STUDENTS' WELL BEING: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK IN CONTEXT OF SCHOOL

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Abstract

Wellbeing is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity; rather it is the positive physical, social and mental state. Apart from the action of individuals it may arise from a host of collective goods and associations with other people. Wellbeing is a useful indicator of the quality of children's lives and, if monitored accurately, could be used to ensure that children maximise their potential and mature into happy and well-adjusted adults. According to FraillonJ. (2004) there are mainly two dimensions of students' wellbeing that is intrapersonal and interpersonal. Wellbeing of children is of utmost importance, irrespective of the child studying in Elementary or Secondary education. The paper discussed about the concept of wellbeing, dimensions of students' well-being and well-being in school context.

Keywords: concept of well-being, definitions of well-being, dimensions of students well-being and well-being in school context.

Introduction

Well-being is not the same as happiness, but can be thought of as a broad phenomenon that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions and global judgments of life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999). Life satisfaction is a person's evaluation of life as a whole, which may be over and above judgments about family, friends, work or school (Huebner, 1991). Ryff (1989) suggested that wellbeing comprises six dimensions – self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Wellbeing is a useful indicator of the quality of children's lives and, if monitored accurately, could be used to ensure that children maximise their potential and mature into happy and well-adjusted adults. In addition, there are often links between antisocial behaviour, including disruptive behaviour in school, and poor achievement resulting in a loss to the individual and to society in general. Unfortunately, not all children receive the same support, care and love, but regular measurement of wellbeing may be useful in helping to improve children's lives (Ben-Arieh and Frones, 2007) and in

raising public awareness and achieving political support for ensuring children's rights (Hood, 2007).

Concept and Definitions of Well-Being

It is important to understand the concept of well-being. The following definition given by different authors at different time helps for clear understanding of the concept of well-being.

1. Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. (WHO, 1946)

2. Wellness is an integrated method of functioning which is oriented toward maximising the potential of which an individual is capable.(Dunn, 1961)

3. Taking responsibility for your health means making a conscious commitment to your well-being. It involves a recognition that you choose a positive existence for the pursuit of excellence affecting all four aspects of being – the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual realm. (Ardell, 1982)

4. An active process through which you become aware of, and make choices that you hope will lead to, a more fulfilling, more successful, more well life. As such, wellness is an approach that emphasises the whole person, not just the biological organism. (Hettler, 1984)

5. Wellness, or a sense of well-being includes one's ability to live and work effectively and to make a significant contribution to society. (Corbin, 1997)

6. A way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being in which mind, body, and spirit are integrated by the individual to live life more fully within the human and natural community. (Witmer &Sweeney, 1998)

7. Well-being – to optimise health and capabilities of self and others. (Tasmania, 2000)

8. Well-being is a complex construct that concerns optimal experience and functioning. (Ryan & Deci, 2001)

9. Well-being is the state of successful performance throughout the life course integrating physical, cognitive, and social-emotional functions that results in productive activities deemed significant by one's cultural community, fulfilling social relationships, and the ability to transcend moderate psychosocial and environmental problems. Well-being also has a subjective dimension in the sense of satisfaction associated with fulfilling one's potential. (Bornstein, Davidson, Keyes, & Moore, 2003)

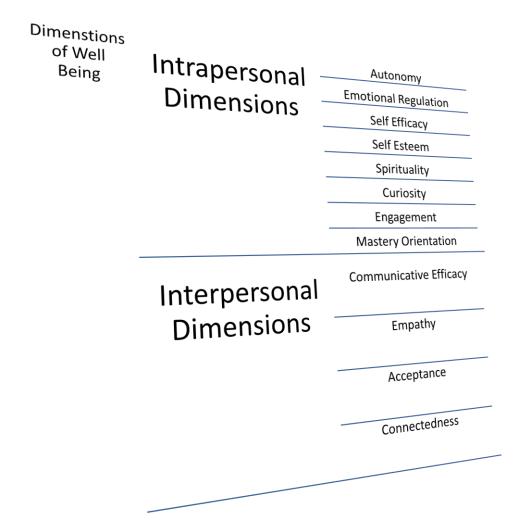From these definitions one can conclude that well-being means:

- Wellbeing is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity; rather it is the positive physical, social and mental state.

- Apart from the action of individuals it may arise from a host of collective goods and associations with other people.

- It requires that individuals have a sense of purpose and feel that they are able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society. It helps if their basic needs are met.

- It is boosted by conditions like good health, financial security, rewarding employment, and a healthy and an environment that include supportive personal relationships, involvement in empowered communities.

- Wellbeing is not the same as happiness, but can be thought of as a broad phenomenon that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions and global judgments of life satisfaction.

- Life satisfaction is a person's evaluation of life as a whole, which may be over and above judgments about family, friends, work or school (Huebner, 1991).

- Well-being emerges as the consequence of a dynamic interaction of different factors.

Dimension of Students Well-Being

In keeping with the variety of definitions of well-being in the research literature, there exists a diversity of multi-dimensional models of well-being. Models of well-being vary in focus and organisational structure.

Fraillon, J.(2004) in his discussion paper identified mainly two dimensions of students well-being derived from analysis and review of existing well-being research.

- The intrapersonal Dimensions
- The interpersonal Dimension

The Intrapersonal Dimension

The intrapersonal dimension of student well-being includes the aspects of well-being apparent in a student's assumed sense of self and ability to function in their school community. Fraillon'sreport defines nine distinct aspects of the intrapersonal dimension of student well-being which are:

- Autonomy:

A person is autonomous when their behaviour is experienced as willingly enacted and when they fully endorse the actions in which they are engaged and/or the values expressed by them Fraillon, J.(2004). There is extensive evidence to support the importance of autonomy to child and adolescent well-being (Bridges, 2003a). A person is autonomous when their behaviour 'is experienced as willingly enacted and when he or she fully endorses the actions in which he or she is engaged and/or the values expressed by them' (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, &

Kaplan, 2003). Autonomy includes the degree to which students can show an internal locus of evaluation with which they can accurately evaluate themselves and their needs as they function in the school community (Ryff& Singer, 1996). Students with high levels of autonomy would typically be self-regulating and able to plan and evaluate their actions independently of social pressure. Students with low levels of autonomy would typically be overly concerned about the expectations and judgements of others in guiding, framing and evaluating their actions. (Bridges, 2003a; Ryff& Keyes, 1995; Ryff& Singer, 1996).

- Emotional regulation:

In the school context it is manifest by the degree to which a student's emotional responses are of an appropriate type and magnitude to the events that surround them. Students with high levels of emotional regulation would exhibit a range of emotional responses that are consistently appropriate to their social and situational context in the school. Examples of students exhibiting low levels of emotional regulation may be when expressions of emotion are extreme given the context (such as outbursts of violent anger or frustration) or when students engage in behaviours that contravene social norms in order to satisfy immediate needs (such as stealing or cheating) (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Finch, 1997).

- Resilience:

Resilience is the capacity to manage, recuperate and move on from challenging events that tax or exceed a person's resources.

- Self-efficacy:

Self-efficacy refers to the degree to which a person believes that he is able to organise, perform and adapt strategies to meet desired outcomes. In the school context, students with high levels of self-efficacy would feel confident of their capacity to manage the academic and social tasks they encounter. High levels of contextual specificity in the measurement of self-efficacy help to protect against the confounding influence of competence, ability and outcome expectations (O'Brien, 2003). The measurement of student self-efficacy in the school context therefore involves the interpretation of a range of hypothetical and/or authentic student behaviours in across a range of contexts.

- Self-esteem:

Self-esteem refers to the way people feel about themselves.

- Spirituality:

Spirituality is aoptimistic sense of meaning and purpose in life. In the school context, evidence of effective student function indicative of spirituality will be manifest by demonstrations of directedness; connection to the past present and future worlds around them (beyond the school community); and consistency in expression of fundamental beliefs that drive students and give purpose to their lives (Adams &Benzer, 2000; Ryff& Keyes, 1995; Ryff& Singer, 1996).

- Curiosity:

Curiosity is the intrinsic desire to learn more. In the school context, curiosity will be manifested by students' capacity to engage with school based tasks independent of perceptions of external reward, and to devise and focus on strategies to explore learning. It may also be the case that, for older students in particular, evidence of high levels of curiosity will be manifested by engagement in tasks in areas that a student either dislikes or feels less confident of achieving. Although curiosity motivation has been positively correlated with academic achievement (Alberti &Witryol, 1994; Cahill-Solis &Witryol, 1994), evidence of curiosity in a school context would come from the processes rather than the outcomes of student task completion.

- Engagement:

Student engagement comprises of both engagement with the learning process and engagement with the school community.

- Mastery Orientation:

Mastery orientation is the desire to complete tasks to the best of one's capability. The broader construct of environmental mastery (Ryff& Keyes, 1995; Ryff& Singer, 1996) can be regarded as subsuming mastery orientation and engagement. Mastery orientation is identified as distinct from engagement in the current construct of intrapersonal well-being because of the contextual specificity brought by the overarching definition of effective student function in the school community. Mastery orientation is distinguishable from curiosity by its focus on the achievement of personal excellence in school tasks rather than the acquisition of the new tasks. In the school context, evidence of mastery orientation is primarily manifested by the degree of effort students put into the completion, refinement and improvement of the learning and community tasks they undertake as part of their school life.

The Interpersonal Dimension

The interpersonal dimension of student's well-being includes those aspects of well-being evident in a student's appraisal of their social circumstances and resultant capacity to function in their school community. This report defines four different aspects of the interpersonal dimension of student well-being which are:

- Communicative efficacy:

Communicative efficacy is the usage of communicative skills to accomplish a purpose. In order to function effectively in the school community, students need to interact with all members of the school community including other students from all levels of the school, teachers, parents and school partners. Communicative efficacy represents students' capacity to use effective and contextually appropriate communicative skills across the range of school contexts for a range of purposes.

- Empathy:

Empathy includes two constructs: cognitive empathy is intellectually taking the role or perspective of another person; affective empathy is responding with the same emoti Students, in the course of their everyday school experience, may be called upon to demonstrate both cognitive and affective empathy in different contexts as indications of effective function. Typically, cognitive empathy will be evident when students are called upon to express their understandings of the thoughts and feelings of others as part of academic learning tasks (such as in the analysis of a text) or in social learning tasks (such as part of a drug or bullying education program). Students may provide evidence of affective empathy through their participation in some learning tasks, although evidence of affective empathy is more likely to be gathered through reflection on students' social interactions on another person's emotion.

- Acceptance:

Acceptance is the construal of society through the character and qualities of other people. Acceptance is founded in beliefs about the fundamental goodness of others and includes respect, tolerance, trust and understanding (Fraillon, J, 2004). Students with high levels of acceptance will demonstrate positive attitudes to their peers, teachers and other members of the school community. They will provide evidence of trusting others and feeling comfortable with other members of the school community in most contexts demonstrating a dispositional favourable attitude to the individual and collective members of the school community.

- Connectedness:

Interpersonal connectedness is individual's awareness of being in close relationship with the society. It represents a meaningful linkage with a wide range of people. In the school community, connectedness will be represented by the number, range, quality and appropriateness of social relationships students develop. Evidence of high levels of connectedness will come from student demonstrations of successful, purposeful relations with a range of their peers, teachers and other members of the school community across a range of contexts.

Importance of Well-Being at School Level

Wellbeing of children is of utmost importance, irrespective of the child studying in Elementary or Secondary education. Children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, social, and school wellbeing, have higher levels of academic achievement and are more engaged in school during their educational years.

It has also been noticed that children with better emotional wellbeing make more headway in primary school and are more engaged in secondary school and they demonstrate less troublesome behaviour. With the child's progression through academic years, emotional and behavioural wellbeing become more significant in explaining school engagement, while demographic and other features become less vital.

An important facet in the adjustment to a different school is the students' sense of belonging and their socio-emotional functioning; the student's level of well-being. Increased sense of belonging, the feeling of being socially connected may lead to increased motivation and grades. Students with low sense of belonging may feel estranged at school, which in turn may cause deteriorate their performance and their eventually dropping out of school (Cueto, Guerrero, Sugimaru & Zevallos, 2010).

Leslie Morrison Gutman & John Vorhaus(2012) Found that importance of wellbeing for children and adolescents throughout their primary and secondary school education. There are critical periods, when specific dimensions of wellbeing are most crucial. For academic headway, better emotional wellbeing is a significant factor in primary school, whereas low levels of troublesome behaviour and more school engagement emerge substantial in adolescence. Good attention skills, on other hand, are important for academic development in both primary and secondary school. For school engagement, victimisation appears to have a greater impact in primary school, whereas better emotional and behavioural wellbeing and

friendships are supportive in secondary school. Students time of enjoyment at school plays a significant role in encouraging engagement in both primary and secondary school.

The relationship between student well-being and the other vital outcomes of schooling is unmistakeable. Improved outcomes in all aspects of student well-being are positively linked with enhanced outcomes in all other facets of schooling. This educational imperative only serves to strengthen and support the moral imperative for schools and schooling to be inclusive, supportive, and nurturing in order to maintain and support student well-being (Ainley&Ainley, 1999; Battistich, Solomon, & Watson, 1997; L. Beckett, 2000; McGaw, 1992).

Impact of School Environment on Students' Well-Being

Just as important to well-being is the security a child feels while at school. According to Laitsch, et. al. (2005) students in safe and supportive and healthy environments, demonstrate enhanced learning and achievement.

Dehuff, P. A. (2013) found in his study that: 1) "Students' relationships with school staff and their classmates were central to students' wellbeing and sense of belonging at school;" 2) "Students' relationships at school were strengthened when students were well known and personally acknowledged, recognized, and cared for by the school staff and their classmates;" 3) "When close relationships at school were fostered, the school was perceived as an extended family for students;" and 4) When the school became an extended family, students' expectations for positive interpersonal interactions and support at school were greater." At the heart of students' wellbeing and sense of belonging at school lie the relationships that are formed between students and school staff and between students and their class mates. Relationships was the dominant factor influencing students' wellbeing. While the core of students' wellbeing and sense of belonging at school lie in students' relationships with the school staff and their classmates, the factors that make these relationships strong are when students are well known and personally acknowledged, recognized, and cared for. As students' relationships with school staff and classmates were strengthened, the relationships became closer and students' wellbeing and sense of belonging at school was enhanced.

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