. Perhaps not coincidentally, the minority of schools that do not offer TY to students tend to fall into one or more of these categories (Clerkin, 2013; Jeffers, 2002).

In both countries, this question of equitable provision is notable as a recurring theme. TY and FYP are valued in part because of the relative freedom afforded to schools to customise the programmes to their own circumstances. However, this also poses a risk of perpetuating social and economic inequalities. For example, all participating students may take part in work experience placements but, depending on the manner in which those placements are sourced and who is responsible for organising them, some students are likely to have more options, or be more likely to access their preferred option, than others. We might expect to observe differences related to geographic location (large city, small town, rural), social capital, gender, and parental educational or occupational background, for example. Creative ways of mitigating these risks are needed in order to ensure a fair distribution of resources and opportunities.

Conclusion

Transition Year and Free Year Program both provide examples of relatively low-stakes environments in which schools are encouraged to come up with appropriate responses to local challenges. In so doing, they provide opportunities for

experimentation with a view to finding solutions to a range of issues related to students' wellbeing and their development as citizens.

Amongst the most notable features of this experimentation is that both programmes are clear in their aims of forming stronger and more cohesive links between students, the school, and wider society, with an unusual emphasis placed on providing students with opportunities to engage with the community around them. This is, perhaps, especially noteworthy in two countries that have evolved significantly as modern democracies over the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Another key feature is the provision of time and space that is explicitly made available for students to explore their interests and capabilities in the absence of high-stakes examination pressure, with guidance and support from teachers.

The combined effect of these characteristics is that students and teachers alike tend to associate participation in FYP and TY with greater wellbeing in the form of stronger interpersonal relationships in school, greater intrinsic motivation to learn, a stronger sense of belonging at school, and enhanced personal satisfaction arising from personal growth and achievements (Choi, 2019; Clerkin, 2019a; Lim et al., 2017; Smyth et al., 2004). Positive effects are reported by both teachers and students to be observable even after participation in the programme, through the remaining years of students' secondary education (Clerkin, 2019a; Jeffers, 2007; Smyth et al., 2004).

Nonetheless, substantial work remains to be done in adopting more systematic approaches to understanding the psychological processes by which such programmes are expected to operate (Clerkin, 2018a), to gathering and interpreting information about the implementation of TY and FYP in practice across the range of school contexts that they serve (Jeffers, 2010, 2011) and to robustly assessing the outcomes of participation from a variety of perspectives, including through the lens of wellbeing (Clerkin, 2019a, b). An important issue to consider is the extent to which any benefits of participation in such programmes accrue evenly across the student population and the ways in which some students face explicit or implicit barriers that could make it more difficult to engage in the types of personal, vocational, and social development enjoyed by many of their peers (Choi et al., 2014b, c; Clerkin, 2018b).

A separate, but related, issue is the question of what lessons could be drawn from FYP and TY – for example, relating to pedagogical approaches, cross-curricular learning, community involvement, artistic and cultural activities, methods of assessing students' progress, or work experience – and applied to other aspects of the education system or other grade levels in their respective countries with a view to strengthening students' educational experience. Given the positive associations of both programmes with enhanced wellbeing in school and with substantive personal and social development, such questions merit attention from researchers and policy-makers.

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Part IV
Amplifying Children's Voices

Chapter 11
School Violence and Wellbeing in Southern Ecuador: Exploring Popular Perceptions and Official Discourse Paradoxes

Bernardo Cañizares, Irene Torres, and Carole Faucher

Abstract This chapter explores perceptions on school violence and school versus home safety amongst children (in this chapter, "children" refers to anyone under 18 years of age, except where otherwise noted) in Southern Ecuador and examines discrepancies in Ecuador's educational policy framing of school violence. The study was conducted using mixed methods, including surveys amongst adult respondents and structured interviews, focus groups, and participatory videos with children. The findings show that children feel safer at home than at school even when they acknowledge suffering from regular abuse at the hand of adult household members. A factor that has not been considered up to now is the national education current legal framework informing norms and practices that promotes the use of strict punishment for non-compliance to school, hindering any efforts aiming to improve school climate and students' wellbeing. However, strategies to boost the school climate and enhance student wellbeing are already embodied by the principles of Buen Vivir (Good Living), a conceptual framework for peaceful living enshrined in the country's constitution. Buen Vivir embraces diversity, communalism, complementarity, and social harmony and is seen as an indigenous alternative to the concept of wellbeing. An in-depth systematic engagement with Buen Vivir would constitute an effective way to tackle school violence in the educational context.

Keywords Children · School · Violence · Wellbeing · LMIC

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Introduction

This chapter explores perceptions on school violence and school versus home safety amongst children[1] of the Ecuadorian province of Azuay and examines tensions and contradictions in Ecuador's educational policy framing of school violence. The data collection took place during an extensive baseline assessment focusing on children's rights and the caring capacity of families.[2] The study was conducted between August and October 2018 in Sayausí, Quingeo, and Gualaceo, three small towns located in the vicinity of the municipality of Cuenca in Azuay province (the fourth most populated province of the country).[3] The objective of the baseline assessment was twofold: collecting data on behalf of the non-governmental organisation SOS Children's Villages to identify local priorities and needs as part of intervention planning, and sharing the findings with the Canton's Board of Protection of Rights (Consejo Cantonal de Protección de Derechos) in Gualaceo and Cuenca.[4]

This region of Ecuador faces great challenges, including food insecurity and poor access to potable water and public services such as sewage (Cordero-Ahiman et al., 2020). Furthermore, the province of Azuay has been severely affected by outmigration waves to cities and other provinces and countries (Herrera et al., 2005). The flow of people escaping harsh conditions, especially prevalent between 1990 and 2003, was linked to the dramatic decrease in economic and employment opportunities coupled with a series of profound social and political crises. The collapse of national financial institutions in 2000 had some of the most far-reaching consequences. As might be expected, migration has directly impacted the composition of families and the caring arrangements for children (Herrera et al., 2009). Lastly, it is worth mentioning that, according to the latest figures, Azuay suffers from a high incidence rate of child labour (12.7% of children between 5 and 14 years of age; 24% of children between 15 and 17 years of age) (Vásconez et al., 2015). The most common form of child labour in Ecuador is farming, followed closely by commerce, manufacture, construction, hospitality, and domestic services. The province also has the highest cumulative number of suicides in Ecuador amongst children under 12, representing 4% of the total across the country (n = 262) (Ortiz-Prado et al., 2017). In regard to schooling, the figures show that an average of 13% (9%

[1] In this chapter, "children" refers to anyone under 18 years of age, except where otherwise noted.

[2] The research was thought, designed and conducted by the two first authors who also analysed the data. The third author contributed to the theoretical and conceptual framework and the writing up of the final manuscript.

[3] As a legacy of the colonial Catholic background, the smallest jurisdictions are called parishes, which include small rural towns and remote hamlets. Sayausí is a peripheral parish and Quingeo, a rural parish of the Municipality of Cuenca. Gualaceo is a municipality that neighbours with Cuenca.

[4] These boards are required in every municipality by art. 598 of the Organic Law of Territorial Organisation, Autonomy and Decentralisation (Ecuadorian Government, 2010), and are in charge of guaranteeing that local governments promote and secure the rights of residents, including children.

male and 18% female) children between the ages of 12 and 17 do not attend school; 9% of all children under 18 years of age do not live with either parent. In 2012, amongst the country's wide requests for support services connected to violence, 9.46% originated from Azuay (Oviedo Fierro, 2015). Considering that Azuay's population represents only 4.94% of the total population of Ecuador, this figure is without a doubt alarming.

Between 2007 and 2017, the government initiated a series of strategies in the form of incentives and policies to improve access to education. Despite these efforts, universal school enrolment has not yet been achieved. Child labour, which is, as mentioned above, widespread in Azuay, cannot alone account for the high number of children out of school. Feelings of insecurity and general deterioration of wellbeing associated with a negative school climate may also represent decisive factors in a child's appraisal to stay in school or to give up schooling (Aldridge, et al., 2015). Nonetheless, studies have shown that safety for children is not only associated with the frequency of violent acts perpetrated against them (Alcantara, et al., 2016); the issue is much more complex and deserves to be analysed by taking other factors into account, including the meaning attached to specific types of aggression, the normalisation of violence, and the level of perceived social support amongst the victims. As part of our inquiry to capture the perception of school violence amongst children, we thus find it critical to address the wider picture and investigate more closely patterns and perceptions of everyday violence amongst children and their carers (Varela et al., 2019).

The Official Discourse on School Violence in Ecuador

In the literature, school violence includes maltreatment, such as violent punishment, and different types of physical, sexual, and psychological/emotional violence and bullying (including cyber-bullying) (Ferrara et al., 2019; Hillis et al., 2016). The Ecuadorian government's guidelines are relatively aligned with this definition and categorise school violence by type (physical, psychological and sexual violence, and negligence) and by the perpetrator (domestic violence, violence by school staff against children, and violence between peers) (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2015). Although school violence is frequently highlighted as a concern in Ecuador, studies on the subject remain scarce, and some statistics are contradictory. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results in Ecuador indicate that the vast majority of 15-year-old school students who took the test (95.2%) consider the school a safe place; however, 36.8% of the same respondents mentioned being aware of at least one violent episode at, or nearby, their school building within the 4 weeks before the evaluation (INEVAL, 2018). Between 2014 and 2018, the Ministry of Education recorded 1623 formal complaints of sexual abuse in the school context, of which 1210 were against teachers (El Universo, 2018). However, prosecutions are infrequent and, when taking place, slow-moving. PISA results also reveal that 82.2% of students between 11 and 18 have qualified their family

relations as "positive" (INEVAL, 2018; Morales & López, 2019). Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education continues to blame social violence and family neglect or domestic violence (Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 2015) for bullying and school violence. In light of this, there is a clear misalignment between children's perspectives on school safety and the overall picture provided by the government.

Turning a blind eye at the possible involvement of adults in school violence, the Ministry of Education conducted a nationwide study in 2015 focusing essentially on peer bullying. According to the study's results, 22.8% of students between the age of 11 and 18 acknowledged being bullied at school. The same survey indicates that most students identified retribution as the best way to cope with bullying. When prompted to share their views on the type of measure that should be taken in such circumstance, the responses were relatively unambiguous: "victims must defend themselves, victims must 'make' others respect them, victims must react, the aggressor must be sanctioned, and observers must act proactively, denouncing the aggression"(Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 49). The report also reveals that each type of aggression perpetrated (theft, insults or nicknames, hitting, propagating rumours or disclosing personal secrets, and cyberbullying) will trigger specific reactions. The most common reactions ranged from wishing for the aggressor to be sanctioned (between 28% in case of cyberbullying to 45% in case of theft) to dropping out from school (12.2% in case of theft to 19.4% in case of hitting), changing schools (11.2% in case of both hitting or theft to 20.6% in case of rumours or secrets), and wishing to die or even contemplating suicide (3.4% in case of theft, to 12.7% in case of both physical aggression and the propagation of rumours or disclosure of secrets) (p. 51).

Wellbeing, School Violence, and Buen Vivir

The tendency for students to opt for violent responses to bullying, as portrayed in the previous section suggests a wider problem relating to the official discourse on student wellbeing and retributive punishment. School life quality has a significant impact on wellbeing (Varela et al., 2019). According to Harber (2002), schooling in itself can be a violent experience for children. The effect of everyday direct violence such as the use of physical and psychological punishment by teachers and bodily harm and acts of intimidation amongst students can be far-reaching. The stress and anxiety associated with school violence may, amongst other effects, dramatically hinder the learning process (Cox-Wingo & Poirier, 2019); when schooling and learning are associated with pain and humiliation, frustration and dissatisfaction towards education become widespread, and the whole social fabric ends up being affected (Harber, 2002). The picture is even more complicated by the fact that student perpetrators may view violence as a way to feel better or boost their self-esteem, or as a game, and legitimise it when "exercised against those who are different, when it has no consequences, to resolve conflicts, to socialise, and to attract the attention of peers" (López et al., 2021).

Amongst the prerequisites for understanding how schools and policies display and engage wellbeing-related values (Thorburn, 2020) is the awareness of what can constitute wellbeing in the specific socio-cultural context of the study (McLellan, 2019). In this study, we apply the framework provided by "Buen Vivir", a concept incorporated in the most recent Constitution of Ecuador (2008) to guide policy and decision-making in the country. The term translates as "good living" and could be interpreted as "living fully" (Senplades, 2013); it is historically associated with indigenous peoples of the Andean region (Chuji et al., 2019). In its most popular conceptualisation, Buen Vivir revolves around the principles of affection, spirituality, reciprocity, communalism, complementary and social harmony (Chuji et al., 2019) and denotes a solid relational element (Bressa Florentin, 2018) which can be seen as contrasting with the more individualistic understanding of wellbeing in European contexts. Buen Vivir is based on the idea that "the community as a whole" should be seen as more important than "the individuals within it" (Guardiola & Garcia-Quero, 2014). The concept of Buen Vivir is complex, and no consensus on its definition and principles has been reached, which makes it even more challenging to articulate in practice (Bressa Florentin, 2018). As we will see below, its implementation remains overall problematic as its ideological principles coexist with a strict school culture privileging punitive measures.

The concept became popular in the middle of the twentieth century. In the mid-'90s, the then-new leftist political leadership, rallying with indigenous movements and Western-based activists, turned Buen Vivir into a political project (Bressa Florentin, 2018). Buen Vivir has seeped into some of the normative documents of Ecuador, especially where there was a need to emphasise democratic values and wellbeing. Its basic principles are expected to be applied in all sectors of national policy. A prior study (Torres, 2017) found that Ecuador's 2013 "National Plan for Good Living" (Senplades, 2013) valued certain elements of Buen Vivir, such as the importance of leading healthy lives and of deliberative, more horizontal decision making. Similarly, the Education Law (Ecuadorian Government, 2011) purports to uphold the principles of Buen Vivir, including peace and non-violence, guarding students from discrimination and defending their rights of opinion. In matters pertaining to school violence, however, school authorities formally have the last word, which effectively disempowers students for reasons we will elaborate in the next section (Torres, 2017).

The Policy Approach to School Violence

Ministry of Education protocols and roadmaps (Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 2014) and the Operational Model of the Departments of Student Counselling (Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 2016) are two documents that guide the prevention and detection of violence and interventions in schools and at home. As a result of a lack of qualified staff – there is only one counselling professional per 400 students in Ecuador – not all cases can be handled following the

guidelines. With regards to child abuse perpetrated by adults, the operational model cites article 67 of the Child and Adolescent Legal Code to label as "mistreatment" any act or omission that hurts or may hurt the physical, psychological or sexual integrity of a child by any person, including their parents, relatives, teachers or staff in charge of their care (Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 65). In the same two documents, bullying is described as a form of intentional psychological, verbal or physical violence between peers that occurs repetitively over a limited period. The two underlying presuppositions are that bullying involves an asymmetrical power relationship that may include differences in physical strength and that students who commit these acts are intimidating, hostile, aggressive, and abusive.

From the perspective of the government, schools have the official mandate of protecting students from all types of violence on their premises and to report to the relevant authorities any violation of students' fundamental rights and of any action or neglect that threaten the dignity and the physical, psychological and sexual integrity of a person. The mechanisms put in place by schools must be in line with the Buen Vivir principles. The Ecuadorian Education Law of 2011 is unequivocal on this point: education must contribute to the objective of building a culture of peace following the principles of Buen Vivir (art.4), which include, as mentioned in the previous section, harmonic coexistence and the resolution of conflict through peaceful mediation. The Buen Vivir principles are further reinforced through formal documents such as the "Methodological Guidelines" for drafting the school's Code for Institutional Coexistence (Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 2019) and the guidelines for the Departments of Student Counselling (Ecuadorian Ministry of Health, 2016). The legacy of disciplinarian procedures in education is enduring, indicating a paradox in policy implementation. Despite all the efforts to promote peaceful dialogue, the use of punishment is deeply entrenched in national educational policies. In this respect, we can count 105 mentions using verbs or nouns deriving from the concept of punishment throughout the educational system's legal framework (Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 2012) whilst peaceful dialogue is only mentioned nine times.

Research Design

We began by conducting an analysis of the official conceptualisations of wellbeing and violence and of the policy approach to school violence in Ecuador to get a good grasp on the policy framing. To harness the perceptions of children, we decided to use two complementary methodological approaches: (1) A baseline of living conditions and perceptions on violence in the three locations and (2) action research using a participatory video approach (Tremblay & Jayme, 2015) to inform the analysis and understanding of the baseline data.

The baseline study was sketched out together with social workers, who leaned towards focus groups (two in each location, one with adults and another with children), short structured interviews with children, and household surveys with adults.

Supplementary secondary information was obtained from public sources, including local development plans and previous studies from other organisations. Participation in the study was voluntary; informed consent was obtained from all participants 18 years old and above (age was verified through a valid national id card), and informed assent was obtained from all participants under 18 years old, after prior consent from an adult who was either a parent or a legal guardian. Consent involved explaining how data would be analysed anonymously, remain confidential, and be used to identify parish-wide or municipality-wide issues of concern or needs and not to treat individual cases.

We agreed that households, not individuals, would be sampled for participation. According to census data, there are 7450 households in Quingeo, 6643 in Sayausí, and 10,682 in Gualaceo (Table 11.1). The sample was stratified and random. The stratification process involved selecting only households with children between 7 and 17 years and 11 months of age across major populated areas in the three locations. Random sampling involved selecting one in every three homes from this universe of households. The final sample included 110 households in Quingeo, 131 in Sayausí, and 159 in Gualaceo. The number of children who answered the short interview is as follows: 81 in Gualaceo, 59 in Sayausi, and 42 in Quingeo.

Whilst baseline indicators included poverty level and school enrolment, the interview and focus group questions centred around the perceptions of and views on violence at home and at school, including where school students felt more secure. We were also looking for signs of child labour affecting school enrolment or attendance, and domestic violence through the interviews. Parents or guardians were permitted to be present during the interview if they wished to do so. In such cases, we would minimise the risk of intentional or unintentional adult interference by ensuring that all questions on abuse or violence were essentially brought up in connection to a fictional character named "Freddy", using a visual aid (Fig. 11.1).

We used a character of a sad-looking boy exhibiting bruises and wearing a Band-Aid on his cheek. Children were prompted to think of possible reasons for Freddy's sadness.[5] A follow-up question asked how parents or guardians would react if Freddy breaks something at home. This visual stimulus is an efficient interview tool

Table 11.1 Number of households, household surveys, semi-structured interviews, and participatory videos per location

	Number of households per location	Sample of households	Household surveys	Semi-structured interviews with children	Participatory video with a group of children
Quingeo	7450	110	112	81	1
Sayausí	6643	131	131	59	1
Gualaceo	10,682	159	167	42	0
TOTAL	24,775	400	410	182	2

[5] As a referential figure we opted for a boy but the decision is not related to any form of gender bias. The idea was to use the same character for all and to compare answers without looking for specific distinction that would be based on gender.

Fig. 11.1 The referential figure used to elicit the response to "Why is Freddy sad?"

to help children verbalise their thoughts and emotions (Daniels, 2006), in this case, in association with their experiences with violence. The strategy would not be effective in identifying children at risk, but this was not the objective here in any case.

The first author led the focus groups using a tool called "historical timeline," which allowed participating children to describe how their views, attitudes, or beliefs have evolved. In this study, time was divided into three phases: (1) when the children's grandparents had been their current age, (2) when their parents had their current age, and (3) present time. The questions for the structured interview were first piloted in 30 households (10 per location) in each of the research sites' neighbouring towns, and the focus group questions were piloted in the country's capital, Quito. The method and instruments were internally reviewed by a child protection officer employed by the SOS Children's Villages to ensure that they would strictly comply with legal, ethical, and privacy frameworks concerning research with minors.

Participatory Video Approach

The participatory video approach involves a group or a community recording audiovisual material representing their perspectives and insights into a specific issue (Bloustien, 2012). The aim is to give participants a voice, an opportunity to be self-reflexive. In this particular study, children in each research location were invited to reflect upon their experiences with violence at home and school. They had the opportunity to be involved in the entire process, from the writing and enacting the script to the final product screening. To avoid any potential tension due to the intrusion of the camera (Whiting et al., 2016), we opted for a technique called "collaborative creation" (Bloustien, 2012), which implies creating a fictional story through which participants are encouraged to pinpoint a problem and come up with a solution. This way, the participants can identify their main concerns and share their perspectives on how they envision these can be tackled. It is important to mention at this point that the two first authors already had years of solid experience in different forms of filmmaking in addition to having been trained in participatory video, a method they have previously applied in two other locations in connection to another research project.

For the development of the participatory videos, different steps were taken. Firstly, several informational meetings were held with groups of children to clarify doubts, exchange suggestions, and obtain informed assent. Eventually, two groups were formed: one in Quingeo (with children younger than 13) and one in Sayausí (with children 13 and older). In Gualaceo, the children expressed their will to not participate in the activity, which was respected in accordance with ethical considerations (Milne, 2012; Torres & Simovska, 2017).

After forming the groups, a production meeting was convened, in which each group had to develop a fictional story under the theme "wellbeing at school and home". Thirdly, roles were assigned according to personal interests. Participants could choose between acting and filming. In addition, it was agreed that all participants would take upon extra tasks when needed. The research team did not intervene either in structuring the story or dividing the teams but acted as facilitators and technical problem solvers. A trained editor supported the participants by teaching them basic editing techniques, helping them develop their skills further, and to make informed editing decisions during the post-production phase.

Analytical Approach

During the analysis process, the answers collected during the closed-question interviews with children and caretakers were tabulated. Responses to the open-ended questions from the interviews and focus groups, and the spoken dialogues and descriptions of the dramatised narratives of the videos, were coded and then categorised into the most salient themes using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Findings from the focus groups with children were synthesised narratively, and categorised according to predetermined themes and time frame (when participants' grandparents were young, when their parents were young, and at present). The material gathered throughout the study was contextualised with the support of published data on local poverty and school enrolment. Finally, we examined the evidence in light of the Ministry of Education findings and position regarding school violence.

Children's Perceptions of School Violence

This section presents findings from the semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participatory videos with children. In Tables 11.2, 11.3, and 11.4, individual answers of children are tabulated and their corresponding percentage calculated by location (Gualaceo, Sayausí, Quingeo). Answers from households (Table 11.5), on the other hand, are indicated only as percentages of total responses by location. This decision was made to help visualise individual answers in the case of children and distribution of answers according to households by location. It is worth mentioning

Table 11.2 Where do you feel safer? (interview)

	Gualaceo	Sayausí	Quingeo
Street	2 (2%)	0	0
Home	69 (85%)	53 (93%)	42 (84%)
School	10 (12%)	4 (7%)	8 (16%)

Table 11.3 Why is Freddy sad? (interview)

	Gualaceo	Sayausí	Quingeo
Violence at home	81 (72%)	17 (40%)	20 (63%)
Violence at school	22 (19%)	22 (51%)	6 (19%)
He had an accident	10 (9%)	4 (9%)	6 (19%)

Table 11.4 When Freddy breaks something at home, he is ____? (interview)

	Gualaceo	Sayausí	Quingeo
Spanked	44 (69%)	37 (65%)	31 (78%)
Yelled at	18 (28%)	19 (33%)	6 (15%)
Corrected	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	3 (8%)
Scolded	6 (9%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)

Table 11.5 Can bad behaviour be improved with a "strong hand"? (household interview with parents or guardians)

	Gualaceo	Sayausí	Quingeo
Agree	59%	60%	45%
Disagrees	40%	40%	55%

that 30% of all surveyed households lived in extreme poverty, which in 2019 was set at a monthly income of $84.82 per capita (National Institute of Statistics and Census, 2020). In addition, the percentage of households in which one or more children did not attend school regularly or were enrolled in school ranged from 11% (in Sayausí) to 7% in Gualaceo and Quingeo.

Perceptions on Safety and Violence

Across the three research locations, students overwhelmingly (an average of 87%) said they feel safer at home than at school (Table 11.2), yet domestic violence seems to be common in their households. When asked why "Freddy" (Fig. 11.1) was sad (Table 11.3), the majority of answers from students in Gualaceo and Quingo pointed out domestic violence as the probable leading cause. In addition, when children were asked to fill in the blank in the statement "When Freddy breaks something at home, his parents____" (Table 11.4), the most frequent answer refers to spanking (an average of 71%).

These findings are corroborated by parents' and guardians' views on physical violence (using a "strong hand" or *mano dura* in Spanish). Almost half or more than half of adults interviewed admitted viewing spanking as a means to "improving behaviour" (59% in Gualaceo, 69% in Sayausí, and 45% in Quingeo) (Table 11.5).

Views on Violence

Children also shared common perceptions on violence. In the focus groups, two major themes were addressed: "How families help(ed) each other" and "How were/are children treated". They were asked to use their imagination to explain how they thought their grandparents and parents would have coped with these experiences compared to what they were themselves experiencing in the present. The aim was to map out the resources available, and strategies unfolding across generations to overcome challenges faced by the family and come up with probable solutions. A synthesis of answers from all locations (Table 11.6) demonstrates that the overall perception was that there was better communication and more proximity in the past, along with more violence and fear. Over the years, children's rights have gained recognition, and disciplining at home has become less common. According to the responses, violence has not disappeared but has instead evolved into "reverse violence" or violence perpetrated by children on their parents. Child-to-parent violence may be related to the naturalisation of domestic violence (Nam et al., 2020) and, thus, be a consequence of the legitimisation of violence in interpersonal relations at home (Cao et al., 2016).

In the participatory videos, the school was identified as the primary source of "external" violence, with teachers as the primary source of conflict for children. Below we share the scripts created by the groups and briefly identify emerging patterns. In the first video, "For a life without violence", produced by the children of

Table 11.6 How family members help(ed) each other and treat(ed) children when their grandparents were young when their parents were young and at present (focus groups)

	Grandparents	Parents	Present
How families helped each other	Families were closer, had better communication, and spent more time together.	There was more control of children and their behaviour. There were fewer dangers. They helped each other more.	Families are more diverse and open. There is less discipline. We have more rights now.
How were children treated	There was a lot of fear. They were harsh with children. There was psychological and physical violence. Problems were solved violently.	Life was hard and there were very few opportunities.	There is less physical violence. There is "reverse violence" and parents are not respected. We are less afraid.

Quingeo, the story tells how a teacher abuses her students by locking them in the bathroom as a punishment for neglecting their homework. A janitor finds them and takes them together with their mother to the headmaster, who at first does not believe their story but then decides nevertheless to confront the teacher. The teacher rejects any implication and tries to "escape" only to be caught soon after by the same students she was fleeing from. At a point during the writing up of the story, the idea came up that the teacher would abuse one of the students sexually. The room was then filled with silence until the children participants agreed on the fact that it would be too difficult to recreate. The video "For an education that listens to us"[6] produced by a group in Sayausí, also addresses the difficulties for children to have their voice heard at school. The video narrates the story of two students who try to convince the school principal that their worries and expectations were not being taken into account at school, an action that has them immediately expelled. A group of their classmates organise a protest and confront the principal, who is then forced to admit that communication within the school had to improve and that their expelled friends would be readmitted.

These videos provide valuable insights into children's perceptions of school violence. The children from Quingeo are aware of, or have experience with, teachers' use of violence as a form of punishment and know about sexual violence implicating school teachers. In the story, they also attach a positive value to the idea of getting back at the teacher who inflicted violence on students. In both Quingeo and Sayausí, the students show the need to speak up despite the negative consequences that might follow. Interestingly, in Quingeo, the students seek support from adults other than teachers, whilst in Sayausí, the students act on their own, which may imply that they cannot rely on the teachers.

Discussion and Conclusion

As discussed in the first part of this chapter, the PISA results support the idea that most students feel well at school in Ecuador. However, this study, together with findings on the rate of school bullying and other forms of abuse, shows that the relationship between children and violence is much more complex and varies according to the setting. According to our findings, children describe school as an unsafe place compared to home. This does not mean that home is free of violence: the majority of children involved in the participatory videos recognised being familiar with domestic violence, including violence perpetrated by adults against children. Parents and guardians on the other hand admitted to physical and verbal abuse towards children and acknowledged giving a positive value to such acts. As they have expressed in this study, children feel families are nevertheless more "open" to new models of child-rearing and "less traditional" compared to the past, and what

[6] The video can be watched in Spanish in https://youtu.be/hebjLUeZs3A

we witness today is an increase of "reverse" violence, or violence against parents and guardians by the children. One interpretation could be that violence is less feared and its use perceived as legitimate when there is a possibility for reciprocity (López et al., 2021; Ruiz-Hernández et al., 2020). Another interpretation could be that domestic violence has been naturalised in the social space, and thus the general level of tolerance in the population is higher (Cao et al., 2016; Nam et al., 2020). Seemingly, the participants' dominant view that the school is the problem could be due to the increasing public awareness of the level of violence taking place in educational institutions across the country or the significant number of formal complaints of sexual abuses implicating teachers.

It was beyond the scope of the study to try to identify relationships of causality. We see that as a limitation as we agree that it would have been helpful to pinpoint the reasons for the percentage of households (11% in Sayausí and 7% in Gualaceo and Quingeo, respectively) with children who are not enrolled in school or do not attend school regularly, particularly to investigate if these could be more specifically related to either school or home violence. That could represent the objective of a subsequent study.

This study raises more questions than answers. In Ecuador, we need more studies that compare acts of violence with perceptions of violence between home and school. The assumption of the Ministry of Education that schools are just replicating external or social violence needs to be critically re-examined in the light of new evidence. More answers are also needed about intervention: When and how should the Ministry of Education intervene at home? There are already protocols and roadmaps, and an operational model, for home intervention that the school could initiate. However, with the emergence of reverted violence, new intervention approaches need to be considered and implemented. One possibility would be for the school to create a "safe space" where teachers coming from similar backgrounds and contexts would have the opportunity to address the issues with students. Such an approach would require moving away from the current focus of educational guidelines, which centre on the need for developing cognition and other related skills to be more competitive later on the job market. Decision-makers must take the initiative to promote educational reforms that revisit the time dedicated by educational institutions to other aspects of learning and personal development such as health education and students' wellbeing. Breaking the cycle of violence at schools becomes more complicated when, as is the case of Ecuador, explicit and implicit educational norms emphasise punishment or discrimination for non-compliance with expectations. The Buen Vivir framework upholds values that are viewed as helping people live better together, such as spirituality, communalism, complementarity, and social harmony. At the same time, Buen Vivir does not involve a unitary concept of fulfilment: it embraces diversity in how people are expected to find wellbeing. Given that the Buen Vivir framework is constitutionally guaranteed and embedded in different education policies, it may be beneficial to ponder on its underlying values and align all educational strategies and guidelines with its overarching principles in a collaborative effort to tackle school violence and improve the wellbeing of students.

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Chapter 12
Re-imagining Mental Wellbeing Strategies in Schools

Michelle Jayman and Kyrill Potapov

Abstract Giving children a voice is purportedly a key tenet of education policy, practice and research. Nonetheless, ensuring that voice is meaningfully included and responded to in the spaces that children occupy remains a challenge. This chapter considers children's voice with respect to developing evidence-informed, socially valid, mental wellbeing strategies in schools. The pivotal role of schools in supporting pupils' mental wellbeing is well-documented and they are considered the ideal setting for preventative approaches and early intervention. Whilst the new relationships and health curriculum in England puts schools firmly in the spotlight, many staff feel overwhelmed and ill-prepared to deal with their responsibility for supporting pupils' mental wellbeing with growing concerns for staff's own wellbeing. Alongside this, school leaders are challenged with implementing effective and appropriate wellbeing strategies with limited knowledge in this domain, prompting calls for case studies of good practice for schools to share. With this in mind, LifeMosaic, an innovative wellbeing app. – designed, developed and evaluated through a pupil-teacher partnership – is presented in this chapter. The case study serves to demonstrate how child-to-child and child-to-adult collaboration, co-creation and social action can be harnessed to design authentic, child-centred approaches to support mental wellbeing which benefit the whole school community.

Keywords Mental wellbeing · Schools · Children's voice · Social action

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Child and Adolescent Mental Health: A Global Concern

There is growing evidence of the magnitude of mental health issues across the globe with data showing the percentage of children and adolescents experiencing difficulties worldwide at 10–20% (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020). A survey of 227, 441 young people (aged 11, 13 and 15) from 45 European countries indicated that youth mental wellbeing had declined between 2014 and 2018 in many nations (Inchley et al., 2020). Moreover, findings revealed a substantial variation in mental wellbeing across countries highlighting the influence of different cultural, policy and economic factors. In England, 11.2% of 5- to 15-year-olds were identified with a clinically diagnosable mental health disorder in 2017; emotional difficulties were increasingly common, rising to 5.8% from 3.9% in 2004 (Sadler et al., 2018). Worryingly, figures for children[1] experiencing difficulties below diagnostic thresholds were not included in these statistics so the national picture is graver still.

In line with a broader understanding of mental health which encompasses wellbeing (WHO, 2004), Public Health England defined 'mental wellbeing' as, 'not simply the absence of mental illness, but a broader indicator of social, emotional and physical wellness… [such as] happiness, life satisfaction and positive functioning' (2015, p. 6). UK charity, The Children's Society, began conducting annual surveys on children's subjective wellbeing in 2012 and has identified a continuous downward trend in average happiness amongst 10- to 15-year-olds. At age 15, children in the UK were found to be less happy and satisfied with life compared to 21 other European countries. Poverty and fear of failure were identified as potential explanatory factors, both of these relate to significant policy changes (e.g. austerity measures and revisions to the examinations system) within the last decade (The Children's Society, 2020).

A healthy transition to adulthood is grounded in good mental wellbeing in childhood and adolescence. Over half of all mental health problems start during these stages (Kessler et al., 2005) and therefore they mark critical developmental periods in which to intervene. The WHO Mental Health Action Plan, 2013–2020 (WHO, 2013) was developed to tackle the global burden of poor mental health and is underpinned by a life course approach that stresses the importance of prevention. Furthermore, it states that responsibility for promoting mental health and preventing mental disorders extends across every sector of society and all sovereign government departments – including, fundamentally, education.

[1] The term 'children' used throughout the chapter includes young people.

Nurturing Mental Wellbeing in Schools

It is broadly recognised that learning environments should be at the heart of early intervention provision. The notion of the 'nurturing school' (Lucas, 1999) came into popular discourse at the turn of the millennium. This embraces a positive, constructive and developmental approach which places the personal development of the whole school community at its core. Nurture is integral to the educational process and given a clear curriculum focus, engenders a positive cycle of growth and development (Lucas, 1999); therefore, within school settings children can learn social and emotional skills which are protective factors for good mental health. Over the intervening years, the role of schools in fostering wellbeing and supporting children to develop socio-emotional competencies has attracted increased attention. In line with Lucas's concept of the nurturing school, the idea of 'positive education' (Seligman et al., 2009) is underpinned by positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and blends academic learning with pupils' wellbeing.

Undoubtedly, schools have considerable reach and opportunity to deliver health interventions; globally, around 66% and 89% of children are enrolled in secondary and primary education respectively (WHO, 2017). The WHO Health Promoting Schools (HPS) framework offers a holistic approach to promoting health and educational attainment and addresses the whole school environment (Langford et al., 2014). This requires genuine engagement and commitment across the entire community: staff, pupils, governors, parents/carers and external services; a whole school approach. Within this overarching framework, the pivotal role of English schools in supporting children's mental wellbeing has been well documented (Department for Education (DfE) 2016, 2018, 2020; Department of Health (DoH) & National Health Service (NHS) England, 2015; DoH & DfE, 2017). The new relationships and health curriculum in England (DfE, 2019) places statutory responsibility on schools to promote mental wellbeing and provide appropriate support for pupils experiencing difficulties. Whilst evidence suggests that in England, 56% of children were willing to seek support in schools (The Children's Society, 2019a), school staff reported feeling overwhelmed and ill-prepared, with deleterious effects on their own wellbeing (Education Support, 2019). It is therefore a significant challenge for schools to fulfil their potential for nurturing and supporting the mental wellbeing of pupils and staff (Thorley, 2016).

An integral component of whole school approaches is attending to the views of everyone in the school community. This encourages collaborative thinking and fosters a sense of ownership and shared values within a social justice lens (Harris & Manatakis, 2013). However, applying these principles in a local context is complex and multiple factors influence successful implementation including buy-in from stakeholders, available resources, power dynamics and competing curriculum demands. According to Halliday et al. (2019), for positive education to effectively embed strategies to support mental wellbeing it must involve pupils in systemic stakeholder research. For any intervention to be successful it has to be compatible with its recipients (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Children hold unique knowledge and

insider perspectives and thus harnessing authentic pupil voice is a prerequisite. This chapter considers the case of a teacher-pupil collaborative project; pupil voice was mobilised through the design, development and evaluation of a mental wellbeing app. The objective here is to consider how this process was able to meaningly inform and effectively contribute to the school's mental wellbeing strategies.

Challenges and Opportunities for Harnessing Children's Voice

In line with human rights legislation (United Nations, 1989), stipulating children's right to have their opinions considered and views respected in decisions affecting them, section 176 of the English Education Act 2002, states that schools are required to consult with pupils in this regard. Whilst such a policy position supports giving children a voice, it fails to acknowledge ways to authentically do so (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2016). A significant problem lies in disparate interpretations of *listening* to children's views and what constitutes 'participation' (Murray, 2019). For Simovska et al. (2002, p. 45) to enable genuine participation, pupils must be provided with the resources and opportunities to 'develop, promote, exercise, and exert their competencies to be qualified participants in a democratic environment'. Hierarchical distinctions between levels of participation relating to the degree of power either shared or transferred were depicted in Hart's Ladder of Participation: the first three steps peak at 'tokenism' whilst stages four to eight represent 'degrees of participation' and culminate in, 'child-initiated, shared decisions with adults' (Hart, 1992, p. 8). Amongst later adaptations, Shier (2001) devised a five step, Pathway to Participation model for practitioners to reflect on their current position and identify the steps needed to increase children's involvement. Critics, however, have argued that such typologies impose the objective of reaching the highest level where children are the principal actors and decision-makers; however, this may not always be appropriate or desirable by children themselves (Franklin & Sloper, 2006). Therefore, models of participation, including non-hierarchical ones (e.g. Kirby et al., 2003), should serve not only to distinguish between different levels of empowerment afforded to children but also prompt examination of what kind of participation is appropriate and desirable according to each unique context.

For Maybin (2012) socio-cultural factors play a crucial role in shaping children's voice. Ethnographic observations and interviews with children (aged 10–11 years) were collected from a multi-ethnic English primary school. Findings revealed how pupils absorb views from their environment and appropriate and reproduce, to a variable extent, the authoritative voices of education, popular culture and parents/carers, thus shaping their voice in profound ways. In a similar vein, Fielding (2007) suggests caution regarding power authenticity and notions of inclusion which can be superficially understood and employed as a means to maintain the status quo. Pupil voice can become a 'dissembling device' (Fielding, 2010, p. 64) which is corrupted and fails to serve its fundamental purpose of engendering children's agency and empowerment. Therefore, to enable the types of partnership with children that

are truly emancipatory, adults must avoid presumptions that oppress or marginalise children's views and resist the impulse to maintain control. Whilst hierarchical, staff-pupil power relations are less pervasive than in the past, a transition to widespread democratic inclusivity has not occurred (Robinson & Taylor, 2007) and attention should be given to how school policies and practices can prioritise a school-wide, rights respecting ethos which genuinely harnesses pupil voice.

In England, statutory guidance (DfE, 2014) advocates that school pupils should be active participants in a democratic society and defines voice as, 'ways of listening to the views of pupils and/or involving them in decision making' (2014, p. 2). Furthermore, NASUWT, the Teachers' Union, have pledged their commitment to encouraging and supporting universal pupil voice in their school communities (NASUWT, 2019). Certainly, schools with a strong commitment to pupil voice have identified a range of positive outcomes such as increased attendance and fewer exclusions (DfE, 2014); improvements in behaviour and attainment, and better relationships between pupils and staff based on mutual respect (Whitty & Wisby, 2007). Moreover, pupils have reported increased confidence and sense of responsibility, alongside a greater affinity to school. Perceptions of belonging and capacity to participate are associated with subjective wellbeing (Stoecklin, 2013) and this aligns with a body of evidence (e.g. Banerjee et al., 2016) linking children's sense of school connectedness with positive mental wellbeing. Nonetheless, concerns have been raised about pupil voice representing only those pupils who are willing, or selected, to engage (Fielding & Rudduck, 2006) whilst other evidence suggests that good practice is sporadic: 'We rarely get a choice to say what we have to say or we are never heard' – Secondary schoolgirl (The Children's Society, 2019a, p. 17). It seems that ensuring pupil voice is meaningfully included and responded to in all the spaces children occupy remains a challenge.

Capturing Children's Voices on Mental Wellbeing

To enhance children's wellbeing and augment learning, educationalists must find ways to actively listen to children and respond to them (Johnson, 2004). Crucially, children's voice is not simply about collecting data (James, 2007); a clear outcome is essential, whereby children's views are translated into action and visibly contribute to change in meaningful ways. A rapid review of the literature on the subjective wellbeing of UK children with mental health needs (Children's Commissioner, 2017) revealed that studies often relied on the testimony of adult informants (e.g. parents and service providers). Those which did capture the direct voices of children showed that highly negative and stereotyped ideas about mental ill health were held and fears and stigma emerged at a young age. A lack of awareness around available services and support was identified, including help offered in schools. Crucially, children expressed their desire to be active agents and participate in decisions about interventions and services aimed at them:

> We're the experts; start listening to us… Don't do this as a tokenistic gesture… Listen to us because we are the ones who really know what it's like. Make sure we are at the heart of planning, commissioning, and evaluating (Services et al., 2010, cited in Children's Commissioner, 2017, p. 12).

The Children's Society survey (2019b) on children's views on mental health support was co-developed with a small group of target participants. Consultation at the survey design stage highlighted concerns regarding accessible and acceptable language. Children voiced a preference to talk about their 'feelings and behaviour' rather than respond to questions specifically on 'mental health' (2019, p. 1). Findings from the survey showed that over 8% of children who admitted having worries about their feelings or behaviour had not sought help. The authors applied this proportion to population estimates for 10- to 17- year-olds and projected that nationally, more than 464,000 children with worries about their feelings and behaviour were not accessing support. The report recommended more research aimed at understanding from children themselves the type of support they require so services can be appropriately designed around their genuine needs and preferences.

According to Fattore et al. (2019), for children's wellbeing to be fully understood they must be authentically acknowledged as active beings both in everyday life and within research. However, as Huynh and Stewart-Tufesau (2019) point out, significant challenges exist for integrating children's perspectives in research and ensuring they are legitimately involved in measuring, understanding and monitoring wellbeing. Traditionally, children were regarded as inherently poor informants and the views of adults who cared for, educated, or worked with them were sought to understand their lives (Johnson, 2004). More recently, the repositioning of childhood within a rights-based, social justice framework has seen less emphasis on mediating children's lives with adult data and a notable shift from objective to subjective research measures with efforts to engage children of all ages (Huynh & Stewart-Tufesau, 2019). Echoing Fielding's (2010) concerns regarding the appropriation of pupil voice, Johnson, warns that researcher assumptions about children's actions or words can result in inherent meanings being misrepresented, producing poor evidence. Such evidence, subsequently used to inform policy, will lead to inadequate services which are not based on what children want or need. Therefore, only research genuinely undertaken *with* children or *by* children can produce evidence for policy-making that is grounded in children's authentic views.

Shute and Slee (2016) highlight the value of developing partnerships with pupils in the development and evaluation of mental wellbeing interventions. This necessitates, as Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2016) posit, a shift in focus from pupil voice to effective pupil-teacher partnerships. These involve, 'the building of generative relationships and the just engagement of adults and young people in the research enterprise' (2015, p. 162). For Tay-Lim and Lim (2013), in the co-construction process child and adult are, ideally, equal players. However, because children generally lack power in society, they anticipate an inequitable relationship with adults; they are simply not accustomed to having equal voice (Punch, 2002). Successful

partnerships require genuine collaboration amongst everyone involved, whilst strategies to embed co-construction require critical reflection on processes and protocols; otherwise, children can become disempowered and their agentic status rendered tokenistic (Johnson, 2004). Nonetheless, authentic, child-adult, co-owned projects have the reformatory power for pupil voice to move beyond consultation to pupil-led action research. The next section considers the LifeMosaic project: a case study which showcases the transformative potential of children's voice and pupil-teacher partnerships – activated through the design, development, and evaluation of an innovative mental wellbeing app.

The LifeMosaic Project

The project began as a team entry to a national competition focused on youth led innovations to address real-world problems. Team members comprised four pupils (aged 14–16; two males, two females) from an English secondary school and their teacher (the second author). The first author was introduced to the project through her interest in school-based interventions but was not actively involved. At different stages other adults were consulted for their professional expertise but were not part of the core team. The youth members came together through voluntarily attending a weekly lunchtime club set up by the teacher to prepare for the competition. In this space, pupils had freedom to pursue their own motives, fostering meaningful collaboration and co-ownership from the outset. Pupil-initiated discussions centred on everyday issues facing young people. The impetus behind the project was to build a technology that would improve young people's lives and reflect their personal values and ideas, recognising them as experts in their own lives. A popular theme was mental health; several discussants reported first-hand experience of supporting friends with difficulties and from here the idea of designing a wellbeing app began to organically develop.

The LifeMosaic project demonstrated how adult 'professionals' can scaffold work whilst the key knowledge initiative rests with the young people. A central component of successful partnership working is dialogue, enabling the 'many asymmetries of power' to be overcome (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2016, p. 168). In this way, experiences were co-constructed throughout the process, providing ample scope for young people to make decisions and exert their agency. The teacher's role was, 'to seek clarification or prompt ideas already in the youth discourse' (Potapov & Marshall, 2020, p. 5). Likewise, when other adults were involved (e.g. parent volunteers provided workshops on fundraising and branding) ownership of the project was retained by the young people. This type of participatory action research challenges taken for granted assumptions and deliberately upsets traditional research approaches and notions of participation (Percy-Smith et al., 2019).

The LifeMosaic App.

LifeMosaic is a personal informatics (PI) wellbeing app. The voices of the four young people in the project team have been privileged in the following account of the app's development. Their agreed aim was, 'to empower young people to deal with challenges of every shape and size'. Life Mosaic users select an area of their life they wish to focus on and track routinely, 'as part of a tentative and ongoing process of self-understanding… [for young people] to learn about their own wellbeing' (Potapov & Marshall, 2020, p. 8). Aspects such as diet, health and mood are standard suggestions, but individual preferences can be incorporated. Enabling customisation was a major design consideration for the team as they were acutely aware of the disparate values, identities and constructions of meaning held within their peer group, 'LifeMosaic aims to put the user in control… expressing themselves in a way that's more meaningful to them' (Xian, age 16). For example, in contrast to typical PI apps which assume a higher step count is of value, LifeMosaic enables the user to set the evaluation criteria: 'For some people doing an hour's exercise might be ridiculous… you can say you've done 10 minutes and still be proud of yourself' (Geordie, age 16). In this way, children are acknowledged and respected as key informants and experts on their own lives (James, 2007).

Personal data is recorded by simply logging the number of times an activity or experience occurs. For example, instances such as, 'I went on youtube'/'I revised' or 'I reduced my stress'/'I increased my stress'. This creates a daily 'tile' or visual diary of behaviours, collated in a monthly overview or 'mosaic' for the user to reflect on. Each unique mosaic generates, 'a ticket for meaningful discourse' (Potapov & Marshall, 2020, p. 7). Data visualisations can be shared and used as a starting point for wellbeing conversations with friends or a mentor, 'We just aim to facilitate people connecting with other people about who they are'(Xian). By encouraging users to 'start the conversation', LifeMosaic 'would help you understand it's not just happening to you' (Esme, age 14). These positive outcomes were compared to the experience of using social media, 'Instagram believes that social desirability and having many friends is the most valuable thing and they use a 'likes' system to represent that … [whereas] LifeMosaic is purely … opening discussions' (Xian). Young people were critical of the token economies of 'likes' which they felt got in the way of genuine and meaningful connections. They also acknowledged the fear of being judged or bullied on social media and the value of being supported by peers which they believed Life Mosaic helps to facilitate.

Pilot Evaluation Study

Following a successful crowd funding campaign, the LifeMosaic project team secured the services of a freelance developer and the first iteration of the app was produced. The team conducted a small pilot study involving a convenience sample of seven year 8 pupils (aged 12–13; three males, four females) who were invited to

trial the app for one week, using it to track their sleep patterns (none had prior knowledge of LifeMosaic). A focus group technique was chosen to collect the data as it offers a less intimidating and more supportive research encounter than personal interviews, especially for child participants (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). As part of the co-construction process (Tay-Lim & Lim, 2013), the teacher was nominated to facilitate the session and the youth team members contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the findings. This level of participation was congruent with the choices of the young people and deemed both appropriate and desirable, underlining how meaningful participation is a process and not simply an isolated activity or event (Kirby et al., 2003).

A thirty-minute focus group took place on school premises following the trial. The aim was to capture pupils' experiences of using the app and explore its potential to complement existing school wellbeing strategies. Discussion was guided by the teacher, but participants directed the flow and interaction of the discourse. 'Member checking' was regularly employed to ensure the data remained true to the children's views. An audio recording of the session was transcribed and thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2013). All team members agreed the emergent themes which comprised: 'functionality', 'behaviour change', and 'technology and wellbeing' and are now briefly presented.

Functionality

Participants reported varying levels of engagement with the app, from everyday use as a detailed sleep diary to more sporadic practice. This highlights an inherent limitation with all PI apps – they require sufficient commitment to use to fulfil their potential. Nonetheless, data that had been recorded enabled respondents to reflect on their sleep behaviours and demonstrated how LifeMosaic operated as a functional tool, enabling users to observe, reflect and develop greater self-awareness about aspects of their life. Data showed a common pattern amongst participants, using technologies at night which interrupted a healthy sleep routine. Several children reported staying awake watching video sites on school nights. Others reported staying up late chatting with friends, playing online games, or using social media. The negative impact on sleep habits was acknowledged, alongside the resignation that, 'You get sucked in' (Participant 3).

Behaviour Change

Specific behaviour change, prompted by greater awareness of personal sleep hygiene, was not widely demonstrated. Only one pupil admitted actively doing something to improve their sleep quality: using a blue light filter on their phone to reduce the impact of screen light on their level of alertness. Although not linked to

specific positive action, another participant reported how they felt simply using LifeMosaic, 'Helped my sleep a bit because I knew I was tracking it' (Participant 5).

Technology and Wellbeing

Participants' reflections on their sleep 'mosaics' exposed the different relationship young people had with technology compared to an older generation (e.g. parents/carers and educators). One participant described how their parents had encouraged them to charge their phone during the night to avoid the temptation of late-night usage. Fellow participants reacted vehemently to the suggestion of being separated from their phone overnight despite the apparent logic and positive intention of enabling more quality sleep. Knock-on effects of poor sleep in relation to wellbeing also emerged. One participant described feeling more 'vexed' about sitting an exam after suffering from poor sleep. Overall, findings highlighted the centrality of technologies in children's lives and their potential to impact both positively and negatively on wellbeing.

Conclusions on the Project

The LifeMosaic project was a teacher-pupil collaboration which afforded young people agency to champion an important issue which *they* identified as highly relevant, not just for them, but for all young people. Arguably then, this case study counters criticism (e.g. Fielding & Rudduck, 2006) that pupil voice represents only those who are willing, or selected, to engage. Whilst power relations between adults and children have received significant attention, power hierarchies *amongst* children are rarely contemplated but can render individual voices more or less hearable (Schäfer & Yarwood, 2008). Nonetheless, the LifeMosaic team demonstrated their commitment to collective processes in which all voices and contributions were valued. A strong focus on children's agency and empowerment underpinned the project and these principles were embedded in the design of the app. Pupil voice was mobilised at all stages of the project – design, development, and evaluation.

The LifeMosaic app. has been championed by the team's school and adopted for use as part of the school's mentoring system, thus supporting existing wellbeing strategies and the health and relationships curriculum (DfE, 2019). Several other schools have expressed interest and wider rollout is anticipated. These outcomes are testament to how pupil voice and effective pupil-teacher partnerships can contribute to improvements in children's everyday lives. It is increasingly recognised that children's participation in research must comprise more than data collection. As we have seen here, through active involvement at all stages of the research process, children can contribute to the co-construction of knowledge (Waller & Bitou, 2011) and help to generate action and meaningful change (James, 2007).

Re-imagining School Strategies

This chapter has considered the relevance and value of authentically capturing children's voice as this constitutes a fundamental component of whole school approaches to mental wellbeing in schools. Under international legislation (United Nations, 1989) it is expected that children will have their views taken into account and be able to contribute to decisions that affect them. Yet a gap exists between the rhetoric and the reality and effective participation in schools requires policy, practice and cultural change (Forde et al., 2018). Implementing ways for staff and pupils to work in partnership may question long-held personal and professional beliefs, and adults must develop 'frames of mind' for meaningfully consulting with children (Harris & Manatakis, 2013, p. 34).

This challenge is set against the backdrop of increasing pressure on schools to provide preventative strategies and interventions to combat the growing burden of poor mental wellbeing amongst school-aged children. The notion that school is the ideal setting to nourish children's socio-emotional health is widely advocated, whilst good mental wellbeing has been strongly associated with improved educational outcomes and better life chances (Durlak et al., 2011). Nonetheless, evidence-based models of good practice are urgently needed for schools to share (Brown, 2018) to ensure that meaningful and effective mental wellbeing strategies are implemented.

Change initiatives in schools have typically reflected hierarchies of power: decided and introduced by school leaders; implemented by staff and followed by pupils. However, a more progressive approach understands children's participation as democratic and desirable in the production and reproduction of everyday life (Percy-Smith et al., 2019). As Halliday et al. (2019) posit and the LifeMosaic case study suggests, working in partnership with pupils, within a whole school approach, significantly increases the likelihood of achieving meaningful change. Successful partnerships entail genuine collaborations for everyone involved and in the context of re-imagining mental wellbeing strategies in schools, requires firmly locating children's voices at the centre of research, policy, and practice.

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