

*To critically investigate the role of the teacher in promoting
the wellbeing of the child in the primary school setting.*



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the requirements for the degree of Masters in Education
under the supervision of Dr. Wesley O' Brien.

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David O' Leary

Student ID:119225789

Signed Declaration

I, David O' Leary, declare that this work is my own for the purpose of this dissertation and has not been submitted for another degree at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents.

Signed David O' Leary

Date 26/05/2022

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Glossary of Abbreviations

DES Department of Education

CPD Continuing Professional Development

PDST Primary Development Support Team

SPHE Social Personal Health Education

RSE Relationship and Sexuality Education

SET Special Education Teacher

B.Ed. Bachelor of Education

B.A. Bachelor of Arts

Postgrad. Dip. In Ed. Postgraduate Diploma in Education

M.Ed. Master of Education

Abstract

Title

To critically investigate the perception of teachers on their role in promoting the wellbeing of the child in the primary school setting.

Purpose of this study

The researcher hopes that this research will raise awareness, create a deeper understanding, and identify best practice among teachers in a practical, in promoting the wellbeing of the child.

Methods

A mixed method approach was used in conducting this research. A questionnaire was completed by twenty four participants. Five participants engaged in a focus group discussion.

Findings

The quantitative data from the questionnaire revealed that teachers were unanimous in their views that the role of the teacher is paramount in promoting the wellbeing of the child and that there is a strong link between wellbeing and academic achievement.

Four main themes that contribute significantly to the wellbeing of the child emerged from the qualitative findings.

1. The school culture and environment.
2. The role of the teacher in developing the resilience of the child.
3. The teacher as a role model.
4. The challenges associated with wellbeing delivery.

Key Concluding Messages

The teacher plays a very significant role in the holistic development of the child. In this sense, wellbeing delivery extends beyond the allocated curriculum time. The promotion of the wellbeing of the child extends beyond teaching and learning.

Successful wellbeing delivery in the primary school requires a whole school collaborative approach among all stakeholders in the child's education. This is best achieved through the SSE process as well as ensuring that the ethos of the school, as set out in the mission statement, is upheld.

The teacher has the capacity to be an influential role model in the life of the child. The teacher aims to create a classroom environment where children are motivated to learn. Attending to their own personal wellbeing is important for teachers to ensure effective wellbeing delivery in the primary school.

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Introduction

The researcher has twenty-two years of experience as a mainstream class teacher in the primary school setting. Over the years, this researcher has often reflected on his role, purpose as well as the influence that he has in promoting the wellbeing of the many children that he has taught. This researcher has always been mindful of the potentially very significant influence the teacher may have in the life of a child. This researcher hopes to gain a deeper insight into the perception of his fellow teachers into their views on effective wellbeing delivery in the primary school. Furthermore, the researcher, in his current role as a teaching principal in a primary school, will have the responsibility to lead the vision for wellbeing provision in the primary school as outlined by The Department of Education and Skills (DES) in The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice document (DES, 2018). The researcher expects that through his research and engagement in the area of wellbeing delivery, it will improve his leadership capacity and enable him to lead the implementation of the wellbeing process as envisaged by the Department of Education and Skills. This research will be guided by the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice document (DES, 2018).

The aim of this research project is to critically investigate the perception of teachers on their role in the promotion of the wellbeing of the child in a primary school setting. It is underpinned by the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice document published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2018. The researcher hopes that this research will raise awareness, create a deeper understanding, and identify best practice among teachers in a practical sense, in developing the wellbeing of the child, to enable them to flourish in primary school. The research questions that will guide this study are as follows:

- 1 What is the current model of wellbeing delivery at primary school level?
- 2 What is the role of the teacher in promoting the wellbeing of the child in primary school?
- 3 How can teachers continue to strive to enable children to flourish at primary school?

A mixed methodology approach using a questionnaire and a focus group will be used to conduct the research. The research questions will be used to inform the questions chosen for the questionnaire and the focus group discussion. It is hoped that the research will identify what teachers see as their role in promoting the wellbeing of the child and what they consider as best practice in their role. The research will also focus on the teacher's perceptions around any perceived challenges they encounter or mitigating factors that may negatively impact on successful wellbeing delivery.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) published The Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice document in 2018. This document outlined a vision for the promotion of wellbeing of children and young people and has been highlighted as a government priority. It is envisaged that by 2025, all schools will have wellbeing at the core of the ethos of the school, have conducted evidence-based research on the provision for wellbeing in the school through the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process, as well as having a wellbeing policy in place.

As educators, teachers aim to enable the child to reach their full potential, to facilitate their holistic development, to strengthen that sense of belonging and connectedness as well as developing their resilience DES (2018). This is very much part of the ethos of the primary school. With this in mind, it is the researcher's intention to critically investigate the perception of teachers on their role in the promotion of the wellbeing of the child. DES (2016)

acknowledges the role of the teacher as being of paramount importance to the wellbeing of the child and reaches beyond teaching and learning. This claim indicates that the influence of the teacher on the wellbeing of the child extends beyond teaching and learning in the classroom.

This research will develop the professional capacity of other teachers and enable them to reflect on best practice for wellbeing provision at primary school level, which should have a positive impact on the wellbeing and of the child. It is hoped that this research will enable teachers to engage in further collaboration and reflective inquiry as well as a sharing of expertise among teacher for successful wellbeing delivery.

The literature referenced in this research is primarily taken from the field of positive psychology, philosophy and sociology. Positive psychology is concerned with the study of topics such as happiness, optimism, subjective wellbeing and personal growth (Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019). Achor (2011) claims that positive psychology has proved that happiness and optimism fuel performance and achievement. This is relevant to wellbeing provision in the primary school as it is acknowledged that there is a link between wellbeing and academic achievement (DES, 2018). Positive psychology focuses on how to increase individual happiness but also on what makes communities and group flourish as well (Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019). Resilience is concerned with the science of mastering life's challenges and entails growing from adverse events and finding meaning in them (Southwick & Charney, 2018) This research will draw from the field of positive psychology and examine its' relevance towards contributing to the wellbeing of the child in the primary school setting.

Chapter One - Literature Review

Introduction

“Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole end of human existence” (Aristotle as cited in Gaffney, 2011 p.95). Aristotle believed that there were two ways of attaining happiness, the first being hedonic, which is concerned with short term pleasure seeking, and the second is eudaimonia, which is considered to be the ancient word for wellbeing. However, hedonic wellbeing is not enough to make people feel fulfilled (Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019). Happiness, which is sometimes used as a synonym for wellbeing is achieved through having a sense of purpose in this world, specifically when our lives have meaning (Achor, 2011). Achor (2011) states that happiness is the experience of positive emotions combined with meaning and purpose, and is the joy we feel striving after our potential. Boniwell & Tunariu (2019) agree that striving after potential is an ultimate goal in life. Aristotle believed that the purpose of life was to achieve a unique individual state of excellence where we are at our best and discover our true spirit (Gaffney, 2011).

The goal of wellbeing is flourishing (Duckworth, 2016). It is when we are at our best that we flourish (Gaffney, 2011). Flourishing means having the capacity to rise to the challenges of life, while at the same time being able to maintain a high level of positive feelings (Gaffney, 2011). Seligman (2012) claims that the goal of well-being is to increase flourishing, where we experience eudaimonia. Wellbeing is subjective because it is relative to the person who is experiencing it (Achor, 2011). Wellbeing is a lifelong process and is dynamic in nature, therefore it is difficult to measure at any given time. This is due to the fact that our wellbeing is subject to change frequently due to life experiences (Achor, 2011).

Gaffney (2011) outlines four key elements that are required to enable us to flourish. The first one is to experience a challenge where we must engage with a task. Secondly, she highlights

connectivity, which involves being attuned to what is going on inside and outside of you. This sense of connectivity helps you to deal with the challenge. Thirdly, a sense of autonomy, where you are independent to act in pursuit of the challenge. The final element is using your unique strengths and talents to the full.

These can be summarised as:

- Rising successfully to the challenges of life.
- Being in tune with yourself and other people.
- Feeling free to act.
- Using your valued competencies.

Boniwell & Tunariu (2019) refer to flourishing as an element of wellbeing concerned with personal growth, which entails going beyond oneself in pursuit of meaning. Seligman (2012) and Gaffney (2011) both highlight wellbeing as the need to experience positive emotion when facing adversity, living a meaningful life which has a sense of purpose, while maintaining positive relationships with yourself and those around you. The DES (2018) states that children have better academic outcomes if they are happy at school and that child wellbeing is essential to success in both education and in life.

Wellbeing and Mental Health

Seligman (2012) claims that being in a state of positive mental health is to be in the presence of flourishing. Positive mental health for children, includes aspects of the child's social, emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual well-being (Barry and Friedli, 2008 as cited in DES, 2015). Schools are acknowledged as important places for children to develop positive mental health, and there is a positive relationship between wellbeing and student achievement (DES, 2018). Children in primary school with good school connectedness are less likely to

experience mental health issues and are more likely to have good educational outcomes (DES, 2016). It is considered effective practice in schools where students are motivated to learn, understand themselves and their relationships, as well as experiencing the opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning (DES, 2016).

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back after experiencing difficulties, or in the face of adversity, but it also includes the ability to grow from such events and find meaning in them (Southwick and Charney, 2018). Gaffney (2011) claims that resilience is contingent upon balancing the positivity and negativity in life, and that being able to manage emotions is fundamental to building resilience. Resilient people have a belief that their situation has meaning, allowing themselves to commit themselves fully to it, so they can manage their life, even when things seem out of control (Williams and Penman, 2011). Gaffney (2011) believes that it is the capacity to feel positive even when feeling negative, that is at the essence of resilience. Seligman (2012) claims that positive emotion is an essential element of wellbeing. Boniwell & Tunariu (2019) agree that resilient people have the distinct ability to maintain and regulate positive emotions. The role of the teacher here is to create a safe, nurturing and inclusive classroom environment (DES, 2018). Southwick and Charney (2018) believe that optimism ignites resilience, enabling an active and creative approach to coping with challenging situations, which focuses on the positive side of adverse situations. Optimism has positive implications for physical and mental health, being more satisfied with their lives psychologically and physically healthier Southwick and Charney (2018). The role of the teacher in helping children to be optimistic, can be achieved by enabling them to reappraise problems positively and employ strategies to solve their problems (Southwick & Charney, 2018).

Gaffney (2011) claims that one cannot claim to be resilient without having experienced a crisis or failure and that it is these experiences that are most likely to make us resilient. Coping with negative experiences provides an opportunity to re-evaluate and learn from the experience (Southwick and Charney, 2018).

“He who has a why can endure almost any how” (Nietzsche as cited in Southwick and Charney 2018, p.252). Southwick and Charney (2018) state that finding meaning in life promotes resilience and a sense of meaning and purpose enhance positive emotion and happiness. Smith (2017) outlines that people who believe that their lives have meaning are driven by a sense of purpose, and a sense of belonging is the most important driver of meaning. The role of the teacher and the school is to promote a sense of belonging, which can be achieved by ensuring the ethos of the school is maintained (DES, 2018). This sense of belonging, fostered by a living ethos in the school, gives the child a sense of purpose and meaning (DES, 2018).

Child Wellbeing in a Primary School Setting

Schools are acknowledged as important places to promote the wellbeing of the child and there is a positive relationship between wellbeing and student achievement (DES, 2018). Pupil wellbeing can be viewed as both an outcome and an enabler of learning (DES, 2016). The role of schools in promoting pupil wellbeing is recognised through their practices in the key areas of school culture and climate, teaching and learning policies and partnerships and relationships (DES, 2018). These four key areas are acknowledged as indicators of successful wellbeing promotion in the primary school (DES, 2018).

The culture of a school or organisation is seen as the values, behaviours and norms held by a group of people (Duckworth, 2016). School climate is visible in the ethos or characteristic spirit of the school (DES, 2018). A positive school culture and climate promotes a sense of belonging

and connectedness (DES, 2018). In this environment, relationships between adults and children are based on kindness and mutual respect. Achor (2011) claims that positive social relationships lead to heightened wellbeing and performance. The DES (2018) states that the wellbeing of the child should be central to the ethos of the school. Schools promote wellbeing to assist the holistic development of the child, which is their mental, physical, academic, spiritual, emotional and social development (DES, 2018). The holistic view of learning requires the development of a broad range of skills, competences and values that enable personal wellbeing, a sense of belonging and lifelong learning (DES, 2018).

The second indicator of success for wellbeing promotion in primary school is in the area of teaching and learning (DES, 2018). Pupil wellbeing is promoted by having high standards of teaching and assessment, which provides opportunities for success for all children (DES, 2018). One of the roles of the teacher is to set high standards of teaching and learning in the classroom and aim to ensure that all children in their class experience success (DES, 2018). Dweck (2017) cautions against lowering teaching standards in an attempt to enable children to experience success. Dweck (2017) asserts the importance of setting high standards, but the role of the teacher is to ensure that the children are equipped with the strategies to attain those standards. This can be achieved through differentiation in teaching and learning practices in the classroom, as well as through collaboration between the class teacher and the special education teacher (SET) (DES, 2018).

Policies and planning are acknowledged by the DES as the third indicator of successful wellbeing promotion in primary school (DES, 2018). Comprehensive planning is required at a whole school level to ensure successful delivery of wellbeing (DES, 2018). Outside of the SPHE curriculum, there are numerous policies and practices that are linked to the wellbeing of the child, such as: Anti-Bullying, Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) Physical

Education, Substance Use, Healthy Eating, Child Protection, Critical Incident (DES, 2018). Teachers and school leaders have a responsibility to ensure that these policies and practices are implemented on a whole school level, which is best achieved through collaborative reflection (DES, 2018).

The fourth indicator of success for wellbeing promotion is considered to be the relationships and partnerships that exist in the school (DES, 2018). It should be acknowledged that all four indicators for successful wellbeing delivery in primary school are interlinked. Acknowledging the voice of students and their sense of agency is considered best practice in primary schools (DES, 2018). Achor (2011) believes that giving students greater levels of autonomy over their learning leads to increased levels of wellbeing and academic achievement.

The current model of wellbeing delivery in primary school is through the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum (DES, 1999). The current allocation of time for the provision of SPHE is 30 minutes per week according to guidelines set out by the Department of Education and Skills (DES, 1999). The SPHE programmes taught in primary schools include Walk Tall, Stay Safe and the RSE programmes. Many, but not all schools, adopt additional programmes to promote the social and emotional competences of the children, such as Friends for Life (Henefer and Rogers, 2013), and Weaving Wellbeing (Forman and Rock, 2017). These programmes are designed to teach children skills and strategies which develop positive mental health and wellbeing. Such programmes have been shown to significantly improve children and young people's social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour and learning performance (Durlack, Weissbert, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011 as cited in DES, 2018).

The Role of the Teacher in Promoting the Wellbeing of the Child

The teacher plays a very significant role in the promotion of the wellbeing of the child and has the potential to be a very significant role model in the child's life (DES, 2018). Southwick & Charney, 2018) believes that good role models are a source of inspiration, motivation and support, who foster self-esteem. Achor (2011) claims that through imitation children learn right from wrong, how to handle challenging situations, and take responsibility for their actions and their lives. Bandura (2006, as cited in Southwick and Charney, 2018) claims that learning from a role model involves learning rules of behaviour that will serve to guide future action. This develops a sense of autonomy in children, where they begin to take responsibility for their own actions and their lives (Southwick & Charney, 2018).

Southwick and Charney (2018) claim that children who grew up to be emotionally healthy adults found at least one person who truly supported them and served them as a role model. Teachers are sometimes that "one good adult" acting as a powerful protective force in a child's life (DES, 2015). The teacher, by making a connection with the child, creates a bond that enables the child to have a positive experience (Cooper and Jacobs, 2011). Access to one good adult who can guide and support a child at a vulnerable period in their life is identified as a protective factor in promoting the wellbeing of the child (DES, 2018).

Dweck (2017) states that our mission as educators is to develop people's potential and that this can be done by creating a growth mindset in our students. A growth mindset is a belief that the abilities of people can be improved and developed (Dweck, 2017). It is based on a belief that our abilities and talents are not innate and can be improved over time (Dweck, 2017). Achor (2011) agrees that mindsets lead people to maximise their potential and that the growth mindset helps children succeed, but it really comes down to motivation.

Duckworth (2016) outlines that for children to succeed, they must develop ‘grit’ or character which requires having passion and perseverance for what they do. Goleman (2006) refers to character as emotional intelligence, which is the ability to manage our emotions, motivate oneself and persist in times of adversity. “Emotional intelligence or character encompasses a set of traits or skills that need to be developed to promote the children’s sense of wellbeing” (Goleman 2005, p.44). Duckworth (2016) asserts that for children to have grit, they must have the four elements of interest, practice, purpose and hope.

(Dweck, 2017) believes that to enable children to have a growth mindset and enhanced wellbeing requires the creation of a classroom culture where it is seen as acceptable to make mistakes and where they are seen as learning opportunities. Neff (2011) agrees that in this environment, mistakes and negative experiences are seen as learning opportunities. The teacher models this behaviour in the classroom (Dweck, 2017). The use of praise and encouragement has long been understood as an effective means to boost the child’s confidence and self-efficacy, which is a belief in one’s abilities (Bandura as cited in Gaffney, 2011). Boniwell & Tunariu (2019) assert that self-efficacy is a necessary foundation for wellbeing, motivation and personal achievement. Neff (2011), however, discourages the use of indiscriminate praise as it may have the effect of hindering the child’s capacity to see themselves clearly, thus limiting their ability to reach their full potential. Dweck (2017) states that children need honest and constructive feedback and cautions against praising children’s intelligence. Dweck (2017) argues that the child should be praised for their perseverance and effort. Neff (2011) and Dweck (2017) agree that praise should be contingent on hard work and effort, enabling children to feel good about themselves.

Bates and Li (2020) have disputed growth mindset and called into question its core assumptions and predictions, claiming the absence of any link between growth mindset and

academic achievement. Dweck and Yeager (2020) disagree with these findings and claim that the cultural context in which the research was undertaken, was a mitigating factor.

Dweck (2017) claims that there is a message in society to protect children from negative experiences in an effort to boost children's self-esteem, and this viewpoint is potentially harmful. Self-esteem is how we define our own self-worth as determined by our own judgments, as well as the perceived judgements of ourselves by others (Neff, 2011). Neff (2011) claims that self-compassion, which implies self-kindness and non-judgemental awareness of oneself, is a powerful means to improve emotional well-being. The role of the teacher is to enable the child to be more accepting of themselves and not comparing themselves to others (Neff, 2011). In doing so, the child will acknowledge what they have in common with others and feel more connected (Neff, 2011).

Promoting a culture in the classroom, where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities, and instilling in the children the importance of practice and perseverance requires a growth mindset on the part of the teacher (Duckworth, 2016). A culture of growth and teamwork requires a growth mindset on the part of leaders, who have a belief in human potential (Duckworth, 2016). Good teachers are constantly trying to improve and demonstrate a growth mindset and aim to promote the wellbeing of the child (Dweck, 2017).

Seligman (2012) claims that positive emotion is essential to enable children to flourish. This requires being positive and optimistic. Optimism embodies an attitude that things will turn out well, in spite of setbacks (Southwick and Charney, 2018). Neff (2011) purports that positivity enables children to create the mindset to work hard and reach one's highest potential, but they need to feel confident and secure to perform at their best. Confidence and belief in one's own ability, better known as self-efficacy require optimism and hope (Goleman, 2006).

Furthermore, the teacher can further enhance the wellbeing of the child by facilitating the opportunity to engage in self - assessment, where children set goals for themselves (DES, 2018). Gaffney (2011) outlines how setting goals generally increases motivation and gives a sense of purpose. Boniwell & Tunariu (2019) agree and claim that committing to a set of goals provides meaning and structure to daily life. Achor (2011) believes in setting attainable goals for children that are manageable with effort, enabling the child to build confidence and make progress. In this way, there is a sense of continuous improvement, a term in Japanese known as kaizen or ‘continuous improvement’ (Duckworth, 2016). Small successes can build up to become significant achievements (Achor 2011). Gaffney (2011) believes in the importance of setting enjoyable and challenging goals for children, to ensure that the children are fully engaged and get to experience “flow,” the experience of full and deep enjoyment in what you are doing. (Gaffney, 2011, p.269)

Teacher Wellbeing

The DES (2018) emphasises the importance of teacher wellbeing and asserts that if the teacher is to be a good role model, they must be in a positive state of wellbeing. Gaffney (2011) claims that when organisations are led by emotionally positive leaders, employees report themselves to be happier and healthier. Achor (2011) believes that a positive mindset on the part of leaders in an organisation has a positive effect on the whole group. The concept of positive emotion spreading throughout an organisation is referred to as “emotional contagion” (Achor, 2011, p.204). It has a positive effect on the culture of the work environment. Boniwell & Tunariu (2019) claim that when we experience positive emotions, we feel connected to others. Achor (2011) asserts that social relationships are the best guarantee of heightened wellbeing in

organisations. Achor (2011) refers to the importance of social connectedness of teachers to enhance their wellbeing, where they experience positive emotion, and when in times of difficulty, turn to their colleagues for support. Fostering a sense of community and belonging is essential to support the wellbeing of children and staff (DES, 2016). Southwick and Charney (2018) claim that in order to thrive in this world, we need other people, as interdependence with others can provide a foundation for resilience. Building professional capacity among teachers by engaging in professional development and collaborative reflection is acknowledged as having a significant positive impact on teacher wellbeing and also on the wellbeing and achievement of the children (Hargreaves et al, 2018 as cited in DES, 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, promoting the wellbeing of the child is central to the ethos of the primary school, and key to this, is the role that the teacher plays in promoting the holistic development of the child. The teacher has a very influential role in the wellbeing of the child, and delivering a broad and balanced curriculum, setting high standards of teaching and learning as well as assessment practices in the classroom is part of that role. The teacher, by creating a safe, supportive and nurturing classroom environment, enables the child to flourish and strive to reach their potential. The researcher has highlighted the role that the teachers play in promoting the wellbeing of the child, fostering a sense of belonging that gives the child a sense of meaning and purpose, where he or she is motivated to learning. Teacher wellbeing is important, and the teacher needs to be in a positive state of wellbeing, in a supportive work environment, to enable the child to flourish in primary school.

Chapter Two - Methodology/ Research Design

Introduction

This chapter outlines how the overall study was conducted, using a mixed-methods research design, with the overall aim to explore the following research aims:

1. The current model of wellbeing delivery at primary school level.
2. The role of the teacher in promoting the wellbeing of the child in primary school.
3. How teachers continue to strive to enable children to flourish at primary school.

In this chapter, the researcher's philosophical position is described, alongside the research framework. A rationale for choosing a mixed methodological research design approach is outlined, including the limitations of such an approach. The ethical considerations involved prior to and during the research process are described. Background information on the participants is outlined, alongside the data collection process and further analysis of the data. The chapter concludes with a summary of what the researcher learned as a result of the data collection process.

The Researcher's Philosophical Stance

The nature of this research requires the researcher to consider a philosophical paradigm at the beginning of the research proposal. A paradigm acknowledges the researcher's beliefs about the world in the context of the research setting (Broom & Willis, 2007). When choosing a methodology, the researcher must begin with epistemology, also known as a philosophy of

knowledge (Walsh & Ryan 2015). There are two different research frameworks, namely positivism and post positivism, the former being concerned with the objective nature of knowledge and how the world is explained, the latter with the subjective nature of knowledge from the perspective of how the world is experienced Walsh & Ryan (2015). Post Positivism recognises that the researcher's subjectivity influences the research (Walsh and Ryan, 2015). The researcher has a vested interest in hearing about the thoughts and opinions of the participants, as he has a particular epistemological position as a researcher in working in the same role as the participants. The researcher in his role as a teacher, is experienced in the provision of wellbeing to children in primary school, for these reasons, the researcher has a post positivist epistemology on wellbeing provision in the primary school. The researcher values the importance of the participants' understanding, opinions and experiences of their work.

Research Design

A mixed method of inquiry was chosen as the most suitable and appropriate design for this research. Mixed methods research involves combining quantitative and qualitative data in the research (Creswell, 2014). In this research, the quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire, which by and large consisted of mainly closed ended responses. The questionnaire had a total of twenty two questions, 80% of which were quantitative questions. The remaining 20% of the questions were open ended questions, to ascertain the views, experience and opinions of the participants on the provision of wellbeing in primary school. The questions used in the design of the instrument were based on the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice document (DES, 2018). Some qualitative data was also gathered through the use of open-ended questions on the questionnaire.

The most significant amount of qualitative data in this research was collected through the rollout of a focus group interview, with the specific use of open-ended questions. The questions in the focus group, of which there were a total of eight, were again all based on the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice document (DES, 2018). The questions selected were chosen under the thematic domains of:

School Culture and Environment.

Teaching and Learning.

Policies and Planning.

Relationships and Partnerships.

Rationale for using a mixed-methods approach.

A mixed method approach was selected primarily to strengthen the robustness and rigour associated with the research data. The quantitative data was useful to get a wider view of wellbeing provision in the primary school setting, as it involved a broader, and a more diverse group of teachers from a variety of primary school settings. The questionnaires provided the researcher with quantitative data on wellbeing provision in the primary school. It was hoped that the data from the initial questionnaires would provide the researcher with a broad familiarity surrounding the current wellbeing provision of children in the primary school setting, as well as teachers' attitudes, experiences and opinions on their role in promoting the wellbeing of the child. Walsh & Ryan (2015) recommend that the researcher uses his or her own personal and professional experience in deciding where to collect the data from.

In this study, the researcher initially intended on conducting individual interviews with the participants, who are teaching in the same educational setting as the researcher. The interviewer would have a shared understanding of the perspective of the interviewees and this would enable the interviewer to pursue similar lines of thinking, as introduced by the interviewee (Walsh & Ryan, 2015). The decision was made to proceed with a focus group, given the suitability of this method to the small staff group of five teachers. It was also made for practical reasons, given the time-consuming nature of transcribing five individual interviews. Focus groups are deemed unsuitable for collecting statistical data, as the number of participants are too small (Kreuger & Casey, 2010). For these reasons, the focus group generated qualitative data exclusively. This method was selected, as it was hoped by the researcher, that it would provide further depth to the quantitative questionnaire data already collected in the first stage of the research. Qualitative research generally deals with a smaller number of participants and values people's perspectives on their worlds (Walsh & Ryan, 2015).

A focus group is a semi-structured method of collecting data, in the sense that structure is provided through the use of pre-prepared questions, however, the methodology allows for interaction between participants, which adds an unstructured element to it (Kreuger & Casey, 2010). In a focus group, the questions are focused and sequenced, so that the questions are increasingly focused on the key topic of research, as opposed to other interview environments, where the interviewer may ask the most important questions first and have a more unstructured approach to interviewing (Kreuger & Casey, 2010).

The focus group took place at the place of work of the participants at the end of the school day. All participants were in attendance. The researcher tried in his role as a moderator to put the participants at ease and make them feel comfortable with the process. Before the focus group began, the researcher engaged in conversation with his colleagues on matters unrelated to the

focus group discussion. Participants discussed how their day was spent in the classroom and engaged in light conversation in general. The researcher outlined at the beginning of the focus group, that all answers were valid, and that the aim of the research process was to gather a range of thoughts and opinions based on the experience of the participants. Kreuger & Casey (2010) outline the pivotal role that the moderator plays in enabling the participants to be forthcoming with their thoughts and opinions.

Furthermore, another reason why the focus group methodology was chosen, was due to the fact that participants are all part of the same organisation. All participants have varying amounts of expertise and experience with the research topic. Morgan (1995) states the importance of selecting focus group participants that are comfortable with each other and share an interest in the topic. (Kreuger and Casey (2010) claim that using a focus group in this environment is effective as the homogeneity of the group results in a greater sharing of ideas as well as thoughtful listening on the part of the participants.

The focus of the research using the focus group interview was also gathered for practical reasons directly relating to the school setting in which the research took place. Primary schools are mandated by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to have a wellbeing policy in place and make wellbeing part of the School Self-Evaluation process (SSE) by 2023 (DES, 2018). The focus group interview was a suitable method to gather information, which will inform the development of a wellbeing policy and initiate the SSE process in this particular primary school setting.

The participants were aware of this requirement by the DES and so it was felt that they also had a vested interest in engaging with the research that was being undertaken. It was hoped that the focus group would generate rich data for the subsequent study. “Rich data afford the

researcher a thorough knowledge of the empirical world or problem that he or she studies” (Charmaz, 1995, p.33 as cited in Walsh and Ryan, 2015)

Limitations of the Research Methods

While the researcher was pleased with the approach taken to the research and the methods used, the study was not without limitations. Firstly, it has to be acknowledged that the overall scale of the research was quite small. The researcher acknowledges that a sample size of five teachers in a focus group and twenty four participants in the questionnaire is insufficient, to demonstrate a generalised picture of the role of the teacher in promoting the wellbeing of the child in a primary school setting. There was only one questionnaire and one focus group which only measures the views and perceptions of teachers at one time only. A further limitation of the methods used could potentially be the position of the researcher in the research, particularly in the focus group as the researcher is the principal in the setting in which the focus group took place.

It must also be noted that student and parent voice has not been acknowledged in the research. Both of these stakeholders would also provide a unique insight into wellbeing provision in the primary school.

The researcher gave the participants the option of taking a copy of the questions in advance of the focus group. Two participants opted to take the questions one day in advance of the focus group interview taking place. The participants who had obtained the questions in advance had prepared answers that were written, and this impacted upon the tone of the focus group. This

preparation work from two of the participants meant that the answers given on the day of data collection were more theoretical and not always related to the experience of the participant, which is what the researcher really wanted to glean from using this method. Walsh & Ryan (2015) assert that participants in focus groups sometimes see it as an opportunity to speak in more abstract and theoretical terms. As researchers, we strive to engage in a social construction of a narrative in a group, to activate the knowledge and experience of the participants (Richie & Rigano, 2001). This was hindered somewhat as a result of participants seeing the questions in advance of the focus group. The other participants in the group may have felt a little under prepared. The participants who did not have the questions felt under a certain degree of pressure as a result of this. This was noted by the researcher, as one of the participants asked for more time to look at the questions when she noticed that some participants had arrived at the focus group with written answers. There was a certain degree of nervousness detected by the researcher among the group initially. This all seemed to stem from two members of the group having written and pre-prepared answers in advance.

Ethical Considerations

The University College Cork (UCC) Social research Ethics Committee (SREC) approved this study in January 2022. Participants were all from primary school settings. All participants were initially informed about the purpose of the study. The researcher prepared a written outline of the intentions and conditions under which the study would be carried out. This was discussed with the participants. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the process at any stage. Each participant was given a letter of consent to read in advance of the research.

The consent letter outlined the data collection methods used and the purpose of the study. All participants were guided through the information sheet and given time to consider their consent. The consent forms were kept secure in a Google Drive folder under password protection. Consent was sought to conduct the focus group interview at the researcher's work setting, from the Chairperson of The Board of Management. This was deemed necessary as the researcher is the principal of the primary school in question.

The questionnaires were made available to participants as a Google form (see Appendix 1 for questionnaires). All participants remained anonymous during this process. The decision to send out the questionnaire to participants as a Google form was made on the basis that it was convenient for the participants and the participants data was automatically anonymised. A further reason for choosing this method of questionnaire delivery was the ability of Google Workspace to interpret and present visual graphs of the quantitative data. The responses to the questionnaire were stored under password protection in a Google Drive folder. The researcher sent questionnaires to twenty five participants, who had given their consent to engage in the research. Twenty four questionnaires were completed and returned, which is a 96% response rate.

The focus group was conducted face to face with five participants at their place of work, which is a primary school setting. The participants are all colleagues of the researcher. The focus group was audio recorded using voice note on an Apple iPad. The data was subsequently transcribed and stored in a Google Drive folder (see Appendix 2 for focus group questions). The names of the participants were anonymised using pseudonyms to ensure that the data generated from the focus group could not be traced back to the participants in the dissertation or in any further publications. The recording was subsequently deleted. All data collected was collected according to GDPR standards as set about by the UCC, SREC.

Participants

The twenty four participants who completed the questionnaire were from a range of eleven primary schools in total, ranging from small rural schools to large urban schools. Five of the participants work in the same educational setting as the researcher. The remaining nineteen participants who completed the questionnaires, included participants from a wide range of primary schools, ranging from a two teacher rural school to larger urban schools with a teaching staff in excess of forty teachers. The data from the questionnaires was generated from a total of eleven primary school settings. By focusing on a wide range of schools, it was the researcher's intention to gather data which would reflect a broader spectrum of ideas and opinions. The participants had varying degrees of experience and expertise in terms of wellbeing provision in the primary school. All participants who completed the questionnaire were known to the researcher.

The participants in the focus group all teach in the same setting, a rural school with an enrolment of 104 pupils. There are six teachers in total in the school, four of whom teach multi-grade mainstream classes, with the two remaining teachers teaching in special education. The researcher is a colleague of the teachers and is one of the multi-grade teachers. It was a suitable group size to engage in a focus group. Kreuger & Casey (2010) assert that a group of five to eight participants is suitable when the participants have considerable expertise and personal experience in the area of study. The participating teachers were all vastly experienced, which ranged from twelve to twenty two years of teaching experience.

The participants were given a predetermined set of eight questions in total. The teachers' high levels of experience and expertise were acknowledged as factors which would potentially yield rich data on the provision for the wellbeing of children in primary school. The teachers in the

focus group had previously completed the questionnaires. The success of data gathering depends on the willingness, openness of the participants as well as the ability of the researcher to create good questions (Walsh & Ryan 2015). The participants that were chosen to complete the questionnaires and engage in the focus group were all well known to the researcher. The researcher believed that the personal relationships and carefully crafted questions would ensure that the data collection methods would generate useful data.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed through the use of pie charts, bar charts and tables using percentages. Tables were used to represent participant demographic data. Pie charts and bar charts were used to demonstrate the perception of teachers on the current model of wellbeing provision in the primary school.

Two main themes as well as two sub themes were identified in the quantitative data analysis.

The qualitative data from the questionnaire was collected on a Google doc. The data collection process for the questionnaire was completed within a fortnightly period. This data was subsequently transcribed and printed in a hardcopy format. The focus group data was transcribed verbatim from the audio recordings. Both sets of qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis procedures outlined by Braun & Clarke (2013). This involved reading and re-reading, the coding of comments and putting them into categories based on similar content. The researcher then undertook a thematic analysis of the categories to gain a fuller understanding of the data. This process led to the emergence of both themes and sub themes.

Two themes emerged and two sub-themes emerged from the qualitative data from the questionnaire and focus group data.

Conclusion

In conducting this research, as a post positivist researcher, the researcher attempted to take on a learning role, conducting research among people with whom he has a strong connection. Wolcott (1990) believes that the post positivist researcher should conduct research among other people, learning with them, as opposed to conducting research on them. The researcher felt that the personal relationship between him and the questionnaire participants contributed significantly to the gathering of very rich and useful data. This presented somewhat of a challenge in the focus group interview, as the researcher was participating in a role as a moderator. The research, however, was conducted among colleagues and it did lead to further discussion outside of the official focus group interview, between the researcher and the participants. The researcher found the benefit of taking time at the initial stage of the research process to carefully craft questions for both the questionnaire and focus group that would elicit from the participants response to address the overall research aim. This was especially true with the data generated from the questionnaire. The data generated from the questionnaire was collected from teachers in eleven different primary schools, reflecting on the experience of teachers in a wide variety of educational settings. The researcher felt that this approach would give further depth to the overall data being collected.

Post positivist research involves ‘getting up close’ but also requires the researcher to be objective and take a global or distanced view, requiring the researcher to subject his own assumptions to scrutiny (Walsh and Ryan p.135, 2015). The researcher found this quite

challenging. It was tempting as a researcher to ask follow up questions to the focus group questions in order to delve deeper into the perceptions of teachers on wellbeing provision as well as draw further on their experience.

Conducting the research was a learning process for the researcher. It was fascinating to read the varied responses from the questionnaire participants and also to see some common themes emerging from this data collection process. The focus group seemed like quite a formal process. The researcher can only speculate why this appeared to be the case. The atmosphere and tone of the focus group did not go along expected lines. The process seemed a bit rushed and slightly contrived. The researcher thought that the participants may have elaborated further on their answers and drawn on more of their experience, giving examples of stories from their experience to illustrate their answers. While the answers were all relevant, some participant responses were more abstract or theoretical. This caused the researcher to reflect on the questions asked and the nature in which they were asked. The audio recording may also have been a contributing factor and it was felt that this may have inhibited the participants from sharing their own personal insights, as they were conscious of the recordings being transcribed. The researcher can really only speculate as to the reasons why the focus group took on a more formal manner. The researcher was pleased with the overall quality of the data that was generated from the mixed method of inquiry. This, to an extent, can be attributed to the researcher keeping in mind the research aims when devising the questions at the beginning of the process.

Chapter Three – Findings

Quantitative Data

The participants who completed the questionnaire and engaged in the focus group discussion were all teaching in the primary school setting. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants who completed the questionnaire. 66.7% of participants who completed the questionnaire were female. All five participants who engaged in the focus group discussion were female. All questionnaire and focus group participants were over the age of thirty. 95.8% of questionnaire participants have been teaching for in excess of ten years.

Table 1. Participants Demographic Data.

Female		16	66.7%
Male		8	33.3%
Age	21-30	0	0%
	31-40	6	25%
	41-50	17	70.8%
	50 +	1	4.2%
Years teaching experience	1-10	1	4.2%
	11-20	15	62.5%
	21-30	8	33.3%
	31 +	0	0%
Type of school	Urban	7	30.4%
	Rural	16	69.6%

Number of teachers on school staff	0-4	6	25%
	5-10	9	37.5%
	11-20	1	4.2%
	20+	8	33.3%
Levels of Academic Qualification of Participants	National Teacher	0	0%
	B.Ed.	5	20.8%
	B.A.	1	4.2%
	Grad. Dip. in Ed.	6	25%
	M.Ed.	9	37.5%
	Other	3	12.5%

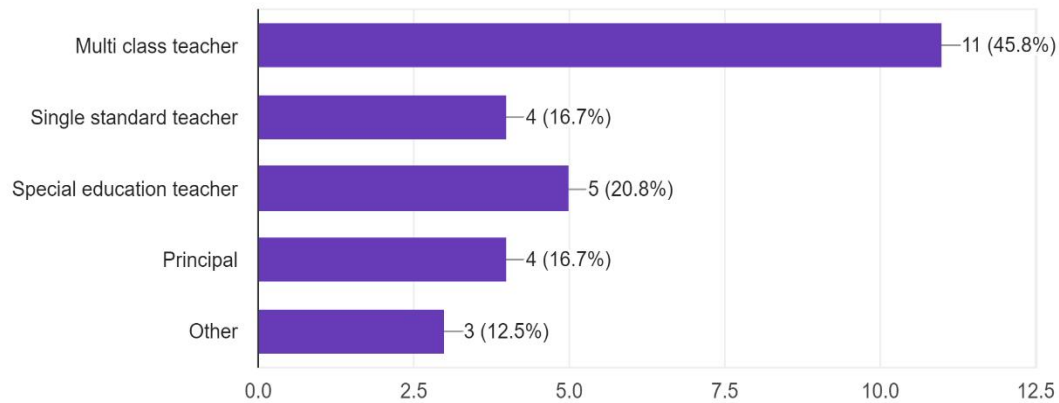


Figure 1. The positions held by the participants within the primary school setting.

69.6% of participants were teaching in rural primary schools. 45.8% of participants were teaching in a multi-grade setting. The multi-grade setting applies to the vast majority of the rural schools. Four principals completed the questionnaire. Two of the principals were teaching principals and the other two principals were administrative principals. 12.5% of the participants in the other category refer to three teachers working in a substitute capacity and were therefore not assigned to any particular classroom setting at that time.

Table 2. Statements related to child wellbeing.

1. The role of the teacher is paramount in promoting the wellbeing of the child.
2. The school culture is an important factor in promoting the wellbeing of the child.
3. I believe that my personal wellbeing contributes to the wellbeing of the child.
4. Physical activity plays an important role in promoting the mental health and wellbeing of the child.

100% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements relating to the wellbeing of the child in the primary school setting.

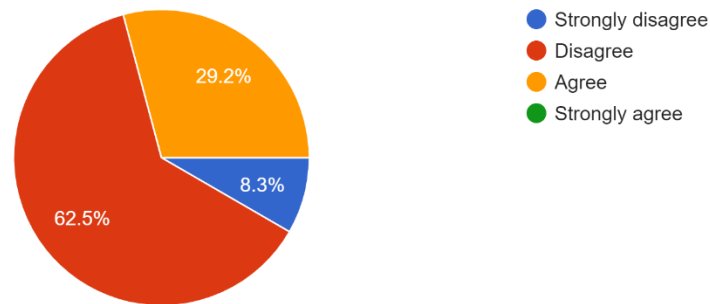
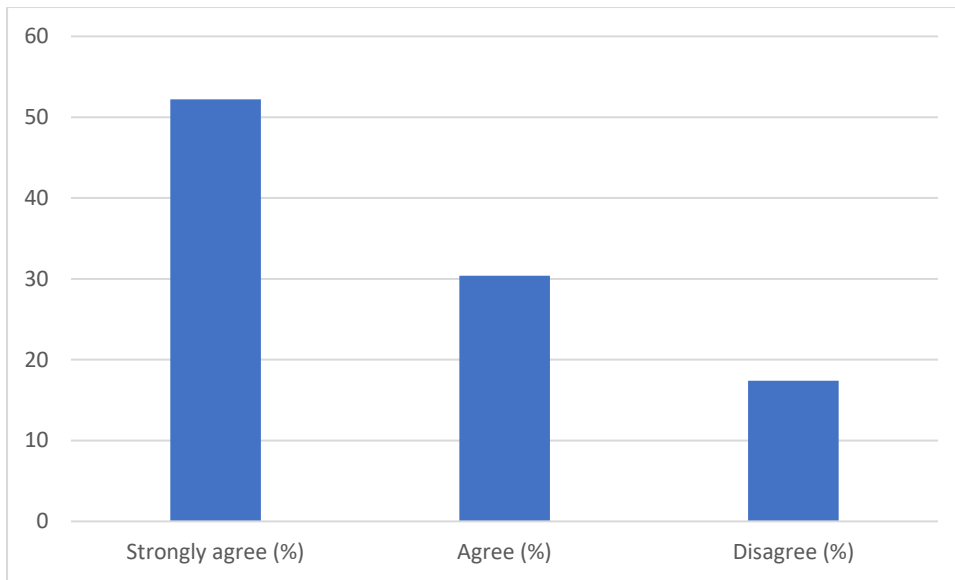


Figure 2. There is adequate provision of Continuing Professional Development to support teachers to promote wellbeing development.

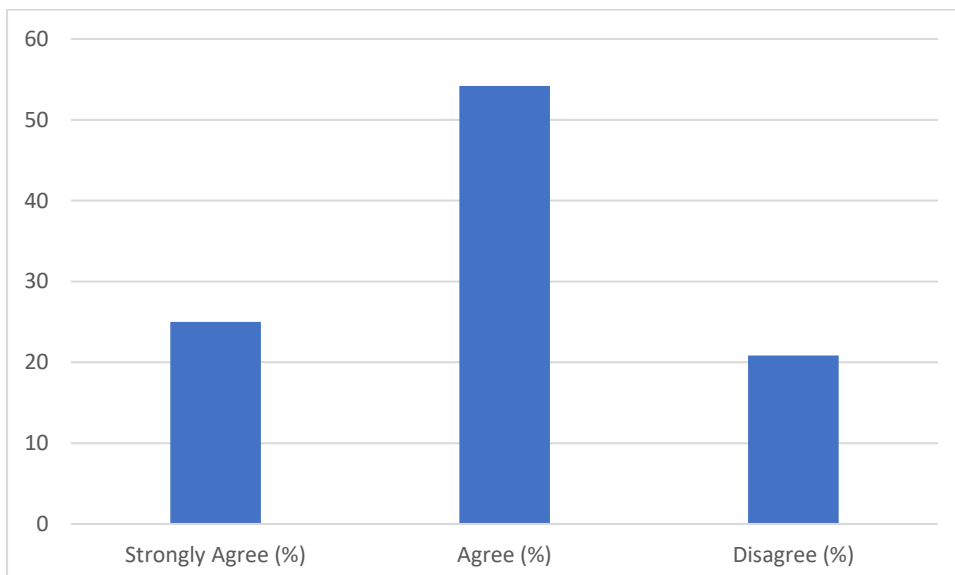
Figure 2 outlines teachers' views on the level of CPD currently being provided for wellbeing in the primary school setting. A sizeable majority of 70.8% of participants agreed that there was inadequate provision of CPD for teachers to promote wellbeing development. 29.2% agreed that there was adequate wellbeing CPD in the primary school. The lack of CPD provision for wellbeing at primary school level also emerged as a theme from the qualitative data in the questionnaire and the focus group discussion.

Figure 3. There is a link between child wellbeing and academic achievement.



52.2% of participants strongly agreed with this statement, 30.4% of the participants agreed, and 17.4% disagreed.

Figure 4. There is a programme to teach social and emotional competence in existence at our school.



79.2% of the participants stated that there was a programme to teach social and emotional skills in existence in their respective educational settings. 20.8% of participants stated that a social

and emotional skills programme did not exist in their educational setting. The two most common programmes mentioned by participants were “Weaving Wellbeing” and “Friends for Life”.

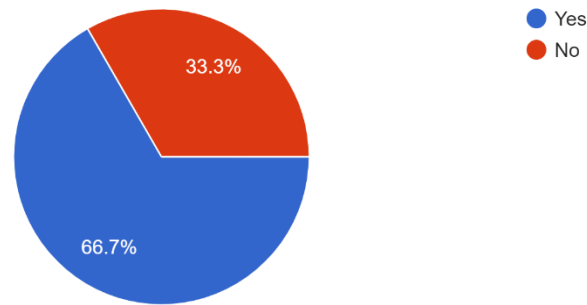


Figure 5. There are structures in place to allow pupils to have a voice on issues relating to their wellbeing.

66.7% of respondents stated that there were structures in place in their school setting, while 33.3% of respondents stated that such structures were not in place to allow pupils to have a voice on wellbeing provision in the primary school.

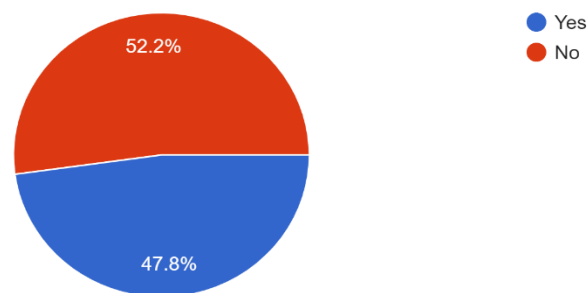


Figure 6. There are structures in place which allows parents and members of the school community to contribute to wellbeing provision in our school.

52.2% of respondents stated that no structures were in place to allow parents or members of the school community to contribute to the wellbeing provision of the child in their respective settings. 47.8 % of the participants stated that such structures were available in their setting.

Qualitative Data from the Questionnaire and Focus Group.

Four main themes emerged, following a thematic based approach to the qualitative data from the questionnaire and focus group discussion.

School Culture.

Participants expressed the view that the school culture played a very significant role in promoting the wellbeing of the child in the primary school. One participant referred to school culture as “an atmosphere of happiness created in the school building” and that the ethos played a significant role in creating this atmosphere. Participants agreed that in order to promote the wellbeing of the child, the school should create a safe, nurturing, welcoming and positive school culture and climate. One participant referred to maintaining the school’s ethos as “those informal conversations that happen every minute of every day between staff members and between staff and children”. Another participant emphasised the importance of creating a safe place for the children, that fosters a sense of belonging. This participant felt that this sense of belonging was created by the ethos in the school.

It was also acknowledged that positive relationships in the school play a very significant role in promoting the wellbeing of the child. The relationships that exist between staff and between the staff and the children were also highlighted as contributing significantly to a positive and welcoming school environment. One participant asserted that positive relationships within the school led to “good morale” throughout the school. It was claimed that the leadership in the

school played a crucial role in creating a positive school culture through promoting positive relationships and ensuring that the ethos permeated throughout the school. One participant stated that school culture requires having a positive school climate, where there is an emphasis on positive relationships, coming from “the top down”.

Resilience.

Many participants referenced the importance of developing the child’s resilience in primary school to enhance their wellbeing. An element of this, was helping children to cope with negative experiences and disappointment. It was acknowledged that many children find it difficult to cope with negative experiences and disappointment and that teachers should not try to shield them from such experiences. A questionnaire participant claimed that “children need to experience failure as well as success in a safe environment.”

Many participants referenced the role of feedback in helping the child to become more resilient. This feedback may take the form of teachers’ written or oral comments, but self-assessment also has a role to play, where children set their own learning goals. This allows children to take ownership over their learning with one participant remarking that “children should be given constructive feedback and not told that they are wonderful all the time, a child can evaluate their own work and can tell if you are being sincere or not.” Another participant referenced the importance of “giving the children honest, immediate and sincere feedback that was actionable to help them, so there is an action they can take to overcome the situation or difficulty they are having.” It was acknowledged that opportunities for success should be created for all pupils and that the teacher has a key role to play here in terms of differentiating the learning in the classroom. One participant claimed that “children should always be encouraged to do their best and that it is normal to feel a range of emotions and that we cannot

be happy all of the time.” Participants remarked that all too often, children compare themselves to others, whereas they should focus on challenging themselves to do better for themselves. One focus group participant stated that she “encourages children to find their strengths and work on their weaknesses, stepping out of their comfort zone and to feel proud of themselves for who they are, to enable them to have high self-esteem and confidence.”

Furthermore, the importance of developing a growth mindset in children was highlighted by a number of participants in both the questionnaire and focus group as a key element in promoting the wellbeing and resilience of the child in primary school. One focus group participant stated that “some children seem to always focus on what they got wrong, but I try to change that over with, what did you get right, and I think it is important that they feel that, you know, where we focus on the positivity of the things that they achieve.” Over 79% of participants who took part in this research stated that they have a programme to teach social and emotional competencies in their respective schools. Following programmes such as “Weaving Wellbeing” and “Friends for Life” were highlighted as very useful in terms of wellbeing promotion in the primary school. Many participants highlighted the importance of the role of the teacher in fostering a sense of gratitude and optimism in the children. This they felt could be achieved by promoting a positive learning environment, teaching social and emotional skills, engage in activities that enable children to sustain a positive mindset. A further example of how to develop resilience and a growth mindset was through the use of problem-solving approaches in the classroom. One participant commented “I look at getting the children to look at their challenges or problems and see how they can solve them, rather than solving them, for them and give them the tools to do this.”

Challenges associated with wellbeing delivery.

A strong theme emerging from the data were the challenges associated with wellbeing delivery in the primary school setting. One of the most notable challenges mentioned was curriculum overload and a lack of time to implement wellbeing formally. An overwhelming majority of participants in the research cited curriculum overload and a lack of time as very significant challenges facing teachers in promoting the wellbeing of the child. Currently Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) has a time allocation of thirty minutes per week “The time that is needed to put into promoting the wellbeing of the child is insufficient, thirty minutes of SPHE per week is inadequate” remarked one of the participants. Some participants remarked that there is an increasing amount of social pressure on both teachers and children on high academic attainment and that this can displace the time that schools might otherwise have spent on promoting the wellbeing of the child. “There are so many curricular areas to cover in the primary school, that the scope for a deeper look at wellbeing is naturally minimised” stated one questionnaire participant. Another participant referred to the “pressure to fulfil the ever-extending demands of the primary school curriculum.”

A further barrier to wellbeing delivery in the primary school cited by the participants was the social and economic backgrounds of the children coming to school. “The social backgrounds of the children and the home environment they are coming from, creates huge challenges in promoting the wellbeing of the child” asserted one focus group participant. Many participants in the questionnaire and in the focus group, echoed these sentiments. It was acknowledged by many participants that children are coming to school from a wide range of social backgrounds and that there is a need for strong home school links, where the approaches used in school to promote the wellbeing of the child are followed up at home. One participant commented that the teacher only sees the child for approximately five and a half hours per day and they are unable to control what happens to a child for the remainder of each day. Another participant

highlighted societal pressures as a significant challenge to wellbeing delivery “There is a huge emphasis in society on being the best, having the best and winning”. Overall, the home and social influences were highlighted as significant factors affecting child wellbeing.

The Role of the Teacher.

The role of the teacher as a role model for the promotion of child wellbeing was a further theme that emerged from the qualitative data. “I personally feel that having a positive, energetic classroom, being an enthusiastic teacher motivates the children to learn” remarked one of the participants. Creating a climate in the classroom where mistakes were seen as learning opportunities and this process being modelled by the teacher was acknowledged as good practice among some participants. “Promote learning from our mistakes, show vulnerability as a teacher and not be afraid to try” stated one participant.

It was claimed by a number of participants, that in order for the effective delivery of wellbeing provision, teacher wellbeing needs to be prioritised. “It is paramount that teachers experience positive wellbeing also, the teacher needs to work in an environment that promotes and provides opportunities for teacher wellbeing” claimed one participant. Another participant commented that “as a teacher I have to ask myself, am I living what I am promoting within the school?” Some participants mentioned that the best methodology for promoting wellbeing in the primary school was by practising it as teachers and modelling it for the children. “If teachers are aware of and look at their own wellbeing, they will be in a better position to improve the delivery of wellbeing” stated one participant.

Many participants asserted that, in order for them to promote wellbeing in the primary school, further continuing professional development (CPD) on their part was required. As mentioned

in the methodology chapter, the participants who engaged in this research have varying degrees and experiences of wellbeing delivery in the primary school setting. Participants cited engaging in CPD collectively as a staff as an effective means of ensuring that wellbeing was delivered on a whole school level. This observation by participants was significant as many of them stated that they believed that the level of wellbeing delivery varied significantly within their individual school settings. One participant asserted that for wellbeing to be effective on a whole school basis “requires collaboration among staff members so that we are all working from a similar philosophy.” Lack of expertise and uncertainty among teachers on how to deliver child wellbeing effectively was mentioned as a barrier to wellbeing delivery in both the questionnaire and the focus group. Furthermore, it was highlighted by a majority of participants that there is currently inadequate provision of CPD at primary school level and it was felt that this needed to be addressed by availing of the CPD provided by the Primary Development Support Team (PDST).

Chapter Four - Discussion

Introduction

The researcher set out to establish the perspectives of teachers on their role in promoting the wellbeing of the child at primary school level. It was envisaged that, through the use of a questionnaire and a focus group discussion, that the researcher would get a greater insight into the following areas:

The current model of wellbeing delivery in primary school.

The role the teacher plays in promoting the wellbeing of the child.

How teachers can continue to strive to enable children to flourish in primary school?

The quantitative data from the questionnaire revealed that teachers were unanimous in their views that the role of the teacher is paramount in promoting the wellbeing of the child and that there is a strong link between wellbeing and academic achievement. The researcher gained an insight into current practices around wellbeing provision. Furthermore, the research also revealed a number of key areas where improvements are required to support child wellbeing, particularly around provision for student and parent voice in primary school. Challenges associated with wellbeing delivery were also highlighted in both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Four main themes emerged from the qualitative data, that were deemed as essential to the wellbeing of the child in the primary school setting. Those four main themes were as follows:

- 1.The role of school leadership in promoting school culture and climate.
2. Developing resilience through positive emotion and growth mindset.
- 3.The challenges associated with wellbeing delivery.

4.The teacher as a role model in promoting the wellbeing of the child.

Quantitative Data Themes

Wellbeing and academic achievement

The majority of participants agreed that there was a link between child wellbeing and academic achievement. A child that is in a positive state of wellbeing is more receptive to learning at school and high levels of wellbeing are achieved through experiencing success at school (DES, 2016). Boniwell & Turnariu (2019) claim that academic improvement is increased when students adopt short term goals. Achor (2011) claims that setting goals for children provides a sense of personal agency and a sense of meaning to daily life, Boniwell & Turnariu (2019) agree and claim that, it is the progression towards the goal and not necessarily the attainment of the goal that creates wellbeing. This would lead one to believe that the journey towards the goal was as important as achieving the goal, in terms of developing wellbeing. Praising the efforts of the child rather than the outcome, helps the child to become motivated and more resilient at school and at home (Dweck, 2016). Achor (2011) states that students having a sense of autonomy and mastery of their own fate is a strong driver of wellbeing and performance. Achor (2011) believes that the child grows in confidence when they master achievable goals that have been set for them. The research from this study indicates that high standards of teaching and learning and goal setting, through self-assessment, facilitates academic achievement and the wellbeing of the child.

Student Voice and Parent Voice

LAOS (2016) states that schools should acknowledge pupils as stakeholders in their education and ensure their involvement in the operation of the school. The Student and Parent Charter

(2019) aims to define how schools engage with students and their parents. The data revealed that the majority of school have structures in place to recognise the voice of the children. Fortunately, teachers are in a position to facilitate student voice in the classroom. This enables children to take more ownership over their learning as they are naturally more invested in teaching and learning in the classroom. In a practical sense, this may involve giving children choice in the classroom. This in turn will increase motivation levels, developing a sense of self-efficacy among children. DES (2018) outlines that provision for student and parent voice at primary school level is a key indicator of success leading to an improvement in school culture and ethos.

Parents are stakeholders in the wellbeing provision at primary school level. Half of the research participants reported that there is a facility for parents to have a say in the wellbeing provision for children at primary school. This would seem quite low, considering the key role parents play in promoting the wellbeing of the child. LAOS (2016) states that schools should value and support partnership with parents as a means of supporting pupils' learning and wellbeing. The social backgrounds of the children were highlighted as a further barrier to wellbeing provision in the primary school. Participants expressed concern that the supports children receive at school may not always be in existence in the home environment, leading to an inconsistent approach between home and school in terms of wellbeing promotion. The researcher believes that it is important that the teacher is aware of the social background of the children and so have a greater understanding of the child. It could be argued that the influence of a teacher on the wellbeing of the child is limited in the absence of strong home school links and adequate support at home.

Wellbeing delivery in the primary school

The two most widely used programmes to teach social and emotional competences in existence in many schools are Friends for Life (Henefer & Rogers 2013) and Weaving Wellbeing (Forman and Rock, 2016) The research demonstrated that programmes such as these are in existence in many schools. The existence of these programmes ensure that there is a whole school approach to teaching social and emotional competencies and that it is taught in a consistent manner. The Weaving Wellbeing programme is in place in the researcher's school setting and was well received by the school community. A number of studies have been undertaken to examine the effectiveness of the Weaving Wellbeing programme. The findings of these studies found that participants showed increased levels of positivity, a sense of fulfilment, self-efficacy, autonomy and use of resilience skills (Mc Grath, 2017). Burns (2019) found that Weaving Wellbeing led to increased levels of self-belief, motivation, perseverance and ability to deal with failure in children. Weaving Wellbeing is a relatively new programme in primary schools. The Walk Tall, Stay Safe and RSE programmes are also currently being used for wellbeing delivery in the primary school.

Themes from Qualitative Data

School Culture

School leadership has a key role in developing and maintaining a positive school climate and culture (DES, 2018). DES (2016) states that it is the responsibility of the board of management and principal to create, model and develop a school climate and culture to support the wellbeing of pupils and staff. Positive relationships were acknowledged by participants in the research as

being very significant as part of the ethos or characteristic spirit of the school. It was acknowledged that leadership had a key role in promoting the ethos of the school. Boniwell & Tunariu (2019) assert that when we build positive relationships with other people, we experience higher levels of wellbeing and resilience in the face of adversity. DES (2016) outlines that it is the responsibility of the principal to encourage respectful interactions at all levels within the school community.

Furthermore, leadership also has a significant impact on the wellbeing of those around them. Achor (2011) asserts that when leaders are in a positive mood, those around them will be in a positive mood. Achor (2011) asserts that emotions are contagious in an organisation, positive emotion leads to the creation of shared emotional norms, Boniwell & Turnariu (2019) agree and claim that people who interact with happy people in their daily lives are happier. The research highlighted that the principal has a pivotal role here as a school leader to foster positive relationships and uphold the ethos of the school. Boniwell & Turnariu (2019) claim that building positive relationships enables people to experience higher levels of wellbeing and resilience in the face of adversity. The researcher agrees that fostering positive relationships and promoting a positive school climate and culture, fosters a sense of belonging, which is at the very core of the ethos of the primary school. Southwick & Charney (2018) believe that creating a sense of belonging is the most important driver of meaning.

Teacher wellbeing was highlighted as significant to ensure effective wellbeing delivery in the primary school. While a teacher is responsible for attending to their own personal wellbeing, school leaderships plays a very significant role here also. The DES (2016) outlines how school leadership must be mindful of the importance of teacher wellbeing and ensure they are supported. The DES (2016) asserts that school leadership should develop and implement clear policies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and staff, as well as a guiding vision that empowers the school community to realise that vision. “Having a clear and valued purpose

and committing fully to a mission can strengthen one's resilience" (Southwick and Charney, 2018) This enhances teacher wellbeing as they have a sense of purpose. People who believe that their lives have meaning are driven by a sense of purpose, they are part of something bigger (Southwick & Charney, 2018). Duckworth (2016) claims purpose stems from identifying one's work as personally interesting and connected to the wellbeing of others. However, the researcher believes that school leadership needs to be aware of the subjective nature of wellbeing of teachers too and exercise compassion and understanding in their interactions with others on a daily basis.

Resilience

A common theme that emerged from the data was the importance for children to be able to cope with disappointment and negative experiences at school. The research identified the teacher as playing a key role here in helping the children to cope in these situations. It was also acknowledged that teachers should not try to shield children from these experiences. Boniwell & Tunariu (2019) purport that happiness is best seen as a process not an end result and that positive and negative experiences are essential for human growth. Achor (2011) asserts that people who manage to overcome failure and disappointment use the experience to find a way forward and grow from the experience. The role of the teacher here is to create a culture when we learn from our mistakes and where mistakes and disappointment are seen as learning opportunities. One focus group participant felt that it was important to model this behaviour as a teacher and show vulnerability, that teachers make mistakes too.

The teacher is in a position to enable children to cope with mistakes or negative experiences and disappointment through the use of constructive feedback and good assessment practices.

The highly effective teacher uses assessment and constructive feedback to equip children with the tools to learn from the experience and provide pupils with clear strategies for improvement (DES, 2016). Dweck (2017) purports that children need constructive feedback to help them to learn and withholding it impacts negatively on the child's confidence.

Dweck (2017) claims that growth mindset is based on the belief that our basic qualities can be improved through effort and help from others. Achor (2011) refers to growth mindset as a set of beliefs about our abilities and that it can change as our mindset is almost always in flux. Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) as cited in Boniwell & Turnariu (2019) claim that there are three elements to a positive mindset that we need to engage: attention, interpretation and memory.

1. Attention is the ability to look at the whole picture, the good and the bad in life.
2. Interpretation is when people interpret events in a negative light, it can affect mood negatively.
3. Memory involves recalling past positive events and experiences and savouring them leading to enhanced wellbeing.

Boniwell and Tunariu (2019) believe that when we engage with these three elements, we create a positive mindset and have a happier existence. Furthermore, the teacher through modelling positive emotion will enhance the wellbeing of the child. Boniwell & Tunariu (2019) assert that experiencing positive emotion helps people cope with adversity and develop resilience. Southwick & Charney (2018) claim that optimists have the ability to reframe a negative situation and see an opportunity in adversity. The role of the teacher here in promoting the wellbeing of the child is helping the child to reframe a negative situation and look at it positively, developing a sense of optimism. Southwick & Charney (2018) also state that optimists are more likely to employ problem solving strategies to cope with difficult situations

in their lives as well as experience more meaningful lives. One focus group participant stated that she makes a conscious effort to foster this sense of optimism to enable the children to solve problems for themselves.

Challenges associated with wellbeing delivery

Curriculum overload and a lack of time were cited as barriers to wellbeing delivery in the primary school. However, while it is acknowledged that there is only thirty minutes allocated formally to SPHE, wellbeing provision takes place informally throughout the school day and is manifested in the relationships, the school climate and culture, school policies, in addition to the teaching and learning (DES, 2018). It doesn't exclusively exist within the classroom and just through the allocated time in the curriculum, it permeates throughout the school. An effective SPHE programme provides opportunities in a combination of a positive school climate and atmosphere, through discrete time (a specific time on the timetable) and through an integrated approach across a range of subject areas (DES, 1999). In this sense, wellbeing promotion is not seen as a subject area that has a weekly allocation of thirty minutes on a timetable. It is something that is embedded in the life of the child at school and permeates through other subject areas.

A lack of expertise in wellbeing delivery among teachers as well as inadequate provision of CPD by the DES were cited as two further challenges associated with promoting the wellbeing of the child. DES (2018) states that all primary schools are required to review wellbeing delivery through the school self-evaluation process (SSE). The PDST are currently providing CPD to assist schools to engage in this process. DES (2016) recommends collaboration among teachers and a sharing of expertise to ensure high standards of teaching and learning are

maintained in schools. With this in mind, there is an opportunity for teachers who have expertise in the area of wellbeing delivery to share their learning with their colleagues. This would help in the process of a consistent whole school approach to wellbeing provision. Furthermore, The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice document (2018) will assist schools in the process of collaboration when reflecting on wellbeing provision in their school context.

Teacher as a role model

The DES (2016) states that teachers should model enthusiasm for learning, and create a learning environment where pupils are motivated and enjoy their learning. The teacher is in a unique position to influence the attitudes, values and behaviour of the children in their class, as the children spend a large portion of the day in the classroom (DES, 2018). Southwick & Charney (2018) state that imitation is a powerful form of learning and it shapes human behaviour, we imitate the attitudes, values, skills and patterns of thought and behaviour of those around us. The researcher believes that the teacher, through modelling an interest and passion for teaching and learning in the classroom has a positive influence of the children and their wellbeing. Duckworth (2016) asserts that it is the combination of passion or interest and perseverance that leads to development of character or otherwise known as grit in the child. The challenge for the teacher is to create the environment where all pupils are motivated to learn. The teacher, through differentiating the learning, goal setting and using effective assessment practices heightens the children's sense of personal motivation (DES, 2016).

Strengths and Limitations of the Research

The strengths of undertaking this research were the mixed methodology approaches used by the researcher. The combination of using a questionnaire and a focus group generated rich data from a range of educational settings, which included both urban and rural settings. Wellbeing provision in the primary school is topical at the moment and there was a willingness among teachers to engage with the research process, as schools will be required to engage with wellbeing provision through the SSE process between 2022 and 2025. The researcher felt that the personal relationship between the researcher and the participants contributed to gathering rich data as there was a sincere willingness on their part to participate.

A further strength of the research is the epistemology of the researcher. The researcher in his role as a teaching principal has a considerable amount of experience in wellbeing delivery in the primary school and this was reflected in the choice of questions used in both the questionnaire and the focus group.

The limitations of the research were primarily that, a much larger sample size would be required to get a more accurate account of the perception of teachers on their role in promoting the wellbeing of the child in the primary school. The researcher only engaged with the perception of teachers in the research. The researcher could have possibly sought the engagement of pupils and parents on their perceptions on the role of the teacher in promoting the wellbeing of the child.

Recommendations

A Whole School Approach through School Self-Evaluation

Schools should examine wellbeing provision in their settings using the six-step school self-evaluation process. This is a collaborative and reflective process that focuses on school improvement. Primary schools should use the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice document (2018) when engaging with the process. The process will focus on the key areas of:

Teaching and Learning

Culture and Environment

Policies and Planning

Relationships and Partnerships

This will enable schools to identify positive aspects and strengths in their practices as well as areas for improvement. The areas for improvement could then be highlighted as areas to focus in the school self-evaluation plan. This plan of action should be ratified by the board of management and adopted by all teachers. This ensures that a whole school approach is taken to wellbeing provision and is context specific. The researcher would recommend that schools engage with the PDST in assisting with SSE, to further enhance the integrity of the process. Engaging with CPD on wellbeing provision and engaging in collaborative reflection will build teacher capacity and enhance teacher wellbeing as a result. This in turn will have a positive effect on the wellbeing and achievement of the child.

Parent and Student Voice in Wellbeing Provision

The researcher would recommend the inclusion of parents and children as part of a whole school approach to wellbeing delivery in the primary school. Schools should acknowledge that parents and children have agency in wellbeing promotion in the primary school. With this in mind, structures should be in place in all schools to facilitate this. The researcher would recommend the establishment of a student council in all primary schools to acknowledge the voice of the child.

Assessment of Wellbeing

The DES (2018) acknowledges that wellbeing provision is difficult to measure in primary schools due to its' subjective nature, but proposes evaluating it in a system using indicators of success to guide the process. The researcher would recommend that each individual school decide on the key indicators of success that will be used to measure wellbeing provision. These indicators should align with the shared vision for the school. In this way, the goals are context specific and relevant to all stakeholders in the school. Examples of such indicators could be data gathered from children, parents, teachers and other staff members or school attendance. The DES (2018) stipulates that outcomes and accountability matter in terms of wellbeing provision. With this in mind, schools need to engage with this process in a meaningful way if wellbeing delivery is to be further enhanced in the primary school.

Mission Statement

School leadership should look at the school's vision as set out in the mission statement for the school. The mission statement or vision outlines the purpose of the school. The researcher initiated a review of the mission statement in his school setting in collaboration with all stakeholders in the school community, during the research process. (see Appendix 3 for

Mission Statement). The school's mission statement was subsequently revised and ratified by The Board of Management. Wellbeing promotion is central element to it. This collaborative review gave all stakeholders a sense of ownership over the school vision. This process enables teachers to see their purpose in the primary school which gives meaning to their work. Purpose and meaning as previously mentioned contribute significantly to wellbeing development.

School Leadership

School leadership should aim to ensure that a positive school climate and culture to support the wellbeing of the child and the teacher exists in the school. This can be achieved through ensuring that the ethos of the school permeates right throughout the school and is experienced in the positive relations that exist in the school. School leadership has a responsibility to create an environment that is conducive to positive relations that fosters social connection. This will enable teachers to feel supported by school leadership and develop their resilience in the face of adversity.

Wellbeing Programmes

The researcher would recommend that schools use the Weaving Wellbeing programme (Forman & Rock, 2016) to assist with wellbeing delivery in the primary school. Weaving Wellbeing (Forman & Rock, 2016) caters for all class levels in the primary school and is a comprehensive, evidence-based wellbeing programme. The researcher has first-hand experience of using this programme and implementing it on a whole school level. The feedback on the programme from all stakeholders, including teachers, children and parents has been very positive. It can be taught in conjunction with other wellbeing programmes also such as Walk Tall and Stay Safe. DES (2018) states that only universal evidence-based programmes to teach

social and emotional competences should be used in primary schools and guided by Circular 0042/2018.

Teacher Wellbeing

The DES (2018) acknowledges that teacher wellbeing is an important factor in promoting the wellbeing of the child. While school leadership has a major role to play in enhancing teacher wellbeing, the teacher also has agency over their personal wellbeing. The researcher would recommend that all teachers be made aware of the five ways to wellbeing and make a conscious effort to practice those in their daily lives. Aked et al (2008 as cited in Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019) outline the five ways to wellbeing as:

1. Connect
2. Be active
3. Take notice
4. Keep learning
5. Give

By practising these five ways to wellbeing, teachers will be attending to their own wellbeing and ensuring that there are well placed to promote the wellbeing of the child in the primary school setting.

Wellbeing provision on a national and international level

The DES (2018) outlines the following aims for wellbeing provision in primary school:

1. That Ireland be recognised as a leader in terms of wellbeing promotion in schools.

2. That the promotion of wellbeing will be at the centre of the ethos of every school.
3. Schools will use evidence-based approaches to enhance the wellbeing of all.

To achieve these aims, will require sustained support for schools in terms of CPD around the area of wellbeing provision and far greater levels of investment in the education system to adequately resource schools. Curriculum overload, lack of time as well as increased levels of accountability were highlighted by a number of participants in the research as mitigating factors in terms of meaningful wellbeing delivery in the primary school. The researcher welcomes the fact that the current primary school curriculum is under review.

On an international level, the researcher would like to see a shared understanding among nations about the importance of child wellbeing in the primary school. The researcher would like to see greater levels of collaboration facilitated between primary schools in terms of wellbeing provision. This would entail a sharing of best practice among nations around wellbeing provision for children. This collaborative and reflective practice would enhance wellbeing delivery for children in primary schools.

Conclusion

The teacher plays a very significant role in promoting the wellbeing of the child. Key to this is creating a positive classroom culture. The teacher should aim to create a safe, nurturing and inclusive classroom environment that fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness for the children. In this environment, there are high standards of teaching and learning that are differentiated for children. The DES (2018) states that teachers should design and prepare teaching and assessment of learning approaches which are differentiated for children providing access, challenges as well as opportunities for success.

Fostering a growth mindset approach is required on the part of the teacher to create this classroom culture. The teacher, as a role model, should express positive emotions in their relationships with children, helping the children to overcome adversity and providing them with the skills to cope with negative experiences. In this classroom environment, mistakes are seen as learning opportunities for the children. The child's levels of motivation can be increased through the use of goal setting in the classroom and constructive feedback on the part of the teacher. The research and literature highlighted that acknowledging the voice of the child was an important factor effecting child wellbeing. By involving the child in decisions around their learning gives the child a sense of agency and ownership over their learning. This should lead to an increase in effort and perseverance towards achieving their goals. By demonstrating a passion and a willingness to persevere to achieve goals will enable the child to develop grit or character, which enhances wellbeing (Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019). In doing so, the teacher will further enhance and develop the resilience of the child. Furthermore, the teacher should at all times model openness, respect and listening in their interactions with children, parents and other staff members. This will help to build positive relationships in the classroom, school and wider school community.

The teacher is responsible for the holistic development of the child, which includes their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. In doing so, the teacher is attending significantly to the wellbeing of the child. It should also be acknowledged that the role of the teacher in promoting the wellbeing of the child and enabling them to reach their potential, extends beyond the classroom setting (DES, 2016). The teacher in their role in developing the 'whole child' plays a very significant role in ensuring that the child leaves school with a balanced set of cognitive, emotional and social skills to face the challenges of life (DES, 2018).

It is acknowledged by the researcher that there is a lack of time and an overloaded curriculum in primary schools as well as increasing levels of accountability. However, wellbeing provision takes place outside of the discrete time of thirty minutes allocated to it in the curriculum. DES (2018) states that teachers should use opportunities to teach wellbeing right across the curriculum. Being mindful of this, will enable teachers to enhance the wellbeing of the child and enable them to flourish in primary school.

Effective wellbeing delivery in the primary school requires a whole school approach. A whole school approach is acknowledged as far more effective than interventions at individual class levels (DES, 2018). A whole school approach should involve collaborative reflection on the part of all stakeholders in the school community, through the SSE process. This process should acknowledge the voice of students and parents. This will enable the school to assess current wellbeing delivery and highlight areas for improvement. This process along with a willingness on the part of teachers to engage in CPD around wellbeing delivery will ensure that children will continue to flourish in primary school.

School leadership also has a significant role to play in ensuring that both child and teacher wellbeing are promoted in the primary school. This can be achieved by ensuring that the ethos of the school is promoted and permeates throughout the school. Promoting positive relationships will lead to a positive school climate which will enhance child and teacher wellbeing. Furthermore, a shared vision for the school will ensure all stakeholders experience a sense of belonging and have a sense of purpose. This sense of purpose gives meaning to what the teacher does. Boniwell and Tunariu (2019) claim that it is not pursuing happiness is not the aim of life, it is the pursuit of meaning that will lead to happiness. That sense belonging is a significant driver of meaning.

The research highlighted that the teacher is a very significant role model in the child's life and should create a classroom environment where children are motivated to learn. This requires the teacher to be in a positive state of wellbeing to be able to cope with the demands of the classroom. The DES (2018) outlines that teachers need to be in a positive state of wellbeing to promote the wellbeing of the child. Teachers need to be mindful of the importance of this statement and take care of their own personal wellbeing. Teachers should also show compassion for themselves. Practicing self-compassion will enable teachers to be more resilient and enhance their own personal wellbeing. In addition to this, practicing the five ways to wellbeing will assist teachers in ensuring that their own personal wellbeing is attended to and enable them to continue to have a positive influence on the wellbeing of the child.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire on Promoting Child Wellbeing in the Primary School Setting

Personal Details

Q 1. Are you?

Male

Female

Q 2. Age?

21-30

31-40

41-50

50+

Q 3. How many years have you been teaching?

1-10

11-20

21-30

31+

Q 4. What are your qualifications?

N.T.

B.Ed.

B.A.

Grad Dip in Ed.

M.Ed.

Other. (please specify)

Q 5. Which of the following best describes your school?

Urban

Rural

Q 6. How many teachers are on your school staff?

0-4

5-10

11-20

20+

Q 7. Tick the following as it applies to your situation. I am a...

Multi class teacher

Single standard teacher

Special education teacher

Principal

Child Wellbeing

Please tick the appropriate box.

Q 8. Health and wellbeing is a priority in school.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q 9. The role of the teacher is paramount in promoting the wellbeing of the child.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q 10. The school culture is an important factor in promoting the wellbeing of the child.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q 11. There is adequate provision of CPD to support teachers to promote wellbeing development.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q 12. I believe that my personal wellbeing contributes to the wellbeing of the child.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q 13. I believe that physical activity plays an important role in enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of the child.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q 14. There is a positive relationship between academic achievement and child wellbeing.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q 15. The physical environment of the school contributes to child and staff well-being.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q 16. School policies promote the wellbeing of the child in our school.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q 17. There is a programme to teach social and emotional competence in existence in our school.

Yes No

If yes, please specify.

Q 18. There are structures in our school which allow pupils to have a voice on issues relating to their wellbeing.

Yes No

Q 19. There are structures in place which allow parents and members of the school community to contribute to well-being provision in our school.

Yes No

Q 20. What are the most significant challenges in promoting the wellbeing of the child in primary school?

Q 21 How do you enable children to become more resilient and motivate them to learn in your school setting?

Q 22. How can teachers continue to improve the model of wellbeing delivery to enhance the wellbeing of the child in primary school?

Appendix 2

Focus Group Questions

1. What do you see as the most important aspects of school culture in promoting the wellbeing of the child?
2. What is your perception of the role that physical activity plays in the promotion of the mental health and overall wellbeing of the child?
3. How do you, in your role contribute to the wellbeing of all children in the classroom, including those with additional needs?
4. How do you enable children to be more resilient and motivate them to learn at school?
5. Describe the approaches you use to give feedback to the children on their work and behaviour?
6. What are the most significant challenges in promoting the wellbeing of the child in primary school?
7. How can you continue to improve in your ability to promote the wellbeing of the child in primary school?
8. What aspects of child wellbeing would you like to see being promoted in your school setting?

Appendix 3

Mission Statement from St Finian's N.S.

St Finian's N.S. aims to create a happy, safe, inclusive and nurturing environment that fosters a sense of belonging. We are a co- educational Catholic school which strives to develop the academic, spiritual, creative, personal and social skills of the child so that s/he may be better able to realise his/her potential as an individual and as an active member of society. We are committed to the well-being of the children and the school community. While St Finian's N.S. is a school with a Catholic ethos, we are also welcoming of other faiths and no faith.

As a formal agent of education within the Catholic Community, this school models and transmits a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God. The policies, practices and attitudes of the school, therefore, are inspired by Gospel values.

At St Finian' s N.S. we seek to send our students out into the world inspired by an education which sought balance between academic, pastoral, and spiritual priorities and as critical and independent thinkers, who are autonomous, self- possessed and caring individuals with a deep spiritual core.

Our school motto is

Déan do dhícheall i gcónaí Always do your best

