Other Resources

2021

# An Examination of Irish Post-Primary Educators' Attitudes Regarding the Promotion of Student's Social and Emotional Wellbeing

David Byrne

*Technological University Dublin*, david.byrne59@mail.dcu.ie

Follow this and additional works at: https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ncrpoth

Part of the Educational Psychology Commons, Other Education Commons, Psychology Commons, and the Secondary Education Commons

# An Examination of Irish Post-Primary Educators' Attitudes Regarding the Promotion of Student's Social and Emotional Wellbeing

**David Byrne**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Ph.D.

Technological University Dublin

Department of Humanities

**August 2021**

**Supervisors:**

Dr Aiden Carthy

Dr Colm McGuinness

Prof. Sinead McGilloway

**Head of School:**

Dr Pat O'Connor

Contents

**List of Appendices**

**List of Tables**

**List of Figures**

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ABC | Affective, Behavioural, Cognitive |
| ANOVA | ANalysis Of VAriance |
| ATWP | Attitudes Toward Wellbeing Promotion (scale) |
| CBA | Classroom Based Assessments |
| COREQ | COnsolidated criteria for REporting Qualitative research |
| CSPE | Civic, Social and Political Education |
| DEIS | Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools |
| DES | Department of Education and Skills |
| DCTB | Directly Controlling Teacher Behaviours |
| DV | Dependent Variable |
| EEM | Estimated Marginal Mean |
| EI | Emotional Intelligence |
| GLM | General Linear Model |
| GP | General Practitioner |
| HSE | Health Service Executive |
| IV | Independent Variable |
| LSD | Least Significant Difference (test) |
| L2LP | Level 2 Learning Programme |
| MDE | Minimum Detectable Effect size |
| NCCA | National Council for Curriculum and Assessment |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PE | Physical Education |
| PERMA | Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment |
| PCT | Primary Care Team |
| RSE | Relationship and Sexuality Education |
| RTA | Reflexive Thematic Analysis |
| SPHE | Social, Personal and Health Education |

| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics |
|------|------------------------------------------------|
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

## Acknowledgements

With gratitude for the instruction of my supervisors and the support of my family and friends.

For Judith.

# Declaration

I certify that this thesis, which is submitted for examination for the award of PhD, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for graduate study by research of the Technological University Dublin and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the guidelines for ethics in research of TU Dublin.

TU Dublin has permission to keep, lend or copy this thesis in whole or in part, on condition that any such use of the material of the thesis be duly acknowledged.

Signature _____ Date ___30/08/2021____

# Abstract

**Background:** In the Republic of Ireland, 'wellbeing' was first recognised in 2015 as a formal area of learning for all Junior Cycle students and this led, in turn, to the consolidation of the wellbeing curriculum and the introduction in 2017 of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) wellbeing guidelines. While much research now demonstrates how social and emotional learning and health and wellbeing initiatives and interventions can benefit students, relatively little is known in terms of the attitudes and opinions of Irish post-primary educators in this regard.

**Objective:** The overarching objective of this study was to contribute to the facilitation of post-primary educators in promoting student wellbeing at a Junior Cycle level by addressing a relative dearth of knowledge regarding educators' attitudes in this regard. The specific objectives of this study were: (1) to examination of educators' attitudes and perceptions of what constitutes best practice in wellbeing promotion, and: (2) to identify factors that may inhibit or facilitate best practice.

**Method:** This study utilised a two-phase sequential mixed methods design, which was informed by an interpretivist constructivist paradigm. Phase One was quantitative in nature and involved participants ($n$ = 327) completing the Attitudes Toward Wellbeing Promotion (ATWP) scale, which is designed to measure the degree to which educators may be positively or negatively disposed to the promotion of student wellbeing. Phase One data was analysed by way of general linear modelling, with main effects and interactions of several demographic variables examined. Phase Two was qualitative in nature and consisted of a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants ($n$ = 11). Phase Two data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis.

**Results:** Participants were found to present with an underlying positive regard for the promotion of student wellbeing, though levels of positivity varied in relation to a number of demographic variables. Reflexive thematic analysis resulted in the interpretation of five themes. Appropriate value for wellbeing promotion, sufficient training in appropriate methods and pedagogies, and sufficient time to deliver wellbeing promoting initiatives were all identified

as significant inhibitive factors in achieving best practice. These factors also appeared to be detrimental to educators' own wellbeing.

**Conclusion:** This study makes a valuable contribution to existing literature by conducting what appears to be the first holistic examination of educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of student wellbeing. This is also the first study to examine the degree to which educators may be positively/negatively disposed to wellbeing promotion. While participants presented with an underlying positivity regarding wellbeing promotion, there appear to a number of factors that significantly threaten best practice in this regard. Some recommendations are made with a view to mitigating those factors that pose a barrier to best practice.

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Context

It has been argued that educational systems, particularly within western culture, have traditionally tended to emphasise the preparation of students to enter into the workforce (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Critical theorists have gone as far as suggesting that the true function of schools has been to produce workers who know their position in the economic order (Willis 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 2011). The manifest function of such being the reproduction of the dominant social order (Foucault, 1980), with an inadvertent latent function being the marginalisation of consideration for student wellbeing and analogous concepts, such as character and citizenship. Indeed, Noddings (2003) contended that western educational culture has been mired in a form of (academic) puritanism that has precluded the development of wellbeing or analogous concepts like character or citizenship from an educational context. In fact, Arthur (2005) argued that, prior to the early 1990's, student wellbeing was largely overlooked, with only peripheral consideration afforded to the development of character and the production of 'good citizens'. Noddings' (2003) argument suggests that the role of the education system has reflected a functional reaction to changing societal contexts by providing basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, in response to the changing needs of the prevalent industry of the time. This could often result in heavy prioritisation of academic attainment, which is now known to impact negatively upon the psychological wellbeing of students (O'Brien, 2008).

Since the 1990's, there has been a gradual acknowledgement of the merit of attending to student wellbeing in school (Arthur, 2005). Initially, the design and functionality of interventions and curricula aimed at augmenting student wellbeing was often reactive and such that negative affect or pathology must first exist in order for relative interventions to be applied (see Cowie, Boardman, Dawkins & Jennifer, 2004; Oost & De Bourdeaudhuij, 2000; Spratt, Shucksmith, Philip & Watson, 2006; Vostanis et al., 2012). However, recent years have seen increased interest in pro-active approaches to promoting student wellbeing that involve specified curricular subjects and whole-school wellbeing practices. Much literature now exists supporting the adoption of such approaches, with short-term advantages including students' enhanced emotional awareness, increased academic attainment and reduced attrition/drop-

out rates (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Durlak & Weissberg, 2005; Gumora & Arsenio, 2002). Long-term benefits can include increased adult adjustment (Vaillant & Davis, 2000) and greater life satisfaction (Goleman, 1996).

In the Republic of Ireland, the importance of student wellbeing and pro-actively pursuing the promotion of student wellbeing in a post-primary context was reified in 2015 with the formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning in post-primary education. This precipitated the development of a wellbeing curriculum, which consists of three pre-existing curricular subjects. These are: Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), which is designed to support students in learning about and caring for themselves and others; Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), which aims to prepare students for active participatory citizenship, and; Physical Education (PE), which utilises physical activity in promoting individual and group wellbeing. In 2017, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) issued a mandate that requires all Junior Cycle students (i.e. students in the first three years of post-primary education) in Ireland be provided with a minimum of 300 hours of social and emotional wellbeing development over the three year Junior Cycle period. The issuing of this mandate was accompanied by the publication of the 'NCCA Junior Cycle wellbeing guidelines', which are designed to "support schools in planning and developing a coherent wellbeing programme that builds on the understandings, practices and curricula for wellbeing already existing in schools" (NCCA, 2017 p.8). Schools have largely been afforded autonomy in the implementation of these guidelines, with the NCCA arguing that, due to the large array of demographic differences that can exist between and within schools, educators would be best positioned to structure and implement the promotion of student wellbeing as necessary for their particular student-body.

The fact that educators have been tasked with structuring and implementing these initiatives arguably highlights the necessity of understanding the attitudes and opinions said educators may hold regarding such a task. Indeed, educators play a central role in the educational process and, therefore, the success or otherwise of health and wellbeing-related education is not only dependent upon the knowledge and skills of the teacher, but also upon their perceptions, attitudes, and personal example (Barrow, 1981). International research suggests that concerns regarding the changing nature of their responsibilities in terms of the

requirement to attend to the wellbeing of their students can feature prominently for educators (Rothì, Leavey & Best, 2008). There is also reason for concern in this regard in Irish schools, as research has documented potential issues regarding the implementation fidelity of wellbeing curriculum subjects, the availability of wellbeing-related training and educators' perceptions of the wellbeing curriculum's position in an already overloaded school day (see Doyle, 2017; Mannix McNamara, Moynihan, Jourdan & Lynch, 2012; Mayock, Kitching & Morgan, 2007; O'Higgins, Galvin, Kennedy, Nic Gabhinn & Barry, 2013).

## 1.2    Study Rationale

The recent move toward recognising the wellbeing needs of students in post-primary school is arguably both necessary and timely. Research has well established the many threats to student wellbeing that can present in a given school day (see Minton, 2010; 2014; O'Brien, 2008; Smyth, 2015). Equally, much research has demonstrated the holistic benefits that social and emotional learning (SEL) and wellbeing-related policies, practices and interventions can provide for students (see Hill et al., 2015; Maloney, Lawlor, Schonert-Reichl & Whitehead, 2016; Mayock, et al., 2007). However, while the importance of SEL and wellbeing-related practices and activities is gaining recognition in Ireland, relatively little is known of the attitudes and opinions of the educators who are tasked with delivering wellbeing promotion in post-primary schools. As previously mentioned, the impact of any such practice or activity can be strongly influenced by the attitudes, perceptions and personal example of the educators delivering them (Barrow, 1981). This is aptly recognised by the NCCA who state that, within a school context, "wellbeing starts with the staff" (NCCA, 2017 p.29).

While numerous studies have examined Irish educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of student wellbeing, they have tended to focus upon specific cohorts or contexts. For example, Doyle (2017) examined educators' perceptions of the benefits of SPHE – an aspect of the wellbeing curriculum – for male students. Research conducted by Mayock et al. (2007) specifically pertained to the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) aspect of SPHE. Several studies did conduct broader examinations of SPHE. However, these also attended to particular cohorts, such as pre-service teachers (Mannix McNamara et al., 2012), or were limited in

context by adopting methods such as case study approaches (O'Higgins et al., 2013). Many such studies conducted in Ireland tend to emphasise the examination of SPHE, though there are notable exceptions (see Moynihan, Jourdan & Mannix McNamara, 2016). In addition, it appears that much of the available literature emphasises SEL and educators' attitudes toward such, with less acknowledgement of tacit and informal aspects of promoting student wellbeing. Further, to the researcher's knowledge, educators' attitudes regarding the recently introduced NCCA wellbeing guidelines (2017) are, as of yet, unexplored. While the available literature is extremely valuable in giving voice to educators, and can be synthesised to establish a broader picture of educators' attitudes, no research to date provides a holistic account of educators' attitudes and perceptions regarding the promotion of student social and emotional wellbeing. Based on Barrow's (1981) assertion, a holistic understanding of educators' attitudes and opinions is arguably necessary to inform best practice in promoting student wellbeing in Irish post-primary schools.

### 1.3   Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim of this study was to contribute to the facilitation of post-primary educators in promoting student wellbeing at Junior Cycle level by addressing a relative dearth of knowledge regarding educators' attitudes in this regard. An examination of educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of student wellbeing was pursued in order to gather valuable information regarding potential refinements that could be made to the wellbeing curriculum and/or the newly implemented NCCA wellbeing guidelines. In total, four research questions informed this study:

1. What are the attitudes and opinions of educators toward the promotion of Junior Cycle students' wellbeing in Irish post-primary schools?

2. What are the attitudes and opinions of post-primary educators toward the current wellbeing guidelines published by the NCCA?

3. What issues or barriers do educators believe pertain to the development of students' wellbeing at Junior Cycle in Irish post-primary schools?

4. What changes, if any, do educators believe should be made to the Junior Cycle post-primary curriculum to ensure the optimal promotion of students' wellbeing?

## 1.4 Operationalising Attitude

In this study, attitude was conceptualised using the ABC model of attitude (Kothandapani, 1971). This model proposes that attitude consists of three distinct components. The *affective* component relates to what one feels in relation to an attitude object; for example, 'I am afraid of flying'. The *behavioural* component denotes the way one behaves in relation to an attitude object; for example, 'I will avoid flying whenever I can'. Finally, the *cognitive* component relates to what one believes or knows of an attitude object; for example, 'I believe it is unsafe to fly'. The ABC model has been the subject of much research, the results of which support the validity of the three-factor model (see Kothandapani, 1971; Breckler, 1984).

Historically, it has been considered that each of the attitudinal components would vary on a common evaluative continuum broadly representative of negativity versus positivity. It has also been asserted that the three components are highly correlated and that attitude, as a whole, is an important predictor of behaviour (Allport, 1935). For a time, it was also considered that a single-factor model of attitude underlays multi-component models, with all components of such models converging upon a single factor that explained attitude (Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979). These assertions have since been challenged. More rigorous psychometric evaluation of the three-component model identified moderate correlation at best, with the outcome of such studies suggesting component correlation should not be an expectant criterion when assessing attitude. It has also been contended that attitude may not have as significant an influence upon behaviour as once thought (Kruglanski et al., 2018), with environmental factors found to be influential with regard to ones' proclivity towards, or away from, attitude-congruent behaviour (Eaton & Visser, 2008). As such, the three-factor model of attitude is often strongly supported in the literature, with particularly concerted arguments pointing toward the merit of including recognition of affective and behavioural components (in addition to the cognitive component) in attitudinal research (e.g. Haddock & Maio, 2019; Nordqvist & Johansson, 2020).

By adopting the ABC model when assessing attitudes regarding the promotion of student wellbeing, affective measures of attitude would attend to feelings and emotional states associated with wellbeing promotion. Behavioural measures would account for what is done in relation to the act of promoting wellbeing, while cognitive measures would relate to knowledge of how to pursue wellbeing promotion, and perceptions of the value of pursuing wellbeing promotion. In adopting the ABC model, it was understood that the three components of attitude can be reciprocal, with each component capable of informing another (Zanna, 1990). For example, what educators know of wellbeing promotion may influence how they feel and what they do in this regard. However, it was also understood that the tendency for these components to show little correlation in previous research may result in dissonance (Kruglanski et al., 2018). For example, it was appreciated that educators' accounts regarding what they know of promoting student wellbeing may not necessarily be indicative of how they feel or what they do in this regard. Educators' accounts of what they feel when promoting student wellbeing may not necessarily be indicative of what they know or do. Finally, educators' accounts of what they do when promoting wellbeing may not necessarily be reflect what they know or feel. This was a particular benefit of adopting the ABC model, as potential occurrences of dissonance and incongruence could be identified and examined (Kruglanski et al., 2018).

**1.5    Operationalising Wellbeing**

Historically, wellbeing has been defined broadly as positive affect in the absence of negative affect. This tended to result in the provision of binary accounts of 'happiness versus sadness' (Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Sanders, 2012). A typical assertion in this regard would be that positive emotions are 'good' and broaden our attention so we become better aware of our social and emotional environment, while negative emotions are 'bad' and narrow our attention to the source of a potential threat (Seligman, 2012). However, it has more recently been appreciated that "wellbeing is a social construct that is fluid in nature and has an ever-evolving and contextual definition" (Watson, Emery, Bayliss & Boushel, 2012 p.25). Both Dodge et al. (2012) and Seligman (2012) – as well as others – have argued that, in line with Watson et al's contention (2012), more dynamic and flexible approaches to understanding wellbeing are necessary in order to further the research agenda in relation to wellbeing. The necessity of such

approaches is widely evident throughout the present thesis, as much of the literature reviewed in preparation for undertaking this study adopts, or is most appropriately understood using, different theoretical conceptualisations of wellbeing, with no one theoretical approach seemingly appropriate for the many different research contexts. As a point of further consideration upon reviewing the literature, it was anticipated (and indeed it transpired) that participants in the qualitative phase of this study would sometimes speak of wellbeing in an atheoretical manner. The researcher was cognisant that it would be necessary to operationalise wellbeing in a manner that would be sufficiently broad to encompass (as much as would be possible) the numerous theoretical and atheoretical approaches to understanding wellbeing that are evident in the literature, but sufficiently prescriptive to facilitate the researcher's theoretically informed interpretations of the research data. In this regard, wellbeing was considered in relation to two broad overarching traditions. These were the hedonic and eudaimonic traditions of wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2001; Ryff, 2014).

The hedonic tradition of wellbeing is perhaps best reflected as content-driven positive psychology, and typically emphasises positive outcomes while seeking to decrease negative experiences (Ciarrochi, Atkins, Hayes, Sahdra & Parker, 2016). The hedonic tradition is a utilitarian approach to wellbeing that assumes the rightness of an action is entirely measurable against the amount of positive affect it will produce and/or the amount of negative affect it will reduce (Mautner, 2005). In this way, hedonic wellbeing would tend to conceptualise positive outcomes in light of the happiness versus sadness argument. Advocates of this approach would accentuate the presence of constructs such as happiness, positive affect, low negative affect, and life satisfaction when assessing wellbeing (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1997; Kahneman, Diener & Schwarz, 1999). As such, the emphasis is on positive experiential content (i.e. awards, material gain, and relationship development) and positive mental content (i.e. the development of optimism, grit and determination) (Ciarrochi et al., 2016).

The eudaimonic tradition proposes that wellbeing should encompass an appreciation for both positive and negative affect. Eudaimonic wellbeing contrasts the hedonic tradition in that wellbeing is considered in terms of the most contextually appropriate affective disposition, rather than seeking to promote continuous positive dispositions. Advocates of the eudaimonic

tradition argue that wellbeing may be achieved by engaging in activities that are congruent with ones' personal values or characteristic personality traits (Steger, Kashdan & Oishi, 2008). Importantly, these activities do not necessarily need to result in positive affective outcomes for them to be meaningful and fulfilling. Wellbeing is conceptualised in relation to the subjective experience, development and appraisal of the six eudaimonic components: *autonomy* attends to the perception that an individual's behaviour is congruent with their convictions; *positive relations* attends to the quality of the connections the individual has with others; *mastery* is the ability of the individual to manage life situations; *purpose in life* is the individual's sense that their life has meaning, purpose and direction; *personal growth* pertains to the use of the individual's talents and potential, and; *self-acceptance* attends to the individual's self-knowledge and self-acceptance (Ryff, 2014).

Criticism has been levied against the hedonic tradition for its over-emphasis of happiness and the promotion of experiential avoidance of negative affect (Ciarrochi et al., 2016). An emphasis upon positive content can reduce the pursuit of wellbeing to the pursuit of happiness, which can be problematic as individuals may struggle to identify what actually makes them happy and may pursue unhealthy goals. There can also be a tendency for individuals pursuing happiness to over-monitor their internal state, rather than 'being in the moment' and appreciating the intrinsic value of their positive affect (Ciarrochi et al., 2016). Furthermore, any direct action taken in the pursuit of happiness would likely have little lasting positive impact upon levels of wellbeing. Set-point theory posits that a genetically predetermined upper and lower limit encompasses an individual's potential for happiness and subjective wellbeing and that an individual's happiness would rarely exceed these parameters (both positively and negatively) (Dodge et al., 2012; Carr, 2004). Furthermore, it has been shown that major life events (e.g. graduating, purchasing a car, being fired from a job) have little lasting effect in terms of enduring happiness, with individuals returning to a baseline level of happiness within roughly three months of such events (Seligman, 2002). The genetic influence upon an individuals' set point for happiness is argued to be extremely strong, with up

to 98% of variance attributed to heritability[1] (Carr, 2004). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the repetitious cycle of seeking positive content in the pursuit of happiness that can arise has been referred to as the 'hedonistic treadmill' (Seligman, 2002).

The subjectivity of positive and negative affect can often be under-represented in the context of hedonic wellbeing. Although positive and negative affect are, at best, only moderately correlated (Headey, 2006), hedonic experience functions under the supposition of negative correlation, i.e. that positive emotions increase when negative emotions decrease, and vice versa (Kirkland, 2015). Rather, eudaimonia appreciates that positive and negative emotions can exist simultaneously (e.g. fear and exhilaration while on a rollercoaster). In addition, both positive and negative affect can result in contradictory outcomes. Positive affective traits, such as grit and determination, can be beneficial to motivation and task completion, but can be directed toward unproductive tasks (Ciarrochi et al., 2016). Typically negative affective traits such as anxiety can in fact be adaptive and augment motivation toward higher performance (Carr, 2004). A negative affective disposition can also be more pertinent in its own right. For example, during a time of personal loss it would likely be more appropriate to respond with grief or sadness.

The shortcomings of operationalising wellbeing via the hedonic tradition when interpreting research findings can present as the (inadvertent) potential to over-emphasise direct remedial action. This issue was exposed during the self-esteem movement of the 1980's (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003). While self-esteem has been recognised as being of critical importance to psychological adjustment and wellbeing (Mruk, 2006), it can often be overlooked that high self-esteem encapsulates a heterogeneous population of individuals, ranging from those who are frank in their acceptance of their positive qualities to those who present as narcissistic, defensive or conceited (Baumeister et al., 2003). These characteristics can link self-esteem to ego-threat, which can result in negative social opinions of people with perceived high self-esteem (Heatherton & Vohs, 2000). In addition, contrary to the hypothesis

---

[1] While it is generally accepted that the genetic influence with regard to happiness is quite large, the exact degree of genetic influence is subject to considerable debate. For example, the 50/40/10 model proposes that 50% of variance in wellbeing can be explained by genetic factors (Lyubomirsky 2008).

of the self-esteem movement in education in the 80's, taking direct action to increase students' self-esteem can have a negative impact upon academic, social and emotional development (Baumeister et al., 2003). The direction of the relationship between self-esteem and factors such as academic achievement or social desirability can be difficult to establish, with studies often finding modest to no correlation (see Baumeister et al., 2003; Bishop & Inderbitzen, 1995). Conversely, in the example of academic achievement, self-esteem has been shown to function as an outcome, in that it can function as a reward for high performance. In this case, Baumeister et al. (2003 p.9) made the following argument:

> "If self-esteem is indeed an outcome rather than a cause, then it is even plausible that raising self-esteem could backfire and produce undesirable effects. Suppose, for example, that working hard in school leads to good grades, and good grades lead to high self-esteem. Assume also that high self-esteem feels good, and so the rise in self-esteem could operate as an important reinforcer for the hard work that leads to academic success. If a school programme intervenes directly to boost self-esteem regardless of academic performance, then students can enjoy the rewards of self-esteem without making the effort."

Indiscriminately attempting to augment self-esteem by not linking praise to positive performance or behaviour can decrease the reward value of self-esteem and artificially inflate ego (Heatherton & Vohs, 2000). This argument can easily be transferred to any of the constructs that fall under the umbrella of wellbeing. The self-esteem movement exemplifies the danger of operationalising wellbeing in a hedonic manner and emphasising direct remedial action in response to research findings. This example also makes it apparent that positive affect may not always result in positive outcomes. In this regard, it is apparent that considerations of wellbeing in the present study should encapsulate and appreciation for the dynamic nature of positive and negative affect, which would arguably precipitate adopting eudaimonic considerations of wellbeing.

In summary, it was decided that the operationalisation of wellbeing in the present study should sufficiently broad so as to accommodate interpretations of a wide range of theoretical

and atheoretical accounts of wellbeing, sufficiently dynamic so as to accommodate the complexities of positive and negative affect, and sufficiently prescriptive so as to allow the researcher to provide theoretically informed interpretations of research findings. The eudaimonic tradition can easily be seen to be sufficiently broad to accommodate interpretations of a wide variety of accounts of wellbeing. This is well evidenced by the influence, and sometimes overlap, of the eudaimonic tradition in relation to other wellbeing-related theories. For example, eudaimonic considerations are often evident in Seligman's (2012) PERMA[2] model of wellbeing. In addition, there is clear overlap in the three components of Basic Psychological Needs theory – autonomy, relatedness and competence – and the autonomy, positive relations and mastery aspects of eudaimonic wellbeing, respectively (Deci, Ryan & Guay, 2013). It is also evident that eudaimonia is sufficiently dynamic, as eudaimonic considerations of wellbeing appreciate that positive affect may not always be positive and negative affect may not always be negative, and that these two states can often be comorbid. Finally, it is arguable that eudaimonia is sufficiently prescriptive as the subjective experience of wellbeing can be interpreted through six different aspects of eudaimonic wellbeing. As such, it was deemed that the eudaimonic tradition of wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001) was an appropriate model to adopt in the present study.

## 1.6    Outline of Thesis

*Chapter Two:* is the first of two literature review chapters. This chapter will set the context for wellbeing promotion in post-primary schools by identifying and discussing a non-exhaustive list of factors that have been found to have an effect on student wellbeing. Macro-factors that will be discussed include school infrastructure and climate, while micro-factors will include relationships, sex/gender and extra-curricular activity.

*Chapter Three:* is the second of the two literature review chapters. This chapter will discuss measures that have been put in place to address student wellbeing. This will be achieved by firstly establishing the policy context of wellbeing promotion in Irish post-primary schools. The Junior Cycle wellbeing curriculum will then be outlined, followed by an

---

[2] PERMA; Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment.

examination of the recently published NCCA wellbeing guidelines (2017). Based on attendant literature, this chapter will also provide an account of educators' attitudes and perceptions regarding the promotion of student wellbeing.

*Chapter Four:* establishes the methodological underpinnings of the study. A rationale for the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm and emotive relativist ethical paradigm, within which this study was conducted, is also established. The online survey used to gather Phase One data is presented and the General Linear Model (GLM) used for Phase One (quantitative) analyses is outlined. Dependent variables examined are the ATWP (including two composite sub-scales) and four non-composite Likert response format items pertaining to the NCCA wellbeing guidelines, for a total of seven GLMs. The settings and procedure used to conduct the semi-structured interviews for Phase Two are also discussed, with the theoretical assumptions of the reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2020) conducted in Phase Two (qualitative analysis) also established.

*Chapter Five:* is the first of two results chapters and presents the findings from Phase One (quantitative) analyses. The results of the seven GLMs examining participants' ($n$ = 327) responses to the ATWP and Likert response format items are presented. Main effects for each independent variable of the finalised GLM are examined, while a number of interactions are also explored. Statistically significant main effects and interactions are further examined by way of pairwise comparisons, where appropriate.

*Chapter Six:* is the second of two results chapters and presents the findings of Phase Two (qualitative) analyses. Participants' ($n$ = 11) accounts of wellbeing promotion are provided in relation to five themes interpreted and analysed during thematic analysis. Briefly, areas examined include best practice in promoting student wellbeing, the value of promoting student wellbeing, time constraints and workload, preparedness (or lack thereof) to promote student wellbeing, and educators' own wellbeing. This chapter provides a mix of illustrative and analytical accounts of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As such, research findings are interpreted and contextualised in relation to relevant literature as and when necessary.

*Chapter Seven:* offers a discussion of the research findings. This chapter begins by discussing the researcher's interpretations of Phase One findings in relation to the available literature (Phase Two findings are not discussed here in this manner here, as this is done in Chapter Six). Phase One and Phase Two findings are then synthesised and the four research questions addressed. A number of strengths and limitations of the study are identified before highlighting and discussing implications for practice and policy. This chapter concludes by identifying a number of potential avenues for future research.

# Chapter Two: Student Wellbeing in Post-Primary Education

## 2.1    Introduction

This chapter will draw upon national and international literature in identifying and discussing a number of factors that have been found to impact student wellbeing in a post-primary school setting. Macro-level factors that will be discussed include school infrastructure and climate and single-sex/co-educational contexts, as well as urban/rural contexts. Micro-level factors will include relationships, gender differences and the experience of puberty. The factors discussed are by no means exhaustive, but are presented as broadly representative of the context within which educators have been tasked with delivering wellbeing as a recognised area of learning. This chapter will begin by discussing school infrastructure.

## 2.2    School Infrastructure

Several studies have examined the relationship between school infrastructure and post-primary students' wellbeing and academic achievement. Matsuoka (2010) highlighted the effect of school aesthetics, emphasising the benefits of sufficient open spaces and 'green areas', and unobstructed views of nature. Interestingly, Matsuoka suggested that the presence of vast expanses of open green landscapes that lack features, such as trees or shrubs, could negatively affect student outcomes. Research conducted in Belgium (Engels, Aelterman, Petegem & Schepens, 2004) also noted that school infrastructure can be a significant factor with regard to students' social and emotional wellbeing, with the authors stating: "it goes without saying that a pleasant environment and involvement in its enhancement is conducive to a positive atmosphere at school" (Engels et al., 2004 p.138). However, an examination of the findings of this study showed that mean scores for students' perceptions of the importance of school infrastructure and facilities to their wellbeing were the lowest of all measured variables.

More recent research, which was also conducted in Belgium (Cuyvers et al., 2010), found that good/poor infrastructure was not highly predictive of measures of wellbeing, and that the influence of infrastructure upon student wellbeing could often be outweighed by other factors. For example, these authors found that when schools were capable of dealing with problems and students were well behaved and had regular contact with their friends, the potential negative influence of less well-developed infrastructure could be mitigated to the

point where measures of wellbeing were reflective of those seen in schools with well-developed infrastructure. It could therefore be suggested that, while school infrastructure may have some influence upon student wellbeing, this can be largely mitigated by aspects of school climate, such as peer behaviour, peer relations, and teacher support. Indeed, this argument is supported by research conducted in Australia, which emphasised the importance of factors such as academic support, academic satisfaction, school satisfaction, positive student/teacher relationships, school connectedness, and order and discipline. These aspects of the school climate can be conceptualised as broadly representative of academic climate and inclusion/interpersonal relationships (Zullig, Huebner and Patton, 2010) and will be discussed in more detail below.

## 2.3  School Climate

### 2.3.1  Academic Climate

A number of studies have indicated that assessments and examinations can be a source of considerable stress and anxiety for post-primary students (Huan, See, Ang & Har, 2008; Putwain, 2009; Putwain, Connors & Symes, 2010). In Ireland, it has been observed that a focus upon exam preparation typically increases as state examinations approach, with the use of active teaching methodologies (which students tend to find most engaging) becoming less frequent (Smyth, Dunne, Darmody, & McCoy, 2007). The emphasis placed upon academic achievement can contribute to a stressful academic climate, which in turn, has been demonstrated to negatively affect students' wellbeing and academic performance (Banks & Smyth, 2015). Aspects of academic climate, such as the organisation of student learning and day-to-day classroom processes, have also been reported to influence student achievement over and beyond factors such as social background and prior ability (Smyth et al., 2007). Furthermore, Banks and Smyth (2015) found that students' own aspirations were a key factor in relation to academic stress, with students' self-perceptions of their ability to realise these aspirations being greatly influenced by their perceptions of the support structures inherent within the academic climate of the school, as well as a perceived sense of connectedness to the school.

### 2.3.2  Ability Streaming

A common practice that can reflect the academic climate of a school is to 'stream' students into groups according to their academic ability. Streaming can see students separated into groups and delivered curricula at a level relative to their ability (e.g. higher or ordinary level Maths). In this regard, students can receive different levels of curricula in one classroom, or they can be streamed into specific classes of varying ability. While streaming appears to be a very common practice, it is also somewhat contentious. Indeed, attempts to organise learning according to ability groupings are well documented and widely debated in both the national and international literature (Hallam & Ireson, 2003; O'Brien, 2008; Smyth, Dunne, McCoy & Darmody, 2006; Stevens & Vermeersch, 2010). A study of over 1,500 UK post-primary teachers from 45 different schools found that, from an educator's perspective, streaming could be beneficial to the organisation of classroom learning, but from the student's perspective, any perceived benefits were stacked in favour of those students in higher streams (Hallam & Ireson, 2003). The potential for adverse effects upon lower stream students has been widely documented, with a reduced tendency for 'study culture' and an increased tendency for anti-school 'counter-culture' observed among these groups (Hallam & Ireson, 2003; O'Brien, 2008; Stevens & Vermeersch, 2010). The development of a culture that is counter to academia among lower stream students can also negatively affect educators, as such students have been found to be more difficult to teach and can present a greater challenge in terms of classroom management (Hallam & Ireson, 2003; Stevens & Vermeersch, 2010).

The effects of streaming upon Irish students have been noted as often being negative, with students in lower stream classes tending to receive a higher number of negative teacher interactions. Interestingly, lower stream students also tend to receive a higher number of positive interactions (Smyth et al., 2006). However, negative interactions, or indeed any factor that may precipitate negative affect, can often be more effectual in affecting the wellbeing state of an individual (Seligman, 2002). In other words, negative interactions can be more efficacious in bringing about negative affect than positive interactions can be at bringing about positive affect. One particular source of anxiety for students noted by O'Brien (2008) is the potential for streaming to threaten friendships between students of different streams. This may

be particularly prominent in earlier years of post-primary education. For example, O'Brien stated that friendships formed in primary education being sustained into post-primary education could be an insulating factor against negative affect for students transitioning into post-primary school. However, streaming can see friends of differing academic abilities placed into different classes, potentially threatening the ability of these students to maintain their friendship.

The fact that streaming is widespread is not necessarily indicative of any kind of pedagogic or academic merit that may be perceived to be associated with the practice. In fact, it is widely argued that the adoption of streaming is more often than not a reflection of structural and operational factors, such as low pupil intake, a lack of resources, or an over-emphasis of academic attainment (see Hallam & Ireson, 2003; Taylor et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2016). All of these factors have been strongly linked to poorer wellbeing outcomes for students and educators alike (Ennis, 2019; Miller, 2003; O'Higgins et al., 2013; Smyth, 2017).

### 2.3.3   Inclusion/interpersonal Relationships

School connectedness describes the quality of social relationships within the school, and the extent to which students feel like they belong at, and are cared for by, the school. A sense of school connectedness is positively associated with academic achievement, student/peer and student/teacher relationships, and emotional wellbeing (Waters, Cross & Shaw, 2010). Conversely, the absence of a sense of school connectedness can indicate poor student/peer and student/teacher relationships, poor class management (on the part of the teacher), and social isolation. These factors can result in a range of negative cognitive and affective outcomes including anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and lower levels of psychological adjustment (Lester & Cross, 2015; Way, Reddy & Rhodes, 2007). O'Brien (2008) argued that the degree of stress experienced due to an over-bearing academic climate could be mitigated by a healthy social climate. In this respect, O'Brien found that Irish post-primary students prioritised the absence of bullying and having at least one close friend as essential to their subjective wellbeing.

A review of international research found that, with regard to student wellbeing, the number of friendships was less important than the quality of friendships, and that resilience in

particular was associated with the stability of friendships, rather than overall levels of popularity (Noble & McGrath, 2012). In terms of the quality of friendships, young people have been found to develop stronger relationships with peers who exhibited proactive pro-social behaviours, such as standing up for and encouraging others, helping others to develop different skills, including others who would be otherwise socially excluded, and being humorous (Cotney & Banarjee, 2017; Bergin, Talley & Hamer, 2003). However, in an Irish context, more positive experiences of post-primary education were found among students with larger friendship networks (Smyth, 2017). Congruence with the international research can be found with regard to the importance of the stability of friendships. As previously mentioned, when friendships formed in primary education were sustained into post-primary education, Irish students were found to be more resilient against the onset of negative affect and were more insulated against the potential to be bullied in the first year of post-primary education (O'Brien, 2008).

### 2.3.4 Bullying

Bullying in school has been the subject of extensive research, which has led to the development of a wide variety of interventions (Gaffney, Farrington & Ttofi, 2019; Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2016; Sung Hong & Espelage, 2012). While anti-bullying policies are necessary to protect students from becoming victimised by bullying, it should also be appreciated that the effects of bullying can extend past the individual victim. The presence of bullying in a school can negatively affect school climate, leading to the potential manifestation of a sense of disconnectedness across the entire school (Mehta, Cornell, Fan & Gregory, 2013). Early intervention and, when possible, prevention is advocated as the most effective means of addressing bullying and, somewhat reflexively, a positive school climate is seen as the most effective insulating factor against the occurrence of bullying in school (Orpinas & Horne, 2006).

While all post-primary schools in Ireland are mandated to develop an anti-bullying policy, significant disparity can be found across schools with regard to training and implementation in this area (Corcoran & McGuckin, 2014). The success of large-scale anti-bullying programmes in Ireland has previously been found wanting due to an absence of

institutional/governmental support and a tendency to focus on sub-strata of bullying, such as ethnicity, gender, and homophobia, as opposed to implementing more universally applicable programmes (Minton, 2010; 2014). In light of Minton's research, it might be considered that large-scale anti-bullying policies may benefit from standardisation. For example, policies regarding whole-school approaches to bullying prevention may be more successful with a prescribed emphasis upon restorative rather than punitive principles. Thus, schools characterised by a restorative climate would understand misbehaviour as a violation of relationships rather than rules. As such, corrective action would emphasise social support and the repair of relationships (as opposed to the imposition of punitive measures, such as isolation or detention), which is argued to be more conducive to reducing bullying behaviour (Orpinas & Horne, 2006; Saracho, 2016).

## 2.4  Student/Teacher Relationships

One of the most prominent and recurring themes in the literature with regard to student wellbeing is the relationship between students and their teachers (INTO, 2012; Smyth, 2017; Smyth, 2015; Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011). Not only are these relationships a significant factor in terms of the wellbeing of students (Braun, Roeser, Mashburn & Skinner, 2018), but teachers have repeatedly reported that relationships with students are among the most important source of enjoyment and motivation in their careers (Hargreaves, 2010; Shann, 1998; Spilt et al., 2011). The student/teacher relationship has also been argued to be a prominent predictor of academic achievement, accounting for almost 30% of students' success at school (Hattie, 2003). Several studies have identified that a large proportion of teachers' required skill-set is non-academic and focuses on the ability to cultivate interpersonal relationships (Cadima, Leal & Burchinal, 2010; Killeavy, Collinson & Stephenson, 2003; Telli, Den Brok, & Cakiroglu, 2007). For example, one study of Irish, English and American post-primary teachers found that a teacher's success in terms of engendering positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes for students was strongly influenced by their ability to relate the curriculum to the every-day lives of their students (Killeavy et al., 2003). This, the authors argued, was predicated upon teachers' deep understanding and knowledge of their students. There are several theoretical

frameworks within which this relationship, and its influence upon student wellbeing, can be understood.

### 2.4.1 Attachment Theory

Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory offers a transferrable understanding of how a student can 'attach' to a teacher and consider them to be a secure base from which to engage in their academic pursuits. The style of attachment to a primary caregiver during infancy, and repeated interpersonal experiences across relationship contexts, generate a global model of attachment. The optimum dynamic in this regard would be to achieve 'secure' attachment, whereby the individual would be confident and resilient, and the security of the attachment would be reciprocal. There are a number of domain-specific models that may also apply to different types of relationships (Split et al., 2011), such as those that occur at home or in school. Nested within domain-specific models, are relationship-specific models (Sibley & Overall, 2008), such as inter-peer relationships or student/teacher relationships. Analogous to parental caregivers, it has been suggested that teachers construct relational schema regarding their students that represent their views, opinions and emotional feelings concerning themselves as teachers (Pianta, Hamre & Stuhlman, 2003). It has been further suggested that teachers themselves can actually be care-seekers, gaining emotional security from relationships with students, or seeking emotionally corrective referencing to disconfirm initially insecure relational schema (Golby, 1996). The social referencing of students by teachers suggests that teachers' personal and professional identities may be closely interlinked. Given that teachers have been found to highly value their relationships with students, it could be suggested that they would be considerably invested in the social and emotional wellbeing of their students. A degree of caution may be necessary in terms of developing or promoting such relationships (Aultman, Williams-Johnson & Schutz, 2009). However, perspectives such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) propose that such levels of mutual, interpersonal regard would be the optimal dynamic within which to promote the growth and fulfilment of each individual students' potentialities, or what may be referred to as their 'self-actualisation' (Deci et al., 2013).

### 2.4.2  Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory is a macro-theory of motivation and personality that examines an individuals' inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs. An appreciation for reciprocal student/teacher relationships is developed within the SDT perspective, with the understanding that students possess inner motivational resources that render them fully capable of constructively engaging with the learning environment. In turn, the learning environment can tend to either support or inhibit the students' motivational resources. This reciprocal relationship between the student and the teacher forms the basis of the student/teacher dialectical framework within SDT (Reeve, 2012). This framework pays specific attention to relationships in which individuals of high status or expertise attempt to motivate those of lesser status or expertise, and is well exemplified by the student/teacher relationship (Reeve, Deci & Ryan, 2004). Within the dialectical framework, students tend to become more highly motivated when teachers are able to cultivate close, interpersonal relationships while facilitating autonomous and self-directed learning. Experimental studies and cross-sectional survey investigations have demonstrated how interpersonal feedback and pro-active teaching styles can positively affect students' motivation (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001; Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman & Ryan, 1981; Ryan, Mims & Koestner, 1983).

The student/teacher dialectical framework is said to be informed by the three fundamental and universal psychological needs. The need for *autonomy* relates to the individual's responsibility for their own actualisation; the need for *relatedness* recognises the importance of social support and interpersonal regard, and; the need for *competence* recognises the importance of feeling capable of bringing about desired outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A substantial overlap can be seen between the need for self-determination and the need for secure attachment (as proposed by Bowlby), particularly regarding the need for relatedness. Students who have the needs of self-determination satisfied via a securely attached relationship with their teacher tend to demonstrate higher motivation, academic achievement and general wellbeing (Bao & Lam, 2008; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Furthermore, Buhrmester (1990) argued that relatedness and a sense of belonging become especially important as children enter adolescence, with the ability to maintain positive

relationships linked to higher levels of sociability and an increased perception of competence and self-esteem, as well as reduced hostility, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Conversely, when self-determination is frustrated, motivational and regulatory processes can become maladaptive and detrimental to wellbeing. For example, students could become extrinsically motivated, leading to 'introjected regulation', which occurs when a student internalises the authority of the teacher, thereby rendering self-esteem contingent upon external approval. This can result in self-imposed pressures to succeed in order to avoid guilt or social disapproval, rather than to achieve intrinsic satisfaction (Gillison, Osborn, Standage & Skevington, 2009; Sims, 2015). Further, students who present as 'non-regulated' with an amotivational disposition can cede to complete school refusal (Ek & Eriksson, 2013).

It is important to note that attachment theory and SDT differ in their explanation as to how an individual develops their specific attachment styles. Attachment theory emphasises the working models of attachment, which develop via interaction with ones' primary care-giver during infancy (Bowlby, 1969). SDT is more contextual and emphasises proximal social supports. Deci and Ryan (2000 p.262) argued that "people show significant within-person variations in attachment security across relationships, and that this variation is a direct function of the partners' responsiveness to, and support of, the person's basic psychological needs". This would suggest a sensitivity among students to the receptiveness of teachers. Research regarding mothers' representations of relationships with their children suggested that the mother's internalisation of the child's negative affect could be predictive of negative parenting behaviour (Button, Pianta & Marvin, 2001). Tentative support for the occurrence of this phenomenon in an educational context was demonstrated by Stuhlam and Pianta (2002), who found a similar tendency among experienced kindergarten and first grade teachers. The internalisation of negative affect by teachers could manifest as negative behaviour towards students, inhibiting the attachment process. As mentioned earlier, teachers can seek social reference from their students, meaning it is plausible that they may react to negative affect in the manner noted by Stuhlam and Pianta. For example, poor student/teacher attachment could exacerbate potential pre-existing issues, such as workload or inter-collegiate relations, resulting in burnout cascade whereby teachers could become callous and cynical towards students (and

colleagues) (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Poor student/teacher relationships could also result in lower teacher self-efficacy, which can manifest as increased tendency to provide negative feedback to students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

### 2.4.3 Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

The teacher's perspective of a negative student/teacher relationship could be understood through Lazarus' (1991) 'transactional model of stress and coping', which posits that an individual's reaction to stress, and subsequent emotional response, is determined by the subjective interpretation of an external stressor. An event or interpersonal status that is deemed to be goal congruent tends to lead to positive affect, while an event or interpersonal status that is deemed to be goal incongruent tends to lead to negative affect. When a teacher perceives a goal incongruent interpersonal status (such as poor student/teacher attachment), they may resort to reactive, excessively punitive responses to eliminate the source of the threat (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). These can be conceptualised as 'directly controlling teacher behaviours' (DCTB), which are defined as "explicit attempts to fully and instantly change the behaviours children presently engage in or the opinions they hold" (Assor, Kaplan, Kanat-Maymon & Roth, 2005, p.398). DCTB can include behaviours such as not allowing children to work at a comfortable pace, excessive imposition of directives, and not permitting students to express opinions that differ from those of the teacher. It has been noted that male educators may be more inclined to use DCTB – particularly, punitive measures – to control the classroom (Martino, 2008; Martino & Frank, 2006). Interestingly, the application of DCTB can result in the erroneous perception of students as being compliant and academically engaged as students may be too fearful of reprimand to vocalise opinions. Conversely, DCTB would be detrimental to students' engagement and autonomy, potentially leading to amotivation and feelings of anger and anxiety (Assor et al., 2005).

Dimensions of interpersonal teacher behaviour (with students) were found to be among the strongest correlates with students' cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement (Van Uden, Ritzen & Pieters, 2013; 2014). For example, teacher 'belongingness', or the feeling of being supported and accepted by teachers, has been conceptualised as existing within a

reciprocal triad along with engagement and academic autonomy. In other words, students'

perceptions of academic autonomy and teacher belongingness can contribute to higher levels

of academic engagement, which in turn can elicit increased support for autonomy and

belongingness from teachers (Van Ryzin, Gravely & Roseth, 2009). As such, while students who

are 'engaged' would be more likely to build positive relationships with their teachers, those

who are 'disengaged' can be less apt to be liked by their teachers (Van Uden et al., 2014). This is

particularly pertinent as peer relationships among students can be guided by how teachers

interact with students. For example, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) found that student

perceptions of social support from their teachers could insulate against these students' social

referencing of peers who present with negative or externalising behaviours. The converse can

also be true in that negative student perceptions of marginalised, disengaged or aggressive

peers can be mitigated when observing teachers to perceive such peers to be likable

(Hughes, Cavell & Willson, 2001).

The perceptions of Irish post-primary students largely reflect these findings in terms of

reciprocal student/teacher relationships and, particularly, the use of DCTB. Smyth (2017) noted

that negative student perceptions of their relationships with teachers and of teachers'

behaviours, such as excessive use of punitive reprimands and a lack of provision of positive

feedback, were indicative of negative student attitudes towards school. Negative

student/teacher relationships were also found to inform poor self-image among students

(Smyth, 2015). It seems evident that the quality of student/teacher relationships is highly

conducive to the social and emotional wellbeing of both students and teachers alike. As one of

the five major agents of socialisation[3] (Barkan, 2012), the time young people spend in

education can have a profound impact upon their future self-regulation, self-image, and ability

to manage relationships. While it would be desirable for students to receive an equal and

standardised degree of support and positive regard, factors such as sex, gender and school

context can cause significant variation in the wellbeing support that is available to students.

---

[3] Barkan (2012) identifies the five major agents of socialisation to be; family, school, the peer group, mass media, and religion.

### 2.5 Sex/Gender Differences in Student Wellbeing

#### 2.5.1 The Influence of Gender

A review of the literature by Beaman, Wheldall and Kemp (2006) revealed that the common perception among students, teachers, parents and researchers was that boys tended to receive a larger share of teachers' attention in the classroom. The historic supposition was that boys garnered this extra attention by bringing criticism upon themselves in response to their greater propensity towards externalising behaviour (Brophy & Good, 1970). However, this assertion was later contradicted by Kelly (1988), whose meta-analysis of over 80 studies on gender differences in teacher/pupil interactions found that boys received more instructional contacts, high-level questions, academic criticism and slightly more praise than did girls. In light of consistent research findings indicating that girls outperform boys across most subjects (Crosnoe, Riegle-Crumb, Field, Frank & Muller, 2008; Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; Hartley & Sutton, 2013), it might be suggested that this is the teachers' response to the academic shortcomings of male students. When considering the discrepancy in teacher attention, Myhill (2002) found that higher achieving girls were generally more compliant, to the point of conformity, and more willing to please. Building upon this research, Beaman et al. (2006) proposed that the significant challenge posed to classroom management by boys, coupled with the relative compliance of girls, has increasingly led to teacher perceptions of the 'ideal pupil' as feminine. They go on to say this perceived feminisation of the school environment would result in a dissonance between the student-identity and the culturally prescribed male gender-identity.

It has been argued that such a classroom dynamic can be developmentally maladaptive for both boys and girls. Boys' non-malicious/non-aggressive externalising behaviours that playfully disrupt the classroom may be used in the construction of a masculinity in opposition to the sensible and academically directed femininity (Beaman et al., 2006). Perceived value dissimilarity (Struch & Schwartz, 1989) can see boys pushed into identity creation via differentiation from the other (in this case, the feminised student-identity). This can be further compounded as many girls, and even some teachers, can find these behaviours amusing and

endearing, reinforcing and pathologising boys into inappropriate classroom behaviour (Francis, 2002). Conversely, girls can arguably be seen to be socialised into a gender identity of compliance and conformity. Myhill (2002) argued that the degree of compliance exhibited by female students is only advantageous to teachers in terms of classroom management and may result in subservience upon eventual entry into the labour market. This gender aspect of the 'hidden curriculum' can result in a cyclical relationship of girls' emotional servicing of boys and boys reinforcing the preferred 'feminine' student identity, perpetuating the gender roles Francis (2002 p.118-119) referred to as "silly boys and sensible girls".

Socialisation into gender roles/identities begins long before entry into post-primary education. For example, Goleman (1996) argued that parents are significantly more likely to expose girls to more information about emotions than they are boys. This may help to explain why girls are often more capable of identifying their emotions than boys. Interestingly, when girls identify a negative emotional state, they can sometimes become trapped in a cycle of self-analysis, which can lead to the onset of 'pessimism-rumination'. This can occur when a threat exists to which an individual believes himself or herself to be helpless. Permanent and pervasive explanatory styles, which girls can often be more likely to exhibit, may lead to pessimism and the expectation of helplessness in similar future situations (Seligman, 2011). Seligman argued that the manifestation of such a consciousness could lead to the onset of depressive symptoms, such as feelings of sadness or hopelessness, anxiety and loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities. When boys identify a negative emotional state, they tend to be more likely to attempt to pursue palliative measures to increase their mood. These can include physical exertion, 'acting out' and discharge of emotions through various media (e.g. music). However, these palliative measures can often be maladaptive and disruptive, contributing to the 'silly boy/sensible girl' gender roles (Seligman, 2011).

While levels of wellbeing tend to decrease for both genders when transitioning from primary to post-primary education, gender differences in life satisfaction, academic self-image, body self-image and freedom from anxiety become significantly more pronounced (Doyle & Gavin, 2006; Smyth, 2015). It has also been noted that the primary source of adversity tends to vary over the three years of the Junior Cycle. Transition anxiety tends to be the prominent

concern in first year. The academic demand of the new school setting can have a negative impact upon academic self-image, while social referencing from a new pool of older peers (when once, the peer group were all younger) can negatively affect social wellbeing and body image. There can also be a degree of trepidation regarding bullying and the loss of primary school friends (O'Brien, 2008; OECD, 2017a; Smyth, 2015; 2017). Maintenance of friendships, communication with parents and teachers, and attitudes during primary school were all found to predict improved adjustment upon entry into post-primary school (Smyth, 2017). Second year can see students generally become aimless and disengaged, negatively impacting their sense of belonging to the school, while third year can see an increase in academic anxiety due to impending state examinations and subsequent pressure to select career pathways (NCCA, 2017). The aforementioned studies all found a negative correlation between measures of wellbeing and progression through the Junior Cycle. Furthermore, it was consistently identified that girls tended to demonstrate a more pervasive trend towards negative affect than did boys.

The increased perception of markers of ill-being among Irish girls was noted in research conducted on behalf of the World Health Organisation (WHO) (Inchley et al., 2016). Inchley et al. found that 40% of thirteen-year-old girls felt pressured by school work compared to 66% of fifteen-year-old girls, while 34% of thirteen year old boys felt pressured by school work compared to 48% of fifteen-year-old boys. This example suggests that academic anxiety may increase over the course of post-primary education. In addition, 36% of thirteen-year-old girls felt 'too fat' compared to 49% of fifteen year old girls, while 18% of thirteen year old boys felt 'too fat' compared to 22% of fifteen year old boys. This points towards an increase in social anxiety over the course of post-primary education. In both examples, an increased propensity towards negative affect is evident among girls.

Several measures can be taken in an attempt to improve wellbeing through post-primary education. Research suggests that the most effective measures in the context of Irish Junior Cycle students would be students having at least one close friend, frequent communication with parents and teachers, participation in sports or extra-curricular activities, and non-exposure to bullying behaviour (Nic Gabhainn, 2005; O'Brien, 2008; OECD, 2017a; Smyth, 2015; 2017). However, while these measures may have a generalised positive impact

upon student wellbeing, they do not specifically address the discrepancy between boys and girls.

It could be suggested that the boisterous and demanding externalising behaviour of boys is implicit in the wellbeing discrepancy between boys and girls. However, some research suggests that boys are also likely to demonstrate these behaviours through primary school, where the discrepancy in wellbeing was found to be negligible (Doyle & Gavin, 2006). Consideration should perhaps be given to the influence of puberty, as puberty will usually overlap with the transition into – and progression through – the Junior Cycle of post-primary education. Indeed, research implicates pubertal processes in the emergence of sex differences in depressive symptoms during adolescence (Hamilton, Hamlat, Stange, Abramson & Alloy, 2014). It may usually be more typical to consider hormonal mechanisms in the onset of puberty as being contributory to differentials in levels of emotional wellbeing (Swerdloff & Odell, 1975). In this case, consideration could be given to the finding that a rapid rise in oestrogen can result in negative affect among eleven- to fourteen-year-old girls (Brooks-Gunn & Warren, 1992). However, hormonal concentrations are typically more strongly associated with affective behaviour in boys (which may contribute to their increased proclivity towards externalising behaviour) (Nottelmann, Inoff-Germain, Susman & Chrousos, 1990). A more marked difference between the sexes can be observed with regard to pubertal timing and development.

### 2.5.2 Sex and the Influence of Puberty

Puberty is beginning at an increasingly early age, particularly among girls (McDonald, 2016). Pubertal timing can have a significant impact upon wellbeing. Conley and Rudolph (2009) noted that increased depressive symptoms were observed among girls with actual or perceived early onset of puberty, while depressive symptoms were observed among boys with actual or perceived late onset of puberty. Resulting outcomes in an educational context include a propensity towards delinquency in early onset girls (Mrug, Elliott, Davies, Tortolero, Cuccaro & Schuster, 2013) and lower academic achievement among late onset boys (Dubas, Graber & Petersen, 1991). Angold, Costello and Worthman (1998) proposed that the influence of puberty

upon wellbeing is most acutely experienced at Tanner Stage III[4] of pubertal development, which is the point at which physiological changes during puberty begin to become more noticeable. This suggests that the trigger for the onset of negative affect is physiological and morphological. For example, body dissatisfaction arising via the manifestation of phenotypical markers of puberty can lead to a host of negative outcomes including anxiety, low self-esteem, eating pathology, and depression (Stice, 2003). Girls may be significantly more susceptible to these outcomes than boys, with Angold et al. (1998) supporting this assertion by noting that achievement of Tanner Stage III could actually mitigate depressive symptoms in boys, as boys would tend to present with depressive symptoms with actual or perceived late onset of puberty.

Indeed, the perception of the timing of the onset of pubertal stage – particularly Tanner Stage III – can be highly influential in adolescents' affective disposition. This can be measured in two ways. *Stage normative* pubertal timing measures the point at which the adolescent achieves a given pubertal stage in relation to norms derived from relevant research. *Peer normative* pubertal timing measures the adolescents' perceived pubertal (stage) timing relative to their peers, explicitly invoking social comparison (Cance, Ennett, Morgan-Lopez & Foshee, 2011). A study of early adolescents (aged 10-13), which utilised a stage normative measure, found roughly half of all off-time adolescents at initial measurement were reclassified as on-time after one year (Wiesner & Ittel, 2002). This may point towards a critical point at which pubertal stage in off-time adolescents begins to achieve synchronicity with on-time adolescents, particularly in the case of early onset. However, it has been suggested that boys tend to see their peer normative pubertal timing less favourable than do girls (Cance et al., 2011), which may be indicative of boys' increased sensitivity to off-time pubertal development.

With regard to actual onset of puberty, research suggests that pubertal timing tends to be negatively correlated with pubertal tempo, or the time it takes to complete the pubertal development process (Marceau, Ram, Houts, Grimm & Susman, 2011; Mendle, Harden, Brooks-Gunn & Graber, 2010). In other words, early onset of puberty would tend to be indicative of a

---

[4] For more information on the Tanner stages of puberty, see childgrowthfoundation.org (2017)

slower pubertal tempo, while late onset of puberty would tend to be indicative of an increased pubertal tempo. The negative correlation between pubertal timing and tempo can create similar but particular developmental problems in terms of when the onset of puberty is early or late. The 'maturation disparity hypothesis' posits that the onset of puberty at a younger age would render the individual less socially and cognitively prepared for the challenges of physical maturity than their peers who reach puberty on-time (Allison & Hyde, 2011). On the other hand, the increased pubertal tempo associated with late onset can result in the compression of maturation. The 'maturation compression hypothesis' posits that accelerated pubertal development can necessitate a corresponding rapid adaptation to the biological and social milestones that punctuate puberty, which can leave adolescents socially, emotionally, and cognitively under-equipped to negotiate pubertal development (Mendle et al., 2010).

The research conducted by Mendle et al. (2010) suggested that, for girls, pubertal timing was the most salient factor in the potential onset of depressive symptoms, while pubertal tempo emerged as non-significant. In this regard, the most prominent source of difficulty for girls may be maturation disparity (Allison & Hyde, 2011), with such girls entering into this new stage in their lives in the absence of same-age models of behaviour (Caspi & Moffitt, 1993). Early onset girls can also be more sensitive to the accentuation of prior emotional and behavioural dispositions, with girls who demonstrated a history of behavioural problems found to have the most negative prognosis for future outcomes (Caspi & Moffitt, 1991). Conversely, other research found that late onset girls demonstrated the highest academic achievement of all groups measured, despite generally having lower achievement orientation than on-time groups (Dubas et al., 1991). A possible explanation for this is that early onset girls tend to receive more social attention from peers – particularly boys (although this attention is not always desired or desirable) – and the absence of this attention in late onset girls can result in an increased focus on school work (Franzoi, 2010).

For boys, both timing and tempo were significant in the potential development of depressive symptoms with (increased) pubertal tempo demonstrating a stronger relationship than that of pubertal timing (Mendle et al., 2010). This was subsequently supported by further research, which identified that the effect of pubertal tempo was in fact substantially stronger

than the effect of pubertal timing (Mendle, Harden, Brooks-Gunn & Graber, 2012). Similar to the issue of maturation disparity in girls, it could be suggested that maturation compression in boys with accelerated pubertal tempo can render individuals socially, emotionally, and cognitively under-equipped to negotiate the accelerated progression through pubertal development. The compounding factor for boys would be the correlated late onset of puberty and the body dissatisfaction issues inherent in the Tanner stage III argument. A contradiction in the literature does exist, in that increased pubertal tempo and *early onset* pubertal timing in boys was found to predict substance abuse, which could later lead to pathology (Castellanos-Ryan, Parent, Vitaro, Tremblay & Séguin, 2013). A possible explanation for this could be that boys who matured earlier tend to be more socially apt (Mendle et al., 2012). These boys may wish to appear more mature and attempt to manifest maturity through substance abuse at a social level. Conversely, for high tempo (late onset) boys, the differences in levels of physical maturity may lead to difficulties in establishing/maintaining relationships with peers whose level of physical maturation differs from their own (Conley & Rudolph, 2009). This is significant, as adolescents can derive their self-identity, self-concept, and self-awareness from the quality and stability of their peer relationships (Brown, Von Bank & Steinberg, 2007). As such, late onset boys may engage in substance abuse to mitigate feelings of isolation or inadequacy and the social, emotional, and cognitive difficulties presented by maturation compression[5].

While the Tanner stage III argument may not be a key factor that differentiates the sexes on measures of wellbeing, this stage of puberty does appear to have a considerable bearing on both male and female students' contextual and subjective wellbeing. As mentioned earlier, coping strategies (with regard to negative affect) also tend to differ between the genders, with boys more likely to seek distraction through physical recreation while girls would be more likely to seek counsel from their peers or engage in 'wishful thinking' (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993). Aspects of both gender and sex appear to be highly influential in the differing behaviours exhibited by boys and girls in the classroom. Perceptions of the opposite sex in the

---

[5] It should be noted that, while the research suggests that the occurance of these phenomena is likely to be gendered, both boys and girls are susceptable to both maturation compression and maturation disparity depending on relative pubertal timing and tempo.

classroom also differ, with girls often feeling stifled and marginalised by boys' behaviour while boys can show improved academic performance and social self-image when sharing the classroom with girls (Jackson & Smith, 2000). It has been proposed that the benefits for boys come at the expense of girls' sense of contentment in school. Advocates of single-sex schooling argue it can foster greater academic aspirations and make it acceptable for students to be interested in academia rather than socialising (Mael, Alonso, Gibson, Rogers & Smith, 2005).

## 2.6  Single-Sex/Co-Educational Schools

Over the years, research examining the benefits of single-sex versus co-educational schools has produced mixed results. One meta-analysis of the literature suggested that single-sex schools show greater academic performance than do co-educational schools. It was further proposed that the benefits of single-sex schools are clearer and more pronounced in girls' schools than in boys' (Mael et al., 2005). Additional research identified particular benefits of single-sex schooling for girls regarding increased self-esteem, self-concept, confidence in academic learning, and a sense of ownership of their class (Streitmatter, 2012; UNESCO, 2007). Conversely, large-scale reviews in Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand found little overall difference between same-sex and mixed-sex schools with regard to academic outcomes (Halpern et al., 2011). However, it has been noted that boys would tend to report higher levels of self-esteem in mixed-sex schools than in same-sex schools (Mael et al., 2005). Research conducted in both Australia and England, in which transitions from single-sex to co-educational classes were analysed, may go some way to clarifying the influence of school type upon academic achievement and wellbeing.

The Australian research took place in two post-primary schools in Sydney over a five-year period (Marsh et al., 1988). In the first phase of this study, it was found that academic achievement remained stable across the five-year period of the study, which was considered to contradict the dominant view that single-sex schools were more beneficial to academic achievement. Measures of wellbeing, such as student self-concept, initially dipped but then rose to higher levels than were previously recorded. The second phase of this study, conducted ten years later, identified that measures of wellbeing remained at this higher level. The English

research took place in an inner city comprehensive school in the south-west (Jackson & Smith, 2000). The findings of this study were more polarised, with girls having more favourable perceptions of single-sex classes and boys having more favourable perceptions of co-educational classes. Boys' behaviour in co-educational schools was perceived to be dominating and disruptive, while girls were perceived to have had a civilising effect upon boys. The findings supported the dominant view that single-sex schools can be beneficial to wellbeing on some measures (such as confidence), while other measures (such as academic self-concept) showed no change. It was also suggested that it would be less likely for gender-typing of curriculum subjects to occur in single-sex schools than in co-educational schools. That said, while it could be considered that the single-sex context may reduce gender comparisons of what constitutes 'male' and 'female' subjects, it could be counter argued that school policies with regard to curriculum selection in a single-sex context can result in the provision of a gendered curriculum. As such, the gender-typing of curriculum subjects in a single-sex context could become more subversive and difficult to identify. Furthermore, it has been proposed that the differences in levels of wellbeing between single-sex and co-educational schools is likely to be influenced by other factors, such as schools' selective intake of students, parental influence, and socioeconomic background (Jackson & Smith, 2000; Riordan, 1999; Salomone, 2002).

Controlling for the aforementioned variables in developing a cultural, anthropological understanding of the influence of school types can be extremely difficult due to the obvious ethical ramifications of experimenting with the random assignment of students to different school types. Research in South Korea took advantage of the country's unique lottery system, known as the 'High-School Equalisation Policy' (Byun, Kim & Park, 2012), which randomly assigns South Korean post-primary students to their schools. The study found that attending all-boys or all-girls schools, rather than mixed-sex schools, was significantly associated with higher average grades and was a better predictor of attendance at third level education programmes (Park, Behrman & Choi, 2012). Girls in all-girls schools showed the largest increase in performance. However, this may be unsurprising as South Korea remains subject to a somewhat patriarchal societal culture (Cho, 2004). While cultural differences may deem it necessary to interpret the results of this study with a degree of caution, it nevertheless

supports the argument that girls may be more confident, comfortable, and content in same-sex schools.

As with the international context, discourse in Ireland regarding the impact of school-type upon academic achievement would seem to lack consensus. While some would argue that all-girls schools outperform all-boys and co-educational schools academically (EASSE, 2017), others argue that controlling for factors such as school intake and socioeconomic background would result in no significant difference between school types. In addition, while one line of research suggests that single-sex schools close the gender gap with regard to STEM subjects[6] (iWish, 2016), another suggests that they exacerbate it (Doris, O'Niell, & Sweetman, n.d.). In contrast to the question of academic performance, the issue of student wellbeing may present more clearly. Contrary to the predominant findings of the international research, Irish post-primary students may benefit more from co-educational schooling, as appears evident in the example St Conleth's College, Dublin. This school is all-boys for the three years of the Junior Cycle, but admits girls in fifth and sixth year who wish to study STEM subjects for the Leaving Certificate[7]. Female students that were interviewed reported a largely positive perception of being mixed with boys, highlighting the more relaxed atmosphere in comparison to the 'hectic, highly strung and stressful atmosphere' of all-girls schools (Fehily, 2016). Indeed, the 'hectic' environment reported by these students can be implicit in an increased propensity for negative student outcomes in all-girls schools (Bould et al., 2016). The 'civilising effect' of girls noted earlier appears to be evident, as the school principal attributed a decreased likelihood for bullying to occur in fifth and sixth year to the presence of girls in the classroom (Fehily, 2016).

Arguably, co-educational schooling may be mutually beneficial to the wellbeing of both male and female students. In addition, research suggests that while gender stereotypes can manifest in co-educational schools, they would be more likely to develop in single-sex schools, with boys in all-boys schools tending to become increasingly aggressive, while girls in all-girls schools would tend to become increasingly sex-typed (Halpern et al., 2011). Students of single-

---

[6] Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

[7] The Leaving Certificate is the terminal exam for post-primary education in Ireland. Students study for the Leaving Certificate over fifth and sixth year - the final two years of post-primary education.

sex schools can also tend to develop stereotypical views of the opposite sex (Stromquist, 2007). The example of St Conleth's College suggests that cooperative action between the genders to allay the negative impact one gender may have upon the other may be less difficult to implement in mixed-sex schools, as opposed to single-sex schools.

## 2.7 Urban/Rural Differences in Student Wellbeing

A comprehensive study of OECD[8] member states found that students in urban schools tend to outperform those in rural schools on most measures of wellbeing (OECD, 2013). While urban/rural differences were found to be influenced by socio-economic factors, characteristics that were found to be synonymous with the urban school environment, such as autonomy and the availability of an adequate supply of teachers, were also noted as important factors. With regard to the issue of student/teacher relationships, rural schools may present one distinct advantage in that, despite the increase in numbers of larger schools in rural areas in recent years, schools and classes still tend to be significantly smaller in rural settings than in urban settings (RuralSettlementIreland.com, 2017). Smaller schools and classes can be beneficial in terms of academic performance, the development of reciprocal student/teacher relationships and the promotion of a positive generally school climate (Darmody, Smyth & Doherty, 2010; Khattri, Riley & Kane, 1997; Zahorik, Molnar, Ehrle & Halbach, 2012). However, smaller classes may also lead to a perception among students that they are being more closely monitored, thereby leading to a potential for student disengagement (Smyth, 2015). Recent research conducted in Ireland found that students in rural DEIS[9] schools, when compared to those in urban areas, were less likely to enjoy school or form positive relationships with their teachers. Such students were also found to take less pride in their schoolwork and tended to demonstrate lower levels of self-efficacy in terms of their aspirations for attaining third level education (Weir, Errity & McAvinue, 2015).

---

[8] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) aims to 'promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world' (OECD 2017b).

[9] DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) is an integrated school support programme used by the Department of Education and Skills to address educational disadvantage in the Republic of Ireland. For more information see Department of Education and Skills (2017a).

The research conducted by Weir et al. (2015) also identified significantly lower levels of peer interaction among rural DEIS students. Interestingly, it was noted that, when young peoples' friends are not within easy access, the reduced time spent socialising with peers can lead to rural students developing deeper and more meaningful relationships with their parents. Indeed, approximately one third of teachers in rural schools rated home support as 'very good' compared to one quarter of their urban counterparts. Again though, the picture is not so straightforward. Research has consistently highlighted the importance of parental involvement with regard to both academic achievement and the promotion of student wellbeing (O'Brien, 2008; OECD, 2017a; Van Uden et al., 2013; Zyngier, 2008). However, it has been suggested that higher levels of academic achievement on the part of parents (particularly, the attainment of a third level qualification) could increase academic anxiety in students, as they can feel more pressure to perform in school (Smyth, 2015). Considering that Weir et al. (2015) found parents in rural (DEIS) settings to be more highly educated than their urban counterparts, the cause of the discrepancy in wellbeing between urban and rural students could be partially attributed to the perception of increased academic stressors on the part of rural students. In other words, the increased proximity to both teachers and parents – which would otherwise be beneficial to academic outcomes and emotional wellbeing – may result in increased levels of academic anxiety among rural students.

It appears that the most prominent factors that contribute to the discrepancy between urban and rural students' wellbeing are classroom structure in smaller rural schools, perceived 'heavy attention' from rural teachers and parents, and the comparative ease of access to social outlets for urban students. Increased levels of academic anxiety can be seen in the rural context, as students in smaller classrooms perceive increased scrutiny from teachers. In addition, reduced socialisation with peers can result in a corresponding increase in parental influence, which may further compound the issue of academic anxiety. One study of post-primary students' understandings of wellbeing in Ireland (Nic Gabhainn, 2005) demonstrated that rural students considered 'family' and 'friends' to be the two most important factors with regard to their wellbeing. They also identified the importance of 'school' in their lives, ranking it 10th (higher than urban students, who ranked school at 16th). Interestingly, among urban

students, these schemata were superseded by that of 'me', suggesting urban students view personal agency as more important to their wellbeing than do their rural counterparts. It is interesting to consider that, although they tend to have easier access to their social network, urban students seem to place more value on their own personal agency, while the converse appears to be true of rural students. Another factor conducive to wellbeing that urban students may also have easier access to than their rural counterparts is sports and extra-curricular activities.

## 2.8    Non-Academic Factors Affecting Student Wellbeing

### 2.8.1    Sports and Extra-curricular Activities

Participation in extra-curricular and pro-social activities can be highly conducive to physical, social, and emotional wellbeing (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). While the rural context can present some difficulties in terms of accessing such activities, it has been found that rural-based students are in fact more likely to engage in *structured* activities, such as sport, while urban students tend to engage in *unstructured* activities, such as attendance at youth clubs and recreational centres (Weir et al., 2015). The former has been shown to predict a greater sense of belonging and higher levels of academic aspiration (Darling, Caldwell & Smith, 2005; Fredricks & Eccles, 2008; Mahoney, 2000; Mahoney, Larson & Eccles, 2008), while the latter can predict problematic behaviour, particularly among those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Booth, Farrell & Varano, 2008; Mahoney, Stattin & Lord, 2004). The sometimes-remote nature of the Irish countryside can often pose difficulties with regard to the availability and accessibility of sports facilities. As a result, rural schools can frequently function as community hubs (Fahey, Delaney & Gannon, 2005). The inconvenience of inaccessibility may then inadvertently benefit rural students, as the available extra-curricular activities are more likely to be structured in nature. This dichotomy has also been observed in relation to gender, with boys being more inclined to participate in sports and other structured activities and girls being more inclined to engage in unstructured activities, such as 'hanging out'. In this regard, focus group studies of 7th and 8th grade students (typically 12-14 years old) in America found that girls could often be reluctant to become involved in sports and other structured activities as they were

intimidated by boys or were afraid of being teased or being perceived as masculine (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Vu, Murrie, Gonzalez & Jobe, 2006).

While structured activities may appear to be more advantageous than unstructured activities, the influence of participation in sports and other activities is not clear-cut and may not always produce beneficial outcomes. While participation in sports may predict a greater sense of belonging (Darling et al., 2005) and, overall, predict lower levels of negative social behaviour (Fredrick & Eccles, 2008), participation in team sports has been demonstrated to be predictive of an increased propensity toward alcohol use and risky behaviour (Blomfield & Barber, 2010; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). It has been proposed that the relationship between team sports and negative social behaviour may be contingent upon a tipping point, at which participants may become over-exposed to (or perhaps, over-invested in) the team environment. Passing this tipping point can result in a polarisation of attitudes, which can lead to a risky shift in social behaviour. In other words, participants in team sports may be 'egged-on' to participate in negative social behaviour, such as alcohol consumption and substance misuse (Booth et al., 2008).

Indeed, within a school context, it has been argued that participation in sports, including team sports, can improve students' mental health, while self-esteem can also be increased as a result of the social prestige afforded to student athletes (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). However, participation in highly competitive activities, and the perception of high expectations on the part of peers, teachers, and parents, can also lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety (Fredricks et al., 2002; Smoll & Smith, 2002). The motivations underlying such participation should also be carefully considered. This point is compounded when considering that, while young people largely tend to emphasise their enjoyment of sports and PE, it has been found that some young people, particularly young girls, cite 'weight-loss' as a primary motivation for participation in sports (Delaney, 2013).

### 2.8.2   Body Image and Healthy Eating

Research conducted by Ging, Savage and O'Higgins Norman (2017) noted that students who experience bullying at school are very often taunted about their weight or physical

appearance. The occurrence of such bullying behaviour was found to be quite common, with nearly one third of the 418 participants indicating that they had been called hurtful names or threatened at school. While this type of behaviour was found to be more prevalent in all-boys schools, girls appeared to be more sensitive than boys to this type of bullying. Perhaps unsurprisingly, other research has found that girls tend to have a more negative body image than do boys (Smyth, 2015). These factors may not only affect the degree to which young people feel motivated or sufficiently confident to take part in sports/activities, but can also affect young people's eating habits. For example, 27% of 13 to 15-year-old girls in Ireland reported not eating a breakfast every day before school, compared to approximately 16% of 13 to 15-year-old boys. Twenty-four percent of male, and 42% of female post-primary students reported that their eating habits had negatively impacted upon their body-image (O'Connell & Martin, 2012). School would arguably be an ideal setting within which to positively influence students' body image by, for example, educating young people regarding healthy body image and promoting healthy eating practices. However, according to information provided by the Department of Education and Skills, while 93% of post-primary schools were found to promote the merits of healthy lunches among their students, only 32% had a healthy eating policy. A further 30% reported they were in the process of developing a healthy eating policy, while 38% reported having taken no measures to introduce a healthy eating policy (Department of Education and Skills, 2017b).

Body image and attendant concerns can also manifest in relation to the way in which students dress in school. Girls in particular can tend to establish the worth of their appearance by way of social comparison with peers (Carlson Jones, 2004). Research conducted in both primary and post-primary schools suggests that school uniforms may be beneficial in terms of allaying body-image concerns. For example, in a series of focus groups involving 50 adolescents, it was noted that many young people felt under pressure to wear branded clothing and footwear in order to fit in and avoid being bullied. However, 83% of participants stated that the requirement to wear a school uniform mitigated this pressure and could prevent (to a degree) bullying based upon appearance or economic background (Turner, 2017). It has also been proposed that wearing a school uniform could be advantageous in establishing among students

a sense of belonging within the school (John-Akinola, Gavin, O'Higgins & Nic Gabhainn, 2013). Interestingly, the benefits of a school uniform may be even more far reaching, as it has been found that teachers' perceptions of student behaviour and academic potential can be influenced by the perceived appropriateness of students' dress sense (Behling, 1994; 1995; Behling & Williams, 1991). That said, school uniforms are not entirely unproblematic and could lead to a sense of deindividuation among students (Long, Wood, Littleton, Passenger & Sheehy, 2011).

## 2.9   Conclusion

This chapter identified and discussed a number of factors that have been found to affect student wellbeing. Aspects of school climate, such as an emphasis of academic merit, and related policies and practices, such as ability streaming, were noted to result in increased academic stress and anxiety among students. The ability of a school to promote inclusion and minimise instances of bullying was noted to help insulate students against social anxiety, as well as potentially reducing academic-based stress. Positive student/teacher relationships were found to be one of the most beneficial factors in terms of augmenting the wellbeing of students and teachers alike. Gender and sex were discussed, with particular attention given to gender-stereotypical behaviours and the influence of puberty, respectively. In this regard, the behaviours typically exhibited by each gender contributed to a narrative of 'silly boys and sensible girls', with girls often perceived to fall victim to boys' dominant behaviour. The merits and demerits of single-sex and co-education were explored, with the literature indicating that girls may often prefer single-sex schooling, while males tend to prefer the company of girls in the classroom. Student wellbeing was also found to differ in terms of the urban/rural divide, with rural students often being exposed to factors beneficial to wellbeing, but urban students nonetheless tending to demonstrate higher levels of wellbeing. Finally, body image issues were briefly addressed, with relative factors such as extra-curricular activities, healthy eating and living discussed. Although this review of the literature was non-exhaustive, it is clear that students can be exposed to a host of threats to their wellbeing on any given school day. The next chapter will outline and discuss some of the measures that have been put in place in recent years to attend to the wellbeing needs of post-primary students.

# Chapter Three: Responding to the Wellbeing needs of Junior-Cycle Students

## 3.1    Introduction

This chapter will discuss the recent move toward addressing the wellbeing needs of post-primary students. The policy context within which educators are tasked with promoting student wellbeing will be outlined in relation to both state-level health and wellbeing policies, and more specified educational policies. The three subjects that comprise the Junior Cycle wellbeing curriculum will be outlined and related to the different facets of wellbeing that each curriculum subject is designed to address. The recently introduced NCCA wellbeing guidelines will be examined, with a discussion of the context of wellbeing promotion, as well as the method of assessing student wellbeing. This chapter will conclude by examining the literature regarding the attitudes and opinions of educators toward the promotion of student wellbeing. As literature in this area is somewhat limited, educators' attitudes regarding similar constructs, such as SEL and health education, will also be examined.

## 3.2    The Policy Context of Wellbeing Promotion in Post-Primary Schools

### 3.2.1    The National Context

Over the last decade, there has been a noticeable increase in the movement towards addressing the issue of student wellbeing in Irish schools. A number of policy documents have been released that establish a framework within which schools are afforded a large degree of autonomy in developing and implementing policies and practices to realise the maximum potential of their students' wellbeing. The broader national context for the promotion of wellbeing in an educational setting is set forward in 'Healthy Ireland: A framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing, 2013-2025' (Department of Health, 2013). The stated aim of this policy framework is to outline a context within which individuals and groups at all societal levels value, and are responsible for, a shared sense of wellbeing, and to promote a healthy Ireland, where all citizens can achieve their fullest physical/mental health and wellbeing potential. Specifically, there are four goals highlighted, which aim to: (1) increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages in life; (2) reduce health inequalities; (3) protect the public from health and wellbeing risks, and; (4) create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play a part in achieving a healthy Ireland. This document sets out a

definition of mental health that acknowledges the importance of each individual realising their own abilities to cope with the normal stresses of life, and to work productively and make a meaningful contribution to their community, all of which are reflective of the actualising process (Ryff, 2014). The importance of a national framework for health and wellbeing is presented in relation to increasing health, social and economic issues in Ireland. Indeed, it is argued that these factors will be influential in mental health becoming the leading cause of chronic disease in high-income countries by 2030 (World Health Organisation, 2008).

The work of Dalghren and Whitehead (1991), as well as that of Grant and Barton (2006), is cited in recognising education as a prominent determinant in health and wellbeing outcomes. The relationship between health/wellbeing and education is understood to be dynamic. For example, as a social determinant of health and wellbeing, education is acknowledged as an important means by which health and wellbeing can be augmented. However, it is also understood that many social determinants may affect the efficacy of education in this regard (as well as affecting health and wellbeing in their own right). For example, poverty can precipitate lower measures of health and wellbeing, but can also inhibit adaptive effects of education via relative deprivation (i.e. discrepancies in the quality of available education). On this basis, education is also identified as a key characteristic of an effective health and wellbeing framework. The school context is identified as an important vector through which to deliver a standard (minimum) level of health and wellbeing education. At post-primary level, this is said to be achieved by full implementation of the wellbeing curriculum (discussed in more detail in section 3.3). It is also recommended that schools pursue whole-school approaches to promoting students' health and wellbeing, and adopt relative health and wellbeing initiatives, such as the 'active school flag' initiative, which aims to promote physical activity and literacy in Irish primary and post-primary schools[10].

### 3.2.2 The Educational Context

The 'Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023' (Department of Education and Skills, 2018) outlines the specific role of schools and centres for education in

---

[10] For more information regarding the active school flag initiative, see https://activeschoolflag.ie.

wellbeing promotion. It is proposed that a number of key principles should guide the promotion of young peoples' wellbeing in an educational context. For example, it is stated that wellbeing promotion should be person-focused, with young peoples' needs central to the development of any relevant initiatives. Wellbeing promotion should be equitable, fair, and inclusive, whilst mitigating (insofar as possible) the influence of social determinants (e.g. poverty) in availing of effective school-based wellbeing initiatives. Wellbeing promotion should be evidence-informed and outcomes-focused, bringing together local experience and research-based evidence in developing and continually improving best practice in wellbeing promotion. Finally, partnership and collaboration in wellbeing promotion is recommended, with schools encouraged to liaise with relevant governmental and non-governmental bodies.

The specific role of education in the promotion of wellbeing is set forward in terms of the link between the cognitive and affective experiences of young people's development (Department of Education and Skills, 2018). Drawing on OECD research (2017a), the argument is made that the school context is a place where the 'whole child' develops, and that schools should provide all young people with a balanced set of cognitive, affective and social and emotional skills to navigate coming life challenges. A number of wellbeing-protective factors specific to the educational context are outlined (many of which have been discussed in detail in Chapter Two). These include positive peer and teacher relationships, a sense of school connectedness, opportunities for SEL, and appropriate levels of wellbeing among school personnel. Risk factors are said to include disengagement/absenteeism, bullying and relationship difficulties, poor communication between family and school, and inconsistent discipline.

The whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion is a prominent feature in the framework for practice (Department of Education and Skills, 2018). In keeping with the general tendency for schools to be afforded a high degree of autonomy, schools are encouraged to consider ways in which they can help staff develop professional capacities to engage in reflective processes that will help ensure that they are implementing wellbeing policies and practices specific to their context. It is acknowledged that both student and staff demographics, as well as resources and infrastructure, can vary greatly from school-to-school. Each school is

encouraged to consider their individual context in ensuring staff can achieve their maximum wellbeing-promoting potential. A number of key risk-reducing factors in relation to whole-school approaches to wellbeing promotion are outlined, with schools encouraged to ensure these factors are in place. Thus, school are encouraged to:

- Foster an environment that enhances competence, fosters relationships, encourages participation, develops pupil and educator autonomy, and establishes and clearly communicates rules and positive expectations.

- Pursue wellbeing promotion in all aspects of teaching and learning. Specifically, it is encouraged that teaching be democratic, inclusive and engaging.

- Develop coherent wellbeing promoting plans and policies. School leaders and appropriate wellbeing staff (e.g. guidance counsellors and pastoral care team members) are identified as playing a critical role in the organisation of whole-school wellbeing policies and practices. However, it is said that the development of wellbeing promoting plans and policies should be reflective and collaborative, involving the perspectives of all school personnel, students and relative external agents.

- Maintain optimum levels of wellbeing among personnel. The availability of 'one good adult' whom students can approach for (informal) guidance and support is recognised as an important protective factor. As such, it is stated that schools should support personnel in building capacities to cope with challenges and adapt to changes in order for them to be able to effectively model and perform the virtues of the whole-school approach.

- Develop and implement systems that offer appropriate levels of support based on students' wellbeing needs. To this end, schools are encouraged to adhere to a 'continuum of support', as espoused by the 'wellbeing in post-primary schools' guidelines (Department of Education and Skills, 2013).

### 3.2.3   Scale of Interventions

Initiatives aimed at promoting health and wellbeing can be conceptualised as existing on three different levels. Firstly, 'universal' interventions are designed to be used among the general student population to reduce or prevent social, emotional, and behavioural issues that are predicated by common risk factors such as stress or anxiety. This type of intervention tends not to focus on addressing individual risk factors, such as ethnicity or socio-economic background, but are more generic in their emphasis. For example, 'UPRIGHT' is an EU funded universal intervention that aims to help facilitate a general culture of mental wellbeing promotion in schools (Uprightproject.eu, 2018). Secondly, 'selective' interventions target students who present with one or more specific risk factors and may therefore be at greater risk of negative outcomes. These interventions are more conceptually precise and focused than universal interventions. For example, the 'Preventure' programme in the Netherlands targets students with specific personality profiles who may be at risk of substance abuse (Lammers et al., 2017). Finally, 'indicated' interventions target individuals who are demonstrating early signs of social, emotional, or behavioural difficulties and who are therefore considered to be high risk when compared to their peers. An example of this type of intervention would be the 'Interpersonal Psychotherapy-Adolescent Skills Training' programme (IP-AST) which is a school-based preventive mental health programme targeted at young people with depressive symptoms in the United States (Young, Mufson & Davies, 2006).

The 'Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools' guidelines (Department of Education and Skills, 2013) outline these three levels of initiatives in terms of 'school support for all', 'school support for some', and 'school support for few', respectively. *School support for all* is presented as reflecting the whole-school approach to recognising and maintaining the mental health of all members of the school community. The earlier discussed measures advocated by the Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing (Department of Health, 2013), such as the wellbeing curriculum and the active school flag initiative, are illustrative of measures of school support for all. *School support for some* is embedded within the whole-school approach and focuses on identifying students who may be presenting with maladaptive behaviours or displaying signs of mental health difficulties. While serving as whole-school support structures,

the school guidance counsellor and pastoral care team are identified as being particularly important in relation to students who require 'school support for some'. *School support for few* focuses on putting interventions in place for students with chronic and complex mental health and wellbeing needs. This level of support tends to require school-based support systems, such as the guidance counsellor and pastoral care team, liaise with extern agents, including the student's general practitioner (GP) and Health Service Executive (HSE)-provided Primary Care Teams (PCTs).

### 3.2.4   School Support for All

In 2015, the 'Framework for Junior Cycle' (Department of Education and Skills, 2015) heralded the introduction of new curricula and assessment arrangements for the Junior Cycle. The new Junior Cycle curriculum is discussed as providing a balance between learned subject knowledge and a range of tangible skills and abilities. Learning is restructured to encourage collaboration and interaction, while assessment is restructured to encourage classroom-based assessments (CBAs). It is argued that, through the new Junior Cycle, students will develop proficiency in eight key skills. These are 'being literate', 'managing myself', 'managing information and thinking', 'being numerate', 'being creative', 'working with others', 'communicating', and 'being well'. The Framework for Junior Cycle outlines the 'school support for all' that schools are to provide to facilitate students in achieving proficiency in 'being well'. At a school-wide level, it is proposed that students engage with wellbeing learning through the school's culture and the student's experience of the whole-school approach. As such, schools are mandated to ensure appropriate policies are in place regarding areas such as behaviour, bullying, relationships and sexuality education (RSE), health promotion, substance use and child protection. More specifically, students will engage with wellbeing learning via curricular lessons, with 'wellbeing' formally recognised as an area of learning for Junior Cycle students.

It is stated that formal lessons in wellbeing are to be delivered via the pre-existing curricular subjects of SPHE, CSPE and PE, which have been consolidated and recognised as the 'wellbeing curriculum'. Schools are afforded flexibility in adding other activities and areas of learning that may be conducive to wellbeing. For example, guidance is recognised for its

important contribution to student wellbeing, and can therefore be included in a school's framework of wellbeing-related activities. However, all schools are mandated to provide students with a minimum of 300 hours of wellbeing learning over the course of the Junior Cycle. The introduction of wellbeing as an area of learning and the execution of the wellbeing curriculum was noted to begin in 2017 in order to allow schools time to prepare for the new area of learning. In this time, schools were expected to provide appropriate CPD to personnel and plan the necessary adjustments to their curriculum. Schools were also informed of the upcoming publication of guidelines pertaining to the promotion of student wellbeing by the NCCA (2017). The wellbeing curriculum will be outlined in the next section and the NCCA wellbeing guidelines will be discussed in the succeeding section.

## 3.3    The Junior Cycle Wellbeing Curriculum

The Junior Cycle wellbeing curriculum in Irish post-primary schools is comprised of three separate subjects including, Social, Personal and Healy Education (SPHE), Civic, Social and Political Education (CPSE) and Physical Education (PE). Each of these subjects will be outlined in turn.

### 3.3.1    Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

Social, Political and Health Education (SPHE) is designed to provide students with "a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives, and social development" (NCCA & Department of Education and Science, 2000 p.3). The aim of SPHE is to help students develop skills for self-fulfilment, to promote self-esteem and self-confidence among students, to support students in developing a framework for responsible decision-making, and to promote physical and socio-emotional wellbeing. The SPHE syllabus is designed to be delivered via one 40-minute class per week, culminating in approximately 70 hours of learning over the three year Junior Cycle period. SPHE consists of ten modules, each of which are delivered over the three years of the Junior Cycle:

*Belonging and Integrating:* This module is designed to support students in identifying and appreciating individual difference and to help students reflect on their progress

through the Junior Cycle. Concepts such as bullying, familial relationships, loss and coping with change are also addressed. The aim of this module is to guide students in reflecting upon their current stage of (cognitive, social and emotional) development and to facilitate their group work skills.

*Self-Management: A Sense of Purpose:* This module supports students' organisational skills and ability to achieve balance between school and home. Motivation, study skills and preparation for state examinations are also addressed. The aim of this module is to help students achieve a healthy 'work/life' balance and to identify students' support networks.

*Communication Skills:* Students are encouraged to assert themselves, while also learning how to listen. This module addresses passive, assertive and aggressive communication, and helps students learn how to communicate effectively in situations of conflict. By undertaking this module, it is expected that students will develop an appreciation of the need to be sensitive to the opinions of others and will understand the appropriateness of different types of communication.

*Physical Health:* This module addresses issues of physical health and hygiene, including healthy eating, exercise and relaxation. Students learn about the link between factors such as diet, rest and personal hygiene and body image and self-esteem. An outcome of this module is that students be able to identify symptoms of common ailments and can identify occasions when they should seek appropriate help. It is also expected that students learn an appreciation for an appropriate balance between exercise and rest.

*Friendship:* This module helps students explore the nature and meaning of friendship and how friendships can change and evolve over time. Other areas explored are the impact of sex roles upon boyfriend/girlfriend relationships and how to recognise and understand sources of bullying behaviour. This module aims to help students reflect

upon different types of friendships, to identify the qualities of a 'good friend', and to identify the benefits of having friends of both[11] sexes.

*Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE):* RSE addresses the biological and physiological development of the individual, as well as the fundamental social, emotional and cognitive realities of the human as a sexual being. This module develops over the three years of the Junior Cycle, building from a physiological understanding of sex to a socio-cultural understanding of respect, rights and responsibilities in relation to sex and sexuality.

*Emotional Health:* This module aims to help students recognise and understand common feelings and emotions. In addition to being able to identify and regulate occurrences of negative affect, this module supports students in reflecting on what makes them feel good about themselves and provides skills necessary to promote the wellbeing of others.

*Influences and Decisions:* Students learn about decision-making processes and evaluate potential positive and negative influences when making decisions. Students are encouraged to consider their 'heroes' as models of appropriate decision-making behaviour. The aim of this module is to help students critically reflect upon the constitution of 'good decisions'.

*Substance Use:* This module discusses different types of solvents, drugs and alcohol, and examines the physical, cognitive and emotional impact they can have upon the user. The aim of this module is to inform students of implications of recreational use of different substances and to deter students from substance abuse.

*Personal Safety:* This module provides an overview of personal safety procedures, such as road safety and school fire drills. Students also learn how to recognise safe and unsafe situations and are provided with support resources and help agencies in the event that they feel their personal safety is threatened.

---

[11] The SPHE syllabus makes reference to "both" sexes. There is no notable recognition of non-binary sex.

It is argued that appropriate delivery of SPHE requires novel pedagogies and active and co-operatively structured learning methodologies. More generally, SPHE is said to oblige schools to adopt a whole-school approach to students' social, political and health learning. Such a school environment is said to require (among other things) tolerance, openness, respect, an appreciation for uniqueness and difference and value and appreciation for the individual. More specifically, it is argued that teachers of SPHE should have an understanding of the particular methodologies necessary to deliver SPHE and should be comfortable and confident in addressing the potentially difficult subject matter with young people. SPHE is not formally assessed on terminal exams. Assessment is proposed under three broad categories. Firstly, student self-assessment and peer-assessment is encouraged. These may take the form of questionnaires or worksheets that students can use to document the progress of themselves and/or others. Second, Teachers can continually assess the progress of students with regard to their understanding of the content matter and their course work over the SPHE programme. Finally, continuous evaluation of the programme structure is encouraged. This could involve all stakeholders, including SPHE teachers, students, parents and school management.

Schools also have the option of delivering Social, Personal and Health Education via an SPHE short course (NCCA & Department of Education and Skills, 2016a). This short course is designed to be delivered through approximately 100 hours of SPHE learning over the Junior Cycle. The content of the SPHE short course is delivered in four strands and overlaps significantly with the SPHE syllabus proper. Strand one, 'who am I?', focuses on developing self-awareness and self-esteem during adolescents. Strand two, 'minding myself and others', reflects upon issues such as bullying and substance abuse, and helps students identify way of helping themselves and others to be healthy. Strand three, 'team up', addresses sexuality, sexual health and gender identity, and supports students in recognising a spectrum of different types of relationships. Strand four, 'my mental health', supports students in building positive mental health and provides resources to help cope with times of stress and illbeing. Supporting documentation for the citizenship course advocates the use of CBAs in order to move beyond the provision of grades and facilitate interim reporting on students' progress and the

development of students' Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) (NCCA & Department of Education and Skills, 2016b).

### 3.3.2   Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)

The stated aim of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) is to "prepare students for active participatory citizenship…through (a) comprehensive exploration of the civic, social and political dimensions of their lives at a time when pupils are developing from dependent children into independent young adults" (NCCA & Department of Education and Science, 1996 p.2). CSPE is provided as an important aspect of the wellbeing curriculum, which will help students understand social rights and responsibilities and guide students in making decisions and judgements of appropriate civic and social actions. The syllabus for CSPE is designed to be delivered via one 40-minute class per week, culmination in approximately 70 hours of lessons over the three year Junior Cycle period. It is proposed that CSPE classes should imbue in students seven fundamental concepts of citizenship:

*Democracy:* Students should be aware that every individual can exercise power and can be represented through participation in an ordered democratic society. It is argued that participation is a central right and responsibility of all individuals, with non-participation or exclusion potentially leading to alienation, apathy or a lack of responsibility.

*Rights and Responsibilities:* Students should be aware that every individual is entitled to basic social, civic, political, religious etc. rights, and that these rights should be protected. It is further stated that individuals are responsible for their own actions towards others at all times. Denying someone their basic rights is said to result in domination and oppression, while a lack of personal responsibility conducive to self-interest and may result on the denial of the rights of others.

*Human Dignity:* Students should afford dignity to every individual and recognise the importance of the provision of basic human needs, such as food, health, security and education. These basic needs going unfulfilled is presented as deprivation.

*Interdependence:* Students should be aware of the interdependence of all people at an individual, community, national and global level, and that the actions of the individual can have significant national and international implications. A lack of such awareness is said to inform isolation, powerlessness and self-interest.

*Development:* Development is defined as meeting the needs of people through a process of social, economic, cultural and political improvement. It is said that students should be aware that development is a complex democratic process that may not meet the needs of all individuals. Failure to develop is said to be indicative of societal decline.

*Law:* Students should be aware of the role of laws and rules in protecting communities, achieving peaceful resolutions to conflicts, and ordering conduct among community members. It is said that students should also be aware that laws change with societal developments. Lawlessness is linked to the denial of human rights and a decline in communal quality of life.

*Stewardship:* Students should be aware that all individuals are owners and stewards in terms of the care and maintenance of the planet. Stewardship is conceptualised as generational and temporary, with subsequent generations taking up the mantle of their predecessors. A lack of stewardship is said to be reflected in the abuse of the natural world and the unsustainable depletion of its resources.

By imbuing in students these concepts of citizenship, it is expected that students will critically reflect upon communal and societal issues and develop favourable attitudes and perceptions of good citizenship. Each of these fundamental concepts of citizenship are delivered to students through four component units:

*Unit 1: The individual and citizenship* – This unit addresses the civic, social and political dimension of citizenship. The citizenship of the student is contextualised with regard to the individual, the family, the school, the local, national and international community, government, and the environment of work. Concepts that are particularly pertinent to this unit are 'Human Dignity' and 'Stewardship'.

*Unit 2: The community* – This unit characterises 'what is community' and identifies similarities and differences in different communities, such as community origins, memberships and rights and duties of their members. The fair and equitable development and improvement of communities is espoused, with 'Democracy' being a particularly important concept in this unit.

*Unit 3: The state-Ireland* – This unit examines the state – which is conceptualised as a large group of communities – and how individuals or communities can become involved in representative or participative state structures. Students learn of important civic responsibilities, such as the election of representatives, observance of law and order and participatory influence in constitutional amendments. The concepts of 'Rights and Responsibilities', 'Democracy' and 'Law' are informative in this unit.

*Unit 4: Ireland and the world* – This unit situates the nation state of Ireland within the greater international context. The implications of Ireland's membership of larger international groups, such as the United Nations, is explored with regard to the influence a nation state may have upon international discourse. 'Development' and 'Interdependence' are important concepts in this unit.

As with SPHE, it is argued that the delivery of these units should precipitate the use of active and co-operatively structured learning methodologies in order to enable students to become active and participatory young persons. Advocated learning practices include research/discovery activities, group-work/discussion activities, simulation activities and action activities. It is further argued that this syllabus should not represent the entirety of civic, social and political learning, but should be complimentary to (and complimented by) a holistic cross-curricular approach to such learning (NCCA & Department of Education and Science, 1996).

Schools also have the option of delivering Civic, Social and Political Education via the CSPE 'citizenship course' (NCCA & Department of Education, 2021). This short course is designed to be delivered through approximately 100 hours of SPHE learning over the Junior Cycle. Similar to the syllabus proper, the aim of this course is to facilitate students in realising a sense of good citizenship. The content of the citizenship course is similar to that of the syllabus

proper and is delivered in three strands. Strand one, 'rights and responsibilities', addresses human dignity and the right and responsibilities of each citizen. Strand two, 'global citizenship', addresses issues of sustainability and global development and change. Strand three, 'exploring democracy', examines the meaning of democracy, the implications of law for the citizen and the role of media in a democracy. While CPSE was initially a mandatory Junior Certificate exam subject, terminal examination of the syllabus proper was discontinued in 2019. As with the SPHE short course, supporting documentation for the citizenship course advocates the use of CBAs in order to move beyond the provision of grades and facilitate interim reporting on students' progress and the development of students' JCPA (NCCA & Department of Education, 2021).

### 3.3.3 Physical Education (PE)

Physical Education (PE) takes a holistic approach to students' learning of the concept of physical activity. The PE syllabus is designed to recognise "the physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of human movement, and emphasises the contribution of physical activity to the promotion of individual and group wellbeing" (NCCA & Department of Education and Science, 2003 p.2). PE is aimed at preparing students for a life of autonomous wellbeing through the development of creative and practical skills and the promotion of positive attitudes and affirmations among students regarding the link between physical activity and a holistic sense of wellbeing. The PE syllabus is designed to be delivered over a two-hour allocation per week, culminating in approximately 210 hours of physical education over the three years of the Junior Cycle. PE comprises seven areas of study:

*Adventure Activities:* Students undertake a number of challenging activities, such as camp craft and orienteering, in a safe and controlled environment. The aim of this area of study is to develop in students a sense of responsibility, self-confidence and self-reliance, as well as promoting a sense of respect and regard for others and the environment.

*Aquatics:* This area of study is designed to promote aqua fitness among students, and to develop in students a sense of competency and safety in water. Students also learn broader water safety rules and regulations pertaining to help-seeking and appropriate rescue procedures.

*Athletics:* Athletics teaches students the fundamental activities of running, jumping and throwing. These base activities are considered inherent in most form of athletic activity and are considered transferable to a wide range of activities. The competitive aspect of athletics is utilised to promote goal-orientation and self-improvement with regard to students own intrinsic goals rather than comparative assessment to the abilities of others.

*Dance:* Students are provided a context for artistic expression and experience. In this area of study, students are encouraged to explore different understandings and interpretations of their feelings, and to express these feeling through different forms of dance. Dance is aimed at promoting coordination and movement quality, and developing relationships through group-work projects, such as dance creation.

*Games:* Students partake in a variety of invasion games, net games and field games, learning fundamental rules and principles of these games, such as attacking and defensive play. The aim of student participation in games is to exercise fundamental movements and lessons learned in other areas of study, with skill acquisition emphasised over competition.

*Gymnastics:* This area of study is designed to increase the movement vocabulary of students through a range of actions and activities including rolling, balancing and flight (jumping). Gymnastics aims to promote students' body management and movement focus by emphasising focus, precision and form.

*Health-Related Activities:* This area of study aims to help students develop an understanding of health-related fitness, and to reflect upon the importance of skilled movement when developing and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Students learn of the

physiological impact of exercise upon the human body, as well as the potential positive influences in terms of social and emotional health and wellbeing.

It is argued that schools should promote inclusion and participation in a wide range of activities when delivering physical education. However, it is appreciated that the types of activities that can be undertaken will vary in accordance with the resources and infrastructure in different schools. It is also said that students should be encouraged to pursue opportunities to utilise the lessons of physical education in a recreational manner by joining sports teams, for example. Student knowledge and skill acquisition regarding physical education is present as informal and in keeping with the practical nature of the subject matter. A number of potential assessment methodologies are provided, with schools having flexibility to adopt assessment methodologies they deem most appropriate. Suggested methodologies include formal teacher assessment based on structured activities, informal teacher assessment based on observation, and peer and self-assessment based on the achievement of agreed upon criteria and student reflection respectively.

Schools also have the option of adopting the Physical Education short course (NCCA & Department of Education, 2016c). The physical education short course is designed for approximately 100 hours of student engagement over the three years of the Junior Cycle. The subject matter of the PE short course is structured around four strands, which overlap with the syllabus proper. Strand one, 'physical activity for health and wellbeing', aims to promote students' understanding and commitment in relation to a healthy lifestyle by designing, implementing and evaluating their own physical activity programme. Strand two, 'games', builds students' competence and confidence with regard to a selection of optional games categories, with the aim of developing in students a range of transferable movement skills. Strand three, 'individual and team challenges', develops students' skills in a selection of individual and team-based activities, with goal-orientation promoted with regard to self-improvement rather than competition. Strand four, 'dance and gymnastics', aims to promote artistic movement and expression, culminating in the creation of a gymnastic or dance performance. As with the other wellbeing curriculum subject short courses, assessment of the PE short course is argued to be most effective when pursued by informal means. CBA is

encouraged in order to continually monitor and assess students' progression and skill development through each of the four strands of the short course (NCCA & Department of Education and Skills, 2016b).

## 3.4    The NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines

### 3.4.1    Context for Promoting Student Wellbeing

In 2017, the NCCA wellbeing guidelines were introduced to complement the integration of these policies and curricula, and to further assist schools to develop their students' social and emotional wellbeing. All post-primary schools in Ireland are required to allocate 300 hours to the development of social and emotional wellbeing over the three year Junior Cycle period. This was due to increase to 400 hours by the 2021/2022 school year (NCCA, 2017). However, the requirement for schools to provide 400 hours of wellbeing learning was deferred by one year due to disruptions resulting from the COVID-19 of 2020 pandemic (ASTI, 2021). The state aim of the wellbeing guidelines is to "support schools in planning and developing a coherent wellbeing programme that builds on the understandings, practices and curricula for wellbeing already existing in schools" (NCCA, 2017 p.8). In tandem with the available policies and curricula, the guidelines aim to realise five nationally prescribed outcomes:

1. Young people achieving active and healthy physical and mental wellbeing
2. Young people achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development
3. Young people being safe and protected from harm
4. Young people being afforded economic security and opportunity
5. Young people being connected and respected, and contributing to their world

The guidelines begin by identifying 'what is wellbeing' and why wellbeing matters. It is stated that "much of the research and policy documentation defines student wellbeing in psychological terms and so wellbeing is commonly seen as a combination of sustained positive feelings and attitudes - happy, healthy and confident young people who feel safe, secure, cared for, included, involved and engaged, and so on" (NCCA, 2017 p.15). However, issue is made with this definition as it is argued to be too narrow and fails to account for the potential for wellbeing and illbeing to co-exist, and it renders the individual solely responsible for their

wellbeing. Rather, the guidelines specify that wellbeing is a life-long journey and that it is important to communicate to students that there will be setbacks and times of low moods as they pursue their most balanced state of wellbeing. The NCCA go on to propose that wellbeing should be considered "less of a state and more of a process" (NCCA, 2017 p.15), demonstrating the need for balance between both positive and negative affect.

The importance of wellbeing is outlined to be three-fold. Firstly, the NCCA identify research supporting the argument that higher levels of wellbeing can be conducive to better cognitive functioning amongst students in school. Secondly, it is suggested that the development of wellbeing can inform better outcomes in later life. Finally, it is suggested that the importance of wellbeing is intrinsic, and that wellbeing is necessary in its own right. While 'wellbeing' has been integrated into the principles for Junior Cycle education (NCCA, 2021a), 'staying well' is also considered to be one of eight key skills to be developed during the Junior Cycle, as per the framework for junior cycle (Department of Education and Skills, 2015). The view that staying well can be considered a skill attends to the personal agency of the individual student with regard to the pursuit and maintenance of their social and emotional wellbeing while further observing the observation of wellbeing as a process. The NCCA highlight four aspects of wellbeing, which coincide with the four areas of action recommended in the 'Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention' (Department of education and skills, 2013). These are presented in Box 3.1.

| **Box 3.1. Aspects of Wellbeing** | |
|---|---|
| Culture<br>- School mission and ethos<br>- Physical and social environment<br>- Classroom culture<br>- Teaching, learning and assessment | Policy & Planning<br>- School policies<br>- School self-evaluation<br>- Subject and whole-school planning<br>- Continuing professional development (CPD) planning |
| Curriculum<br>- CSPE, PE and SPHE<br>- Guidance<br>- Extra-curricular and co-curricular learning<br>- Other subjects and learning experiences | Relationships<br>- Student/teacher relationships<br>- Peer relationships<br>- Student voice<br>- Partnerships with parents/guardians, community and wider supports |

The aspects of wellbeing are discussed in some detail, with particular attention paid to the importance of relationships between students and their teachers, parents and peers. It is also noteworthy that the importance of teacher wellbeing is acknowledged with the argument that "wellbeing in school starts with the staff" (NCCA, 2017 p.29). The guidelines conceptualise and discuss teacher wellbeing in terms of individual, relational, and contextual factors, as per Acton and Glasgow (2015). Previously identified trends, such as the importance of the student/teacher relationship to the wellbeing of teachers as well as the students (Hargreaves, 2010; Shann, 1998; Spilt et al., 2011) are repeatedly highlighted throughout the guidelines. In addition, it is argued that teachers require continuous professional development (CPD) to ensure that they build a deep conceptual understanding of wellbeing and are confident in utilising the pedagogical approaches necessary to support student wellbeing. Positive teacher perception of the wellbeing programme, and an understanding of how teachers can contribute to the wellbeing of their students is said to be essential to the success of the wellbeing programme.

### 3.4.2   Assessing Student Wellbeing

The NCCA (2017) state in the wellbeing guidelines that student wellbeing should be assessed in relation to six indicators of wellbeing (see Figure 3.1). Teachers are expected to regularly and informally monitor their students for these indicators, with emphasis placed on the importance of ongoing assessment. This is considered necessary in providing "an overview of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students are moving towards achieving in support of their wellbeing" (NCCA, 2017 p.72). It is also stated that "the focus of wellbeing assessment is to gather evidence of what the student has learned about wellbeing, i.e. the knowledge, skills and dispositions students have gained" (NCCA, 2017 p.72). Formal reporting practices, such as self-report questionnaires (for both students and teachers), poster presentations and video assignments are proposed to be conducted intermittently. At the end of the third academic year (i.e. the end of the Junior Cycle), schools will be provided with templates for reporting on wellbeing in accordance with the JCPA. These templates are formatted to gather information regarding students' achievements in the state-certified final examinations; CBAs in subjects and

short courses, where relevant; other areas of learning, and; L2 Learning programmes (L2LP's)[12], where relevant (Department of education and skills, 2017b).

The six indicators of wellbeing are argued to provide a multi-dimensional approach to the assessment and development of student wellbeing. Kern, Waters, Adler and White (2014, p.2) make the apt analogy that "in education, overall grade point average indicates a student's overall achievement, but obscures the individual academic areas where students struggle". The same argument can be made for wellbeing whereby, for example, an over-reliance on the hedonic tradition of positive affective experience could cloud what may be the most salient areas of positive affect, in addition to obscuring the potential occurrence of negative affect. This argument can be clarified when examining the research of Huppert and So (2013). Comparisons of several European countries revealed notable differences in levels of overall wellbeing and levels of wellbeing as measured on the five core elements of Seligman's (2012) PERMA framework. For example, results in Spain and France demonstrated similar levels of overall wellbeing. However, results in France demonstrated high engagement, moderate competence, and low self-esteem, while results in Spain demonstrated moderate engagement, low competence, and high self-esteem. In this example, subtle differences in measures of wellbeing between the two countries were obscured by the similarities in overall levels of wellbeing. This serves to highlight the appropriateness of a multi-dimensional approach to assessing student wellbeing.

While it is prudent to conduct a thorough assessment of the learning and explicit knowledge acquired by students, it would arguably also be necessary to measure their subjective experiences of their actualising process. As mentioned earlier, the focus of assessment in wellbeing is on students' acquired, explicit knowledge of wellbeing. As such, the guidelines state: "assessment in wellbeing is not about teachers assessing where the student is situated on the continuum of wellbeing or the students' subjective state of wellbeing. It would be counterproductive for a teacher to make a judgement about a student's wellbeing per se…"

---

[12] L2 Learning Programmes are designed to provide students with special educational needs (of higher functioning moderate and low functioning mild categories), with a Junior Certificate aligned to level 2 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

**ACTIVE**
- Am I a confident and skilled participant in physical activity?
- How physically active am I?

**RESPONSIBLE**
- Do I take action to protect and promote my wellbeing and that of others?
- Do I make healthy eating choices?
- Do I know where my safety is at risk and do I make right choices?

**CONNECTED**
- Do I feel connected to my school, my friends, my community and the wider world?
- Do I appreciate that my actions and interactions impact on my own wellbeing and that of others, in local and global contexts?

**RESILIENT**
- Do I believe that I have the coping skills to deal with life's challenges?
- Do I know where I can go for help?
- Do I believe that with effort I can achieve?

**RESPECTED**
- Do I feel that I am listened to and valued?
- Do I have positive relationships with my friends, my peers and my teachers?
- Do I show care and respect for others?

**AWARE**
- Am I aware of my thoughts, feelings and behaviours and can I make sense of them?
- Am I aware of what my personal values are and do I think through my decisions?
- Do I understand what helps me to learn and how I can improve?

*Figure 3.1. Indicators of Wellbeing*

(NCCA, 2017 p.72). This position is qualified by the argument that an emphasis upon subjectivity would result in narrowing the scope of understanding with regard to student wellbeing. However, Mikolajczak (2010) argued that skills and knowledge being well learned does not necessarily mean they will be put into practice. Mikolajczak originally raised this argument in the context of the trait/ability debate regarding emotional intelligence (EI), stating EI should be considered in terms of three criteria; what people know, what people can do, and what people do. This is relative to the wellbeing guidelines, as "knowledge does not always translate into abilities, which in turn, does not always translate into practice" (Mikolajczak, 2010 p.27). While students may be equipped with a robust skillset and knowledge bank, the assessment methodology provided by the wellbeing guidelines may overlook important factors, such as students' subjective experience of learning about wellbeing, their tendencies to implement what they have learned and the efficacy of these learnings in augmenting student wellbeing.

### 3.5 Educators' Attitudes Regarding the Promotion of Student Wellbeing

The importance of educators in implementing interventions aimed at supporting and enhancing students' social and emotional wellbeing has previously been highlighted, with the NCCA guidelines stating that "wellbeing starts with the staff" (NCCA, 2017 p.29). According to Barrow (1981), teachers play a central role in the educational process and, therefore, the impact of health education upon pupils is not only dependent upon the knowledge and skills of the teacher, but also upon their perceptions, attitudes, and personal example. However, developing a holistic understanding of educators' attitudes regarding the task of promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of their students is an area that is somewhat under-represented in the available literature. That said, there are a number of studies that have focused upon particular cohorts, contexts, and variables, which may allow for tentative inferences to be made regarding educators' general attitudes toward promoting student wellbeing.

For example, research conducted in Cyprus suggests that the more positive teachers are about their own health, the more positive they are likely to be about health education as a part of their school's curriculum (Fontana & Apostolidou, 2002). However, subsequent research

conducted by Apostolidou & Fontana (2003) suggested that teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of wellbeing interventions may not be wholly positive. Their follow-up study examined 9,021 male and female teachers across pre-primary, primary, post-primary and special needs education. In total, 4,215 of these participants were situated in post-primary schools. It was found that, whilst 87% of teachers welcomed the opportunity to teach health education, 61% believed the school curriculum to be overloaded and unable to accommodate such lessons. Furthermore, teachers largely felt inadequately trained to deliver health education, with 82% identifying the need for more in-service training in 'health matters', and 84% indicating a need for training in 'the methodology of health education'. The authors proposed that training in health education would facilitate the development of more positive attitudes toward the teaching of the subject. A similar trend was identified with regard to the implementation of a more specified healthy life-style intervention in South Africa (Hill et al., 2015). This study examined the implementation of the 'HealthKick' intervention, which aims to promote a healthy lifestyle among students, with a particular focus on student diet. Among the six participating schools, it was found that teachers' perceptions of an already heavy workload and a reluctance to participate in non-compulsory activities were the most prominent barriers to implementation. However, it was also found that an appropriate introduction to the programme and continued support for teachers were beneficial to teacher perceptions and programme implementation.

A recent review of the literature examining the implementation of a universal SEL programme (MindUP) also found that teachers required more training with regard to delivering many aspects of SEL curricula (Maloney et al., 2016). There would appear to be a recurring theme within the literature, which highlights training and workload as significant factors influencing teachers' perceptions of wellbeing curricula (Apostolidou & Fontana, 2003; Hill et al., 2015; Sancassiani et al., 2015; Byrne, Rietdijk & Pickett, 2018). This is reflected in the Irish context with research noting that, while educators are expected to deliver wellbeing curriculum subjects such as SPHE using interactive pedagogies, educators were very often insufficiently trained in such pedagogies. Workload was also found to significantly inhibit educators' ability to avail of appropriate training in this regard (Mannix McNamara et al., 2012).

There may also be a degree of discomfort among teachers with regard to the delivery of some aspects of the wellbeing curriculum. For example, Shannon and Smith (2015) observed that teachers in Australia felt considerable discomfort when involved in the delivery of sexuality education. It was also suggested that teachers may tend to be somewhat reticent toward Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, Inter-sex (LGBTQI) students as a result of a lack of training and a perceived ambiguity regarding relevant school policy. In this regard, it has been argued that male educators may be more susceptible to feelings of discomfort than female educators (Collie, Shapka, Perry & Martin, 2015). Similar to the issues of training and workload, teacher discomfort is commonly reported in relation to the requirements of attending to the social and emotional wellbeing of students (Moor et al., 2007, Walter, Gouze & Lim, 2006; Cohall, Cohall, Dye, Dini, Vaughan & Coots, 2007). For example, research conducted by Rothì, Leavey and Best (2008) found that teachers in England expressed concerns about the changing nature of their responsibilities in terms of the requirement to attend to their students' wellbeing needs. It was also noted that the requirement to attend to their students' wellbeing needs could negatively affect job satisfaction and teachers' own psychological wellbeing.

A similar sentiment was reported among Irish teachers. In one study, 71% of schools reporting teacher discomfort with delivering Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) to be the most significant barrier to full implementation of this aspect of the curriculum. Furthermore, 82% of schools reported that the curriculum was too overcrowded to accommodate the RSE curriculum, with approximately two-thirds agreeing that the delivery of RSE added to the perceived pressure in delivering core exam subjects (Mayock et al., 2007). A more recent study highlighted the issue of subject status with regard to SPHE. It was found that, although teachers identified the benefit of SPHE (in this case, to male students), consideration for this aspect of the curriculum was marginalised, with teachers tending to focus on the delivery of the core exam subjects (Doyle, 2017). This may in part be attributed to a lack of understanding of the benefits of the whole-school implementation of the SPHE curriculum for both students and educators alike (Nic Gabhainn & Barry, 2013). Indeed, Moynihan et al. (2016) make the argument that Irish educational policy needs to conceptualise the whole-school approach in a manner that is clearer and more relatable for all stakeholders.

With regard to teachers' tendency to focus on core exam subjects, the opposite appears to be true for pastoral care and support staff such as guidance counsellors. A review conducted by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (2016) found that, due to a sustained reduction in resources since the 2012 Budget, there has been an overall decrease in guidance counsellor practice hours. There was also a noted increase in 'classroom guidance' at the expense of 'one-to-one guidance', as well as an increase in guidance counsellors performing a full-time core curriculum teaching role. Contrary to teachers, guidance counsellors have argued strongly for their need to attend to the pastoral care of their students (Hearne & Galvin, 2014; Hearne, Geary & Martin, 2017). Thus, while teachers feel their delivery of the core curriculum may be hindered by the requirement to attend to student wellbeing, guidance counsellors seem to view the requirement to assist in the delivery of the core curriculum as a barrier to their delivery of pastoral care. The argument put forward by guidance counsellors is not without merit, as their involvement with core curriculum activities can in fact be problematic in terms of the quality of guidance counselling services they could then provide to their students. Furthermore, the requirement to perform additional non-guidance tasks can also be a significant predictor of the onset of burnout and negative affect (Moyer, 2011).

The reluctance of teachers to become involved in wellbeing-related activities may prove to be problematic in terms of the whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion that is advocated by the NCCA (2017). Indeed, it may well be that guidance counsellors might be the most appropriate leaders with regard to the implementation of the wellbeing guidelines. For instance, Hearne and Galvin (2014 p.236) argue that "if the guidance counsellors were to become more involved in the promotion and in-house training of a whole-school approach, as well as pastoral care training, it might encourage more regular teachers to engage in pastoral care activities in the school". Thus, guidance counsellors could play a key role in helping to dispel the perception among some teachers of pastoral care as burdensome, and help to secure teacher buy-in to the whole-school approach to promoting student wellbeing. However, this may prove to be challenging in view of the historic and current resource constraints experienced by guidance counselling services, particularly at a junior-cycle level (Hearne, Geary & Martin, 2017).

## 3.6    Conclusion

This chapter outlined some of the measures that have been introduced in recent years to help promote the wellbeing of post-primary students. The policy context for wellbeing promotion in Irish schools was established, with educational policies contextualised within wider state health and wellbeing policies. The three aspects of the wellbeing curriculum were outlined and the NCCA wellbeing guidelines were examined. Studies pertaining to the attitudes and opinions of educators regarding the promotion of student wellbeing were also examined. While the findings from these studies are helpful in understanding the attitudes and opinions of educators regarding the promotion of student wellbeing, the majority of these studies examine particular cohorts or specific contexts. More generally speaking, educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of student wellbeing remains relatively under-researched. At the time of writing (and to the researcher's knowledge), no study has been conducted that has attempted to develop a holistic understanding of educators' attitudes toward the promotion of student wellbeing.

# Chapter Four: Method and Methodology

## 4.1    Overview of Methodology

This study was conducted using a sequential mixed methods design. This design is characterised by two phases of analysis. Phase One incorporated a large-scale survey of post-primary educators ($n$ = 327, as deemed sufficient by power analysis: see section 4.7.6.4), and was conceptualised as predominantly exploratory in nature. Phase One was designed specifically to address research questions one and two, while providing supplementary information that would inform the design of Phase Two. Phase Two was qualitative in nature, consisting of a series of semi-structured interviews ($n$ = 11), and was designed to address research questions three and four, while providing additional information regarding research questions one and two.

One of the benefits of concurrent mixed methods is the ability to support and build upon the data obtained by the first method employed. However, this presents the issue of 'priority'. Ivankova, Creswell and Stick (2006) use the term 'priority' in reference to the method that is given most weight by the researcher throughout the data collection/analysis process. They suggest that this is typically the method that is employed first, identifying that explanatory mixed methods usually begin with quantitative methods, while exploratory mixed methods usually begin with qualitative methods. The problem of priority was negated in the present study, as each phase was (predominantly) designed to address two of the four research questions. Therefore, each phase was afforded equal weight.

The implementation of a mixed methods design can have several benefits over a single method approach, and these have been outlined in detail by Creswell (2009). For example, a convergent parallel mixed methods design affords the researcher the opportunity to corroborate their findings by collecting and analysing two sets of data (which are considered to be two types of information) from a single source and compare the results to see if they support or disconfirm each other. Concurrent triangulation mixed methods utilises two or more methods of data collection/analysis to overcome the perceived weaknesses of one collection/analysis method by using the strengths of another. On the other hand, methodological triangulation uses multiple methods to obtain more comprehensive data, with

a view to enhanced understandings of the studied phenomena. The present study adopted methodological triangulation between Phase One and Phase two in order to pursue comprehensive understandings of the data and to afford further validity and credibility to the research findings.

## 4.2    Ontological Considerations

This study adopted an interpretive ontology, which proposes that social reality is constructed and ascribed meaning by active social actors. Shared schema are established to derive meaning from all cognitive, affective and experiential phenomena. The aim of interpretivism is "to establish an objective science of the subjective; producing verifiable knowledge of the meanings that constitute the social world" (Blaikie & Priest, 2017 p.107). Interpretivism advocates a fundamental belief that language is implicit in shaping perceptions of the social world and emphasises the examination of the meaning of this language (Macionis & Gerber, 2011; Schwandt, 1998). Weber differentiated between two distinct 'meanings' that may be derived from language. The *actual meaning,* ascribed by a specific actor, is intrinsic to the individual and constitutes an individual experience or understanding of a phenomenon. The *average meaning* is ascribed by multiple actors and constitutes a shared understanding of the constitution of a phenomenon (Weber & Parsons, 1947). Interpretivism emphasises the inter-subjective nature of how social phenomena are experienced and understood, and how they are expressed in a language constitutive of the respective society (Schwandt, 1998). In this sense, it is argued that reality is constitutive of the average meaning ascribed to a phenomenon.

Interpretivism accommodates a pluralistic understanding of social phenomena. As multiple inter-subjective perspectives may exist regarding a given phenomenon, a principal concern of interpretivist inquiry is establishing the degree to which social actors agree or disagree about the nature of their social reality, as opposed to, for example, assessing whether or not a social reality has an independent existence (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Schwandt (1998) argued that an individuals' interpretation cannot properly be said to be verifiable. Rather, we can at best appraise the interpretation by applying norms or criteria that are compatible with the phenomenon that is to be interpreted. As such, it may be necessary to apply a greater

degree of caution when making generalisations from interpretivist research than from positivist research, as norms and criteria of an interpretivist persuasion are not fixed and immutable as they are within the positivist persuasion (Cohen et al., 2016).

## 4.3    Epistemological Considerations

The interpretive ontology adopted by this study was complimented by a constructivist epistemology. Researchers of a constructivist persuasion acknowledge inter-subjectivity, but also highlight the intrinsic nature of cognitive, affective and behavioural responses to a given phenomenon. Constructivism acknowledges that what is inter-subjectively agreed upon as constituting objective social knowledge is ultimately subject to the perceptions of the individual (Schwandt, 1998). In this way, just as interpretivism can be construed as emphasising average meanings, constructivism can be construed as emphasising actual meanings (Weber & Parsons, 1947). Framing the research paradigm as such demonstrates an understanding that, while reality as examined by social science may be interpreted inter-subjectively, the construction of relevant schema is subject to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the individual.

Constructivists are unburdened by the possibility of a reality as ascribed by the natural sciences. As such, by investing in relativist inquiry but not denying realism, constructivism is aptly positioned to examine the constitution of knowledge of a reality within social science via a wide range of research methods (MacKenzie & Knipe, 2006). For example, constructivist considerations for quantitative analytical methods in the present research would hold that the outcome of a given mathematical equation may be understood in a realist sense, with a singular correct outcome to an appropriately conducted equation. However, the use of 'realist' methods should be punctuated by the acknowledgement that the outcome of the method be interpreted in the realm of the subjective. As all social phenomena are socially constructed, what we consider to be objective knowledge of social phenomena may instead be best considered reflective of aggregated actual meanings. This will help the researcher remain cognisant that some of these aggregated actual meanings might not necessarily reflect the aggregated outcome. In other words, it may be found that the mean score for a particular variable might indicate positive attitudes. However, this would not necessarily mean all

participants are indeed positive with regard to that variable. Furthermore, as social phenomena may be understood through multiple, often conflicting constructions of knowledge (which are all, at least, potentially meaningful) (Schwandt, 1998), it may be more pertinent to forgo the assessment of the trueness of a construction in favour of the assessment of the meaningfulness of a construction.

## 4.4    Interpretive Constructivism as a Research Paradigm

Interpretive constructivism has been adopted as the research paradigm as it allows for the unpacking of the subjective and inter-subjective dimensions of social phenomena. The advantage of adopting an interpretive constructivist paradigm is predicated on the understanding that our frames of interpreting the social world belong to both a system of interpretation (our constructions of knowledge) and to what is interpreted (our social reality) (Schwandt, 1998). Schutzs (1954) argued that an individual's constructions of knowledge are second order to the social interpretations of reality. For example, schematic constructions of knowledge should be examined with respect for their construction within a framework of plural interpretations of social reality. This indicates the order of inquiry of the present study, in that educators' *attitudes* (schematic constructions) were examined with regard to the promotion of student *wellbeing* (plural interpretations). In other words, a plural interpretation of wellbeing should be established, within which schematic constructions can be examined.

As outlined in Chapter One, wellbeing has been operationalised in this study using the eudaimonic tradition, as it affords a broad framework within which the potential for many theoretical and atheoretical understandings of wellbeing can be examined. This operationalisation is specific to a shared framework of a mutually accepted lexicon, and inter-subjective systems of representations and laws of discourses as identified within the available research. Therefore, the data gathered during this study will be interpreted within the context of the eudaimonic tradition. Generalisation of this data may only be appropriate with regard to this particular interpretation of wellbeing, and may be wholly inappropriate for interpretations constructed via other theoretical frameworks (e.g. positive psychological theory) (Blaikie & Priest, 2017).

As a fundamental principle of interpretive constructivism, the idea that any essential or natural givens may precede the processes of social determination are wholly rejected (Fuss, 1989). Interpretive constructivism forgoes the argument of objectivity, and indeed true 'knowing', instead proposing that analyses constitute the aggregation of individually constructed knowledge, or 'actual meanings'. Aggregated knowledge is not necessarily taken to be a true reflection of knowledge constructed by the individual, or their actual meanings (Weber & Parsons, 1947). Rather, aggregated knowledge is taken as a probable system of representations of the knowledge constructed by the constituent parts of a plurality. It may therefore be pertinent, not to consider the trueness of what educators profess to be their attitudes toward the promotion student wellbeing, but to consider the meaningfulness of the various schema, systems of representations, and laws of discourse pertaining to their attitudes.

## 4.5  Reflexivity in the Interpretive Constructivist Paradigm

Schutz (1954 p.266-267) argued that, unlike the world of nature, which does not 'mean' anything to the molecules, electrons and atoms that inhabit it, "the observational field of the social scientist, namely the social reality, has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the human beings living, acting, and thinking therein… It is these thought objects of theirs which determine their behaviour by motivating it". Schutz's argument points toward a fundamental difference between the natural and social sciences in that social scientists, unlike natural scientists and their subjects, are inextricably linked to the content of their inquiry. As such, social inquiry is arguably axiologically pre-disposed to non-objectivity. While this has historically been viewed as a limitation synonymous with social inquiry, over the last number of years there has been a move toward appreciating the presence and influence of the researcher within their research (Evans, Nistrup, Henderson, Allen-Collinson & Siriwardena, 2018; Finlay, 2002a; Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015).

With the understanding that meanings are socially negotiated within particular social contexts, it can be appreciated that different researchers may invariably extract different meanings from a particular study. Rather than the lack of objectivity being problematic within social inquiry, Finlay (2002b) proposed that subjectivity should be embraced as an opportunity

to explore the many meanings that can be interpreted from a particular social phenomenon. However, when subjectivity is embraced, it is arguably necessary to document the process of exploration and deduction/induction/abduction through which the researcher interprets their data. Sparkes and Smith (2014) argue that researchers choose a particular paradigm, as it embodies values and assumptions about the world to which the researcher subscribes. It is therefore suggested that the researcher adopt a reflexive approach to critical reflection within their research in order to monitor their influence in the research, and to afford transparency to their research process (Finlay, 2002a).

The practice of reflexivity can be an ambiguous and difficult process. Negotiating reflexivity while conducting social research presents a number of difficult questions. These include: to what extent should researchers give a methodological account of their *experience* of conducting their research?; how much personal detail should be disclosed and what forms should it take?, and; how are researchers to represent a multiplicity of voices while maintaining transparency of their own influence in their research? The researcher is presented with the didactic responsibility to address these questions with transparency (when they could easily be circumvented through the argument of objectivity) while not becoming mired in a regression of self-analysis (Finlay, 2002a). Finlay (1998) put this argument another way by stating that reflexivity should be neither the opportunity to wallow in subjectivity nor permission to engage in legitimised emoting. To regulate the reflexive process, it may therefore be beneficial to identify the reflexive principles the researcher considers most fundamental to their study. These can be numerous and can include, but are not limited to, introspection, inter-subjective reflection, epistemological reflexivity, mutual collaboration, social critique, discursive deconstruction, and feminist reflexivity (Finlay, 2002a; Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas & Caricativo, 2017). With consideration for the subjective and inter-subjective nature of the paradigm adopted in the present research, it was deemed most prudent to attend to both introspection and inter-subjective reflection.

*Inter-subjective Reflexivity:* The construction of all knowledge is affected by the social conditions under which it is produced, and is rooted in both the social location and social biography of the observer and the observed (Mann & Kelley, 1997). As such, inter-subjective

reflexivity emphasises a focus upon the self-in-relation-to-others (Finlay, 2002a). To this end, the researcher undertook to remain cognisant of the possibility that their interpretation of a social reality (i.e. wellbeing) may differ from that of their research participants due to their differing experience in and of that reality, and that this may influence the interactions between the researcher and participants.

*Introspective Reflexivity:* Introspective reflexivity attends to the understanding that the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the researcher may bear an explicit influence upon the research process. It has been argued that the motivation to undertake a particular piece of research may originate from the researcher's personal experience and interests (Marshall, Fraser & Baker, 2010). Introspective reflexivity attends to the issue that it may not be possible to wholly 'control out' the intrinsic thoughts and feelings of the researcher from having some degree of influence upon the research. Rather, these thoughts and feelings should be documented and made transparent if and when they present (Finlay, 2002a). Introspective reflexivity clarifies the argument that introspection should not only be viewed as self-reflection, but also as an opportunity to become "more explicit about the link between knowledge claims, personal experiences of both participant and researcher, and the social context" (Finlay, 2002a p.215). Maintaining an appreciation for reflexivity through the research process can thereby contribute to the moral and ethical representation of data with regard to the context in which the data was gathered, and the meaningfulness of the data as ascribed by both the researcher and the participants.

## 4.6   Ethical Considerations

The ethical framework, within which the present study was conducted, was constructed as a dyad. Ethical approval for this study was sought from, and granted by, the TU Dublin ethics committee in 2017. A principal ethical framework, which observed the standards set out by the TU Dublin ethics committee, established the initial ethical parameters that governed the conducting of this study. The principal ethical framework was also informed by the code of conduct of the Psychological Society of Ireland (2019). This was then complimented by the observation of a theoretical ethical paradigm, which was adopted with specific consideration

for the interactions between the researcher and the participants. The principal ethical framework and theoretical ethical paradigm will now be discussed.

### 4.6.1 Principal Ethical Framework

The principal ethical framework for the present study was constructed in collaboration with the ethics committee of TU Dublin (Blanchardstown Campus). Prior to the commencement of this study, several criteria were addressed with regard to the impact of the research design upon the human participant and/or researcher. Upon consultation with the TU Dublin ethics committee, it was established that, as a minimum criteria, all participants were to be healthy, voluntary, and consensual individuals (providing informed affirmative consent) employed in post-primary education. Thereafter, exclusion criteria were established that would preclude the participation of individuals the TU Dublin ethics committee deemed to require specified consideration within the present study. These included vulnerable individuals, minors, and educators employed in specialised fields, such as special needs and youth detention centres. Procedural morality was guided by the axiom that participants would not be subject to any invasive or peculiar procedure, or any form of physical contact that may cause discomfort or distress. All Phase One participants were informed of their ability to withdraw from the study at any stage prior to the submission of their responses, at which point withdrawal was not possible as all data was gathered anonymously. During the recruitment process, Phase One participants were provided with a consent advice form informing them of such (Appendix 1. Phase One Recruitment Letter/Information Sheet). When answering open-ended questions, participants in Phase One were advised to be mindful not to disclose any information that may identify themselves, their colleagues, their students, or their school. All Phase Two participants were informed of their ability to withdraw from the study, in full or in part, at any stage. Phase Two participants were provided with a consent advice form informing them of such (Appendix 2. Phase Two Informed Consent Form).

All sensitive data pertaining to the study was stored in a password protected folder on a password protected computer and were only made available to the researcher and the supervisory team. All data were maintained in accordance with General Data Protection

Regulations (GDPR) protocols (European Commission, 2018). However, the introduction of the GDPR protocols post-date the commencement of this study and this had an impact regarding the choice of hosts used for data collection. It was initially intended that Google Forms would be used to gather data for both the development of the test instrument used in Phase One and for Phase One itself. Upon close inspection of Google Forms' terms and conditions, and follow up consultation with the GDPR compliance officer at TU Dublin, it was determined that there were a number of concerns regarding the privacy policies pertaining to Google Forms (Google Inc., 2019). Google Forms was therefore abandoned. Microsoft Forms was found to be the most effective GDPR compliant alternative available and was used for the collection of subsequent relevant data. It should be noted that the content validity and Exploratory Factor Analysis phases of the development of the Phase One test instrument had already been conducted using Google Forms prior to the introduction of the GDPR protocols.

### 4.6.2   Theoretical Perspectives regarding Ethical Considerations

There are a number of theoretical perspectives that can be adopted to inform and strengthen ethical considerations when conducting research involving human participants. A selection of these perspectives are briefly delineated below:

- *Moral Objectivism:* Researchers of this persuasion would take the position that ethical considerations can be addressed by identifying the supposed objective trueness or falseness of the morality of the situation or phenomena under consideration (Beebe & Sackris, 2016). In other words, moral facts are considered to present as physical facts and are independent of opinions or attitudes.
- *Cultural Relativism:* Sometimes referred to as 'ethical relativism', this doctrine holds that conduct is moral if it is considered so by the group or society to which one belongs (Vaughn, 2015). It is assumed that a diversity of moral judgements among groups/societies renders consideration of what constitutes moral or immoral conduct relative to the culture of a particular group/society.
- *Subjective Relativism:* As opposed to cultural relativism, subjective relativism posits that the prerogative for ascribing the morality of conduct rests solely with the individual

(Vaughn, 2015). An important differentiating factor between subjective and cultural relativism is that, from a subjective perspective, if an individual were to consider conduct to be moral or immoral, they would do so with the understanding that this consideration would be exclusive to themselves and may or may not be the position held by any other individual of a similar culture or society (Bond, 1996).

- *Emotivism:* This approach posits that the morality of an observed situation or phenomenon should not be viewed in terms of trueness or falseness, but rather be understood as the expression of the attitudes or emotions of the beholder. All phenomena are understood to be fundamentally amoral, with morality subsequently ascribed and expressed in the form of favourable and unfavourable attitudes and emotions toward said phenomena (Vaughn, 2015). In other words, any given phenomenon is not moral or immoral until it is interpreted as such, and the interpretation of a given phenomenon as moral or immoral is contingent upon the construction of relevant schema.

With consideration for the available literature, it was determined that the optimal method for establishing sound ethical parameters within which to conduct the present research was to observe the principle of emotivism while also adhering to ethical relativism. As an amalgam of meta-ethical theories constructed within an interpretivist constructivist framework, this ethical paradigm has been termed *emotive relativism* in the present study. Emotive relativism eschews the principle that the moral considerations of an individual or group are correct or incorrect, instead emphasising the subjective meaningfulness that an individual may ascribe to a given situation or phenomenon. By employing emotive relativism in this study, all situations and phenomena that presented throughout the entirety of conducting the research were considered to be axiomatically amoral. Within the principal ethical framework outlined above, the ethical appropriateness of these situations and phenomena were then determined in accordance with the moral meaningfulness ascribed by the researcher and participants, as groups and as individuals. For example, that a particular question might be deemed to be ethically sound within the principal ethical framework would not obligate participants to provide a response. Further, that a participant might consider this question to be ethically

sound would not obligate the individual to provide a response. Further again, that an individual may have ethical concerns regarding a particular question would not preclude the use of this question in interviews with subsequent participants who may not share these ethical concerns. Emotive relativism, then, recognises individual participants' right to abstain or withdraw, at any point and for any reason, from participation in all or any part of the present study.[13]

## 4.7   Phase One

### 4.7.1   Participants and Settings

An opportunistic sampling method was undertaken with regard to the recruitment of participants for Phase One (Etikan, Muas & Alkassim, 2016). A spreadsheet containing the names and contact information for 724 post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland was obtained from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) website (2018b). Of these, 224 schools were used during the development of the Attitudes Toward Wellbeing Promotion (ATWP) scale (discussed further in section 4.7.2 of Chapter 4). Participants for Phase One were recruited from the remaining 500 unused schools on the DES contact list. A total of 327 educators ($n$ = 117 males, $n$ = 210 females) completed the survey. A crosstabulation of the age and gender of these participants can be seen in Table 4.1, while a crosstabulation of the participants' employment context can be seen in Table 4.2.

*Table 4.1. Crosstabulation of Phase One Participants by Age and Gender*

|  |  | Gender | | |
|  |  | Male | Female | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Age | 18-29 | 10 | 23 | 33 |
|  | 30-39 | 28 | 62 | 90 |
|  | 40-49 | 42 | 66 | 108 |
|  | 50-59 | 33 | 51 | 84 |
|  | 60+ | 4 | 8 | 12 |
| Total |  | 117 | 210 | 327 |

---

[13] With the noted exception that participants would be unable to withdraw after submitting responses to the Phase One survey, as these responses are anonymous.

*Table 4.2. Crosstabulation of Phase One Respondents by Employment Context*

| SS_CoEd | | | Urban/Rural | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Urban | Rural | Total |
| All boys | Position | Principal | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | V. Principal | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| | | Teacher | 55 | 13 | 68 |
| | | Secretary/Admin | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | G. Counsellor | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| | Total | | 58 | 23 | 81 |
| All girls | Position | Principal | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| | | V. Principal | 13 | 12 | 25 |
| | | Teacher | 32 | 23 | 55 |
| | | Secretary/Admin | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | | G. Counsellor | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| | Total | | 48 | 42 | 90 |
| Co-education | Position | Principal | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| | | V. Principal | 5 | 8 | 13 |
| | | Secretary/Admin | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | Teacher | 81 | 45 | 126 |
| | | G. Counsellor | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| | Total | | 98 | 58 | 156 |
| Total | Position | Principal | 10 | 3 | 13 |
| | | V. Principal | 18 | 25 | 43 |
| | | Teacher | 168 | 81 | 249 |
| | | Secretary/Admin | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | | G. Counsellor | 7 | 14 | 21 |
| | Total | | 204 | 123 | 327 |

### 4.7.2   Measures

The Phase One survey comprised four sections. Section one was a demographic questionnaire totalling 10 questions. Section two comprised the ATWP scale (Byrne et al., 2021), and was aimed at directly addressing research question one. The ATWP scale is a 10 item, Likert response-format test instrument that was specifically developed for the use in the present study. The instrument consists of two non-correlated subscales:

- "Wellbeing Promotion", which consists of five items and is designed to examine educators' attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing.
- "Policies & Curriculum", which consists of five items and is designed to examine educators' attitudes regarding the available wellbeing policies and curricula.

Each of the 10 items that comprise the ATWP produced item-Content Validity Index (i-CVI) (Polit &Beck, 2006) values of 1.0, indicating the highest level of content validity. As such, the ATWP produced a scale-Content Validity Index (s-CVI) of 1.0. Internal reliability was interpreted as McDonald's Omega ($\omega_t$). McDonald's Omega was preferred to options such as Cronbach's Alpha as Omega does not assume essential tau-equivalence and is therefore more suitable to reliability analysis of composite test instruments (Hayes & Coutts, 2020). Reliability analysis indicated good reliability for the ATWP ($\omega_t$ = .81) and the Wellbeing Promotion subscale ($\omega_t$ = .82), and acceptable reliability for the Policies & Curriculum subscale ($\omega_t$ = .75).

Section three consisted of four non-composite Likert response format items pertaining to the NCCA wellbeing guidelines. These items were design to assess educators' knowledge and use of the wellbeing guidelines, in addition to their perceptions of the usefulness of the guidelines. The purpose of section three was to address research question two.

Finally, section four consisted of four open-ended questions to be analysed by way of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020). As previously mentioned, this analysis was supplementary to the design of Phase Two and, for brevity, will not be discussed in the context of this thesis. The findings from this analysis were however presented at the Children's Research Network research symposium 2019. The compiled survey can be seen in Appendix 3. Phase One Survey.

### 4.7.3   Procedure

Prior to dissemination to potential participants, the compiled survey was piloted with a small, purposively sampled, group of peers (n=7). Feedback from the pilot study informed a number of minor corrections that were made to the survey. A "don't know" option was added to demographic questions to accommodate participants who may, for example, be unsure whether their school was located in an urban or rural catchment area and a minor grammatical error in a non-composite item was corrected. The data obtained from the pilot study was not analysed as the purpose of this stage was to assess the functionality of the survey. The survey, which was hosted online on Microsoft Forms, was then disseminated via email to the point of contact of 500 schools with the request that this link be forwarded to any members of staff

who may be interested in participating in the research (see Appendix 1. Phase One Recruitment Letter/Information Sheet A total of 12 emails were returned as undeliverable, in which case the appropriate contact information was solicited from the respective schools' websites. Recruitment for Phase One was conducted over a two week period (15th-29th May 2019).

The use of an online survey for data collection presented a number of advantages with regard to accessibility, time, and cost. However, there are also a number of limitations associated with using this format for data collection. For example, although this method can be beneficial in terms of accessing the largest number of schools possible, problems present with regard to accessing educators. It cannot be known how many emails may have been directed to spam folders, how many points of contact chose not to forward the email to their faculty, or how many faculty members may have incidentally not received the email from the point of contact (due to spam filters, for example). Therefore, it is not possible to ascertain a true response rate, as it is not known how many educators were made aware of the study. In addition, although it may be possible to achieve a diverse and representative sample, the context in which participants complete the survey cannot be controlled (Wright, 2006).

The survey remained live for a period of two weeks. No attempts to garner additional participant numbers were made in light of the results of posteriori power analyses (see section 4.7.4.6 of Chapter 4). The researcher was also mindful that a second recruitment drive would be necessary for Phase Two and that repeated unsolicited contact seeking participants for this study may become invasive. The average completion time for the survey was seven minutes and thirty-nine seconds.

### 4.7.4   Analysis

#### 4.7.4.1   Planned Tests

The analysis plan for Phase One was designed to address research questions one and two. General Linear Models (GLMs) were to be used to explore the relationships between dependent variables (DVs) and independent variables (IVs). All IVs were to be examined as main effects, while a number of interactions among IVs were to be examined in relation to the literature examined in chapters two and three. For example, research has found that the

attitudes of male and female *students* regarding their social and emotional wellbeing can vary across single-sex and co-educational settings (Mael et al., 2005; Streitmatter, 2012). It was therefore undertaken to examine the attitudes of male and female *educators* toward wellbeing promotion in single-sex and co-educational settings. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons for statistically significant main effects for polytomous IVs and interactions were conducted using Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test. Phase One analyses were conceptualised as exploratory, as this study marked the first attempt to quantify the attitudes of educators – in terms of their positivity or negativity – with regard to the promotion of student wellbeing. Fisher's LSD was therefore preferred over post-hoc tests that may employ an alpha correction to facilitate the identification of potential areas for further research.

Effect sizes for GLMs were to be interpreted as partial eta squared ($\eta_p^2$). The magnitude of $\eta_p^2$ was to be interpreted in relation to the implementation of multiple regression, i.e. .02 = small, .13 = medium, .26 = large. Effect sizes for Fishers LSD tests were to be interpreted as Cohen's *d*, which was calculated as mean difference divided by sigma. The magnitude of *d* was to be interpreted as .20 = small, .50 = medium, .80 = large (Cohen, 1988). Cohen clarified that the standards of small, medium and large effect sizes were provided as an 'arbitrary convention', and that the magnitude of observed effect sizes should be contextualised within the field in which the research has been conducted. In other words, an effect size should not be considered large (for example) because of Cohen's convention of '.80 = large', but rather should be considered large in relation to effect sizes observed in the particular field of study. The structure of the GLMs that were to be conducted across the seven dependent variables is illustrated in Figure 4.1. A series of four open-ended questions were included in the Phase One survey, which were to be analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2020) model of reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). This was undertaken as a supplementary analysis to further inform the design of the Phase Two interview agenda, with no intention to discuss the findings of this analysis in the context of this thesis.

| Dependent Variables | Main Effects | Interactions |
|---|---|---|

- A.T.W.P
- Wellbeing Promotion
- Policies & Curriculum

Gender
- Age
- Position
- Years Teaching
- Single-Sex /Co-Education

Urban/Rural
- DEIS/Non-DEIS
- Number of Pupils
- Streaming/Vertical Education

- Non-Composite 1
- Non-Composite 2
- Non-Composite 3
- Non-Composite 4

- Age
- Position
- Years Teaching
- Single-Sex/Co-Education
- Number of Pupils
- DEIS/Non-DEIS
- Fee Paying/Non-fee Paying
- Streaming/Vertical Education

*Figure 4.1. Phase One Analysis Plan*

*4.7.4.2 Dependent and Independent Variables*

For quantitative analysis during Phase One, the dependent variables (DV) are the test instruments used in the Phase One survey. These include the Attitude Toward Wellbeing Promotion (ATWP) scale (and its two composite subscales) and four non-composite (NC) Likert response format items pertaining to the NCCA wellbeing guidelines. The intended independent variables (IV) are the demographic items of this survey. Intended dependent and independent variables are listed in Table 4.3.

*Table 4.3. Dependent and Independent Variables*

| Dependent variables | Independent Variables |
|---|---|
| ATWP scale | Age |
| ATWP subscale - Wellbeing Promotion | Gender |
| ATWP subscale - Policies & Curriculum | Position in School |
| NC1 - Familiar | Years Teaching |
| NC2 - Understand | Number of Students |
| NC3 - Use | Single-sex/Co-Education |
| NC4 - Beneficial | Urban/Rural |
| | Fee-paying/Non-fee Paying |
| | DEIS/Non-DEIS |
| | Use of Streaming/Vertical Education |

NC1 – Familiar: I am familiar with the wellbeing guidelines
NC2 – Understand: The wellbeing guidelines are easy to understand
NC3 – Use: I know how to use the wellbeing guidelines to facilitate student wellbeing
NC4 – Beneficial: The wellbeing guidelines are beneficial to student wellbeing

*4.7.4.3 Screening and Cleaning*

Phase One data were downloaded from Microsoft Forms as a Microsoft Excel file. This file was then backed-up as a raw data master file. Responses to the open-ended questions were transferred to a separate file for later analysis and the revised Excel file was then transferred to SPSS. A number of measures were then taken to screen and clean the data. The potential for transcription errors during this period of data entry was negated by the fact that the data could be downloaded directly from Microsoft Forms as an Excel file. Negatively worded scale items were reverse scored. A total of five randomly selected responses to each of the five reverse

scored items (n=25) were then audited to ensure accuracy of the reverse scoring process. No errors were found. Data were then examined for outliers and inconsistencies in responses. SPSS detects outliers using the inter-quartile range (IQR). However, Hoaglin and Iglewicz (1987) demonstrated that the default criterion used by SPSS (1.5*IQR) can frequently be inaccurate. These authors proposed that a multiplier value of 2.2*IQR would provide more accurate results with regard to the detection of outliers. Using Hoaglin and Iglewicz's criterion, no outliers were found that warranted removal. In total, three respondents were removed from the database on the basis of insufficiently completed responses (<50% completion) or providing patterned responses. As a result of the screening and cleaning process, 324 responses were taken forward for analysis.

### 4.7.4.4 Descriptive Analysis

Inspection of frequency distributions identified sample size issues in relation to a number of IVs. Some IV groups were found to be so small as to threaten the meaningfulness of conducting pairwise comparisons between these and much larger groups. Firstly, the 'number of students' variable was found to be unbalanced, with 145 (47%) valid responses attributed to the '600+' group, while 17 (6%), 10 (3%) and 19 (6%) valid responses were attributed to the '0-99', '100-199' and '200-299' groups respectively. The '0-99' through '500-599' were therefore amalgamated, dichotomising the 'number of students' variable. The amalgamated group was subsequently termed 'smaller schools', accounting for 161 (53%) valid responses, while the '600+' group was termed 'larger schools', accounting for 145 (47%) valid responses.

A large discrepancy was also identified in relation to the 'fee-paying/non-fee paying' variable, with fee-paying schools accounting for 44 (14%) of valid respondents, while 260 (86%) were accounted for by non-fee paying schools. With such a large discrepancy in sample sizes and no discernible way to reconceptualise these groups, the 'fee-paying/non-fee paying' variable was removed from the analysis model.

The 'position' variable also presented as problematic. The 'teacher' group accounted for 229 (75%), while the 'principal' and 'vice-principal' groups accounted for 12 (5%) and 43 (14%) valid responses respectively. The 'principal' and 'vice-principal' groups were then amalgamated

and reconceptualised as 'principal/vice-principal', accounting for 55 (19%) valid responses. One (<1%) respondent identified as 'secretarial/admin'. This respondent was removed, resulting in the removal of the 'secretarial/admin' group from the analyses and reducing the total number of valid responses to $n = 323$. Finally, a total of 19 (6%) respondents identified as 'guidance counsellors'. While a large discrepancy existed between the 'guidance counsellors' and 'principal-vice-principal' groups and the 'teachers' group, the 'position' variable was considered too important to addressing the research questions and was therefore retained in the analytical model.

### 4.7.4.5   Assumptions Testing for General Linear Modelling

Freckleton (2009) identified four key assumptions for general linear modelling: (1) independent observations, (2) normality of the DV residuals; (3) homogeneity of variance (homoscedasticity) of the DV residuals, and; (4) linearity (and the absence of co-linearity). These were examined in relation to the revised nine-term model (fee-paying/non-fee paying having been removed). Observations were assumed to be independent based on the method of data collection. Normality of the DV residuals and homogeneity of variance of the DV residuals were tested by plotting each of the DV residuals against each of the IVs using qq-plots. It may be considered more appropriate to formally test the assumption of normality. However, Mundry (2014) argued that a p-value is a function of (at least) two properties of the data – the effect size (in this case, the deviation from normality) and the sample size. As such, "p-value alone does not provide a simple criterion for rejection (or not) of the assumption that the residuals are normally distributed, but can only be interpreted in conjunction with the sample size" (Mundry, 2014 p.145). Mundry suggested that inspection of qq-plots would usually be the most reliable tool for assessing the normality of the distribution of DV residuals. Inspection of the qq-plots indicated that the assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity were satisfied. Satisfying these assumptions also suggests a linear relationship between dependent and independent variables, thereby satisfying the assumption of linearity. It is also necessary to establish the absence of collinearity among the IVs. This was examined by inspecting the correlation matrices for the IVs in accordance with each of the DVs for moderate to larger correlations ($r \geq .60$). Inspection of these matrices indicated that the assumption of

independent observations was satisfied, barring a significant positive correlation between 'age' and 'years teaching' ($r = .68$, $p < .001$), which was found across all seven models. A number of measures were attempted in order to resolve this issue. Group centring of the two variables was initially attempted, but this failed to resolve this issue. Combining the two variables was also considered as a method to retain the data from both variables and minimise any potential negative impact regarding the variance explained by the model. This involved computing a new variable using respondents' age and years of experience to determine the age at which respondents began teaching. However, it was deemed that the resulting variable – which was termed 'age when beginning teaching' – was not appropriate in the context of the present study's research questions. 'Years teaching' was therefore removed from the analytical model. This resulted in an average loss of 2% of variance explained across the seven models.

### 4.7.4.6 Power Analysis

Power analysis was conducted using G*Power (v3.1.9.4). The statistical test used to run the power analysis was 'ANOVA: Fixed effects, special, main effects and interactions', from the 'F family' of tests. Prior to sample recruitment, an 'a priori' power analysis was conducted to calculate required sample sizes for each term of the proposed analytical model in relation to the seven DVs. For this analysis, power ($1-\beta$) = .80 and $\alpha$ = .05, while effect size $f$ = .1428571, which corresponds to the minimum significant value of $\eta_p^2$ = .02. The numerator df was determined in relation to each IV of the GLM, while the number of groups was set as the total number of groups in each model (df+1 = 29) (see section 5.2 of Chapter 5). The results indicated that, across the seven models, the largest sample size required to run the proposed model was $n$ = 590. This was adopted as the target sample size. The sample size subsequently achieved fell considerably short of that required to detect the smallest significant effect size ($\eta_p^2$ = .02). Subsequent to recruitment, a 'post hoc' power analysis was conducted to determine the observed power based on relative achieved sample sizes for each DV. For this analysis, the sample sizes inputted were the valid $n$ indicated for the GLM for each DV. The smallest observed $1-\beta$ (obs. $1-\beta$) was .53, while the largest was .70. A 'sensitivity' analysis was then conducted with $1-\beta$ = .80 to determine the detectable effect sizes for each DV. The smallest

detectable effect size was $\eta_p^2 = .03$, while the largest was $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Results of power analyses are presented in Table 4.4.

Establishing criteria for acceptable minimum detectable effect sizes (MDEs) for the present study was difficult due to the absence of relevant research in this area. A number of studies that examined demographic influences upon educators' attitudes in related fields were consulted to establish an acceptable MDE. One such study examined gender influences with regard to Turkish early childhood teachers' perceptions of job burnout. The average effect size regarding significant gender differences across three measures in this study was $\eta_p^2 = .05$ (Sak, 2018). Another study grouped Italian post-primary teachers by resourcefulness, stressfulness, and wealth, and examined these groups in relation to eight organisational/personal characteristics. The average effect size for significant group differences across the eight characteristics was $\eta_p^2 = .09$ (Simbula, Panari, Guglielmi & Fraccaroli, 2012). Finally, a study conducted in South Africa examined male and female student teachers' anxieties, and perceived potential sources of anxiety, in relation to teaching. The average effect size when measuring gender*age across three potential sources of anxiety was $\eta_p^2 = .09$ (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). As the average $\eta_p^2$ values found in these studies was found to be larger than the largest MDE of the present study and would therefore be detectable in relation to any IV in the present study, the sample achieved (*n* = 327) was deemed to be adequate for analysis and no further recruitment of participants was undertaken.

*Table 4.4. Power Analysis*

| Term | $n$ required* | ATWP (valid $n$=289) | | Policies & Curriculum (valid $n$=304) | | Wellbeing Promotion (valid $n$=290) | | Non-Comp 1 (valid $n$=303) | | Non-comp 2 (valid $n$=305) | | Non-Comp 3 (valid $n$=304) | | Non-Comp 4 (valid $n$=300) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | obs. $1-\beta$** | $\eta_p^2$*** | obs. $1-\beta$** | $\eta_p^2$*** | obs. $1-\beta$** | $\eta_p^2$*** | obs. $1-\beta$** | $\eta_p^2$*** | obs. $1-\beta$** | $\eta_p^2$*** | obs. $1-\beta$** | $\eta_p^2$*** | obs. $1-\beta$** | $\eta_p^2$*** |
| Age | 539 | .50 | .04 | .53 | .04 | .50 | .04 | .53 | .04 | .53 | .04 | .53 | .04 | .52 | .04 |
| Gender | 387 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .69 | .03 |
| Position | 476 | .57 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .57 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 |
| Num_Students | 387 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .69 | .03 |
| Single Sex/Co-Ed. | 476 | .57 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .57 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 |
| Urb/Rur | 387 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .69 | .03 |
| DEIS/Non-DEIS | 387 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .69 | .03 |
| Streaming/V. Ed. | 590 | .46 | .04 | .48 | .04 | .46 | .04 | .48 | .04 | .48 | .04 | .48 | .04 | .47 | .04 |
| Age*Gender | 539 | .50 | .04 | .53 | .04 | .50 | .04 | .53 | .04 | .53 | .04 | .53 | .04 | .52 | .04 |
| Gender*Position | 476 | .57 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .57 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 |
| Gender*SS/Co-Ed. | 476 | .57 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .57 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 | .59 | .03 |
| Num_Students*Urb/Rur | 387 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .69 | .03 |
| Urb/Rur*DEIS/Non-DEIS | 387 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .68 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .70 | .03 | .69 | .03 |
| Urb/Rur*Streaming/V. Ed. | 590 | .46 | .04 | .48 | .04 | .46 | .04 | .48 | .04 | .48 | .04 | .48 | .04 | .47 | .04 |

\* $\eta_p^2$=.02, $\alpha$=.05, $1-\beta$ =.80

\*\* $\alpha$ =.05, $\eta_p^2$=.02

\*\*\* $\alpha$ =.05, $1-\beta$=.80

### 4.7.4.7 Finalised Model

The finalised model consisted of eight IVs. Dichotomous IVs were 'gender', 'urban/rural', and 'DEIS/non-DEIS'. Polytomous IVs were 'age', 'position in school', 'number of students', 'single-sex/co-education' (with single-sex split into 'all-boys' and 'all-girls' groups), and 'use of streaming/vertical education' (which also included use of 'both', 'neither' and 'don't know' groups) [14]. The intended analysis plan was revised in light of the removal and re-computation of some IVs, and can be seen in Figure 4.2. Contrasts for main effects and interactions were calculated using estimated marginal means (EMMs), which indicate the mean response for each factor adjusted for any other variables in the model. As per section 4.7.4.1 of Chapter 4, statistically significant main effects for polytomous IVs and interactions were subject to post-hoc testing using Fisher's LSD test. Effect sizes for GLMs were interpreted as $\eta_p^2$. Effect sizes for Fishers LSD tests were interpreted as Cohen's *d*, which was calculated as mean difference/sigma (Cohen, 1988).

---

[14] Participants were afforded the opportunity to identify as a non-binary gender. No participants identified their gender in this way, resulting in the use of only two groups in the gender variable (male and female). The "don't know" group was only populated in the "streaming/vertical education" variable.
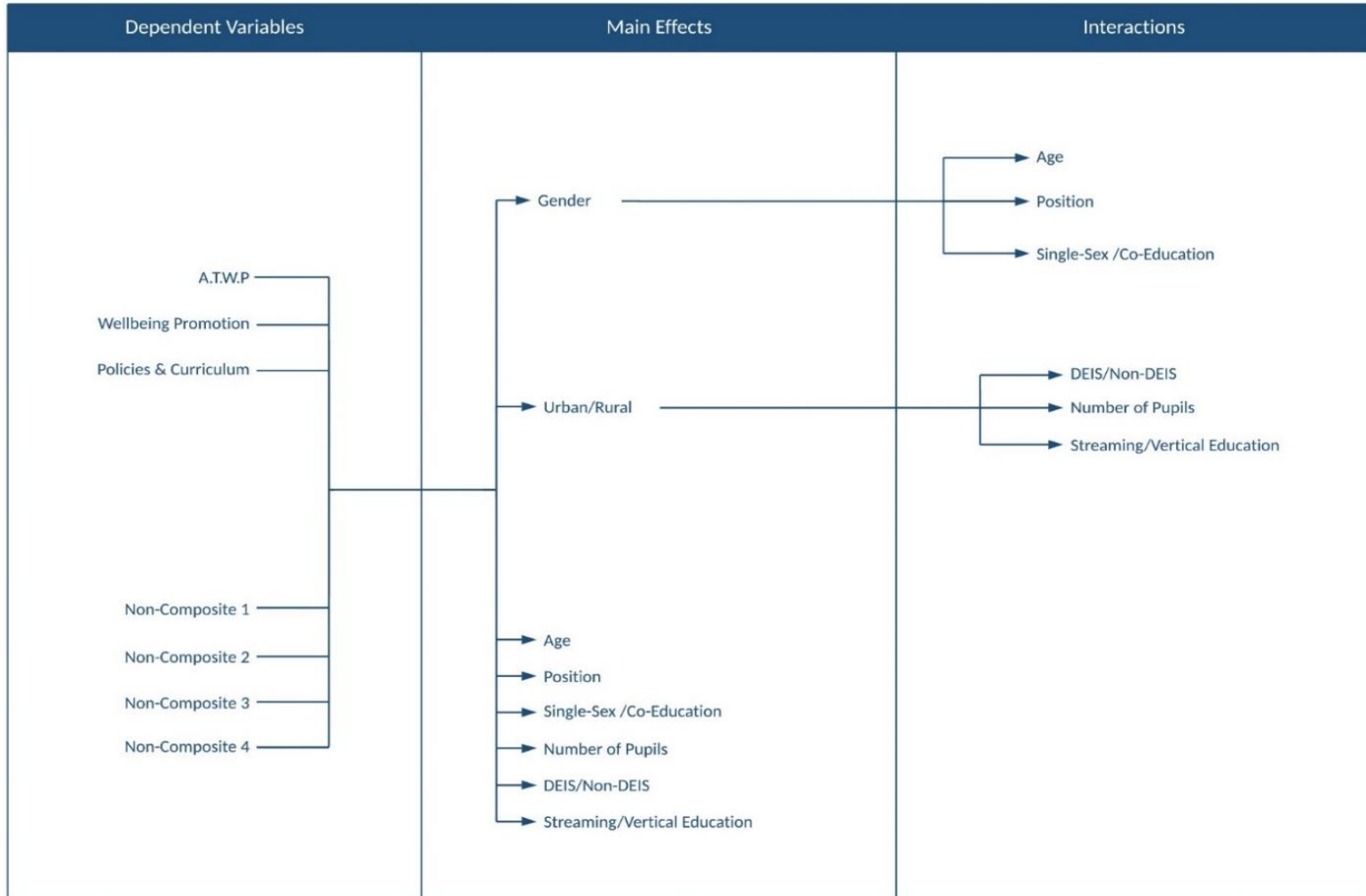
*Figure 4.2. Finalised Phase One Analysis Plan*

### 4.8    Phase Two

#### 4.8.1    Participants and Settings

As per the recruitment process for Phase One, an opportunistic sampling method was adopted when recruiting participants for Phase Two. The 724 points of contact listed on the aforementioned DES spreadsheet were emailed and informed regarding the upcoming interviews (see Appendix 4. Phase Two Recruitment Letter/Information Sheet). As per Phase One, appropriate contact information had been solicited from the school websites of 12 invalid email addresses. In total, 12 educators registering their interest in being interviewed. Basic demographic information was garnered from these participants to establish the degree of diversity in the sample. This information is displayed in Table 4.5. A reasonable diverse representation was achieved in terms of gender, urban/rural status, subjects taught, and experience with wellbeing practices. It is notable however, that teachers were over-represented, with only one vice-principal included in the sample. In addition, no respondents reported working in all-boys schools.

It should be noted that the recruitment process for Phase Two was foreshadowed by growing concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. It was therefore decided to expedite data collection. Geographically, participants were widely dispersed across the country, with no two participants situated in the same town/city. Liaising with each participant, an itinerary was planned that would allow all face-to-face interviews to be conducted within a four-day period. The remote nature of the location of two participants (P2 and P3) was such that they could not be included in the itinerary without incurring a significant increase in travel time and expense. These participants were offered the opportunity to be interviewed via Skype, to which P2 agreed. Citing concerns regarding their ability to use digital media, P3 requested their interview be conducted by phone, to which the researcher agreed. Just before the commencement of interviews, P12 requested that their interview be postponed to one week later. Prior to conducting this interview, a countrywide lockdown was announced by the Irish government in response to COVID-19, prohibiting non-essential travel for all citizens. P12 was contacted and offered the opportunity to conduct the interview by digital means.

*Table 4.5. Phase Two Participants*

| Participant | Gender | Urban/Rural | All-boys/All-girls/Co.Ed. | Position | WB Position | Subject(s) Taught |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | Male | Rural | Co.Ed. | Teacher | - | Business studies and PE |
| P2 | Male | Rural | Co.Ed. | Teacher | Prev. Temp. SPHE | Geography and Math |
| P3 | Female | Rural | Co.Ed. | V. Principal | Pastoral Care Team | None |
| P4 | Female | Rural | Co.Ed. | Teacher | Wellbeing Coordinator | SPHE |
| P5 | Female | Rural | Co.Ed. | Teacher | Prev. Temp. SPHE | English and History |
| P6 | Female | Rural | Co.Ed. | Teacher | - | Geography and History |
| P7 | Male | Urban | Co.Ed. | Teacher | - | English and Classical Studies |
| P8 | Female | Rural | All-girls | Teacher | - | Math and Science |
| P9 | Female | Urban | All-girls | Teacher | Pastoral Care Team | SPHE and History |
| P10 | Male | Urban | Co.Ed. | Teacher | - | CSPE and English |
| P11 | Female | Rural | All-girls | Teacher | Pastoral Care Team | SPHE and Art |
| P12 | Female | N/A | N/A | Teacher | N/A | N/A |

However, P12 chose not to avail of this alternative, citing time constraints resulting from the requirement to work from home. This resulted in the reduction of the Phase Two sample size ($n$ = 11).

All participants in face-to-face interviews were afforded the opportunity to identify if they would be more comfortable conducting their interview on-site at their school or at a neutral venue. Of the nine face-to-face participants, five indicated a preference for using a neutral venue, with two explicitly expressing this preference in relation to considerations regarding COVID-19. The four on-site interviews were conducted in the participants' classroom or in a pastoral care room, while four of the five neutral venue interviews were conducted in hotel meeting rooms, with one being conducted in a community centre meeting room. All face-to-face interviews were successfully completed within the allocated four-day period, ending the day prior to the implementation of the lockdown. The two digital interviews were conducted on the day following completion of the face-to-face interviews, meaning data collection for Phase Two was completed within a five-day period.

### 4.8.2  Procedure

A recruitment letter was sent via email to points of contact at 724 post-primary schools. Points of contact were requested to forward the email to their respective faculty so that any members of staff who may wish to participate in this phase could register their interest in being interviewed. Potential participants were informed that they could register their interest in being interviewed by directly emailing the researcher. Alternatively, potential participants were offered the opportunity to follow a link provided in the recruitment email to complete a brief registration form (hosted on Microsoft Forms) by providing their name, email address and location (town/city). The registration form option was offered to facilitate confidentiality in potential participants registering their interest in participating in the study. Recruitment for Phase Two was conducted over a two-week period (24th February-8th March 2020).

All interviews began with an introduction of the researcher and a brief overview of the background and purpose of the study. The contents of the interview agenda (see Appendix 5. Phase Two Interview Agenda) were briefly discussed with participants. Participants were informed

that the contents of their interview was confidential and would only be shared with the research supervisors, and that their data would be anonymised such that their identity within the context of the study would be protected. Participants were also informed that: interviews would be audio recorded with their written informed consent; they were under no obligation to answer any question they did not wish to answer; they could stop the interview at any time for any reason, and; they could withdraw from the study and/or withdraw their data at a later date. Participants were informed that, upon completion of the interview, informed consent would be sought to allow the researcher to use their data in the present study, which may include future publications. Written informed consent was solicited from participants digitally by emailing participants a link to a consent form, which was hosted on Microsoft Forms (see Appendix 2. Phase Two Informed Consent Form). This method was adopted in preparation for a potential necessity to conduct any or all interviews online in response to COVID-19 concerns. It was also considered pertinent to minimise the exchange of physical objects.

Interviews were semi-structured in nature. The interview agenda addressed four distinct areas: the general task of promoting student wellbeing; the current wellbeing curriculum; the NCCA wellbeing guidelines, and; educators' perceptions of their own wellbeing. Each of these sections further comprised four questions, for a total of 16 questions. The researcher was aware of the possibility that some interviews might be arranged during 'free periods', which turned out to be the case for some participants. Given that a free period would typically be 40 minutes in duration, the interview agenda – including appropriate introductions and conclusions – was designed to be completed in no more than 30 minutes. On average, interviews lasted approximately 25 minutes.

In order to adhere to the interpretive/constructive paradigm, a number of measures were undertaken to help ensure that discourse during interviews was, to as large a degree as possible, driven by the participant. To this end, interviews were conducted with an emphasis upon emergent information provided by interviewees, rather than strict adherence to the interview agenda. The interview agenda was used more so as a reflexive tool to help ensure that while discourse remained subjective to the participant, it also remained relevant to the research questions. In addition, to help ensure that interviews were not biased by pre-

conceptions that may have been held by the researcher, each section of the interview was opened by asking a subjective and open question (e.g. "how do you feel about the current wellbeing curriculum?"). Participants were also asked if they had any additional thoughts, feelings or information that they would like to share before moving on from a given section of the interview agenda. In addition, participants were encouraged to revisit previously covered topics should new thoughts, feelings or information come to light. When concluding the interview, participants were invited to share any thoughts, feelings or information that they felt was relevant to the topic of promoting student wellbeing. Careful consideration was also given to non-verbal cues, such as inflections and body language, to identify discourse that was perceived to be meaningful to the participant. These instances were followed-up with additional questioning (e.g. "how does that make you feel?" or "how do you believe that obstacle could be overcome?").

In light of the expressed considerations for COVID-19, a number of additional measures were observed when conducting interviews. Handshaking was eschewed when greeting participants and closing interviews. It was undertaken to monitor proximity to participants when moving to and from the interview venue. It was also undertaken (where possible) to employ a barrier during interviews. This involved the researcher allowing the participant to be seated at a table first, and then sitting at a 90-degree angle to the participant. While this represented a departure from 'normal practice' when conducting interviews, employing (and communicating) these measures was actually beneficial to building trust and rapport with participants.

### 4.8.3   Analysis

Phase Two data analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2012; 2013; 2019) reflexive approach to thematic analysis (RTA). RTA is an easily accessible and highly flexible method of qualitative data analysis that facilitates the identification and interpretation of patterns or themes in a given data set. Initially, thematic analysis was an often adopted but poorly delineated analytical method (Boyatzis, 1998). Over the last number of years, Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012; 2013; 2015; 2019) have refined a systematic approach to conducting

thematic analysis that structures the analytical process while retaining a large degree of flexibility with regard to the theoretical assumptions that may underpin the analysis.

Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis identifies a number of underlying conceptual assumptions to be addressed by the researcher. Across the aforementioned publications, Braun and Clarke propose that RTA is situated at the junction of a number of continua. These are: Positivist versus Constructivist epistemologies; Experiential versus Critical orientation to data; Inductive versus Deductive analyses, and; Semantic versus Latent coding of data. These criteria are addressed below.

*Positivist versus Constructivist epistemologies:* In keeping with the Interpretivist Constructivist paradigm adopted for this study, and the qualitative philosophy of RTA, epistemological considerations during Phase Two analysis were constructivist. As such, meaning and experience was interpreted to be socially produced and reproduced via an interplay of subjective and inter-subjective construction. A constructivist epistemology has particular implications with regard to RTA, namely that in addition to recurrence, meaningfulness is highly influential in the interpretation of codes and themes. The criteria for a theme to be considered noteworthy via recurrence is simply that the theme should present repeatedly within the data. However, what is common is not necessarily meaningful or important to the analysis. Braun and Clarke (2012, p.37) offer the example:

> *"…in researching white-collar workers' experiences of sociality at work, a researcher might interview people about their work environment and start with questions about their typical workday. If most or all reported that they started work at around 9:00 a.m., this would be a pattern in the data, but it would not necessarily be a meaningful or important one".*

 Furthermore, there may be varying degrees of conviction in participants' expression when addressing different issues that may facilitate in identifying the salience of a prospective theme. Therefore, meaningfulness can be conceptualised, firstly on the part of the researcher with regard to the necessity to identify themes that are relevant to answering the research questions, and secondly on the part of the participant as the expression of varying degrees of

importance with regard to the issues being addressed. In adopting a constructivist epistemology, this study acknowledges the importance of recurrence, but acknowledges meaningfulness as the central criterion in the coding process.

*Experiential versus Critical orientation:* An experiential orientation to data interpretation was adopted for Phase Two analysis in order to emphasise meaning and meaningfulness as ascribed by participants. Adopting this approach meant that this analysis did not seek to make claims about the social construction of the research topic (which would more so necessitate a critical perspective), but rather acknowledged the socially constructed nature of the research topic when examining the subjective experiences and 'personal states' of participants.

*Inductive versus deductive analysis:* Analysis of Phase Two data adopted a predominantly inductive approach, meaning data were open-coded and participant/data-based meanings were emphasised. A degree of deductive analysis was, however, employed to ensure that the open-coding contributed to producing themes that were meaningful to the research questions, and to ensure that the participant/data-based meanings that were emphasised were relevant to the goals of the research.

*Semantic versus Latent coding:* The analysis conducted in this study utilised both semantic and latent coding. Although this study was informed by a constructivist epistemology, no attempt was made to prioritise latent coding over semantic coding. Rather, semantic codes were produced when meaningful semantic information was interpreted, and latent codes were produced when meaningful latent information was interpreted. As such, any item of information could be double-coded in accordance with the semantic meaning communicated by the participant and the latent meaning interpreted by the researcher (Patton, 1990).

In summary, the position of the researcher in relation to the aforementioned continua was such that Phase Two analysis was conducted within a constructivist epistemological framework, which observed an experiential orientation to data interpretation. Codes and themes were interpreted inductively, with a degree of deductive analysis necessary to ensure that themes remained relevant to the research questions. Codes were interpreted at both a semantic and latent level. The principal considerations for the interpretation of themes were

recurrence and, more pointedly, meaningfulness. These criteria were considered representative of what Braun and Clarke (2006 p.82) refer to as the "prevalence" of a theme.

### 4.8.3.1   Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Some methods of qualitative analysis – such as Framework Analysis – offer a systematic approach to both data management *and* analysis (Hyland, 2014). However, RTA is purely a method of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). RTA is non-prescriptive with regard to the management of the dataset, requiring the researcher to construct a framework within which to manage the data throughout the analytical process. A number of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analytic Software (CAQDAS) packages exist, which can help to manage the data (e.g. nVivo). While the use of software such as nVivo was initially considered, it was subsequently concluded that a manual approach to working with data might further promote the researcher's familiarity with the data. To this end, Microsoft Excel 2016 was used to manage the dataset and conduct the analysis. The RTA was conducted as per the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012), which are as follows:

1. *Familiarisation with the data:* The 'familiarisation' phase is prevalent in many forms of qualitative analysis. The purpose of this phase is to become intimately familiar with the contents of the dataset. This is necessary to be able to appropriately identify information that may be relevant to the research question(s). Familiarisation entails the reading and re-reading of the entire dataset. Transcription of data would occur at this phase which, when performed manually and by the researcher, can facilitate deep familiarisation.

   The researcher transcribed all 11 interviews verbatim into individual Microsoft Word files. Transcription documented supplementary information and non-verbal cues, such as sighing, laughing, inflections, and body language. Familiarisation with the data was achieved through multiple examinations of the dataset. Preliminary notes were taken with regard to particularly expressive use of language, items of information that may later be coded, and recurring patterns that may later develop into themes.

2. *Generating initial codes:* Codes are the fundamental building blocks of what will later become themes. The process of coding is undertaken to produce succinct, shorthand descriptive or interpretive labels for pieces of information that may be of relevance to the research question(s). Coding requires additional full reads of the dataset, with equal attention being afforded to each item of information. The process of generating codes is non-prescriptive regarding how data is segmented and itemised for coding, and how many codes or what type of codes (semantic or latent) are interpreted from an item of data.

   At this phase, preliminary codes were interpreted from each interview individually. Individual tables were developed in tab 1 of an Excel spreadsheet, which documented the data item that was coded, the code, and whether the code was semantic or latent, in respect of each individual participant. A new table was then created in tab 2. All the information contained in the tab 1 tables was consolidated in the tab 2 table. Several iterations of coding were then undertaken to standardise codes (this involved minor adjustments to align two or more similar codes, e.g. "the wellbeing curriculum is not relatable for the students" and "wellbeing curriculum is too vague for students"), remove redundancy, and review new interpretations of data. Codes from subsequent iterations were placed in adjacent columns of the table. In each iteration, codes that were changed or removed were highlighted. The semantic/latent status of codes was also re-evaluated at each iteration. Reviewing the semantic/latent status of codes also served as a reflexive tool, prompting the researcher to remain mindful of the potential for deeper levels of meaning to be interpreted from data items.

3. *Generating themes:* This phase begins when all relevant data items have been coded. This shifts the focus from the interpretation of individual items of information in the context of the dataset, to the interpretation of aggregated meaning and meaningfulness. At this phase, codes are collated into broader level candidate themes. In doing so, the researcher is tasked with analysing how different codes may be combined to form themes and sub-themes. The researcher must also construe the

relationships between the different codes, themes and sub-themes, and how these relationships may inform the narrative of the overall dataset. At this point, themes should be distinctive, and may even be contradictory to other themes, but should tie together to produce a coherent and lucid picture of the dataset.

At this phase, codes were copied into a new table in tab 3 and ordered alphabetically. Each code and respective data item was examined to produce candidate themes. This phase was completed iteratively and recursively. As codes were being analysed for potential groupings, new interpretations of the data sometimes manifested. When this occurred, a new iteration of coding was undertaken. As with phase two, phase three used subsequent columns to demonstrate the iterative interpretation of themes and sub-themes, with changes from the previous iteration being highlighted. This phase of the analysis was considered to be satisfied when an iteration of this phase: 1) produced themes that were considered representative of the content of the dataset in the context of the research questions, and; 2) did not result in the interpretation of new codes. At the end of this phase, four themes were interpreted from the data (discussed in section 6.1 of Chapter 6).


4. *Reviewing potential themes:* This phase involves a recursive review of the candidate themes in relation to the coded data items, and the entire dataset. At this phase, it is not uncommon to identify that some candidate themes may not function well as themes in the context of the data or the research questions. It may also come to light that the constituent codes and/or items of information that inform these themes may be incongruent and require revision. As such, it is typical at this phase that themes (and codes) may be revised or removed to facilitate the most meaningful representation of the content of the dataset. Braun and Clarke (2012 p.65) proposed a series of key questions that may be useful in conducting this review. They are:

    ▪ Is this a theme (it could be just a code)?

- If it is a theme, what is the quality of this theme (does it tell me something useful about the data set and my research question)?
- What are the boundaries of this theme (what does it include and exclude)?
- Are there enough (meaningful) data to support this theme (is the theme thin or thick)?
- Are the data too diverse and wide ranging (does the theme lack coherence)?

The analysis conducted at this phase involves two levels of review. Level one is a review of the relationships among the items of information and codes that inform each theme and sub-theme. If the items/codes form a coherent pattern, it can be assumed that the candidate theme/sub-theme makes a logical argument and may contribute to the overall narrative of the data. At level two, the candidate themes are reviewed in relation to the data set. Similar to level one, themes are assessed as to how well they contribute to the most apt interpretation of the data in relation to the research questions. Essentially, these two levels of review function to demonstrate that items and codes are appropriate to inform a theme, and that a theme is appropriate to inform the interpretation of the dataset. In addition to the key questions, Patton's (1990) 'dual criteria for judging categories' (internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity) were observed when conducting the level two review. The response matrix was used to organise data items and codes according to their respective themes. Themes and their constituent codes and data items were examined to ensure they each communicated a coherent and unique narrative of the dataset. At this point, the thematic framework was revised to include five themes (discussed in section 6.1 of Chapter 6).

5. *Defining and naming themes:* At this phase, the researcher is tasked with presenting a detailed analysis of the thematic framework. Each individual theme and sub-theme is to be expressed in relation to both the dataset, and the research questions. As per Patton's (1990) dual criteria, each theme should provide a coherent and internally consistent account of the data that cannot be told by the other themes. However, all themes

should come together to create a lucid and informative narrative that accurately represent the content of the data set. The names of the themes are also subject to a final revision (if necessary) at this point.

In the present study, the theme and sub-theme names that were created at phase four for the finalised thematic framework were retained. The opportunity was taken at this point to collate data extracts pertaining to each theme/sub-theme that may provide meaningful expressions of that theme. The outcome of the analysis of the thematic framework can be seen in the results chapter.

6. *Producing the report:* Braun and Clarke (2012) state that the separation between phases five and six can often be blurry. The write-up of phase five can often constitute a significant portion of a report or article publication that may be produced to demonstrate the results of an RTA. In the context of the current research, the thematic analysis is only one aspect of a larger, mixed methods research project. This precipitates that, while the RTA forms a coherent and self-contained narrative, it must also be synthesised with other analyses that have been conducted and contribute to the overall aims of the study. As such, phases five and six of the RTA can be clearly separated in the present research as phase five pertains to the presentation of the results of the RTA, while phase six is reflective of the completion of the entire research project[15].

### 4.8.3.2 Rigour in qualitative analysis

Assessing methodological soundness in qualitative research is arguably a more subjective process that in quantitative research. It can therefore be advantageous to apply the concept of 'rigour' to the assessment of qualitative research design. Rigour can be understood to be the process by which high standards can be achieved in qualitative research design. To this end, four criteria have been adopted in the pursuit of rigour in the design of the qualitative aspect of this study. These are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria are often considered to be the qualitative equivalent of the quantitative concepts

---

[15] A detailed account of how the Phase Two RTA was conducted can be seen in Byrne (2021).

of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, respectively (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). The process by which each criterion was addressed is outlined below:

1. *Credibility:* Credibility attends to the fit between the participants' positions, as communicated during the interviews, and the researchers' interpretation and representation of these positions (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Credibility of the analysis was affirmed by publishing a paper detailing the method by which Phase Two analyses were conducted (Byrne, 2021). A paper was also published disseminating the findings of the Phase Two analyses (Byrne & Carthy, 2021). The peer review stage of these publications was influential in the reflexive process and was viewed as highly conducive to the credibility of the analysis. An auditor was used to sense-check the researcher's interpretations of the data and ensure consistency in the data-coding process. To a moderate degree, this study adopted methodological triangulation between Phase One and Phase Two in order to afford credibility to the RTA findings. Additionally, appropriate use of verbatim quotes in the findings chapter also contributes to establishing credibility.

2. *Transferability:* Qualitative research is not typically considered generalisable in the same manner as quantitative research. Nevertheless, establishing transferability is an important aspect of demonstrating rigor in qualitative analysis. Transferability communicates the necessary information for the reader to determine how applicable the findings are, or how suitable the method is, for use in another context. In relation to the criterion of transferability, the present study emphasised conceptual (rather than numerical) generalisability, which addresses how well the content of a study's findings (rather than the number of participants providing this content) can inform contexts that differ from that in which the original study was undertaken (Creswell, 2009). To demonstrate satisfaction of the criterion of transferability, demographic information regarding the Phase Two participants was provided, as well as detailed information regarding the discourse method (i.e., the interviews) and settings. Furthermore, 'thick' descriptions of the examined phenomena were provided, in line with the criteria established by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012; 2014).

3. *Dependability:* Establishing dependability is akin to establishing reliability. A detailed record of all research related activities was maintained over the course of the study. This included an extensive audit trail relating to Phase Two analysis, consisting of process notes, interview schedules, and records of each iteration of the analytical process. As the results of Phase Two analysis represent the culmination of this information, dependability of the analysis can be traced by examining this audit trail. Dependability of the analysis was also assessed through the aforementioned publication of the method by which the analysis was conducted (Byrne, 2021).

4. *Confirmability:* The final criterion demonstrates the extent to which findings may have been influenced by researcher bias. This requires the highlighting of any potential factors that may result in researcher bias in reporting the findings of the study. The above mentioned audit trail served a critical function in demonstrating how conclusions and interpretations have been reached. The audit trail was examined by a nominated 'auditor' to assess the soundness of the theoretical, methodological and analytical choices made throughout this phase. The decision-making process implicit in these choices has also been communicated where appropriate throughout this study. Additionally, reflection upon the audit trail served to further enhance introspective reflexivity on the part of the researcher. Finally, all databases (both qualitative and quantitative) will be made freely and publicly available in a data repository upon completion of this study.

Adherence to these criteria was complemented by completing the 'consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research' (COREQ) checklist (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007). The COREQ checklist contains 32-items across three major domains relating to the characteristics of the researcher, the study design, and the analysis and findings (see Appendix 6. COREQ Checklist). Relevant aspects of this checklist were completed as and when respective aspects of the study were being addressed.

**4.9    Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the methodology of the present study, including ontological, epistemological and ethical considerations, and the analytical methods used in each phase of the study. The results of each phase of analysis will be presented in the next two chapters.

# Chapter Five: Results – Phase One

## 5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the results of quantitative analysis of Phase One data. These results pertain to research questions one and two by examining the attitudes of post-primary educators in terms of the degree to which they are positively or negatively disposed to the promotion of student wellbeing and to the wellbeing guidelines respectively. A general linear model (GLM) was run for each dependent variable in respect of the analytical model outlined in the section 4.7.4.7 of the previous chapter. Dependent variables include:

- ATWP scale
- Well_Pro subscale (task of wellbeing promotion)
- Pol_Cur subscale (policies & curriculum)
- NC1 – Familiar: I am familiar with the wellbeing guidelines
- NC2 – Understand: The wellbeing guidelines are easy to understand
- NC3 – Use: I know how to use the wellbeing guidelines to facilitate student wellbeing
- NC4 – Beneficial: The wellbeing guidelines are beneficial to student wellbeing

Analyses of variance will be reported for each GLM, highlighting statistically significant results for main effects and interactions. Post-hoc testing, conducted as pairwise comparisons using estimated marginal means (EMMs), will be reported for statistically significant main effects and interactions. For brevity, only statistically significant results will be discussed in-text. However, all test results will be demonstrated in respective tables.

The GLMs for each of the four non-composite items pertaining to the NCCA wellbeing guidelines demonstrated extremely poor fit: NC1 – Familiar ($R^2$ = .09, $p$ = .52); NC2 – Knowledge ($R^2$ = .08, $p$ = .76); NC3 – Use ($R^2$ = .12, $p$ = .13), and; NC4 – Beneficial ($R^2$ = .08, $p$ = .75). Therefore, no further analyses were conducted for these models. Briefly, descriptive statistics for the non-composite items were as follows: NC1 – Familiar ($n$ = 303, $\bar{x}$ = 3.50, SD = 1.90); NC2 – Knowledge ($n$ = 305, $\bar{x}$ = 3.28, SD = 1.01); NC3 – Use ($n$ = 304, $\bar{x}$ = 3.40, SD = 1.01, and; NC4 – Beneficial ($n$ = 300, $\bar{x}$ = 3.63, SD = 10.5).

For clarity of reference, the term 'wellbeing promotion' will refer to the results of the ATWP scale. The term 'the task of promoting student wellbeing' will be used in reference to the Well_Pro subscale, while 'relevant policies and curricula' will be used in reference to the Pol_Cur subscale. In addition, several variable labels have been abbreviated in results tables. Abbreviated variables are: Number of students (Num_students); Single-sex/Co-education (Single-sex/Co-Ed.); Streaming/Vertical education (Streaming/V. Education), and; Urban/Rural (Urb/Rur). Finally, the threshold between scores representing 'negative' and 'positive' attitudes was set at the median possible values, which for ATWP was M = 30, and for Pol_Cur and Well_Pro were M = 15. Scores higher than these respective thresholds were considered to suggest positive attitudes, while scores lower than these thresholds were considered to suggest negative attitudes.

## 5.2 ATWP

The sample mean ATWP score was 36.60 (SD = 6.24), which suggests an overall moderate degree of positivity among educators. A general linear model was run for ATWP scores in respect of the analytical model outlined section 4.7.4.7 of Chapter Four. Good fit was observed, with 41% of the variability of response data explained by the model ($R^2$ = .41, $p$ < .001). A number of statistically significant interactions and main effects were found. A significant interaction was observed between educator gender and educator age for ATWP scores, $F(3, 260)$ = 5.32, $p$ < .001, $\eta_p^2$ = .06, and between educator gender and single-sex/co-educational school status, $F(2, 260)$ = 3.69, $p$ = .03, $\eta_p^2$ = .03. There was also a significant main effect of educator position for ATWP scores, $F(2, 260)$ = 5.98, $p$ = .003, $\eta_p^2$ = .04, as well as a main effect of the status the educators' school as employing streaming/vertical education, $F(4, 260)$ = 7.65, $p$ < .001, $\eta_p^2$ = .11. Results of analyses of variance for the ATWP GLM are displayed in Table 5.1. Post-hoc testing for each of the significant interactions and main effects was conducted as pairwise comparisons and will now be outlined. It should be noted that a significant main effect of gender was also observed. However, this result is superseded by the significant interactions involving gender and therefore will not be reported or further analysed.

*Table 5.1. ATWP Analysis of Variance*

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 4548.697[a] | 28 | 162.45 | 6.33 | .00 | .41 |
| Intercept | 90552.11 | 1 | 90552.11 | 3530.33 | .00 | .93 |
| Gender | 289.59 | 1 | 289.59 | 11.29 | .00 | .04 |
| Age | 123.82 | 3 | 41.27 | 1.61 | .19 | .02 |
| Position | 306.75 | 2 | 153.37 | 5.98 | .00 | .04 |
| Num_students | 80.15 | 1 | 80.15 | 3.12 | .08 | .01 |
| Single Sex/Co-Ed. | 101.85 | 2 | 50.92 | 1.99 | .14 | .02 |
| Urb/Rur | 23.27 | 1 | 23.27 | 0.91 | .34 | .00 |
| DEIS/NonDEIS | 14.51 | 1 | 14.51 | 0.57 | .45 | .00 |
| Streaming/V. Education | 784.90 | 4 | 196.22 | 7.65 | .00 | .11 |
| Gender * Age | 409.24 | 3 | 136.41 | 5.32 | .00 | .06 |
| Gender * Position | 47.13 | 2 | 23.56 | 0.92 | .40 | .01 |
| Gender * Single Sex/Co-Ed. | 189.40 | 2 | 94.70 | 3.69 | .03 | .03 |
| Num_students* Urb/Rur | 7.18 | 1 | 7.18 | 0.28 | .60 | .00 |
| Urb/Rur * DEIS/NonDEIS | 9.33 | 1 | 9.33 | 0.36 | .55 | .00 |
| Urb/Rur * Streaming/V. Education | 134.41 | 4 | 33.60 | 1.31 | .27 | .02 |
| Error | 6668.94 | 260 | 25.65 | | | |
| Total | 464305.00 | 289 | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 11217.63 | 288 | | | | |

a. R Squared = .405 (Adjusted R Squared = .341)

## 5.2.1   Gender by Age

Pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine for intra-gender mean differences across four age groups. ATWP EMM scores among male educators were 38.44 ($n$ = 8, $SE$ = 2.11) for the 18-29 year-old group, 39.21 ($SE$ = 1.20) for the 30-39 year-old group, 35.17 ($SE$ = 1.11) for the 40-49 year-old group and 35.92 ($SE$ = 1.16) for the 50+ group (see Table 5.2). Analyses identified a significant mean difference between male educators aged 30-39 and male educators aged 40-49 of 4.04, 95% CI [1.33, 6.75], $p$ = .004, $d$ = 0.80 (large). There was also a significant mean difference found between the 30-39 year-old and 50+ groups of 3.29, 95% CI [0.44, 6.14], $p$ = .02, $d$ = 0.65 (medium). This suggests that 30-39 year-old male educators held more positive overall attitudes regarding wellbeing promotion than did all of their older counterparts.

ATWP EMM scores among female educators were 42.30 (*SE* = 1.33) for the 18-29 year-old group, 39.61 (*SE* = 1.00) for the 30-39 year-old group, 42.28 (*SE* = 1.05) for the 40-49 year-old group and 39.98 (*SE* = 1.03) for the 50+ group (see Table 5.2). Analyses identified a significant mean difference between female educators aged 30-39 and female educators aged 40-49 of -2.67, 95% CI [-4.55, -.78], *p* = .01, *d* = 0.53 (medium). There was also a significant mean difference found between the 40-49 year-old and 50+ groups of 2.30, 95% CI [4.27, 0.29], *p* = .02, *d* = 0.45 (medium). This suggests that female educators aged 40-49 held more positive general attitudes regarding wellbeing promotion than their counterparts who were 30-39 years-old and those over the age of fifty.

As statistically significant differences were observed between 30-39 and 40-49 year-old age groups for both male and female educators, an interaction contrast was performed to compare the differences in these groups. A statistically significant difference between the differences was found, mean difference = 6.71, 95% CI [3.40, 10.02], *p* < .001, *d* = 1.32 (large). This suggests that an increase in age group from 30-39 to 40-49 was more profoundly negative regarding male educators' ATWP scores than it was positive regarding female educators' ATWP scores (see Figure 5.1).
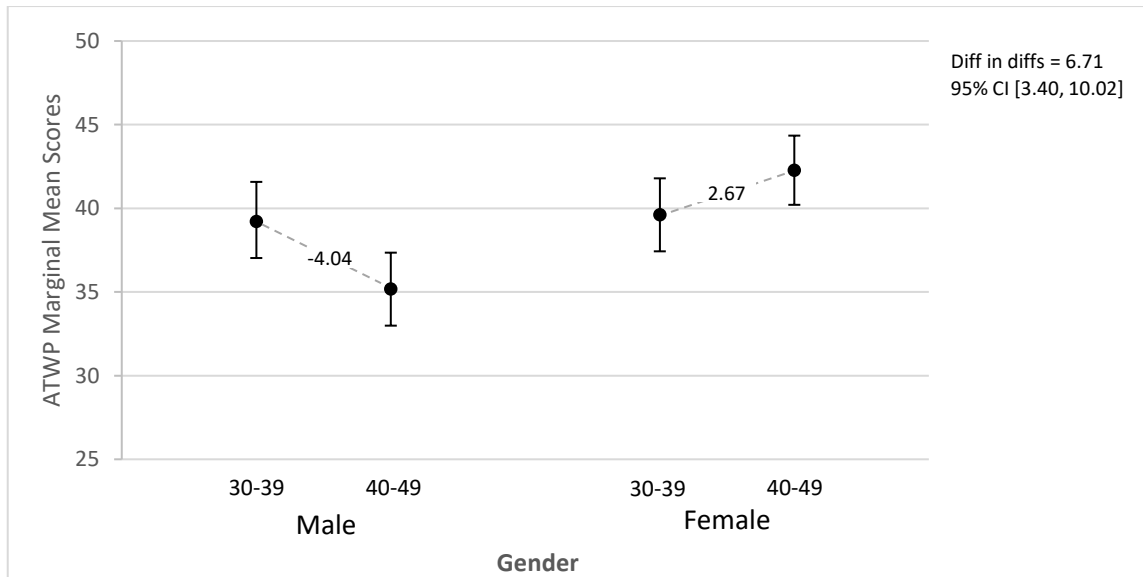


*Figure 5.1. ATWP Inter-Gender Differences between 30-39 and 40-49 Year-Old Age Groups*

Inter-gender pairwise comparisons identified a significant mean difference between male and female educators aged 40-49 of -7.11, 95% CI [-9.96, -4.26], $p < .001$, $d = 1.40$ (large). There was also a significant mean difference in the 50+ age group of -4.06, 95% CI [-6.97, -1.14], $p = .01$, $d = 0.80$ (large). These findings suggest that, in all-girls schools, male educators in both the 40-49 and 50+ age groups held less positive overall attitudes regarding wellbeing promotion than did their respective female counterparts. This was further analysed by performing an interaction contrast to compare the difference in male and female educators' ATWP scores in the 40-49 year-old age group to the difference in male and female educators' ATWP scores in the 50+ age group. A non-significant difference between the differences was found, mean difference = 3.05, 95% CI [-0.16, 6.26], $p = .06$. All significant and non-significant test results for pairwise comparisons involving gender by age are displayed in Table 5.3. It is noteworthy that Table 5.3 identifies moderate differences between the male 18-29 year-old group and the two later male age groups, but indicates that these differences are not statistically significant. This is also true of the male 18-29 year-old group and the female 18-29 year-old group. When examining Table 5.2, it can be proposed that these differences are non-significant because of a lack of power due to the small sample size of the male 18-29 year-old group. Estimated marginal mean scores are presented in Figure 5.2.

*Table 5.2. ATWP Estimates for Gender by Age*

|  |  |  |  |  | 95% CI for Mean | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Age | n | Mean | Std. Error | Lower | Upper |
| Male | 18-29 | 8 | 38.44 | 2.11 | 34.30 | 42.59 |
|  | 30-39 | 24 | 39.21 | 1.20 | 36.84 | 41.58 |
|  | 40-49 | 38 | 35.17 | 1.11 | 32.99 | 37.35 |
|  | 50+ | 31 | 35.92 | 1.16 | 33.63 | 38.21 |
| Female | 18-29 | 19 | 42.30 | 1.33 | 39.68 | 44.92 |
|  | 30-39 | 58 | 39.61 | 1.00 | 37.64 | 41.58 |
|  | 40-49 | 60 | 42.28 | 1.05 | 40.21 | 44.35 |
|  | 50+ | 51 | 39.98 | 1.03 | 37.95 | 42.00 |
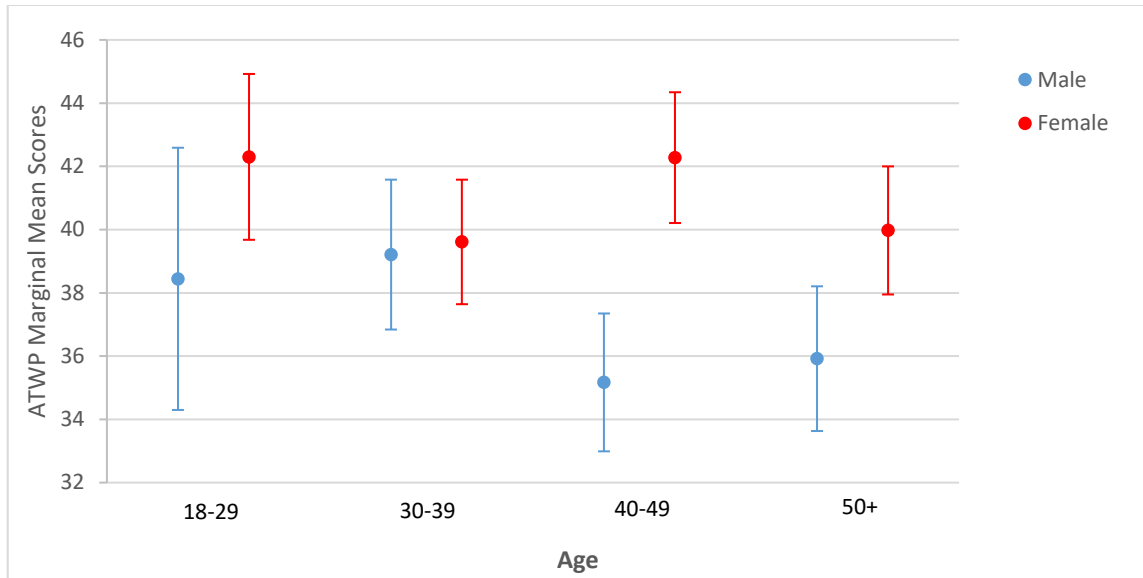
*Figure 5.2. Scatterplot of ATWP Marginal Mean Scores for Age by Gender*

*Table 5.3. ATWP Pairwise comparisons for Gender by Age*

| Gender | Age | | Mean Diff. | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% CI for Difference | | d |
|--------|-----|-----|------|------|------|-------|-------|------|
| | | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| | | 30-39 | -0.77 | 2.29 | .74 | -5.27 | 3.74 | 0.15 |
| | 18-29 | 40-49 | 3.28 | 2.13 | .13 | -0.93 | 7.48 | 0.65 |
| | | 50+ | 2.52 | 2.21 | .25 | -1.83 | 6.88 | 0.50 |
| Male | 30-39 | 40-49 | 4.04 | 1.38 | .00 | 1.33 | 6.75 | 0.80 |
| | | 50+ | 3.29 | 1.45 | .02 | 0.44 | 6.14 | 0.65 |
| | 40-49 | 50+ | -0.75 | 1.27 | .55 | -3.25 | 1.75 | 0.15 |
| | | 30-39 | 2.69 | 1.40 | .06 | -0.07 | 5.45 | 0.53 |
| | 18-29 | 40-49 | 0.02 | 1.42 | .99 | -2.78 | 2.82 | 0.00 |
| | | 50+ | 2.33 | 1.42 | .10 | -0.47 | 5.12 | 0.46 |
| Female | 30-39 | 40-49 | -2.67 | 0.96 | .01 | -4.55 | -0.78 | 0.53 |
| | | 50+ | -0.36 | 0.99 | .71 | -2.31 | 1.58 | 0.07 |
| | 40-49 | 50+ | 2.30 | 1.00 | .02 | 0.34 | 4.27 | 0.45 |
| Age | Gender | | | | | | | |
| 18-29 | Male | Female | -3.86 | 2.46 | .12 | -8.70 | 0.99 | 0.76 |
| 30-39 | Male | Female | -0.40 | 1.48 | .79 | -3.30 | 2.51 | 0.08 |
| 40-49 | Male | Female | -7.11 | 1.45 | .00 | -9.96 | -4.26 | 1.40 |
| 50+ | Male | Female | -4.06 | 1.48 | .00 | -6.97 | -1.14 | 0.80 |

### 5.2.2 Gender by School Type

Pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine for intra-gender differences across the three school types. ATWP EMM scores for male educators in all-boys, all-girls and co-educational schools were 38.99 ($SE$ = 1.10), 35.69 ($SE$ = 1.35) and 36.88 ($SE$ = 1.29) respectively (see Table 5.4). Analyses identified a significant mean difference between male educators in all-boys schools and male educators in all-girls schools of 3.29, 95% CI [0.38, 6.21], $p$ = .03, $d$ = 0.65 (medium). This suggests that male educators in all-boys schools held more positive overall attitudes regarding wellbeing promotion than did their counterparts in all-girls schools.

ATWP EMM scores for female educators in all-boys, all-girls and co-educational schools were 41.16 ($SE$ = 1.33), 42.45 ($SE$ = 0.97) and 39.51 ($SE$ = 0.89) respectively (see Table 5.4). Pairwise comparisons suggested a significant mean difference between female educators in all-girls schools and female educators in co-educational schools of 2.94, 95% CI [0.86, 5.02], $p$ = .01, $d$ = 0.58. This suggests that female educators in all-girls schools held more positive overall attitudes regarding wellbeing promotion than did their counterparts in co-educational schools.

Pairwise comparisons were also conducted to examine for inter-gender differences within each school type. Analyses identified a significant mean difference between male and female educators in all-girls schools of -6.75, 95% CI [-9.74, -3.77], $p$ < .001, $d$ = 1.33 (large), suggesting that, in all-girls schools, male educators held less positive overall attitudes regarding wellbeing promotion than did female educators. Estimated marginal mean scores are presented in Figure 5.3. All significant and non-significant test results for pairwise comparisons involving gender by school type are displayed in Table 5.5.

*Table 5.4. ATWP Estimates for Gender by School type*

| Gender | Single Sex/Co-Ed. | n | Mean | Std. Error | 95% CI for Mean Lower | 95% CI for Mean Upper |
|--------|-------------------|-----|-------|------------|-------|-------|
| Male | All-boys | 38 | 38.99 | 1.10 | 36.82 | 41.15 |
|  | All-girls | 28 | 35.69 | 1.35 | 33.03 | 38.36 |
|  | Co-education | 35 | 36.88 | 1.29 | 34.34 | 39.42 |
| Female | All-boys | 25 | 41.16 | 1.33 | 38.55 | 43.78 |
|  | All-girls | 56 | 42.45 | 0.97 | 40.55 | 44.35 |
|  | Co-education | 107 | 39.51 | 0.89 | 37.75 | 41.27 |
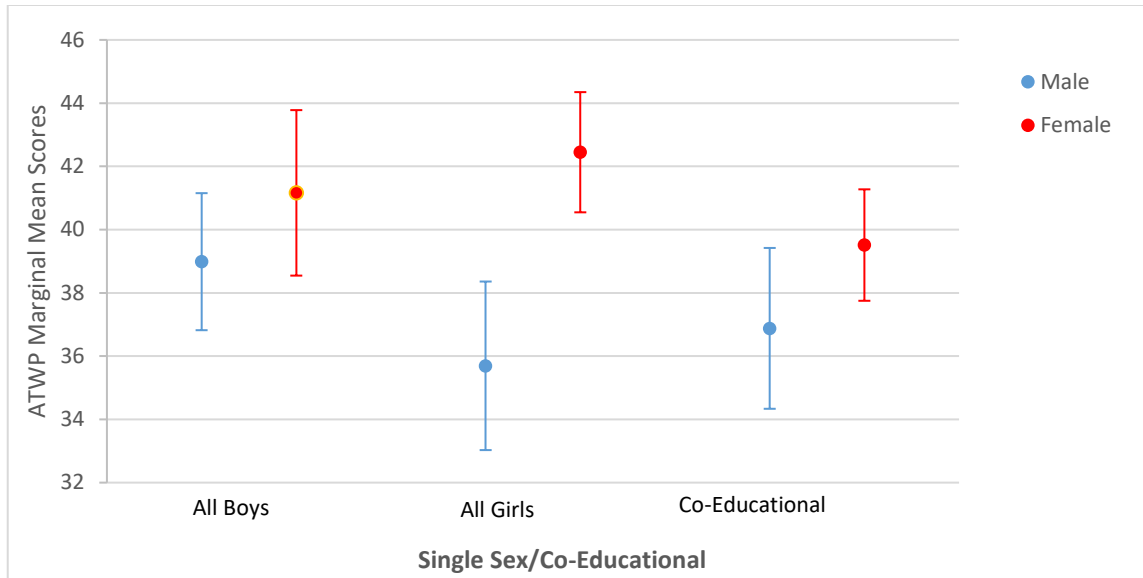
*Figure 5.3. Scatterplot of ATWP Marginal Mean Scores for Gender by School type*

*Table 5.5. ATWP Pairwise comparisons for Gender by School type*

| Gender | Single Sex/Co-Ed. | | Mean Diff. | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% CI for Difference | | d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| Male | All-boys | All-girls | 3.29 | 1.48 | .03 | 0.38 | 6.21 | 0.65 |
| | | Co-education | 2.11 | 1.36 | .12 | -0.57 | 4.79 | 0.42 |
| | All-girls | Co-education | -1.18 | 1.57 | .45 | -4.28 | 1.91 | 0.23 |
| Female | All-boys | All-girls | -1.29 | 1.35 | .34 | -3.94 | 1.37 | 0.25 |
| | | Co-education | 1.65 | 1.21 | .17 | -0.73 | 4.03 | 0.33 |
| | All-girls | Co-education | 2.94 | 1.06 | .01 | 0.86 | 5.02 | 0.58 |
| Single Sex/Co-Ed. | Gender | | | | | | | |
| All-boys | Male | Female | -2.18 | 1.65 | .19 | -5.43 | 1.08 | 0.43 |
| All-girls | Male | Female | -6.75 | 1.52 | .00 | -9.74 | -3.77 | 1.33 |
| Co-education | Male | Female | -2.63 | 1.47 | .07 | -5.53 | 0.26 | 0.52 |

### 5.2.3 Position

Pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine for mean differences among principals/vice principals, teachers and guidance counsellors who had ATWP EMMs of 40.28 ($SE$ = 0.94), 37.36 ($SE$ = 0.55) and 39.71 ($SE$ = 1.38) respectively (see Table 5.6). Analyses identified a significant mean difference between principals/vice principals and teachers of 2.93, 95% CI [1.13, 4.72], $p$ < .001, $d$ = 0.58 (medium), suggesting that principals/vice principals held

more positive overall attitudes regarding wellbeing promotion than did teachers. Estimated marginal mean scores are presented in Table 5.6. All significant and non-significant test results for pairwise comparisons involving position are displayed in Table 5.7.

*Table 5.6. ATWP Estimates for Position*

| Position | n | Mean | Std. Error | 95% CI for Mean Lower | 95% CI for Mean Upper |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Principal/V. Principal | 52 | 40.28 | 0.94 | 38.44 | 42.12 |
| Teacher | 220 | 37.35 | 0.55 | 36.27 | 38.44 |
| Guidance Counsellor | 17 | 39.71 | 1.38 | 36.99 | 42.42 |
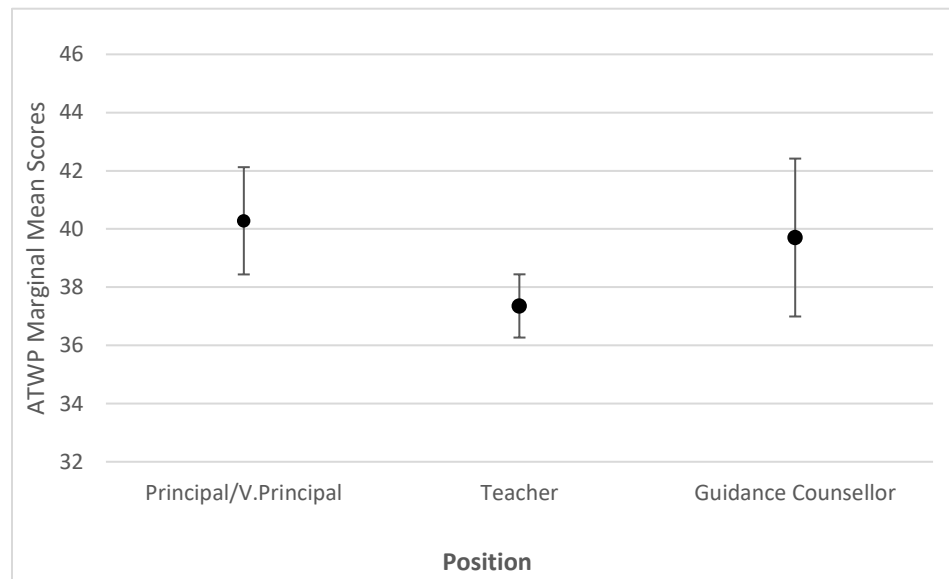


*Figure 5.4. Scatterplot of ATWP Marginal Mean Scores by Position*

*Table 5.7. ATWP Pairwise comparisons for Position*

| Position | | Mean Diff. | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% CI for Difference Lower | 95% CI for Difference Upper | d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Principal/V. Principal | Teacher | 2.93 | 0.91 | .00 | 1.13 | 4.72 | 0.58 |
| | Guidance Counsellor | 0.58 | 1.58 | .72 | -2.54 | 3.70 | 0.11 |
| Teacher | Guidance Counsellor | -2.35 | 1.41 | .10 | -5.13 | 0.43 | 0.46 |

### 5.2.4   Streaming/Vertical Education

ATWP EMM scores by educational practice were 39.10 (*SE* = 0.84) for streaming, 41.12 (*SE* = 0.80) for vertical education, 36.43 (*SE* = 1.05) for when *both* streaming and vertical education were employed, 41.85 (*SE* = 0.74) for when *neither* streaming nor vertical education were employed, and 37.07 (*SE* = 1.82) for when educators *don't know* if streaming or vertical education were employed. Descriptive statistics for streaming/vertical education are displayed in Table 5.8. Pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine for mean differences among these groups. Analyses identified significant mean differences between the *both* group and the *streaming* group, mean difference = -2.67, 95% CI [-4.94, -0.39], *p* = .02, *d* = 0.53 (medium), the *vertical education* group, mean difference = -4.69, 95% CI [-7.00, -2.37], *p* < .001, *d* = 0.93 (large), and the *neither* group, mean difference = -5.42, 95% CI [-7.62, -3.22], *p* < .001, *d* = 1.07 (large). These findings suggest that educators in schools where *both* streaming and vertical education were employed held less positive overall attitudes regarding wellbeing promotion than did their counterparts in schools where *neither* or only one of these educational practices were employed.

*Table 5.8. ATWP Estimates for Streaming/V. Education*

| Streaming/V. Education | n | Mean | Std. Error | 95% CI for Mean Lower | Upper |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Both | 33 | 36.43 | 1.05 | 34.36 | 38.50 |
| Neither | 115 | 41.85 | 0.74 | 40.40 | 43.30 |
| Vertical education | 69 | 41.12 | 0.80 | 39.53 | 42.70 |
| Streaming | 63 | 39.10 | 0.84 | 37.45 | 40.74 |
| Don't know | 9 | 37.07 | 1.82 | 33.49 | 40.66 |

There were also significant mean differences between the *neither* group and the *streaming* group, mean difference = 2.75, 95% CI [1.02, 4.48], *p* = .002, *d* = 0.54 (medium), as well as the *don't know* group, mean difference = 4.78, 95% CI [1.15, 8.40], *p* = .01, *d* = 0.94 (large). Taken with the previous findings, this suggests that educators in schools where neither streaming nor vertical education are employed held more positive overall attitudes regarding

wellbeing promotion than their counterparts in schools where: (1) streaming is employed; (2) educators are unsure if streaming or vertical education are employed, and; (3) both streaming and vertical education are employed.

Finally, a significant mean difference was found between educators in the *vertical education* group and both the *streaming* group, mean difference = 2.02, 95% CI [0.16, 3.88], $p$ = .03, $d$ = 0.40 (small), and the *don't know* group, mean difference = 4.04, 95% CI [0.38, 7.71], $p$ = .03, $d$ = 0.80 (large). Taken with the previous findings, this suggests that educators in schools where vertical education is employed held more positive overall attitudes regarding wellbeing promotion than their counterparts in schools where: (1) streaming is employed; (2) educators are unsure if either streaming or vertical education are employed, and; (3) both streaming and vertical education are employed. All significant and non-significant test results for pairwise comparisons involving position are displayed in Table 5.9. Estimated marginal mean scores are presented in Figure 5.5. When examining Table 5.9, it can be seen that a non-significant moderate difference exists between the *streaming* group and the *don't know* group. The non-significant finding here may be due, at least in part, to the small size of the *don't know* group.
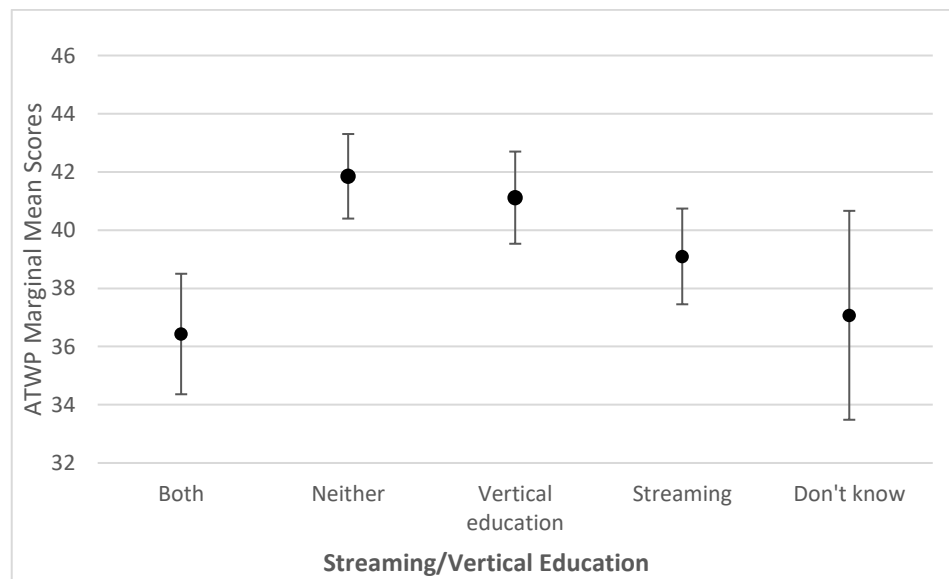


*Figure 5.5. Scatterplot of ATWP Marginal Mean Scores by Streaming/Vertical Education*

Table 5.9. ATWP Pairwise comparisons for Streaming/V. Education

| Streaming/V. Education | | Mean Diff. | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% CI for Difference | | d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| Both | Streaming | -2.67 | 1.16 | .02 | -4.94 | -0.39 | 0.53 |
| | Vertical education | -4.69 | 1.18 | .00 | -7.00 | -2.37 | 0.93 |
| | Neither | -5.42 | 1.12 | .00 | -7.62 | -3.22 | 1.07 |
| | Don't know | -0.64 | 2.00 | .75 | -4.59 | 3.30 | 0.13 |
| Neither | Streaming | 2.75 | 0.88 | .00 | 1.02 | 4.48 | 0.54 |
| | Vertical education | 0.73 | 0.83 | .38 | -0.91 | 2.37 | 0.14 |
| | Don't know | 4.78 | 1.84 | .01 | 1.15 | 8.40 | 0.94 |
| V. Education | Streaming | 2.02 | 0.95 | .03 | 0.16 | 3.88 | 0.40 |
| | Don't know | 4.04 | 1.86 | .03 | 0.38 | 7.71 | 0.80 |
| Streaming | Don't know | 2.02 | 1.89 | .28 | -1.69 | 5.74 | 0.40 |

## 5.3 Subscale One: Well_Pro

The sample mean score for Well_Pro was 17.66 (SD = 3.29), which suggests a moderate degree of positivity among educators regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing. A general linear model was run for Well_Pro scores in respect of the analytical model outlined in section 4.7.4.7 of Chapter Four. Good fit was observed, with 36% of the variability of the response data explained by the model ($R^2$ = .36, $p$ < .001). A number of statistically significant interactions and main effects were found. A significant interaction was observed between educator gender and single-sex/co-educational school status for Well_Pro scores, $F(2, 275)$ = 3.73, $p$ = .03, $\eta_p^2$ = .03. There was also a significant interaction between the urban/rural status of the school and the status of a school as employing streaming/vertical education, $F(4, 275)$ = 2.81, $p$ = .03, $\eta_p^2$ = .04. A significant main effect of educator position for ATWP scores, $F(2, 275)$ = 3.42, $p$ = .03, $\eta_p^2$ = .03. Results of analyses of variance for the Well_Pro GLM are displayed in Table 5.10. Post-hoc testing for each of the significant interactions and main effects was conducted as pairwise comparisons and will now be outlined. Significant main effects of gender, single-sex/co-education and streaming/vertical education were also observed. These results are superseded by the significant interactions involving these variables and therefore will not be reported or further analysed.

*Table 5.10. Well_Pro Analysis of Variance*

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 1119.997[a] | 28 | 40.00 | 5.22 | .00 | .36 |
| Intercept | 18643.76 | 1 | 18643.76 | 2431.57 | .00 | .90 |
| Gender | 117.41 | 1 | 117.41 | 15.31 | .00 | .06 |
| Age | 34.25 | 3 | 11.42 | 1.49 | .22 | .02 |
| Position | 52.40 | 2 | 26.20 | 3.42 | .03 | .03 |
| Num_students | 28.88 | 1 | 28.88 | 3.77 | .05 | .01 |
| Single Sex/Co-Ed. | 48.76 | 2 | 24.38 | 3.18 | .04 | .02 |
| Urb/Rur | 24.15 | 1 | 24.15 | 3.15 | .08 | .01 |
| DEIS/NonDEIS | 0.07 | 1 | 0.07 | 0.01 | .92 | .00 |
| Streaming/V. Education | 204.53 | 4 | 51.13 | 6.67 | .00 | .09 |
| Gender * Age | 45.18 | 3 | 15.06 | 1.96 | .12 | .02 |
| Gender * Position | 8.15 | 2 | 4.07 | 0.53 | .59 | .00 |
| Gender * Single Sex/Co-Ed. | 57.19 | 2 | 28.60 | 3.73 | .03 | .03 |
| Num_students* Urb/Rur | 4.66 | 1 | 4.66 | 0.61 | .44 | .00 |
| Urb/Rur * DEIS/NonDEIS | 0.36 | 1 | 0.36 | 0.05 | .83 | .00 |
| Urb/Rur * Streaming/V. Education | 86.03 | 4 | 21.51 | 2.81 | .03 | .04 |
| Error | 2001.19 | 261 | 7.67 | | | |
| Total | 93022.00 | 290 | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 3121.19 | 289 | | | | |

a. R Squared = .359 (Adjusted R Squared = .290)

### 5.3.1  Gender by School Type

Pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine for intra-gender differences across the three school types. Well_Pro EMM scores for male educators in all-boys, all-girls and co-educational schools were 17.23 (*SE* = 0.59), 15.39 (*SE* = 0.71) and 15.60 (*SE* = 0.66) respectively (see Table 5.11). Analyses identified significant mean differences between male educators in all-boys schools and male educators in both all-girls schools, mean difference = 1.84, 95% CI [0.26, 3.42], *p* = .02, *d* = 0.66 (medium), and co-educational schools, mean difference = 1.63, 95% CI [0.20, 3.07], *p* = .03, *d* = 0.59 (medium). These findings suggest that male educators in all-boys schools held more positive attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing than did their counterparts in both all-girls and co-educational schools.

*Table 5.11. Well_Pro Pairwise comparisons for Gender by School type*

| Gender | Single Sex/Co-Ed. | n | Mean | Std. Error | 95% CI for Mean | |
|--------|-------------------|-----|-------|------------|-------|-------|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Male | All-boys | 38 | 17.23 | 0.59 | 16.06 | 18.39 |
| | All-girls | 28 | 15.39 | 0.71 | 13.99 | 16.79 |
| | Co-education | 36 | 15.60 | 0.66 | 14.30 | 16.89 |
| Female | All-boys | 25 | 18.39 | 0.73 | 16.96 | 19.83 |
| | All-girls | 56 | 19.29 | 0.53 | 18.25 | 20.33 |
| | Co-education | 107 | 17.47 | 0.49 | 16.50 | 18.43 |

Well_Pro EMM scores for female educators in all-boys, all-girls and co-educational schools were 18.39 ($SE$ = 0.73), 19.29 ($SE$ = 0.53) and 17.47 ($SE$ = 0.49) respectively (see Table 5.11). Analyses identified significant mean differences between female educators in all-girls schools and female educators in co-educational schools, mean difference = 1.83, 95% CI [0.69, 2.96], $p$ = .002, $d$ = 0.66 (medium), suggesting that female educators in all-girls schools held more positive attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing than did their counterparts in co-educational schools.

Pairwise comparisons were also conducted to examine for inter-gender differences within each school type. Analyses identified a significant mean difference between male and female educators in both all-girls schools, mean difference = -3.90, 95% CI [-5.48, -2.32], $p$ < .001, $d$ = 1.41 (large), and co-educational schools, mean difference = -1.87, 95% CI [-3.35, -.39], $p$ = .01, $d$ = 0.68 (medium). These findings suggest that male educators held less positive attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing than female educators in both the all-girls and co-educational school setting. This was further analysed by performing an interaction contrast to compare the difference in male and female educators' Well_Pro scores in the all-girls context to the difference in male and female educators' Well_Pro scores in the co-education context. A statistically significant difference between the differences was found, mean difference = 2.03, 95% CI [.22, 3.85], $p$ = .03, $d$ = 0.73 (medium). This suggests that while female educators' Well_Pro scores were higher than those of male educators in both contexts, the gender-difference in attitudes was more pronounced in all-girls schools (see Figure 5.6).

Estimated marginal mean scores are presented in Figure 5.7. All significant and non-significant test results for pairwise comparisons involving position are displayed in Table 5.12.
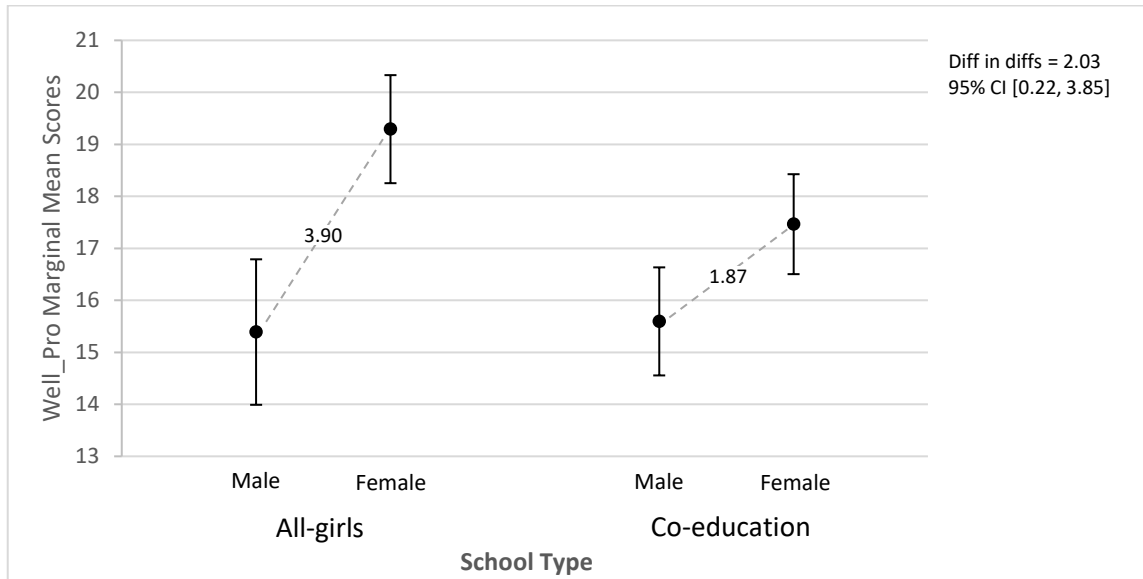


*Figure 5.6. Well_Pro Intra-Gender Differences between All-Girls and Co-Educational Schools*
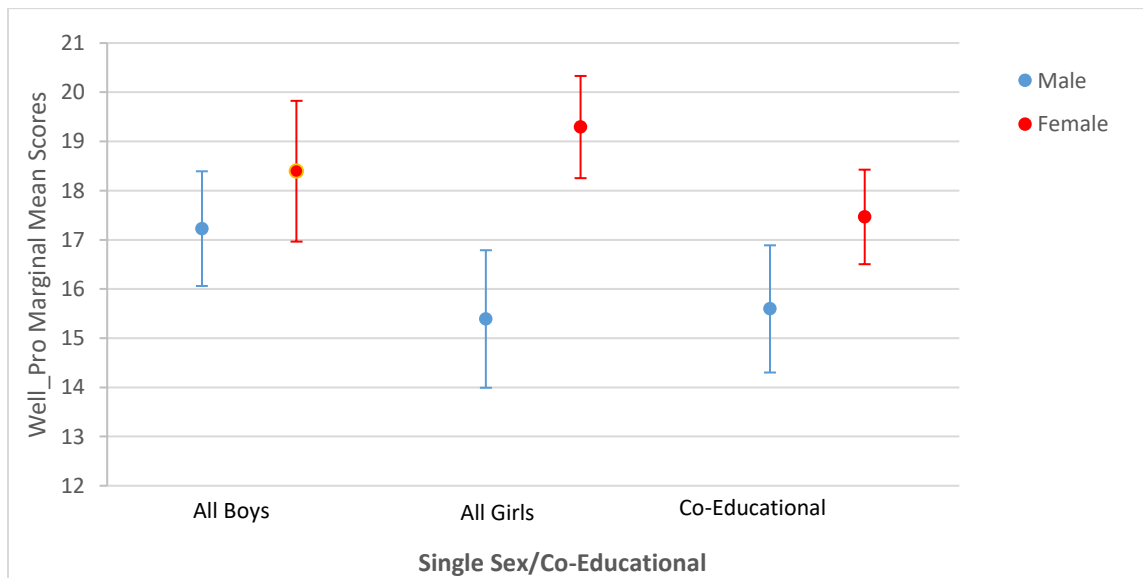


*Figure 5.7. Scatterplot of Well_Pro Marginal Mean Scores for Gender by School type*

*Table 5.12. Well_Pro Estimates for Gender by School type*

| Gender | Single Sex/Co-Ed. | | Mean Diff. | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% CI for Difference Lower | 95% CI for Difference Upper | d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | All-boys | All-girls | 1.84 | 0.80 | .02 | 0.26 | 3.42 | 0.66 |
| | | Co-education | 1.63 | 0.73 | .03 | 0.20 | 3.07 | 0.59 |
| | All-girls | Co-education | -0.21 | 0.86 | .81 | -1.89 | 1.48 | 0.07 |
| Female | All-boys | All-girls | -0.90 | 0.74 | .22 | -2.35 | 0.55 | 0.32 |
| | | Co-education | 0.93 | 0.66 | .16 | -0.37 | 2.23 | 0.34 |
| | All-girls | Co-education | 1.83 | 0.58 | .00 | 0.69 | 2.96 | 0.66 |
| Single Sex/Co-Ed. | Gender | | | | | | | |
| All-boys | Male | Female | -1.17 | 0.90 | .19 | -2.93 | 0.60 | 0.42 |
| All-girls | Male | Female | -3.90 | 0.80 | .00 | -5.48 | -2.32 | 1.41 |
| Co-education | Male | Female | -1.87 | 0.75 | .01 | -3.35 | -0.39 | 0.68 |

### 5.3.2 Urban/Rural by Streaming/Vertical Education

Pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine for differences according to educational practice within both the urban and rural context. Within the urban context, Well_Pro EMM scores by educational practice were 16.59 (*SE* = 0.54) for streaming, 17.81 (*SE* = 0.54) for vertical education, 17.45 (*SE* = 0.69) for the *both* group, 18.70 (*SE* = 0.44) for the *neither* group, and 17.90 (*SE* = 1.46) for the *don't know* group (see Table 5.13). Analyses identified a significant mean difference between urban educators in the *neither* group and those in the *streaming* group of 2.11, 95% CI [0.96, 3.26], *p* < .001, *d* = 0.76 (medium). This suggests that, in the urban context, educators in schools where neither streaming nor vertical education were employed held more positive attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing that did their counterparts in schools where streaming was employed.

Within the rural context, Well_Pro EMM scores by educational practice were 17.20 (*SE* = 0.64) for *streaming*, 18.53 (*SE* = 0.57) for *vertical education*, 14.61 (*SE* = 0.84) for the *both* group, 18.57 (*SE* = 0.52) for the *neither* group, and 14.92 (*SE* = 1.32) for the *don't know* group (see Table 5.13). Analyses identified a significant mean difference between rural educators in the *both* group and those in the *streaming* group, mean difference = -2.59, 95% CI [-4.62, -0.56], *p* = .01, *d* = 0.93 (large), the *vertical education group*, mean difference = -3.92, 95% CI [-5.85, -1.98], *p* < .001, *d* = 1.41 (large), and the *neither* group, mean difference = -3.96, 95% CI [-5.84,

-2.07], *p* < .001, *d* = 1.43 (large). These findings suggest that, in a rural context, educators in schools where both streaming and vertical education were employed held less positive attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing than did their counterparts where only streaming, only vertical education, or neither of these educational practices were employed.

Analyses also identified a statistically significant mean difference between rural educators in the *neither* group and the *don't know* group, mean difference = 3.66, 95% CI [0.95, 6.36], *p* = .01, *d* = .1.32 (large), as well as between the *vertical education* group and the *don't know* group, mean difference = 3.61, 95% CI [0.90, 6.33], *p* = .01, *d* = 1.31 (large). These findings suggest that, in a rural context, educators in schools where neither streaming nor vertical education were employed or where only vertical education was employed held more positive attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing than did their counterparts who were unsure if either educational practice was in play.

Pairwise comparisons examining for differences between the urban and rural context according to educational practice identified a statistically significant mean difference between geographical contexts for the *both* group of 2.83, 95% CI [0.78, 4.88], *p* = .01, *d* = 1.02 (large). This suggests that, when schools practice both streaming and vertical education, urban educators held more positive attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing than did their rural counterparts. Estimated marginal mean scores are presented in Table 5.13 and Figure 5.8. Scatterplot of Well_Pro Marginal Mean Scores for Urban/Rural by Streaming/V. Education. All statistically significant and non-significant test results for pairwise comparisons involving school location by educational practice are displayed in Table 5.14. It should be noted that this table indicates several non-significant small, moderate and large mean differences. As per the ATWP results, that these mean differences are non-significant is possibly due to associated groups presenting with small sample sizes.

*Table 5.13. Well_Pro Estimates for Urban/Rural by Streaming/V. Education*

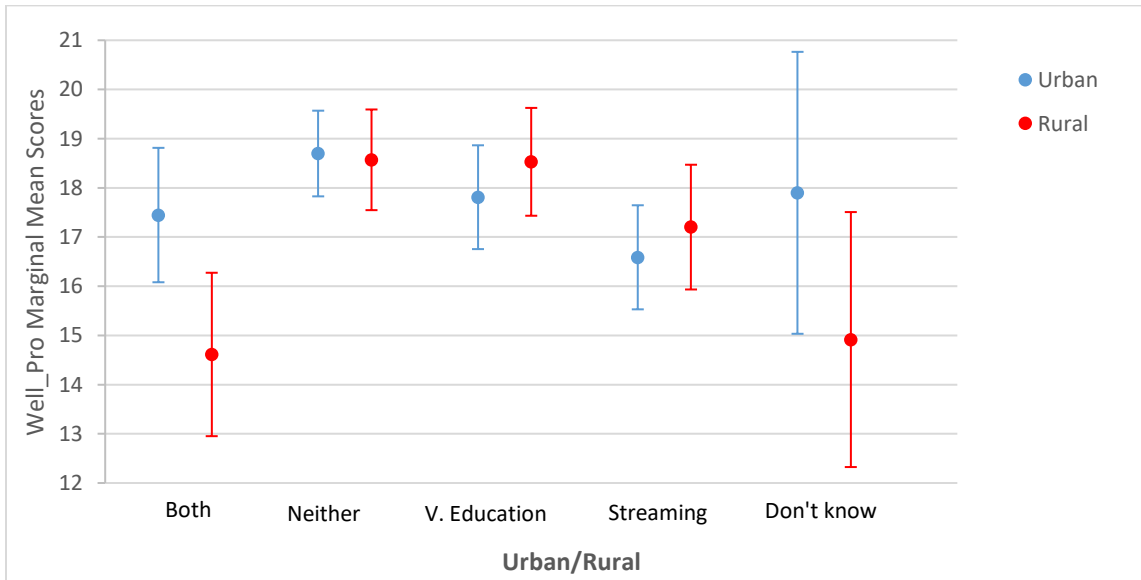| Urban/Rural | Streaming/V. Education | n | Mean | Std. Error | 95% CI for Mean Lower | 95% CI for Mean Upper |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Urban | Both | 21 | 17.45 | 0.69 | 16.08 | 18.81 |
| | Neither | 72 | 18.70 | 0.44 | 17.83 | 19.57 |
| | V. Education | 38 | 17.81 | 0.54 | 16.76 | 18.87 |
| | Streaming | 40 | 16.59 | 0.54 | 15.53 | 17.65 |
| | Don't know | 4 | 17.90 | 1.46 | 15.03 | 20.77 |
| Rural | Both | 12 | 14.61 | 0.84 | 12.95 | 16.27 |
| | Neither | 43 | 18.57 | 0.52 | 17.55 | 19.59 |
| | V. Education | 32 | 18.53 | 0.56 | 17.43 | 19.63 |
| | Streaming | 23 | 17.20 | 0.64 | 15.93 | 18.47 |
| | Don't know | 5 | 14.92 | 1.32 | 12.32 | 17.51 |



*Figure 5.8. Scatterplot of Well_Pro Marginal Mean Scores for Urban/Rural by Streaming/V. Education*

Table 5.14. Well_Pro Pairwise Comparisons for Urban/Rural by Streaming/V. Education

| Urban/Rural | Streaming/V. Education | | Mean Diff. | Std. Error | Sig. | Lower | Upper | d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Urban | Both | Streaming | 0.86 | 0.76 | .26 | -0.64 | 2.36 | 0.31 |
| | | Vertical education | -0.36 | 0.79 | .65 | -1.92 | 1.20 | 0.13 |
| | | Neither | -1.25 | 0.72 | .09 | -2.68 | 0.18 | 0.45 |
| | | Don't know | -0.45 | 1.55 | .77 | -3.50 | 2.59 | 0.16 |
| | Neither | Streaming | 2.11 | 0.58 | .00 | 0.96 | 3.26 | 0.76 |
| | | Vertical education | 0.89 | 0.57 | .12 | -0.24 | 2.01 | 0.32 |
| | | Don't know | 0.80 | 1.45 | .58 | -2.06 | 3.66 | 0.29 |
| | V. Education | Streaming | 1.22 | 0.65 | .06 | -0.06 | 2.51 | 0.44 |
| | | Don't know | -0.09 | 1.49 | .95 | -3.02 | 2.85 | 0.03 |
| | Streaming | Don't know | -1.31 | 1.49 | .38 | -4.25 | 1.62 | 0.47 |
| Rural | Both | Streaming | -2.59 | 1.03 | .01 | -4.62 | -0.56 | 0.93 |
| | | Vertical education | -3.92 | 0.98 | .00 | -5.85 | -1.98 | 1.41 |
| | | Neither | -3.96 | 0.96 | .00 | -5.84 | -2.07 | 1.43 |
| | | Don't know | -0.04 | 0.69 | .95 | -1.40 | 1.32 | 0.01 |
| | Neither | Streaming | 1.37 | 0.77 | .08 | -0.14 | 2.88 | 0.49 |
| | | Vertical education | 0.04 | 0.69 | .95 | -1.32 | 1.40 | 0.01 |
| | | Don't know | 3.66 | 1.38 | .01 | 0.95 | 6.36 | 1.32 |
| | V. Education | Streaming | 1.33 | 0.79 | .09 | -0.23 | 2.88 | 0.48 |
| | | Don't know | 3.61 | 1.38 | .01 | 0.90 | 6.33 | 1.31 |
| | Streaming | Don't know | 2.29 | 1.43 | .11 | -0.54 | 5.11 | 0.83 |
| Streaming/V. Education | Urban/Rural | | | | | | | |
| Both | Urban | Rural | 2.83 | 1.04 | .01 | 0.78 | 4.88 | 1.02 |
| Neither | Urban | Rural | 0.13 | 0.57 | .82 | -1.00 | 1.25 | 0.05 |
| V. Education | Urban | Rural | -0.72 | 0.69 | .30 | -2.08 | 0.65 | 0.26 |
| Streaming | Urban | Rural | -0.61 | 0.78 | .43 | -2.15 | 0.92 | 0.22 |
| Don't know | Urban | Rural | 2.98 | 1.93 | .12 | -0.83 | 6.79 | 1.08 |

### 5.3.3   Position

Pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine for mean differences among principals/vice principals, teachers and guidance counsellors who had ATWP EEM scores of 18.00 ($SE$ = 0.51), 16.69 ($SE$ = 0.30) and 16.99 ($SE$ = 0.72) respectively (see Table 5.15). Analyses identified a statistically significant mean difference between principals/vice principals and teachers of 1.30 95% CI [0.32, 2.28], $p$ = .01, $d$ = 0.47 (small), suggesting that principals/vice principals held more positive attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing than

did teachers. Estimated marginal mean scores are presented in Figure 5.9. All statistically significant and non-significant test results for pairwise comparisons involving position are displayed in Table 5.16.

*Table 5.15. Well_Pro Estimates for Position*

| Position | n | Mean | Std. Error | 95% CI for Mean | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Principal/V. Principal | 52 | 18.00 | 0.51 | 16.99 | 19.00 |
| Teacher | 220 | 16.69 | 0.30 | 16.10 | 17.29 |
| Guidance Counsellor | 18 | 16.99 | 0.72 | 15.58 | 18.40 |
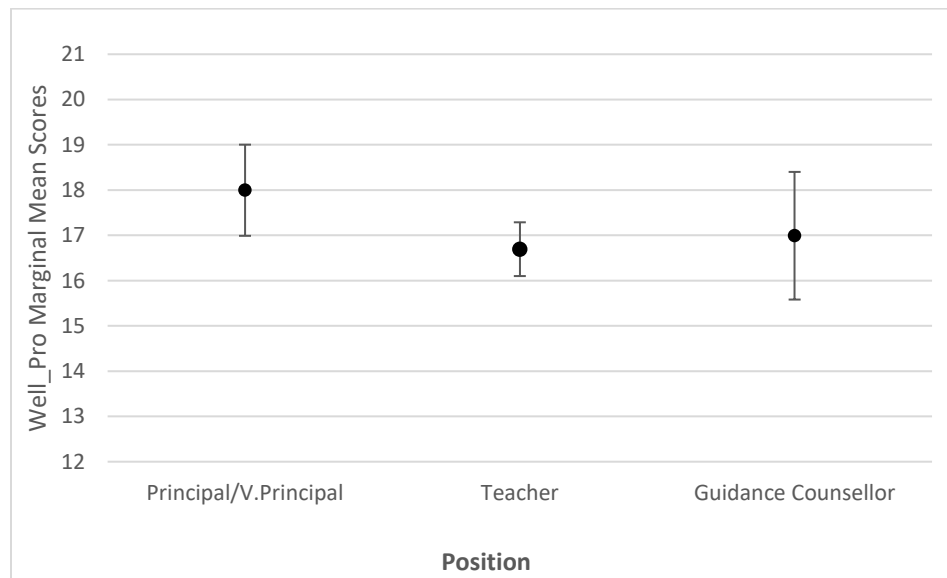


*Figure 5.9. Scatterplot of Well_Pro Marginal Mean Scores by Position*

*Table 5.16. Well_Pro Pairwise Comparisons for Position*

| Position | | Mean Diff. | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% CI for Difference | | d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| Principal/V. Principal | Teacher | 1.30 | 0.50 | .01 | 0.32 | 2.28 | 0.47 |
| | Guidance Counsellor | 1.01 | 0.84 | .23 | -0.64 | 2.65 | 0.36 |
| Teacher | Guidance Counsellor | -0.30 | 0.74 | .69 | -1.75 | 1.16 | 0.11 |

### 5.3.4  Subscale Two: Pol_Cur

The sample mean score for Pol_Cur was 17.42 (SD = 2.79), which suggests a moderate degree of positivity among educators regarding the available policies and curriculum. A general linear model was run for Pol_Cur scores in respect of the analytical model outlined in section 4.7.4 of Chapter 4. Good fit was observed, with 32% of the variability of the response data explained by the model ($R^2$ = .32, $p$ < .001). A statistically significant interaction was observed between educator gender and educator age for Pol_Cur scores, $F(3, 261)$ = 6.98, $p$ < .001, $\eta_p^2$ = .07. There was also a statistically significant main effect of educator position, $F(2, 261)$ = 7.04, $p$ = .04, $\eta_p^2$ = .05, as well as a main effect of the status the educators' school as employing streaming/vertical education, $F(4, 261)$ = 4.25, $p$ = .002, $\eta_p^2$ = .06. Results of analyses of variance for the Pol_Cur GLM are displayed in Table 5.17. Post-hoc testing for each of the statistically significant interactions and main effects was conducted as pairwise comparisons and will now be outlined. A statistically significant main effect of gender was also observed. However, these results are superseded by the statistically significant interaction involving gender and therefore will not be reported or further analysed.

### 5.3.5  Gender by Age

Pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine for intra-gender mean differences across the four age groups. Pol_Cur EMM scores among male educators were 17.36 ($SE$ = 1.00) for the 18-29 year-old group, 18.21 ($SE$ = 0.56) for the 30-39 year-old group, 15.63 ($SE$ = 0.52) for the 40-49 year-old group and 16.28 ($SE$ = 0.53) for the 50+ group (see Table 5.18). Analyses identified a statistically significant mean difference between male educators aged 30-39 and male educators in both the 40-49 age group, mean difference 2.58, 95% CI [1.33, 3.83], $p$ < .001, $d$ = 1.06 (large), and the 50+ age group, mean difference 1.92, 95% CI [0.62, 3.23], $p$ = .004, $d$ = 0.79 (medium). These findings suggest that male educators aged 30-39 years-old held more positive attitudes regarding the available wellbeing policies and curricula than did their all of their older counterparts.

*Table 5.17. Pol_Cur Analysis of Variance*

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 756.627[a] | 28 | 27.02 | 4.56 | .00 | .32 |
| Intercept | 18464.67 | 1 | 18464.67 | 3116.51 | .00 | .92 |
| Gender | 24.91 | 1 | 24.91 | 4.21 | .04 | .02 |
| Age | 46.16 | 3 | 15.39 | 2.60 | .05 | .03 |
| Position | 83.40 | 2 | 41.70 | 7.04 | .00 | .05 |
| Num_students | 5.26 | 1 | 5.26 | 0.89 | .35 | .00 |
| Single Sex/Co-Ed. | 3.37 | 2 | 1.68 | 0.28 | .75 | .00 |
| Urb/Rur | 1.40 | 1 | 1.40 | 0.24 | .63 | .00 |
| DEIS/NonDEIS | 7.42 | 1 | 7.42 | 1.25 | .26 | .00 |
| Streaming/V. Education | 100.69 | 4 | 25.17 | 4.25 | .00 | .06 |
| Gender * Age | 124.11 | 3 | 41.37 | 6.98 | .00 | .07 |
| Gender * Position | 14.37 | 2 | 7.19 | 1.21 | .30 | .01 |
| Gender * Single Sex/Co-Ed. | 28.30 | 2 | 14.15 | 2.39 | .09 | .02 |
| Num_students* Urb/Rur | 0.03 | 1 | 0.03 | 0.01 | .94 | .00 |
| Urb/Rur * DEIS/NonDEIS | 10.14 | 1 | 10.14 | 1.71 | .19 | .01 |
| Urb/Rur * Streaming/V. Education | 9.08 | 4 | 2.27 | 0.38 | .82 | .01 |
| Error | 1629.32 | 275 | 5.92 | | | |
| Total | 94613.00 | 304 | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 2385.94 | 303 | | | | |

a. R Squared = .317 (Adjusted R Squared = .248)

Pol_Cur EMM scores among female educators were 17.94 (*SE* = 0.62) for the 18-29 year-old group, 17.72 (*SE* = 0.48) for the 30-39 year-old group, 18.98 (*SE* = 0.50) for the 40-49 year-old group and 17.54 (*SE* = 0.49) for the 50+ group (see Table 5.18). Analyses identified a statistically significant mean difference between female educators aged 30-39 and female educators aged 40-49 of -0.96, 95% CI [-1.86, -0.06], *p* = .04, *d* = 0.39 (small). There was also a statistically significant difference between female educators aged 40-49 and the 50+ age group, mean difference 1.14, 95% CI [0.24, 2.05], *p* = .01, *d* = 0.47 (small). These findings suggest that female participants aged 40-49 years old held more positive attitudes regarding the available wellbeing policies and curricula than did their counterparts aged 30-39 and aged 50 and over.

Table 5.18. Pol_Cur Estimates for Gender by Age

| Gender | Age | n | Mean | Std. Error | 95% CI for Mean | |
|--------|-----|---|------|-----------|-------|-------|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Male | 18-29 | 8 | 17.36 | 1.00 | 15.40 | 19.33 |
| | 30-39 | 26 | 18.21 | 0.56 | 17.10 | 19.32 |
| | 40-49 | 39 | 15.63 | 0.52 | 14.60 | 16.65 |
| | 50+ | 34 | 16.28 | 0.53 | 15.24 | 17.33 |
| Female | 18-29 | 20 | 17.94 | 0.62 | 16.71 | 19.16 |
| | 30-39 | 58 | 17.72 | 0.48 | 16.78 | 18.66 |
| | 40-49 | 62 | 18.68 | 0.50 | 17.70 | 19.67 |
| | 50+ | 57 | 17.54 | 0.49 | 16.58 | 18.50 |

As statistically significant differences were observed between 30-39 and 40-49 year-old age groups for both male and female educators, an interaction contrast was performed to compare the differences in these groups. A statistically significant difference between the differences was found, mean difference = 3.54, 95% CI [1.99, 5.09], $p < .001$. $d = 1.45$ (large). This suggests that an increase in age group from 30-39 to 40-49 was more profoundly negative regarding male educators' Pol_Cur scores than it was positive regarding female educators' Pol_Cur scores (see Figure 5.10).

Pairwise comparisons were also conducted to examine for inter-gender differences across the different age groups. A statistical mean difference in Pol_Cur scores was identified between male and female educators aged 40-49 years-old, mean difference -3.06, 95% CI [-4.40, -1.71] $p < .001$, $d = 1.26$ (large), suggesting that female educators aged 40-49 held more positive attitudes regarding the available wellbeing policies and curricula than did their male counterpart of a similar age. All statistically significant and non-significant test results for pairwise comparisons involving position are displayed in Table 5.19. As per the ATWP results, it should be noted that moderate mean differences between the male 18-29 year-old group and the male 40-49 and 50+ age groups might be non-significant due to the small sample size of the 18-29 year-old group. Estimated marginal mean scores are presented in Figure 5.11.
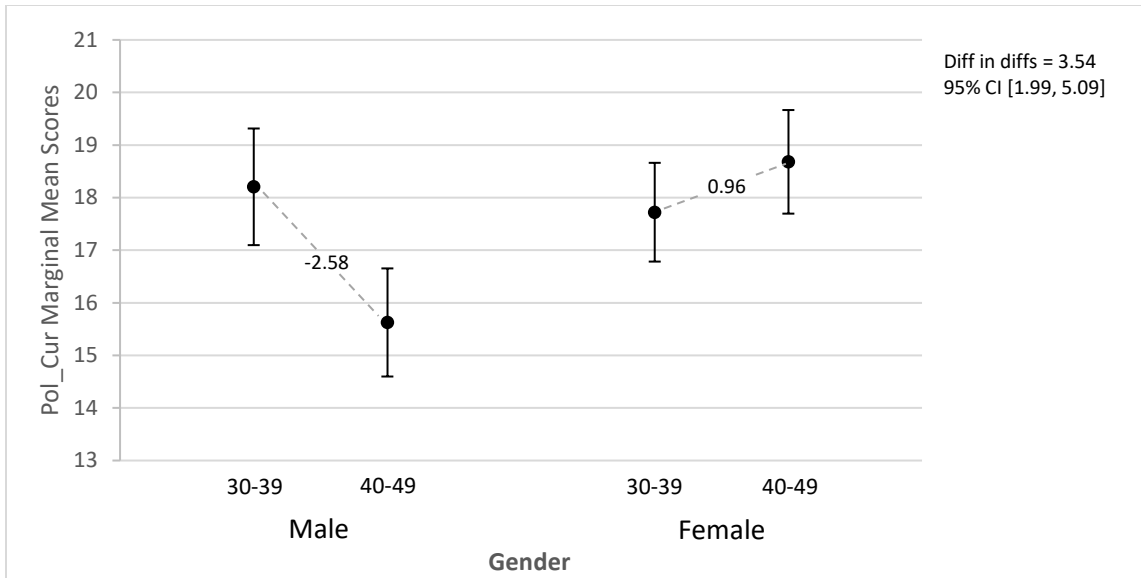
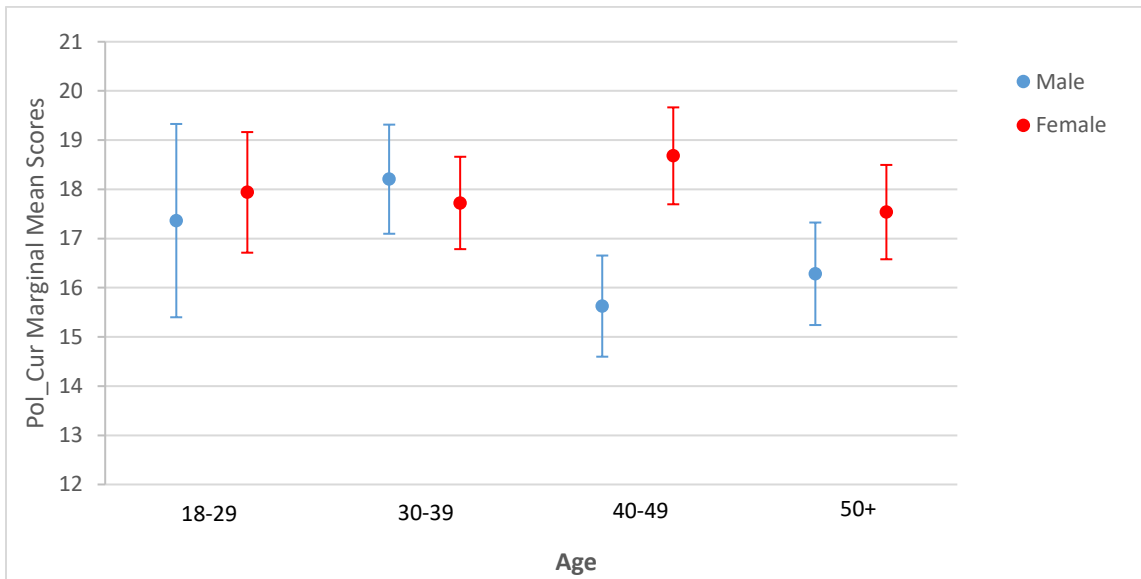*Figure 5.10. Pol_Cur Inter-Gender Difference between 30-39 and 40-49 Year-Old Age Groups*



*Figure 5.11. Scatterplot of Pol_Cur Marginal Mean Scores for Age by Gender*

*Table 5.19. Pol_Cur Pairwise Comparisons for Gender by Age*

| Gender | Age | | Mean Diff. | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% CI for Difference | | d |
|--------|-----|---|------|------|------|-------|-------|------|
| | | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| Male | 18-29 | 30-39 | -0.84 | 1.08 | .44 | -2.97 | 1.28 | 0.35 |
| | | 40-49 | 1.74 | 1.02 | .09 | -0.27 | 3.75 | 0.71 |
| | | 50+ | 1.08 | 1.05 | .30 | -0.99 | 3.15 | 0.44 |
| | 30-39 | 40-49 | 2.58 | 0.64 | .00 | 1.33 | 3.83 | 1.06 |
| | | 50+ | 1.92 | 0.66 | .00 | 0.62 | 3.23 | 0.79 |
| | 40-49 | 50+ | -0.66 | 0.59 | .27 | -1.82 | 0.51 | 0.27 |
| Female | 18-29 | 30-39 | 0.22 | 0.66 | .74 | -1.08 | 1.51 | 0.09 |
| | | 40-49 | -0.74 | 0.67 | .27 | -2.06 | 0.58 | 0.30 |
| | | 50+ | 0.40 | 0.66 | .55 | -0.90 | 1.71 | 0.16 |
| | 30-39 | 40-49 | -0.96 | 0.46 | .04 | -1.86 | -0.06 | 0.39 |
| | | 50+ | 0.19 | 0.46 | .69 | -0.72 | 1.09 | 0.08 |
| | 40-49 | 50+ | 1.14 | 0.46 | .01 | 0.24 | 2.05 | 0.47 |
| Age | Gender | | | | | | | |
| 18-29 | Male | Female | -0.57 | 1.16 | .62 | -2.85 | 1.71 | 0.24 |
| 30-39 | Male | Female | 0.48 | 0.69 | .49 | -0.88 | 1.85 | 0.20 |
| 40-49 | Male | Female | -3.06 | 0.68 | .00 | -4.40 | -1.71 | 1.26 |
| 50+ | Male | Female | -1.25 | 0.68 | .07 | -2.59 | 0.08 | 0.52 |

## 5.3.6  Position

Pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine for mean differences among principals/vice principals, teachers and guidance counsellors who had ATWP EMM scores of 17.81 ($SE$ = 0.45), 16.43 ($SE$ = 0.26) and 18.01 ($SE$ = 0.64) respectively (see Table 5.20). Analyses identified a statistically significant mean difference between principals/vice principals and teachers of 1.38, 95% CI [0.53, 2.23], $p$ < .001, $d$ = 0.57 (medium). There was also a statistically significant difference between teachers and guidance counsellors of -1.58, 95% CI [-2.88, -0.28], $p$ = .02, $d$ = 0.65 (medium). These findings suggest that teachers held less positive attitudes regarding the available wellbeing policies and curricula than did both principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors. All statistically significant and non-significant test results for pairwise comparisons involving position are displayed in Table 5.21. Estimated marginal mean scores are presented in Figure 5.12.

*Table 5.20. Pol_Cur Estimates for Position*

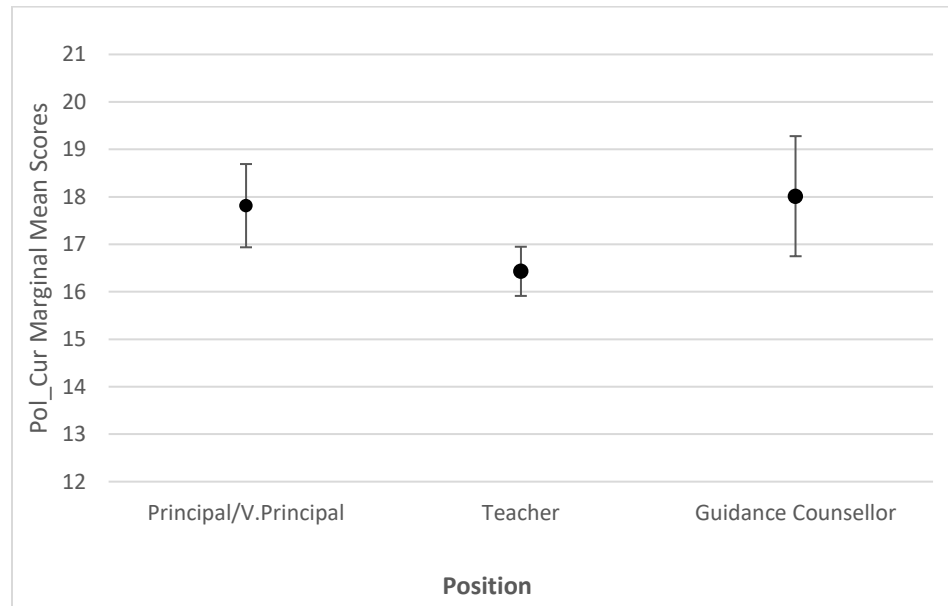|  |  |  |  | 95% CI for Mean | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Position | n | Mean | Std. Error | Lower | Upper |
| Principal/V. Principal | 52 | 17.81 | 0.45 | 16.94 | 18.69 |
| Teacher | 234 | 16.43 | 0.26 | 15.91 | 16.95 |
| Guidance Counsellor | 18 | 18.01 | 0.64 | 16.75 | 19.28 |



*Figure 5.12. Scatterplot of Pol_Cur Marginal Mean Scores by Position*

*Table 5.21. Pol_Cur Pairwise Comparisons for Position*

|  |  |  |  |  | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference | |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Position |  | Mean Diff. | Std. Error | Sig. | Lower | Upper | d |
| Principal/V. Principal | Teacher | 1.38 | 0.43 | .00 | 0.53 | 2.23 | 0.57 |
|  | Guidance Counsellor | -0.20 | 0.74 | .79 | -1.65 | 1.25 | 0.08 |
| Teacher | Guidance Counsellor | -1.58 | 0.66 | .02 | -2.88 | -0.28 | 0.65 |

### 5.3.7 Streaming/Vertical Education

Pol_Cur EMM scores by educational practice were 17.68 (*SE* = 0.40) for *streaming*, 18.12 (*SE* = 0.38) for vertical education, 16.45 (*SE* = 0.49) for the *both* group, 18.37 (*SE* = 0.35) for the *neither* group, and 16.48 (*SE* = 0.87) for the *don't know* group. Descriptive statistics for

streaming/vertical education are displayed in Table 5.22. Pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine for mean differences among these groups. Analyses identified statistically significant mean differences between the *both* group and the *streaming* group, mean difference = -1.23, 95% CI [-2.30, -0.15], *p* = .03, *d* = 0.50 (medium), the *vertical education* group, mean difference = -1.68, 95% CI [-2.76, -0.59], *p* = .003, *d* = 0.69 (medium), and the *neither* group, mean difference = -1.92, 95% CI [-2.95, -0.89], *p* < .001, *d* = 0.79 (medium). These findings suggest that educators in schools where both streaming and vertical education were employed held less positive attitudes regarding the available wellbeing policies and curricula than did their counterparts in schools where neither or only one of these educational practices were employed.

There was also a statistically significant mean difference between the *neither* group and the *don't know* group of 1.90, 95% CI [0.16, 3.63], *p* = .03, *d* = 0.78 (medium). This suggested that educators in schools where neither streaming nor vertical education were employed held more positive attitudes regarding the available wellbeing policies and curricula than did their counterparts who were unsure if either of these educational practices were in play. Estimated marginal mean scores are presented in Figure 5.13. All statistically significant and non-significant test results for pairwise comparisons involving position are displayed in Table 5.23. As previously noted, a number of non-significant moderate mean differences involving the *don't know* group could be non-significant due to this group's small sample size.

*Table 5.22. Pol_Cur Estimates for Streaming/V. Education*

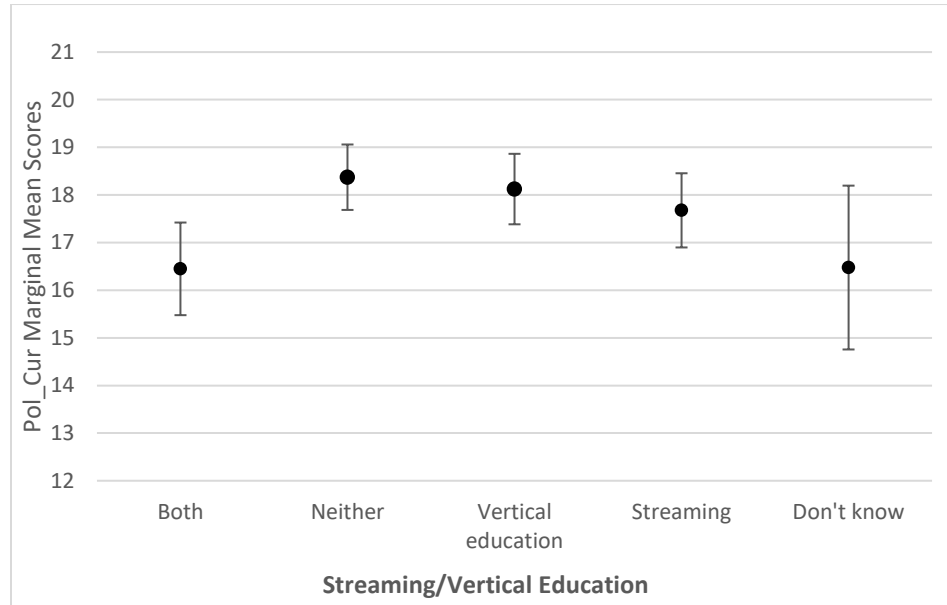| Streaming/V. Education | n | Mean | Std. Error | 95% CI for Mean | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Both | 36 | 16.45 | 0.49 | 15.48 | 17.42 |
| Neither | 121 | 18.37 | 0.35 | 17.69 | 19.06 |
| Vertical education | 71 | 18.12 | 0.38 | 17.38 | 18.86 |
| Streaming | 67 | 17.68 | 0.40 | 16.90 | 18.46 |
| Don't know | 9 | 16.48 | 0.87 | 14.76 | 18.20 |

*Figure 5.13. Scatterplot of Pol_Cur Marginal Mean Scores by Streaming/Vertical Education*

*Table 5.23. Pol_Cur Pairwise Comparisons for Streaming/V. Education*

| Streaming/V. Education | | Mean Diff. | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% CI for Difference | | d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| Both | Streaming | -1.23 | 0.55 | .03 | -2.30 | -0.15 | 0.50 |
| | Vertical education | -1.68 | 0.55 | .00 | -2.76 | -0.59 | 0.69 |
| | Neither | -1.92 | 0.52 | .00 | -2.95 | -0.89 | 0.79 |
| | Don't know | -0.03 | 0.95 | .98 | -1.91 | 1.85 | 0.01 |
| Neither | Streaming | 0.70 | 0.41 | .09 | -0.12 | 1.51 | 0.29 |
| | Vertical education | 0.25 | 0.39 | .53 | -0.52 | 1.02 | 0.10 |
| | Don't know | 1.90 | 0.88 | .03 | 0.16 | 3.63 | 0.78 |
| V. Education | Streaming | 0.45 | 0.45 | .32 | -0.43 | 1.32 | 0.18 |
| | Don't know | 1.65 | 0.89 | .07 | -0.11 | 3.40 | 0.68 |
| Streaming | Don't know | 1.20 | 0.91 | .19 | -0.58 | 2.98 | 0.49 |

138

## 5.4    Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the quantitative finding of the Phase One analysis. Several areas of statistically significant differences in educators' attitudes were found. A statistically significant interaction was found between gender and age. The findings suggest that more positive attitudes were prevalent among middle-aged participants. For the male group, higher levels of positivity were observed among early middle-aged participants, while for the female group, higher levels of positivity were observed among late middle-aged participants. At late middle-age, female participants were also found to be more positive than their male counterparts. These findings were consistent across the ATWP and Pol_Cur subscale.

A statistically significant interaction was also found between gender and the single-sex/co-educational status of participants' schools. Male participants in all-boys schools tended to have more positive attitudes than did their counterparts in all-girls schools, while female participants in all-girls schools tended to have more positive attitudes than did their counterparts in co-educational schools. In all-girls schools, female participants were found to demonstrate more positive attitudes than did male participants. These findings were consistent across the ATWP and the Well_Pro subscale.

Participants who identified as a principal/vice-principal demonstrated more positive attitudes than did participants who identified as being a teacher. This was consistent across the ATWP and both the Pol_Cur and Well_Pro subscales.

Participants from schools where both streaming and vertical education were employed were found to hold less positive attitudes than their counterparts from schools where one or neither of these educational practices were employed. Participants from schools where neither of these educational practices were employed were also found to be more positive than their counterparts who were unsure if either of these practices were employed in their school. These findings were consistent across the ATWP and Pol_Cur subscale, as well as in the rural context for the Well_Pro subscale.

When examining median possible values for ATWP (M = 30), Pol_Cur and Well_Pro (M = 15), and the non-composite items (M = 3), it can be seen that mean and estimated

marginal mean values for respective analyses are almost universally higher than respective median possible values[16]. Exceptions were observed in rural schools that practice both streaming and vertical education, as well as those who were unsure if either of these practices were employed in their school, and pertained to participants' attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing. This suggests that participants' attitudes in almost all analysed groups were to some degree positive.

The mean differences and effect sizes for statistically significant findings pertaining to ATWP and sub-scale GLMs are illustrated Table 5.24. In the following sections, the results for each of these GLMs will be presented in detail.

---

[16] As the analysis required all response values to be filled, the range of possible scores for ATWP, Well_Pro and Pol_Cur, and non-composite items were 10-50, 5-25 and 1-5 respectively.

*Table 5.24. Statistically Significant Results of Post-Hoc Testing Across GLMs*

| | | | ATWP | | POL_CUR | | WELL_PRO | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | **Age** | | Mean Diff. | d | Mean Diff. | d | Mean Diff. | d |
| Male | 30-39 | 40-49 | 4.04** | 0.80 | 2.58*** | 1.06 | | |
| | | 50+ | 3.29* | 0.65 | 1.92** | 0.79 | | |
| Female | 30-39 | 40-49 | -2.67* | 0.53 | -0.96* | 0.39 | | |
| | 40-49 | 50+ | 2.30* | 0.45 | 1.14* | 0.47 | | |
| **Age** | **Gender** | | | | | | | |
| 40-49 | Male | Female | -7.11*** | 1.40 | -3.06*** | 1.26 | | |
| 50+ | Male | Female | -4.06*** | 0.80 | | | | |
| **Gender** | **Single Sex/Co Ed.** | | | | | | | |
| Male | All-boys | All-girls | 3.29* | 0.65 | | | 1.84* | 0.66 |
| | | Co-education | | | | | 1.63* | 0.59 |
| Female | All-girls | Co-education | 2.94* | 0.58 | | | 1.83** | 0.66 |
| **Single Sex/Co Ed.** | **Gender** | | | | | | | |
| All-girls | Male | Female | -6.75*** | 1.33 | | | -3.90*** | 1.41 |
| Co-education | Male | Female | | | | | -1.87* | 0.68 |
| **Streaming/V. Education** | **Urban/Rural** | | | | | | | |
| Both | Urban | Rural | | | | | 2.83* | 1.02 |
| | **Streaming/V. Education** | | | | | | Rural | |
| | Both | Streaming | -2.67* | 0.53 | -1.23* | 0.50 | -2.59* | 0.93 |
| | | Vertical education | -4.69*** | 0.93 | -1.68** | 0.69 | -3.92*** | 1.41 |
| | | Neither | -5.42*** | 1.07 | -1.92*** | 0.79 | -3.96*** | 1.43 |
| | Neither | Streaming | 2.75** | 0.54 | | | | |
| | | Don't know | 4.78* | 0.94 | 1.90* | 0.78 | 3.66* | 1.32 |
| | V. Education | Streaming | 2.02* | 0.40 | | | | |
| | | Don't know | 4.04* | 0.80 | | | 3.61* | 1.31 |
| | | | | | | | Urban | |
| | Neither | Streaming | | | | | 2.11*** | 0.76 |
| | **Position** | | | | | | | |
| | Principal/V. Principal | Teacher | 2.93** | 0.58 | 1.38** | 0.57 | 1.30* | 0.47 |
| | Teacher | Guidance Counsellor | | | -1.58* | 0.65 | | |

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

# Chapter Six: Results – Phase Two

## 6.1  Introduction

This chapter presents the results of a reflexive thematic analysis of Phase Two data. At the conclusion of the first iteration of phase three of the RTA (generating initial themes), four themes were interpreted from the data (see Figure 6.1). However, further iterations of analysis resulted in a number of revisions to the initial themes. Inspection of the prospective sub-theme 'sources of negative affect' in relation to the theme 'recognising educator wellbeing' resulted in a new interpretation of the constituent coded data items. This resulted in the 'sources of negative affect' sub-theme being split into two new sub-themes; 'work-related negative affect' and 'the influence of wellbeing promotion'. The 'actions to improve educator wellbeing' sub-theme was folded into these sub-themes, with remedial measures for each issue being discussed in respective sub-themes. The theme 'factors inhibiting wellbeing promotion' was particularly dense and somewhat incoherent. This theme was re-evaluated and broken down into three different themes.
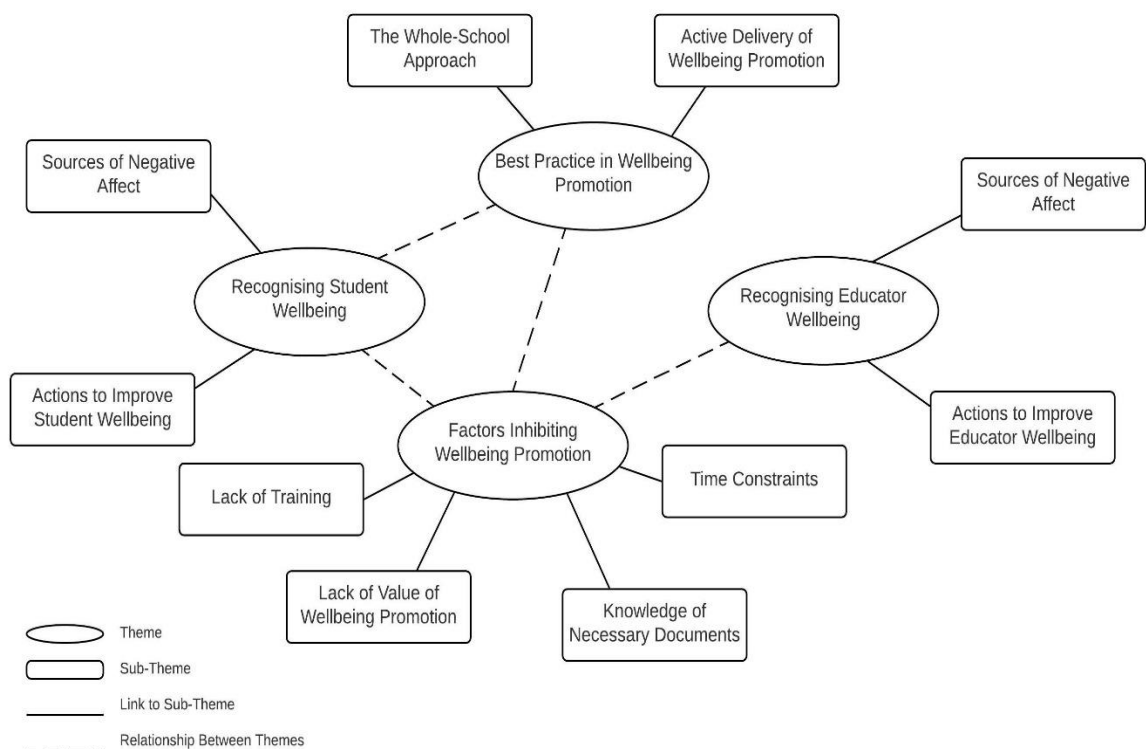


*Figure 6.1. Initial Thematic Map*

The candidate sub-theme entitled 'time constraints' was reconceptualised to move past merely describing time constraints as an inhibitive factor in wellbeing promotion. A more thorough account of the bi-directional nature of time constraints was realised, which acknowledged that previously existing time constraints affected wellbeing promotion, while wellbeing promotion compounded previously existing time constraints. This added an analysis of the way in which the introduction of wellbeing promotion also produced time constraints in relation to core curricular activities. The candidate sub-themes 'lack of training' and 'knowledge of necessary documents' were re-evaluated and considered to be topical rather than thematic aspects of the data. Constituent coded data items of these two sub-themes appeared to be informative of a single narrative of participants attending to their students' wellbeing in an atheoretical manner. As such, these two candidate sub-themes were folded into each other to produce the theme 'incompletely theorised agreements'.

Finally, the full potential of the data that informed the candidate sub-theme 'lack of value of wellbeing promotion' was not realised. An important distinction was made in that participants held differing perceptions of the value attributed to wellbeing promotion by educators and by students. Further, educators' perceptions of wellbeing promotion were not necessarily negative and should not be exclusively presented as an inhibitive factor in wellbeing promotion. A new theme, named 'the axiology of wellbeing' and informed by the sub-themes 'students' valuation of wellbeing promotion' and 'educators' valuation of wellbeing promotion', was developed to delineate this multifaceted understanding of participants' accounts of the value of wellbeing promotion.

Upon completion of the RTA, a total of five themes were interpreted from the data, with themes one, three and five each consisting of two sub-themes. A map of these themes and sub-themes is presented in Figure 6.2. The structure of the thematic map suggests that knowledge, value and time are necessary pre-requisites for educators in order to appropriately deliver best practice in wellbeing promotion. It also appears evident that educators must be content in their own sense of wellbeing in order to invest sufficiently in the task of promoting student wellbeing. A complete thematic framework of themes, sub-themes and codes can be seen in Appendix 7. Phase Two Thematic Framework
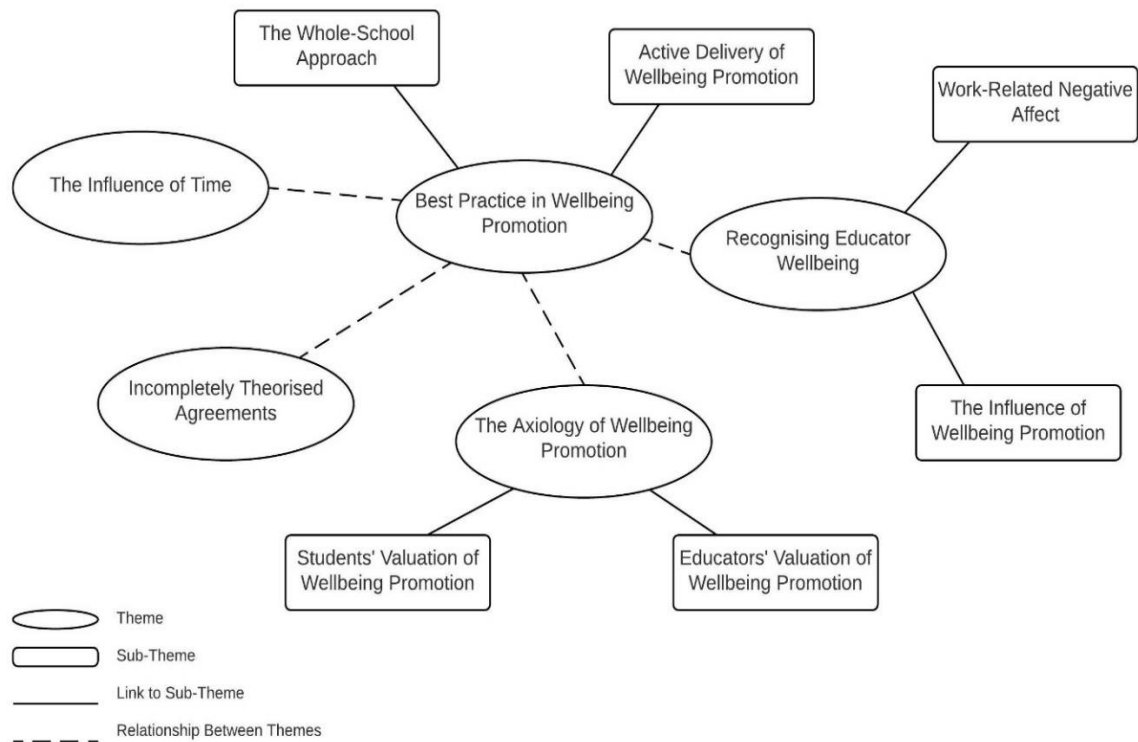
*Figure 6.2. Finalised Thematic Map*

In keeping with the tenets of reflexive thematic analysis, the narratives informing each theme are provided in both an illustrative and analytical manner. When reporting the results of RTA, data can be presented illustratively, providing a surface-level description of what participants said, or analytically, interrogating what has been interpreted to be important about what participants said and contextualising this in relation to the available literature. If the researcher were aiming to produce a more illustrative write-up of the analysis, relating the results to the available literature would tend to be held until the 'discussion' section of the report. If the researcher were aiming to produce an analytical write-up, data would tend to be contextualised in relation to the literature as and when it is reported in the 'results' section (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Terry et al., 2017). This thesis takes a predominantly analytical approach. As such, each theme contains illustrative narratives of participants' accounts, as well as theoretically informed analyses contextualised in relation to available literature.

**6.2     Theme One: Best Practice in Wellbeing Promotion**

Theme one illustrates the factors that participants communicated to be conducive to best practice in wellbeing promotion. Two sub-themes were interpreted in this regard. The first, "active delivery of wellbeing promotion", relates to the active and pro-active delivery of wellbeing promotion, as well as the activities and exercises that may be utilised. The second sub-theme, "the whole-school approach", highlights important environmental factors as communicated by participants, as well as educator dispositions that should be evident among school staff.

**6.2.1     Sub-theme One: Active Delivery of Wellbeing Promotion**

Active delivery of wellbeing promotion was predicated on the behaviour of educators in identifying and pursuing opportunities to promote student wellbeing and encouraging students to participate in wellbeing-orientated activities. It was expected that schools and educators be pro-active in seeking opportunities to promote student wellbeing, with participants often communicating their belief that educators should exhibit referent behaviours in relation to their students. This was said to require that educators demonstrate to their students a willingness and desire to establish close interpersonal relationships while also attending to their pastoral care role. Participants highlighted numerous casual and informal behaviours that they felt were conducive to establishing referent relationships with students: *"…it's about smiling and saying hello to a youngster in the morning. It's about looking out for that youngster who sits alone at lunchtime" [P3].* Other such behaviours included engaging with students 'in the yard', actively participating in game days, and 'having a cup of tea and a chat' with students when the opportunity may arise. It was clarified that the type of behaviour was not necessarily important. Rather, emphasis was placed upon using these behaviours to demonstrate to students an openness to a relationship further than the typical student/educator dynamic. Pursuing relationships with students in this manner has been found to inform a greater sense of student/educator relatedness, which in turn can augment student motivation and wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2010). As much as it was believed that this approach was beneficial in terms of building relationships, participants tended to maintain awareness of their pastoral role and their potential requirement to attend to remedial actions. Advocacy for engaging in this type of

146

informal approach was frequently punctuated by the need for educators to be 'switched on' and looking for potential issues students may not be vocalising.

> *"…some students won't come to you with a problem. Some will retreat into themselves, some will mitch…you know, they won't come in" [P7].*

> *"You can't just wait for them to come to you with a problem they're having. You have to be on the lookout for it. You have to talk to them, you know, start the conversation. You have to let them know that you're there for them" [P11].*

A number of formal structural factors were also proposed to demonstrate pro-active engagement in wellbeing promotion. These included schools holding periodic meetings to discuss potential wellbeing issues and ensuring adequate levels of training for staff in relation to addressing such issues. However, discussions around these factors tended to be quite vague, with participants tending to emphasise the importance of engaging with students. When discussing the implications of formal structures in pro-active wellbeing promotion, one participant did take the opportunity to express concern regarding the capability of their school – and indeed all schools – to develop relevant policies and practices pro-actively.

> *"See, it depends on the schools' history. What has happened over the years in the school. You know you realise there are certain needs that need to be dealt with. And that's certainly the case in our school – probably most schools – where something happens, there's a critical incident, and you realise that you need to do certain things" [P4].*

This participant communicated an appreciation for pro-activity in engaging in wellbeing promotion. However, in this excerpt, it is also highlighted that the ability of educators to be pro-active may sometimes be predicated on schools having previous experience of a given issue. The participant takes a retrospective approach to pro-activity, understanding that in some instances a critical incident would need to have occurred within the school in order for staff to be able to know of, and pro-actively seek to prevent further occurrences of, this incident. For example, schools may be well situated to pro-actively attend to issues of bullying. However, the onset of smartphones would have introduced a

new dynamic to bullying behaviour (i.e. cyberbullying), to which schools could only respond retrospectively. As occurrences of cyberbullying were perpetrated in school, educators could react by updating policies and practices, and attend to the prevention of this, now recognisable, threat to student wellbeing. As new potential threats in this regard are recognised in the wider discourse, schools can and often do act appropriately in an attempt to insulate students against these threats. The above participant attested to this in relation to their school: *"we don't wait until something happens before we all meet" [P4].* However, it may often be the case that a critical incident would need to occur before educators would be able to identify that to which they should pro-actively attend.

In relation to structural factors, pro-activity was most readily identifiable with regard to the wellbeing curriculum. Student involvement in the delivery of lessons was merited, with participants arguing this to be a more relatable and engaging way to deliver the likes of SPHE and CSPE. Participants – particularly those that deliver the wellbeing curriculum – were aware that the content of the likes of SPHE and CSPE could be quite abstract and might sometimes be difficult for students to relate to and understand. There was also an awareness that students may not understand why some aspects of this curriculum are important. To remedy these issues, some participants argued that educators adopt appropriate teaching methodologies to capture and maintain the interest of students. When speaking of CSPE, a participant who delivers this subject identified that students can often be very interested in aspects of the curriculum, and that this needed to be nurtured by delivering it in an appropriate and engaging manner.

> *"…in Civics class, for example, in CSPE. [pause] Nobody wants to listen to how to be a good citizen! Nobody – well, that's the thing – a lot of them are actually interested in politics. But it's topical politics. It's things like climate change, and gender equality, and racism. That kind of thing seems to really capture their imagination […] So if you keep it topical and keep it interactive, you know, have some debates and that, they'll be very keen" [P10].*

The use of debates was endorsed by a number of participants as a way to facilitate deeper learning, while also securing increased student engagement. Drama, or 'acting things out', was also reported to be employed in several participants' schools in this regard. Another participant – an SPHE educator – identified how using drama to deliver SPHE can

also make the wellbeing guidelines more relatable. Indeed, employing activities such as debates and drama can instil in students a sense of autonomy and ownership of the learning process, which research has identified to be a highly appropriate educational practice (Deci & Ryan, 2010).

> *"…act it out (a bullying incident) and then have a silence afterwards. You know, 'how did that feel? How did that feel to be that person?' You know, it's the only way to make it (wellbeing) relatable to students. Some students might be able to take a term and apply it, the vast majority won't. They need to see it in action"* [P4].

Participants identified a host of other activities that they believed were conducive to an active and practical approach to wellbeing promotion. These included meditation, mindfulness, yoga, playing a musical instrument, dancing and colouring in, as well as more structured activities such as team sports. For example, meditation, mindfulness and yoga were highlighted as activities that could be incorporated into SPHE classes. While it was widely appreciated that participation in such activities is beneficial to student wellbeing, it was regularly communicated that the goal was more so to teach these activities to students so that they could use them in the future as needed.

> *"…we definitely need to be teaching them practical ways to look after their own wellbeing. So, things like meditation, mindfulness, body-awareness, I think these are the kind of things we should be teaching. Skills that they can go home and use when needed"* [P1].

Promoting these activities was often less about potentially improving students' wellbeing in the moment, and more so a matter of providing students with a range of tools that they may use on a continual basis to attend to their own wellbeing. This subscribes to the NCCA (2017 p.11) dictum that educators should view wellbeing promotion as "a process of 'well-becoming', where young people are gaining knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will sustain them throughout their lives". In this sense, engaging in these activities in school is as much instructional as it is remedial, in that it is also very important to communicate to students how these activities are beneficial to their wellbeing. This sentiment was observed among participants, who often expressed the importance that

students understand the 'theory and practice' of these activities. One participant used football as an analogy to explain this dichotomy.

> "There's two different aspect, and it needs to be seen that way. There's the
> learning – it's like playing football; you need to know the rules of how to play,
> you need to, you know, know the formations and tactics and that. Then
> there's the actual playing of the game" [P5].

For this participant, it was very important that students understand how and why particular activities are beneficial to their wellbeing, and subsequently why it is worth engaging in these activities. Elaborating on this analogy, this participant discussed how students learning how to look after their own wellbeing in this way was also inherently beneficial to their wellbeing. An exemplar was offered in relation to yoga. The participant communicated an understanding that it is one thing to know of some of the different postures, but it is another to know how to pose correctly in these postures. It is yet another thing to pose in these postures. By discussing the 'theory and practice' of wellbeing, this participant – as did others – differentiated between knowledge and behaviour, and highlighted the intrinsic value of learning and mastering new skills and activities. More often than not, participants emphasised the importance of this learning over any particular type of activity. This is an apt observation and is supported within the literature. The development of competence has been identified as an important aspect of wellbeing, while the continued investment and engagement in these types of activities has been linked to the actualising process (Ryff, 2014).

When discussing wellbeing-orientated activities, PE was identified as an important and potentially under-valued aspect of the wellbeing curriculum. Physical health and fitness was most strongly associated with PE in terms of beneficial wellbeing outcomes, however, these were often related back to students' social and emotional wellbeing. Direct links were made between physical and psychological health, while the activities typical of PE were related to sociability among students.

> "I will say that PE is a very important part of the wellbeing curriculum. And, I
> think some people might overlook that because it's not necessarily…directly
> related to…psychological wellbeing, and psychological health. But, I think

150

*being active is very, very important, and very good for your mental health. I*
*think staying active keeps your mood up, it strengthens your immune system,*
*it can build your social abilities" [P7].*

The promotion of sociability presented as an additional benefit of PE that was not perceived to be afforded by activities such as yoga or meditation. This did not preclude such activities from being pursued during PE. However, participants did tend to use discussions regarding PE to highlight the importance of students' social wellbeing. While particular sports were not identified, 'team sports' were heavily implicated in relation to PE. Discussions that moved in this direction often saw participants advocating for students to become involved in extra-curricular organised sports. Indeed, research has identified the benefits of team sports, and that young people largely tend to enjoy sports and PE (Fredrick & Eccles, 2008; Delaney, 2013). However, it has also been found that participation in extra-curricular team sports can be predictive of risky behaviour and substance misuse (Blomfield & Barber, 2010; Dougherty, 2015). Further, while Delaney (2013) found most students to enjoy sports, it was noted that many preferred other types of less rigorous activities. This was observed by one participant when speaking about the importance of encouraging sociability:

*"I think a really good way to promote wellbeing is to promote…you*
*know…socialness – you know, promote pro-social activity. So, I'd always*
*encourage pupils to join a (sports) team. Or, you know, pursue their interest.*
*So, if you're more into those table-top games – my son loves the Game of*
*Thrones game. So, if you're more into those games, you know, get together*
*and actually play them!" [P8].*

This participant highlighted that students should pursue activities they find most meaningful, which is in keeping with the pervading sentiment of de-emphasising specific types of activities. As previously identified, some participants emphasised the link between certain activities and student autonomy and involvement in learning, while others emphasised the development of competence in appropriate skillsets. In this instance, the participatory aspect is emphasised and allied to students' need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2010).

While most participants could easily relate many types of activities to an active process of 'well-becoming', only a small number were also able to relate this process back to the greater curriculum. Woodwork and home economics were recognised by some participants for their practical nature, which was considered highly conducive to augmenting students' wellbeing. Speaking about home economics, one participant said; *"it's fun and it's very tactile, and it gets the students working with their hands" [P10]*. Participants recognised the advantageous latent function of these subjects, in that the delivery of these subjects is inherently active and this activity promotes the development of competence in useful life-long skills. This particular participant painted an image of home economics being enjoyable for students and contributing to lifting students' moods in the moment, while also equipping students with these important skills, which may be used later in life.

### 6.2.2   Sub-theme Two: The Whole-School Approach

A whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion was proposed to be a fundamental aspect of best practice in wellbeing promotion. The whole-school approach was said to require the involvement of the entire school community, including management, teachers, support staff, and students, but to be driven by a number of key positions including wellbeing coordinators, pastoral care team members and guidance counsellors: *"you start with – you delegate those 'official' roles. Your guidance counsellor, your (wellbeing) coordinator. But, you support them. Everyone gets involved…and stays involved" [P7]*. The whole-school approach was said to oblige the entire school staff to have some degree of capability to attend to their students' wellbeing, with all teaching staff having a working knowledge of relevant policies and curricula. One participant clarified how this requirement was actioned in their school, and how it was beneficial to wellbeing promotion.

> *"Our principal wants us all to have some kind of level of … erm … ability … to do the wellbeing thing. Other teachers have done a lot more (training) – the ones that are actually doing the SPHE classes! But, we've all been and done something (some training)." [P6].*

A high degree of importance was attributed to the involvement of the entire school staff in delivering a whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion, with the level of staff

involvement in the whole-school approach thought to be indicative of a school's culture and ethos. The perceived strength of a school's culture and ethos was constructed by participants in relation to the perceived level of staff support, openness (e.g. 'an open-door policy'), involvement, and leadership, both in relation to students and each other. While participants appreciated factors such as wellbeing activities and educator training, culture and ethos seemed to transcend these in terms of importance.

> "…you know, culture and the way we live that day-to-day, I think is really, really important. And, without that, it doesn't matter how many hours you put on or say are mandatory…or what you put in a timetable. If that bit doesn't exist and doesn't work, you're wasting your time" [P3].

This participant – as did others – made specific reference to the NCCA (2017) mandate requiring schools to allocate a minimum of 300 hours to wellbeing promotion over the course of the junior-cycle. While participants recognised the importance of this mandate, some were quick to suggest the futility of this venture if staff are not inclined toward the promotion of student wellbeing. Indeed, the NCCA (2017) highlight the centrality of school staff in the process of wellbeing promotion, while much research has also highlighted the importance of positive educator perceptions when aiming to deliver positive outcomes regarding student wellbeing (e.g. Forman et al., 2008; Jamtsho, 2015; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

The importance of positive educator perceptions was not lost on the participants, who attributed value to the concept of educator buy-in proportionate to the value attributed within the literature. Buy-in was identified as an important precursor to the whole-school approach, which, again, is in keeping with the literature examined by Jamtsho (2015). To some participants, buy-in was indicative of an educators' positive perceptions of wellbeing promotion and their willingness and desire, not only to engage with their students, but also to support their colleagues in achieving best practice. To this end, some participants considered buy-in to be a crucial criterion when selecting staff to fill the aforementioned key positions.

> "People need to want to help each other. People need to be able to see the benefit of helping each other. If someone isn't optimistic, or doesn't see the

*value, they'll likely neither seek help, nor offer it. You need the buy-in. You*
*need people to see the value in coming together…" [P2].*

*"…my AP-1 (assistant principal-1) cares, and she's actually in charge of SPHE*
*and junior-cycle implementation, which is really useful. That's a good way of*
*making sure that wellbeing is at the heart of any plan around junior-cycle*
*implementation in schools. People need to really think about who they're*
*putting in there" [P3].*

Some participants also demonstrated an acute awareness of the importance of selecting an appropriate educator to deliver the wellbeing curriculum. In addition to being adequately trained, it was proposed that this educator should be enthusiastic about wellbeing promotion, but also be able and willing to pro-actively engage with young people. Moreover, it was considered that this educator should have a personality that would predispose them to the pastoral care inherent in the wellbeing curriculum, and that they should be comfortable with the 'difficult conversations' that may invariably arise when discussing sensitive subjects such as substance abuse, relationships, sex, and sexuality. However, concern was expressed that these criteria often were not observed, and that the allocation of an educator to SPHE was sometimes predicated upon availability more so than suitability.

*"So, this is how it works. 'A P.E. teacher has 24 lessons of P.E. He needs*
*another five lessons. I'll throw him into SPHE'. Now, that P.E. teacher might be*
*the last person in the world who should be delivering it because, number one,*
*he (hypothetically) doesn't see any importance in it. Number two, he hasn't*
*the personality, you know, to deliver the stuff around sex, around drugs and*
*alcohol. People shy away from that. They won't have hard conversations with*
*youngsters about that, or anything that's challenging. And that's the sort of*
*people you should not be letting near SPHE" [P3].*

This participant – a deputy-principal – illustrated how the selection of an inappropriate educator to deliver SPHE can come to fruition and how this may negatively influence best practice in wellbeing promotion. The participant referenced their experience working in several different schools, stating that each school would have a similarly

optimistic charter or mission statement, but that the ethos and environment when 'walking around the school' could be far removed from what was communicated. This discrepancy was used to highlight the ease with which schools could purport to action a particular philosophy but succumb to erroneous practices such as allocating SPHE to the educator who has 'a couple of lessons to fill'. Indeed, for this participant, the willingness and tendency of a school to afford commensurate effort to selecting an appropriate educator to deliver SPHE was inextricably linked to the school's culture and ethos.

> *"How do you pick them, rather than throw in the person that's got a couple of*
> *lessons free? Again, I think it comes down to culture and ethos within the*
> *management and the school, and the importance they place on wellbeing and*
> *SPHE" [P3].*

Discussions around the topic of choosing an appropriate educator to deliver the wellbeing curriculum tended to be informed by negative connotations. As is illustrated in the extract above, when participant three declares "…he hasn't the personality…" and "…they won't have hard conversations…", participants often identified the criteria for what an appropriate SPHE educator is by first identifying what an appropriate SPHE educator is not. Participants were observed to engage in perceived value dissimilarity (Struch & Schwartz, 1989) – particularly at the beginning of discussions regarding this topic – identifying undesirable criteria and establishing the identity of an appropriate SPHE educator as antithetical to these criteria. Ascribing meaning or value in this way has been strongly associated with negative perceptions of the 'other' group (Struch & Schwartz, 1989; Sirin McCreary & Mahalik, 2004), in this case the inappropriate educator. Interestingly though, this convention was not observed among participants in the present study. On the contrary, the below participant was actually observed to have found humour in the negative outcomes resulting from the perceived inappropriateness of an educator delivering PE.

> *"I remember a PE teacher who used to be in the army! [laughs] So, he'd have*
> *the poor kids run ragged! [laughs]. So that was good in one sense, you know,*
> *it whipped them into shape. But…the emphasis was on fitness and not*
> *wellness. There were lots of drills, and exercises, and laps of the field!*
> *But…how hard they were pushed could upset some pupils. You know, you'd*
> *hear them complain about how hard it was. And he'd – that teacher would be*

*complaining about the amount of pupils coming in with notes (from parents)*
*saying they can't do PE today, and you're thinking 'are you surprised!?'*
*[laughs] So, you definitely need the right person for the job! [P11]".*

This participant identified that, even when an educator is highly trained in a respective aspect of the wellbeing curriculum, they still may not have a personality appropriate for promoting the wellbeing of young people. The physical educator's prioritisation of physical fitness over holistic wellness was likely influenced by a military background, and evidently had a negative effect upon the overall wellbeing of many students. This negative effect was so pervasive that it ultimately resulted in subject refusal among some students. In this case, the physical educator seemed to be unaware of the inherent issue as communicated by the participant, in that they were unable to deliver a fitness/wellness regime at an appropriate level for many of the students. Considering the tendency for educators to be 'thrown into' the wellbeing curriculum, the perspective of many participants suggest that the educator 'thrown into' the wellbeing curriculum is often as much a victim of the circumstance as are the students. However, this physical educator is evidently highly trained, so notions of victimhood excusing the inappropriateness of this educator may not carry much weight.

When discussing the appropriateness (or otherwise) of the method of wellbeing promotion in their school, some participants did acknowledge a potential disconnect between educators and students. It was proposed that this might be remedied by involving a relatable peer-group in the design and delivery of wellbeing promotion. One participant proposed the use of an age-appropriate peer-group to deliver aspects of the wellbeing curriculum. The selection of this peer-group was proposed to be as important as the selection of an appropriate educator, with this participant stating that *"you couldn't have tearaways coming talking about how drink and drugs impacted their lives"*, while also saying *"you can't have, kind of, 'squeaky clean' kids coming in telling them how to live their lives" [P2]*. However, participants were more compelled by the notion of involving the students themselves. In the below example, one participant highlights 'safe use of technology' to argue the merit of student involvement in the design of the wellbeing curriculum.

*"And, I mean, what do we know about technology compared to these kids!*
*They know so much more about social media and all of that than we do! We*

*need to get someone a bit more informed to design that (aspect of SPHE). And*

*they (the students) should be involved! Like I said, no one knows this stuff*

*better than them!" [P5].*

Another example pointed toward students being important partners in the delivery of wellbeing promotion.

*"…involve the students! Get their feedback and see how things can be*

*improved from their perspective. The other thing we do is we have prefects,*

*we have at least two prefects each year – we're not a very big school. We've*

*been doing [this] for a good few years now and, for the most part, the*

*prefects have been hugely popular! The students really take to them, and*

*they're so good at building a rapport with the students. And, they're such a*

*good source of information, students tell them a lot that they*

*wouldn't…initially tell us" [P7].*

King (2017) proposed that the two major requirements of prefects in post-primary schools are that they be agents of social control and act as role models to other students. Here though, prefects were utilised in a pastoral care role. While these prefects were employed in the traditional sense as proposed by King, they were also used as 'insiders', who were often more adept at garnering information from students regarding their wellbeing needs than were educators. Using the prefects in this manor took advantage of student peer-relationships to identify potential wellbeing issues, and appeared to expedite educators in attending to these incidents. The school was said to take great care in the selection process, monitoring prospective candidates' perception of academia and potential for pro-social activity over the course of fifth year before selecting the prefects in sixth year. The prefect programme in this participant's school was said to be very successful, with the partnership between prefects and educators perceived to make a valuable contribution to wellbeing-promoting practices.

### 6.2.3   Conclusion

A key finding interpreted from theme one was that wellbeing promotion precipitates an active and pro-active approach to delivering a wide range of wellbeing-orientated activities, but that the success of this approach was largely predicated upon the

predisposition of educators' toward wellbeing promotion. A whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion was championed, which was said to be predicated upon a school's culture and ethos. The importance of 'buy-in' and positive perceptions on the part of all school staff was acutely expressed, while participants also highlighted the necessity of selecting an appropriate educator for respective wellbeing roles. There were some concerns expressed with regard to how an educator may be assigned to deliver aspects of the wellbeing curriculum such as SPHE. It is also instructive to consider participants' use of value dissimilarity in constructing meaning with regard to what constitutes an appropriate 'wellbeing' educator. However, participants identified a number of critical factors that they believed contributed to achieving best practice in wellbeing promotion.

Viewing the analysis of theme one as a whole, the critical factors identified by participants were interpreted to be reflective of the student/teacher dialectical framework (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which is outlined in Chapter Two.

- *Autonomy*, or "the need to experience behaviour as emanating from and endorsed by the self" (Reeve, 2012 p.153), was advocated in relation to students' participation in wellbeing curriculum lessons. The merits of student-led activities such as debates and re-enactments was endorsed, which reflect appreciation for students' self-directed learning and internal locus of causality, as espoused by the dialectical framework. This was further emphasised when participants advocated for the involvement of students in the development and delivery of the wellbeing curriculum.
- *Relatedness*, which is the need to develop close bonds and secure relationships with others (Reeve, 2012), was advocated through a whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion. Participants repeatedly indicated that educators should have a caring and open disposition, and should be receptive to the needs of their students. Further, sociability among students was promoted as highly conducive to wellbeing, with participants indicating that they often encourage students in their school to avail of group or team based activities.
- Finally, *competence,* or the need to be effective in one's pursuits and desire to exercise ones capacities, was advocated through participants' promotion of

students' pursuit of their hobbies. More pointedly, competence was promoted in relation to the wellbeing-orientated activities outlined in sub-theme one.

Some participants demonstrated an understanding that, not only is engaging in activities such as yoga and meditation intrinsically beneficial to students' wellbeing, but the learning and development of competence of these activities is also highly conducive to students' actualising processes. It is questionable whether the participants may be aware of the theory. Nevertheless, they demonstrated an appreciation for the importance of students' sense of freedom and self-direction, involvement and companionship, and development of competence, in relation to best practice in wellbeing promotion.

## 6.3 Theme Two: The Axiology of Wellbeing Promotion

Theme two presents the inherent value-systems associated with wellbeing promotion. Theme two was interpreted to have been informed by two sub-themes. Sub-theme one, "educators' valuations of wellbeing promotion", illustrates the value and worth participants perceived educators to ascribe to wellbeing promotion and related curricula and guidelines. Participants also discuss a number of factors that were believed to be implicit in educators' valuations of wellbeing promotion. Sub-theme two, "students' valuations of wellbeing promotion", focused on the value and worth participants perceived students to ascribe to wellbeing promotion and related curricula and guidelines. Here, participants discussed potential causal factors in students' valuation formation, but also proposed insulating measures in relation to negative student perceptions of wellbeing promotion.

### 6.3.1 Sub-theme One: Educators' Valuations of Wellbeing Promotion

Overall, participants generally reported positive perceptions with regard to the promotion of student wellbeing. Participants highlighted the importance they attributed to wellbeing promotion, while also demonstrating a clear appreciation for both short-term and long-term outcomes for students in this regard. In the short-term, there was an awareness of the immediate impact the school environment can have upon students' wellbeing. This is widely documented in the literature, with social and academic stressors being particularly salient in the post-primary context in Ireland (O'Brien, 2008; Smyth, 2017). In the long-term, the value of wellbeing promotion was attributed to the preparation of students for their

adult lives, which in turn, is also supported by previous research (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich & Linkins, 2009; Vaillant & Davis, 2000).

> *"Well, I fully agree with making it mandatory! I think it's such an important part of their (students') learning, and their school-day. I think – I've believed for a very long time that we need to be doing more to prepare them – to prepare students for this aspect of…of life!" [P9].*

The wellbeing curriculum was considered a complimentary aspect of the wider curriculum in terms of delivering a holistic educational experience to students. Participants acknowledged the value of discussing and teaching non-academic 'life lessons', identifying a host of relevant issues in this regard such as substance misuse, physical health and 'making good decisions'. Participants also recognised the complexity inherent in negotiating social and inter-personal relationships at this stage in students' lives. In highlighting the importance of the wellbeing curriculum in this regard, one participant said, *"…most of it is stuff that students need. I think 90% of the content is stuff that really needs to be taught to students, and discussed with students. I think things like consent and relationship management are very important" [P10]*. Another participant echoed this position, saying, *"there's a lot of really good…really important stuff in there. Like, we teach our students about drink and drugs, and relationships and social pressure, and how they can all be related" [P2].* Negotiating relationships during adolescence can be a perilous developmental experience at a time when young people are often highly susceptible to the influence of social perceptions and peer-pressure. Young people can also struggle to reconcile many conflicting thoughts and emotions, which may result in a shift toward risky behaviour (O'Brien, 2008). The wellbeing curriculum was credited as affording an opportunity to teach students about these thoughts and feelings and discuss where they come from and what they mean.

Participants also welcomed the formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning. The increased recognition of wellbeing as an integral aspect of the greater curriculum was said to have added legitimacy to the wellbeing curriculum and the role educators play in nurturing students' social and emotional wellbeing. Formalisation was also considered beneficial in terms of soliciting support when attending to students' needs: *"…it's quite a positive move, isn't it! It's quite good that it's getting the recognition it*

*deserves…it's good to have that extra support – that extra recognition" [P7].* Another participant suggested that formalisation contributed to appropriately structuring the wellbeing curriculum: *"I think it's very important. And I'm very happy that it's formalised now, that there's some structure around it" [P11].* One participant valued formalisation as an opportunity to demonstrate the value of wellbeing promotion to educators who may otherwise be uninclined to attend to this aspect of their job.

> *"…there may be some teachers that…you know…forgo that responsibility. That maybe think they're just there to teach and that's it. So, adding wellbeing to the official curriculum is a very positive step forward in terms of those teachers in particular" [P7].*

Participants presenting with an underlying positivity regarding wellbeing promotion is in line with previous research that has identified this trend at an international level (Apostolidou & Fontana, 2003; Doyle, 2017; Maloney et al., 2016). However, while participants expressed how they themselves valued wellbeing promotion, some concerns were voiced regarding the perceptions of other educators. There were a number of instances when participants suggested they had colleagues who tended to 'phone it in' in relation to wellbeing promotion. One participant identified how such colleagues may negatively affect wellbeing promotion.

> *"I think some teachers can…they're not really as involved as they could be. Like, when we have a meeting, they don't really offer anything…so that probably hurts the work we're doing in terms of the whole-school approach. Particularly for new students. I mean, if one of those teachers is your year-head, they're going to give you a very bad impression. You're not going to feel like you can go and talk to someone" [P7].*

The whole-school approach has been found to be an important factor in promoting and maintaining positive perceptions of wellbeing promotion. School ethos in particular can be informative of educators' tendencies to afford appropriate value to wellbeing promotion and related curricula. This is argued to be driven by senior management, principals and vice-principals, and wellbeing co-ordinators. However, it has also been noted that pervading negative colleague sentiment and the perception of colleagues as under-contributing can

have a deleterious effect upon the attitudes of otherwise positive educators. (Byrne et al., 2018; O'Higgins et al., 2013).

Another participant discussed potential issues that may arise in terms of the delivery of SPHE. This participant drew on their experience of working with a colleague who was assigned to deliver SPHE, but did not afford much value to the wellbeing curriculum.

> *"…like I've said, students can come in ready for their doss class. But, equally, if*
> *you get the wrong teacher doing it (delivering SPHE), they could be thinking*
> *the same! They might be thinking, 'I can catch up on my paperwork here'"*
> *[P5].*

Over the course of this discussion, participant five expressed the view that their colleague's lack of sufficient value for SPHE resulted in this colleague abstaining from delivering this class in an appropriate manner. Further, it was suggested that this colleague attended to other responsibilities during SPHE class. Educators who under-value wellbeing promotion have been found to be resentful of losing academic activities in favour of wellbeing promotion, viewing the wellbeing curriculum as encroaching upon core curriculum activities. Indeed, previous research has found that, even when educators valued the wellbeing curriculum, they often afforded it 'low status' relative to the core curriculum (Doyle, 2017; Mayock et al., 2007). This trend was also observed among participants in the present study. The value of the wellbeing curriculum was said to be easily recognisable, but delivering the core curriculum was considered a more pressing priority:

> *"I suppose you could say that, you know, you're trying to teach the content of*
> *the course and get them through exams, and that's your priority. Then,*
> *wellbeing isn't the priority" [P4].*

This participant – who delivers SPHE in their school – offered that the core curriculum may be afforded more legitimacy due to the associated measure of formal assessment. It was added that time and resources allocated to the delivery of the wellbeing curriculum could sometimes be reallocated to facilitate the delivery of the core curriculum. Another participant discussed this trend in the context of their school, which they identified as relatively under-resourced.

*"So…we're not the most resourced school, to be honest, so there's some
overlap in responsibilities. So, for example, we have a guidance counsellor –
who's fully qualified – who also teaches Geography and History. And, our
wellbeing coordinator, she also teaches French. She delivers the SPHE
curriculum, but she also does French"* [P7].

The issue here became apparent when the participant was asked if these wellbeing
staff members attended CPD courses or workshops.

*"Probably not as frequently as would be necessary, no. And, it's not for the
want, you know! It's just there's no cover if they go. They each cover other
subjects, so if they go to a course, or to a workshop for the day, then there's
no French class. Or, there's no Geography class…and that comes first, the core
curriculum comes first. So, they don't really get to go to a lot of courses, or do
a lot of training"* [P7].

In this example, the decision to prioritise the core curriculum was largely outside of
the educators' control in that, due to a lack of resources, each wellbeing educator had been
required to undertake additional responsibilities. These wellbeing educators were said to be
dedicated to their pastoral care roles but, ultimately, were more obliged to attend to their
core curriculum activities. This decision would seem to have been made at a management
level. One participant did express a concern that management under-valued wellbeing
promotion and saw it as something of a 'box-ticking exercise'. However, the more
compelling argument made by participants, as seen above, identified the issue in this regard
to be a systemic prioritisation of the core curriculum over the wellbeing curriculum, rather
than an underlying lack of value of the wellbeing curriculum.

While an underlying positivity regarding wellbeing promotion and related curricula
was noted among participants, the same could not be said for the wellbeing guidelines.
Participants viewed the wellbeing guidelines with a degree of scepticism, frequently
identifying perceived limitations in terms of the scope of the guidelines' potential
application. The value of the guidelines was widely considered to be relatively short-term,
and their use sometimes considered erstwhile. Participants often referred to the wellbeing

guidelines in the past tense, suggesting they and their school had 'moved on' from the instruction the guidelines provide.

> *"I mean, they don't really have longevity. We brought our school in line with*
> *the guidelines and that was kind of it...we don't go back to them that often."*
> *[P11].*

While participants bemoaned the lack of longevity of the wellbeing guidelines, there were numerous accounts of how the guidelines were used to 'audit' wellbeing practices. Some participants indicated that this audit was a one-time affair: *"…we sat down with them (the guidelines) and we checked, you know, 'what are we not doing? What is this telling us is important that we haven't covered?' and we made some adjustments" [P11]*. However, others said their school would turn to the guidelines periodically as a form of self-assessment: *"…it might be useful to go back periodically to check that you haven't slipped, you know, that you're still doing what you're supposed to be doing" [P8]*. A tendency to undervalue wellbeing- or SEL-related practices can typically result from a lack of knowledge and understanding as to how such practices can create a healthier learning and working environment within schools (see Byrne et al., 2018; Mayock et al., 2007; O'Higgins et al., 2013). If indeed participants' schools audited their wellbeing practices using the guidelines, the longevity of the guidelines would arguably be apparent in the subsequent reforms to the schools' wellbeing policies and practices. In this sense, it may be that participants have not recognized potential improvements in their schools, or have not attributed improvements in wellbeing policies and practices to the audit, which was informed by the guidelines.

### 6.3.2   Sub-theme Two: Students' Valuations of Wellbeing Promotion

There was a perception among some participants that students very often did not value wellbeing promotion or the related curriculum. Such participants frequently conjectured that students *"don't really see the point in all this wellbeing stuff" [P8]*, while also postulating that the predominant perception among students regarding SPHE was that it is 'a bit of a doss class'. It was said that students could hold preconceptions that SPHE was not a very useful class and that students anticipated teachers to have lower expectations of them in this class when compared to other classes: *"I just think there are a lot of students*

*who are thinking, 'brilliant, we can go in here now and just take it easy'" [P5]*. These participants identified an intrinsic devaluing of SPHE – and more generally, wellbeing promotion – among students, proposing that students simply did not see the value in such activities. Conversely, other participants attributed a perceived under-valuing of SPHE among students to oversaturation of wellbeing education across the greater curriculum.

> *"…it (wellbeing promotion) loses its impact on the students, and I think that's (oversaturation) happening at the moment. For example, we would have – in first year they do digital media literacy, where they talk about cyberbullying. Then, in SPHE, we talk about bullying [laughs]. They do a learning-to-learn course, where they learn to talk about study. And, yet in SPHE, that's also covered there. So, you've to be very careful, and you can see the students going, 'oh, we've done this'. That's not good" [P4].*

According to this participant, some students can lose interest in SPHE when they encounter lessons and topics that they feel they have already addressed in other aspects of the wider curriculum. This participant made the case that there are different ways of talking about certain topics and that this might necessitate these topics being addressed in multiple classes. Cited examples were puberty and substance misuse being discussed physiologically in science class and sociologically in SPHE. Students' negative perceptions of SPHE were then attributed to duplication across the greater curriculum more so than an intrinsic de-valuing of SPHE. Another participant echoed this position.

> *"You know, wherever there's something in the SPHE class that's in one of the other subjects, I'd take it out of the SPHE class. Or, at least re-write it – re-do it so it has more of an emphasis on how it relates to wellbeing" [P6].*

The prevailing degree of negativity participants perceived among students is not wholly reflected in the available literature. Research in this area has tended to find mixed perceptions among students in this regard. For example, in a case study conducted across 12 schools, O'Higgins et al. (2013) documented a negative sentiment among many students, with some referring to SPHE as boring, useless and unhelpful, and one student quoted as identifying SPHE as 'the worst subject ever'. That said, 49% of 713 students considered SPHE to be an important part of what they learned, with 41% considering SPHE to be as important

as core curriculum subjects. It was said that even in schools where performativity and academic achievement were emphasised, students would often ascribe significant value to SPHE. Participants in the present study frequently proposed that some aspects of the wellbeing curriculum may not be relatable for students, often identifying that aspects of the wellbeing curriculum could be quite 'textbook'. It was suggested that students may have difficulty seeing the value and meaning in these types of lessons and that they might struggle to put these lessons into perspective.

> *"…(the) relationships and sex, and sexuality aspect: It's very…rote learning. Very textbook. I don't think it's very relatable" [P1].*

> *"The curriculum reads – all the wellbeing stuff reads like it was written by a teacher. It's a bit stuffy, you know! [laughs]. It's a bit dry. You can get away with that to an extent with the core curriculum, but I think this (the wellbeing curriculum) needs to be more relatable" [P2].*

> *"…it can be difficult for some pupils to relate it (the wellbeing curriculum) to their wellbeing – to see how some of the topics relate to their wellbeing. So you have to find ways to make it relate…you know, make it relatable" [P8].*

It was also suggested that some students may be somewhat fatigued by the wellbeing curriculum because of a perceived high degree of duplication of content in relation to some aspects of the core curriculum. Many participants argued that the wellbeing curriculum should be updated to remove duplication and to be more practical and relatable for students. Indeed, a more relatable curriculum delivered using engaging pedagogies would arguably facilitate students' sense of relatedness with regard to the subject matter, as well as their sense of autonomy over the learning process (Deci & Ryan, 2010; Mannix McNamara et al., 2012).

> *"There's a few things like that with SPHE too. I mean, there's a bit of duplication in the curriculum. There's a lot of stuff about biology – well, everything to do with biology in SPHE – you know, the reproductive system and substance abuse and that – it's all covered in Science. So, they're getting the same thing twice. It just seems a bit wasteful" [P10].*

*"I think it needs a bit of an overhaul. I think it needs to be more relatable, and there should be – we should be able to deliver it more practically"* [P2].

Similar concerns were also raised about the wellbeing guidelines. Particularly concerted critiques were levied against the indicators of wellbeing, in that they were considered unrepresentative of how young people perceive, discuss, or attend to their wellbeing.

*"…the indicators of wellbeing – they're just a bit generic, do you know what I mean? I mean, they make sense, I just don't think they represent how students perceive their wellbeing"* [P7].

*"I don't know if you want me to talk about the wellbeing indicators [interviewer nods]. I have them there on my wall – this is maybe my third year to have them on the wall. To be honest, I feel that that's just way too abstract! It means nothing to a 13 or 14 year old, absolutely nothing"* [P4].

These participants offered accounts of how they felt the wellbeing guidelines were developed in the absence of student involvement, and argued that it should not be considered surprising that students may not find them engaging. Both participants went on to report that they and some of their colleagues also found aspects of the wellbeing guidelines difficult to interpret and empathised with the difficulty they pondered students to experience in relating to the wellbeing guidelines. For these participants, the inability of students to relate to the wellbeing guidelines was an important factor in their respective valuation of wellbeing promotion. It has been proposed that student involvement in SPHE can be a correlate of augmented student value-perceptions, and indeed has been widely advocated across the literature (e.g. Mayock et al., 2007; Moynihan & Mannix McNamara, 2012; O'Higgins et al., 2013). Such research has highlighted the benefits of including the views and experiences of students in developing, reviewing and delivering SPHE (and wider social and emotion learning) policies, practices and curricula. In the present study, participants intimated that student involvement in wellbeing promotion was largely absent, and that this may have contributed to students' negative views.

Participants also discussed student engagement as an influential precursory factor in students' valuation of wellbeing promotion. Some participants reported experiencing

difficulty achieving student engagement and recalled occasions when they unsuccessfully attempted to engage with students whom they believed were experiencing difficulties.

> *"…some pupils don't really want to work with you…they might be having a problem – you might see that they're having a problem – so you approach them and they're having none of it. They just don't want to engage with you. And I still don't know how to overcome that" [P8].*

The above participant spoke about the difficulty in attending to student wellbeing when the student is not receptive to this type of support. This was seen as deeply frustrating for the participant as they felt they could only afford a limited amount of effort to this student as they also had to attend to the rest of their students, resulting in the situation being unresolved. It was also said to paint a very negative picture for the student. The participant contemplated the outcome of this scenario for the student, suggesting that the concession of the educator in this case might reinforce an already negative perception of wellbeing promotion: "*…maybe they pick up on that. Maybe they think – you know, those pupils who don't engage – maybe they think I don't actually care" [P8].*

The challenges of achieving student engagement was also considered indicative of students' negative perceptions of the wellbeing curriculum. Some students were said to ascribe little consequence to SPHE. Participants said they often perceived a sentiment among students that, further to there being no benefit in paying attention during this class, there would be no negative outcome for not paying attention.

> *"I think – it's (SPHE) not part of the core curriculum. Students aren't graded on it, there's no tests. So, what's the motivation to pay any attention to it? It's a really hard sell. Kid's see it as a bit of a doss class" [P2].*

> *"…they (students) can say, 'aww great, this is a class where there's no exam, no homework. This is the doss class where we can sit back'. You know, you really have to, sort of, stress that for the first ten minutes or so of class. Otherwise, it can be a difficult one to counter" [P4].*

Both of the above participants acknowledged the lack of any form of exam to be influential in students' decisions to cede from engaging fully during SPHE. Participant four

went on to propose that there was an increased onus on educators to communicate the importance of SPHE to students at the beginning of the class in order to secure their engagement. Failure to do so could result in students generally undervaluing SPHE and subsequently not engaging with the subject lessons. Difficulty engaging students in SPHE has previously been attributed, in part, to a lack of appropriate teaching methodologies being used in SPHE (O'Higgins et al., 2013). This was acknowledged by one participant when discussing potential difficulties in delivering SPHE, and was related to a lack of experience on the part of such educators.

> *"I'd say keeping the class switched-on (is difficult). Especially at first. When*
> *you first start teaching SPHE and you're a bit inexperienced, you might try to*
> *do it the way you would any of the other subjects. And you probably haven't*
> *done too much training yet so…yeah…you probably would struggle more to*
> *hold the attention of the class" [P9].*

However, participants in the present study tended to emphasise referent student/teacher relationships as conducive to establishing necessary levels of student engagement. As previously alluded to with the example of participant eight, participants believed many students needed to feel that educators genuinely cared about wellbeing outcomes and were not simply fulfilling a perfunctory teaching role when delivering SPHE. While a perception that educators 'don't actually care' could negatively influence student engagement, so too could positive student perceptions of educators contribute to increased engagement.

> *"…if you have a good relationship with them, they're more likely to see the*
> *value in what you're trying to teach them, and that's a big one for*
> *wellbeing! But, it's hard to get that importance across to the students. So, if*
> *you get on well and they value your opinion, that can really help" [P5].*

This participant advocated for the development of students/teacher relationships based upon affinity and mutual respect. Wider arguments were made regarding the benefits of such relationships in terms of establishing a supportive school environment. However, in this example, participant five highlighted how a student's perception of a valued educator can contribute to that student ascribing value to, and engaging in, SEL and wellbeing-related

activities. Indeed, referent student/teacher relationships have been found to be the optimum dynamic within which to engage and motivate students, particularly in relation to affective learning (Chory & Goodboy, 2010). For participant five, student engagement was negotiated between the student and educator, in that educators' ability to 'sell' SPHE and students' willingness to 'buy' SPHE could be strongly influenced by the existence (or not) of a referent relationship. This position is consistent with contemporary literature regarding student engagement. For example, Zyngier (2008) argued that a lack of student engagement should not be attributed to deficiencies only in the student, reasoning that engagement was reciprocal and comparably influenced by educators (among other things). Research has found students' perceptions of educators' interpersonal behaviours to be among the strongest predictors of student engagement, but that educators tended to be more invested in their pedagogic skills than their didactic skills (Van Uden, Ritzen & Pieters, 2013; 2014). In this sense, the literature affords credence to the inference that educators may be implicit in deficits in student engagement and, by extension, students' valuation of wellbeing.

### 6.3.3 Conclusion

Theme two presented participants' perceptions of the value placed on wellbeing promotion by both educators and students, and examined the factors that participants believed to be influential in this regard. Three key findings were identified here. First, in the face of an underlying appreciation for wellbeing promotion, participants communicated a pervasive and systemic devaluing of wellbeing promotion and related curricula in favour of core curriculum activities among educators. This is largely reflective of the available literature. Second, participants attributed little value to the wellbeing guidelines. Curiously, many participants were able to identify several positive outcomes that seem to have resulted from the introduction of the wellbeing guidelines, but failed to attribute these positive outcomes to the guidelines. This may suggest a lack of familiarity with the wellbeing guidelines. Third, participants communicated wholly negative perceptions of students' valuations of wellbeing promotion and related curricula. A number of participants proposed that some students simply did not value wellbeing promotion, while others identified unrelatable curricula and guidelines, as well as a lack of engagement, as implicit in students' low valuations. This degree of perceived negativity among students is inconsistent with the

available literature, demonstrating the dissonance between the attitudes held by students and educators' perceptions of such attitudes.

## 6.4    Theme Three: The Influence of Time

Theme three examines time as a factor in the promotion of student wellbeing. Here, participants discuss the reflexive nature of the influence of time, in that a perceived heavy workload has resulted in time constraints that can negatively affect wellbeing promotion, while the formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning has further compounded time constraints brought about by this heavy workload.

When discussing time constraints in relation to wellbeing promotion, the first port of call for many participants was to highlight their workload. More specifically, participants were acutely aware that their workload had been increasing over the years, often in very small increments: *"So, you know, little by little, there's lots of work being added on…every teacher is going to say that" [P4*]. These incremental increases in workload could result in educators working significant amounts of overtime. It was also reported that this issue seemed to have been compounded by the formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning, with some participants proposing that wellbeing promotion has significantly increased their workload.

> *"There needs to be an audit or something on the amount we have to do. Because, it keeps building bit by bit. You know, little bits being added here or there. It all adds up, you know!...You can be looking at 50-60 hours a week sometimes" [P6].*

This participant spoke with frustration when discussing the implications of their workload, and appealed for a review of the amount of tasks and activities for which educators are responsible. The way in which this participant (as well as others) spoke of the 'bit by bit' increase in work implied a consideration that policy makers were unaware or unaccommodating of the amount of work already attended to by educators. This frustration was shared by others, who held similar views that the school day was already full and yet policy makers continued to increase educator workload: *"…you can't just keep adding things to the day!" [P1]*. The negative correlation between workload and time was widely documented among participants and presented as a source of frustration and resentment in

terms of the way in which additional work has been added to educators' repertoire of responsibilities. International research has previously indicated that perceptions of time constraints resulting from a heavy workload can inhibit the appropriate implementation of SEL interventions and activities (Hill et al., 2015). For participants in the present study, this issue seems to have been compounded by the formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning, with some participants proposing that wellbeing promotion has significantly increased their workload.

> *"I mean, the workload has increased since wellbeing was introduced. I didn't think it would, but it did. You know, there's so much…administration. There's a lot of meetings, and meetings with parents. And, we're doing that on top of everything we were doing. Nothing has been cut back to make room for it"* *[P8].*

This participant echoes the concern of other participants in highlighting that wellbeing responsibilities are additional to their pre-existing tasks, with no commensurate measures taken to moderate their workload. Further, the majority of the additional workload seems to be in relation to meetings and administration, as opposed to wellbeing-oriented activities. This was also conveyed by another participant, who reported an increase in workload, but little perceptible change in terms of wellbeing-orientated activities: *"We're pretty much doing the same thing (to promote wellbeing), but there's the extra hours that have to be included. And there's a lot of reporting!" [P10]*. This participant spoke of workload extensively over the course of their interview and concluded that workload was the single most deleterious factor with regard to their ability to adopt appropriate pedagogic practices. While this participant valued wellbeing promotion, they also felt that the way in which they were charged with this task was burdensome and uninformed, and further contributed to an unsustainably heavy workload. When asked how the issue of educator workload could be addressed, this participant replied, *"Just reduce it! Stop adding to it! Don't just extend the curriculum without understanding the impact on our ability to teach the curriculum!" [P10]*. Again, it is clear that the sentiment communicated is that workload was increased with little consideration for the impact upon educators' ability to actually do the work. When workload becomes overburdened in this way, SEL activities

typically become de-prioritised in favour of academic activities, and are subsequently afforded less time in the school day (Barry, Clarke & Dowling, 2017).

Administrative duties were frequently acknowledged to be one of the primary causes of workload-related time constraints. While some participants proposed frequent meetings to be problematic, completing paperwork presented as the most time consuming administrative task to which educators were required to attend. Paperwork typically involved completing various reports and grading exam papers. Formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning was said to have further increased the amount of paperwork educators were required to complete: *"…we've a lot more paperwork now than we used to have" [P4]*. One participant highlighted an inconsistency in the way measures were introduced to improve students' social and emotional wellbeing, but inadvertently inhibited wellbeing promotion: *"…ironically, with this wellbeing stuff, we've more forms to fill out so we've even less time (for wellbeing promotion) now than we did before!" [P5]*. Furthermore, there was a perception that much of the paperwork educators were required to complete served little purpose and was sometimes unnecessary: *"There's so many forms to fill out these days, and what are they for...really? You could cut back the paperwork easily" [P8]*. That being said, educators took the task of completing paperwork seriously, and tended to allocate any additional time that could be found within the school day to completing this task: *"…if you're lucky enough to have a free class, you're spending it catching up on paperwork!" [P1]*. As previously mentioned in theme one, participants even identified the possibility that some colleagues might use SPHE classes to attend to paperwork: *"(some teachers) might be thinking, 'I can catch up on my paperwork here'" [P5]*.

Indeed, paperwork preoccupying an inordinate amount of educators' time was such a pervasive issue that some participants reported using any free or non-teaching time they may have had to resolve this issue. Further, it was readily recognisable to some participants that this non-teaching time could have been allocated to wellbeing promotion. One participant discussed how they enjoyed sometimes taking lunch with students to build relationships, but that they would often have to forgo this activity for the sake of catching up with paperwork.

*"I suppose it can be difficult to make time to be there for the pupils. I mean, I'd like to go in to the lunchroom more often than I do. But, there are a lot of times, I'll eat my lunch really quickly so I can catch up on…administration stuff. You know, grade papers, do the reports…So you're not around as often as you would like to be. That would probably be the biggest obstacle (to wellbeing promotion) for me"* [P11].

This participant – who teaches SPHE and is a member of their schools' pastoral care team – demonstrated passion and value for their position as a pastoral carer. They spoke of frequently socialising with students during non-teaching times within the school day. This was both because they found it fulfilling to build such relationships and because they recognised this time as an opportunity to attend to student wellbeing. They seemed untroubled by the prospect of giving their non-teaching time (lunchtime) to their students. Rather, the participant's principal concern appeared to be the way in which administrative duties impeded their ability to attend to student wellbeing during their non-teaching time. This is particularly telling of how overbearing and time-consuming paperwork could be, as the need to attend to paperwork could even supersede educators' want or ability to volunteer their non-teaching time to their students. Brady and Wilson (2020) proposed that such heavy monitoring and accountability with regard to educators' performance and activities may not only act as a barrier to student wellbeing, but can also be detrimental to educator wellbeing, as they may perceive that they are working to provide evidence of their competence rather than achieving optimum outcomes for their pupils.

There were numerous expressions of discontent with the way in which formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning had been mandated in the perceived absence of consideration for these time constraints. Speaking of the 300 hours that is to be allocated to wellbeing promotion over the course of the Junior Cycle, one participant exclaimed, *"…I mean, it's extra work, but there's no extra support. There's no extra time. There's no time being made available"* [P9]. The allocation of 300 hours to wellbeing promotion was a feature with which participants repeatedly took issue. Participants would often punctuate this concern by proposing their agreement with the general idea of promoting student wellbeing, clarifying that their issue was less about the imposition of the allocated wellbeing promotion hours and more to do with a perceived lack of facilitation in fitting these hours

into an already busy school day. This sentiment was shared among most participants, with the issue of accommodating 300 hours of wellbeing learning and promotion being something of a focal point for their ire and concern.

*"I mean, if they're going to be making us responsible for this (wellbeing) stuff, they should probably free up some time for it instead of just dropping it in on top of what we're already doing. I mean, 300 hours doesn't just come from nowhere! I believe some schools are extending their school-day to accommodate it!" [P8].*

Some participants reported attempting to remedy the issue of time constraints in relation to wellbeing promotion by seeking windows of opportunity in their non-teaching time. Typically, this would involve the participant attempting to make themselves available to students in the period between classes or at the end of the school day. However, participants felt it could be very difficult to make this time available to attend to their students' wellbeing needs. One participant added to the issue of educators being too busy during these times by highlighting how allocating these times to students' wellbeing needs may have potentially negative implications for the student.

*"…well we haven't really got a lot of time to give to students in this regard. Someone can come to you in between classes, which makes them late for their next class, or they can come to you during the break. I've seen times when a student wouldn't eat because they're talking about something, and obviously that means the teacher probably isn't eating either" [P2].*

Firstly, it was suggested that students can approach educators between classes, but it is recognised that this would result in the student being late for their next class. This could result in this class being briefly disrupted. More pointedly, the delay in moving between classes may increase the visibility of the student in question. Proceeding to the second class late and entering the room when the rest of the class may have already been seated could disclose that this student might be encumbered with a wellbeing issue. This could be particularly problematic if this student was known by other students to be a victim of bullying, for example. Secondly, it was suggested that students could come to educators during their lunchbreak. Participants have already been seen to have demonstrated their

willingness to accommodate students' wellbeing needs during lunchtime, but very often cede to the necessity to attend to administrative duties instead. Participant two compounded the negative impact of these time constraints by highlighting that, when lunchtime is given over to attending to student wellbeing, both the student and teacher may end up not eating a lunch. In this sense, time constraints could dictate that educators attend to one aspect of wellbeing at the expense of another.

Participants who spoke of allocating non-teaching time to wellbeing promotion usually did so with an understanding that this was unsustainable in terms of best practice. A number of participants referred to the need for dedicated time to be allocated to student wellbeing outside of that mandated to SEL activities: *"...it's keeping the free time so a student can drop in. Maybe a portion of the time given to wellbeing could be allocated to students being able to talk" [P2]*. While it was proposed as beneficial for educators to have free time to discuss wellbeing needs with their students in an informal manner, specific consideration was given to pastoral care team members and their requirement to formally attend to student wellbeing.

> *"They're probably – I think they really struggle to be available for students too. They've no free time – none of us have free time – but, when it's their job to look after students' wellbeing, it's not really free time. It should actually be rostered time that's free, where there's no lessons or paperwork. Where they can be available for the students. Like an 'office hours' kind of thing. At the moment, they're just squeezing it in between lessons…and all the other things they're responsible for" [P7].*

Speaking of the pastoral care team in their school, this participant succinctly presents the predominant argument of this theme in that time constraints appear to have proven deleterious to best practice in wellbeing promotion. Tellingly, this participant differentiates between 'free time' that educators might be able to allocate to student wellbeing (e.g. non-teaching time), and 'rostered time that is free', which is time when pastoral care team members can be available to their students as per the requirements of their position. It was argued that such time was difficult for the school's pastoral team to secure because of pedagogic and administrative duties. Previous research has indeed indicated that pastoral care staff have often struggled to attend to what they perceive to be

their principal duties. For example, guidance counsellors have reported that time constraints resulted in a reduced ability to adopt preferred methods when providing counsel to students, with one-to-one guidance replaced by classroom guidance. It was also reported that guidance counsellors could be required by their school to perform a fulltime teaching role, drastically reducing their availability to provide pastoral care (Institute of Guidance Counsellors, 2016). These conditions were found to inform a tendency for guidance counsellors to work far beyond their timetabled hours (Connor, 2014).

Participants often spoke with a degree of frustration and dissatisfaction when discussing pedagogic or administrative duties precipitating the incurrence of extra hours. This was predominantly evident in relation to undertaking work-related tasks during their lunchtime, but also evident when participants were required to undertake such tasks outside of the school context: *"work does come home with you! I'm forever marking tests at home because there's just no other time to do it! And the workload always seems to be increasing!" [P10]*. However, participants rarely communicated a negative perception of affording additional hours to students' wellbeing. While there were no examples offered in terms of attending to student wellbeing outside of the school context, there were many examples of using lunchbreaks in this regard. At a minimum, participants spoke of giving up their lunchbreak in a perfunctory, matter-of-fact manner: *"some kids don't have friends! So then, you're their friend. You'll try to keep them company during lunch" [P6]*. Others found sharing their lunch with students to be an enjoyable experience.

*"I'd often spend my lunchbreak – part of my lunchbreak in the lunchroom. You know, I'd bring my cup of tea in and just have a chat with the pupils that are there. I think – I mean I love it! I have really good fun with them! But, I think it really builds that trust, you know? It lets them know that you're there to talk. So, a really nice, friendly environment, for me, is the best way to promote student wellbeing" [P11].*

This participant described how taking lunch with students could be reciprocally beneficial for both parties. While a trusting referential bond may be established with students, participant eleven also indicates deriving pleasure from socialising with students. This is reflective of what Davis (2006) referred to as 'dual relationships', whereby the participant attends to the needs of their students, while also soliciting validation regarding

177

their professional or personal self-concept. While these types of relationships have been found to be an important source of enjoyment and fulfilment in educators' careers (Hargreaves, 2000; Spilt et al., 2011), attending to student wellbeing in this manner is nonetheless a further undertaking of emotional labour. Although this participant spoke with positivity and optimism, for some educators the lack of reprieve from emotional labour could hasten the onset of burnout, to which educators have been found to be acutely susceptible (Kinman, Wray & Strange, 2011).

It was also widely reported that attending wellbeing CPD could be difficult because of the time constraints resulting from high workload. This was seen to be particularly problematic for non-wellbeing educators: *"I'm not an SPHE teacher so I don't really get to go to those training workshops" [P2]*. The apparent solution to CPD-inhibiting time constraints seems to have been to provide CPD courses and workshops outside of school hours. However, non-wellbeing educators may be reticent to undertake formal CPD outside of what they viewed to be their contracted hours.

> *"…a lot of the time there isn't enough cover to let one of the other (non-wellbeing) teachers go (on training). Or, they don't want to go because the course is on during their time off" [P11].*

> *"I know there are CP – eh, continuous professional development programmes but, again, where can you fit them in. We shouldn't really be expected to do CPD in our own time" [P1].*

Conversely, participants who identified as members of their school's pastoral care team, or who were responsible for delivering an aspect of the wellbeing curriculum appeared to have less difficulty availing of wellbeing-related CPD. Further, such participants also demonstrated their willingness to pursue additional training, often on their own time and at their own expense.

> *"Oh, well, I've done a whole bunch of workshops and courses over the years. I'd try to do those CPD courses as often as I can. And, I'd go off and do little courses every now and then myself" [P11].*

*"But…erm…yeah, I would like to compliment the training I do – I go on – that the school sends me on, by doing these other courses when I can. And, you know, I pay for them myself, but I find them interesting. And, I think I get a lot out of them"* [P9].

There were as many meaningful arguments *for* the idea of undertaking additional training in wellbeing during personal time as there were *against* the idea of undertaking training in this manner. With regard to the prospect of educators being burdened with affording their personal time to the completion of wellbeing CPD, perceptions appeared to be strongly informed by the position of the participant as a wellbeing educator or a non-wellbeing educator. It is noteworthy that wellbeing educators reported receiving greater facilitation from their schools in availing of wellbeing CPD, while non-wellbeing educators appeared to had trouble availing of wellbeing CPD. Non-wellbeing educators might therefore often only be able to avail of courses and workshops that run outside of their contracted hours. Considering their explicated reticence to afford personal time to wellbeing CPD, non-wellbeing educators may therefore be somewhat under-prepared for the task of attending to student wellbeing.

### 6.4.1    Conclusion

A key finding interpreted from theme three was that numerous time constraints exist, which can significantly impede educators' ability or capacity to attend to student wellbeing. Participants reported experiencing a gradual increase in workload, which was said to have been compounded by the formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning. The most prominent source of time constraints in this regard was administrative duties, with paperwork considered to be particularly burdensome. Heavy workload was reported to drastically reduce the time participants could be available for their students. This resulted in many participants attempting to move wellbeing promotion into non-teaching times, such as periods between classes and lunchbreaks. Even then, participants found it difficult to free up time in the face of overwhelming pedagogic and administrative duties. Most participants reported a willingness to afford their free time to the promotion of student wellbeing. However, the topic of wellbeing CPD proved divisive, with wellbeing educators actively pursuing development opportunities, while non-wellbeing educators appeared unwilling to undertake such training in their personal time.

### 6.5 Theme Four: Incompletely Theorised Agreements

Theme four provides a theoretically informed interpretation of participants' level of preparedness to attend to the task of promoting student wellbeing. Participants' familiarity with the NCCA wellbeing guidelines, their understanding of the wellbeing curriculum and their participation in wellbeing-related training all informed the development of a narrative that suggests educators may attend to the task of promoting student wellbeing in an atheoretical manner. This theme is conceptualised in relation to Sunstein's (1995) thesis of 'incompletely theorised agreements', which posits the way in which groups can work together to pursue an action or outcome in the absence of theoretically informed agreements as to why this action or outcome may be appropriate or beneficial.

A discernible lack of familiarity with the NCCA wellbeing guidelines was notable to some degree among all participants. It was evident that all participants were aware of the existence of the wellbeing guidelines and that they believed their colleagues were also aware of the guidelines. However, they were often very forthcoming in acknowledging that they or their colleagues have likely not engaged with the guidelines to a sufficient degree: *"I think every teacher is aware of it. They wouldn't have read the guidelines, but I think we're all aware that there are wellbeing guidelines there to be read if anybody wants to read them" [P4]*. This participant spoke of engagement with the wellbeing guidelines as if it were an optional exercise at the discretion of the educator. At the same time, there was a clear understanding among participants of the mandatory nature of wellbeing learning and promotion. While they frequently spoke of time constraints inhibiting wellbeing promotion in numerous ways (as illustrated earlier in theme three), it seems that a lack of perceived value for the wellbeing guidelines may have to some level of non-engagement with the wellbeing guidelines, as noted in theme two. As such, not only were participants often unfamiliar with the wellbeing guidelines, but they were also unsure as to how the guidelines may be utilised in their school.

> *"To be honest, I haven't read the guidelines and – I'm sure the people that need to have, and I'm sure they (the guidelines) inform what they do, but I couldn't honestly tell you how my school uses the guidelines….That's really bad! [laughs]" [P2].*

This participant openly spoke of their lack of knowledge of the guidelines, and appeared to be dismissive of any kind of obligation to read the guidelines. In this example, participant five portrayed a more systemic issue in that their school seems to have disengaged from the guidelines after an initial period of use. Participant two appeared unsure how, or even if, their wellbeing-orientated colleagues have been using the guidelines to inform or enhance wellbeing-related practices. Participants offered numerous examples illustrating their lack of clarity as to if, or how, their wellbeing-orientated colleagues used the guidelines. Surprisingly, many of these examples were offered by participants who themselves identified as wellbeing educators.

> *"Well, I presume I'm implementing the guidelines. You know what I'm going to do now. I'm going to go away and read them [laughs]. Erm [long pause], look, whatever we're supposed to do from a mandatory point of view, I know we're doing, right! That's being covered. But, I would like to think, as a caring school that cares about its youngsters, that whatever the guidelines are, we're doing that and more! And I'm hoping that when I read them I go, 'yeah, yeah, yeah' (implying all areas of the guidelines are addressed)"* [P3].

Participant three offers the assumption that, being a wellbeing-orientated educator and having not engaged with the wellbeing guidelines, they are nevertheless implementing the guidelines appropriately. It was assumed that, 'as a caring school', what the staff are doing to attend to student wellbeing naturally overlaps with mandated policies and practices. However, participant three is evidently uncertain that this is indeed the case. It is telling that discussions with this participant regarding student wellbeing were largely atheoretical over the course of the entire interview. For example, there were numerous references to educators 'putting their mammy-head on', but few discussions of appropriate policies or formal practices. To some degree, this participant's school seems to have adopted a 'generally accepted body of values' in relation to the promotion of student wellbeing. This term was first used in 1950's post-war America to describe an informal set of moral values that were to be disseminated through the countries school system in order to inculcate in young people a sense of American identity and citizenship (McClellan, 1992). In the context of participant three's school, this would be a more micro-functionality of the

school staff informally agreeing upon a wellbeing value system in the absence of consideration for, or awareness of, appropriate theory.

A tendency to adhere to conceptualisations of wellbeing that were exclusive of consideration for the wellbeing guidelines was evident among numerous participants. While this was due, in part, to a lack of familiarity with the guidelines for some participants, for others it was associated with a lack of clarity. Some participants did demonstrate a degree of familiarity with the guidelines and were able to discuss certain aspects in considerable detail. However, these participants almost unanimously reported concerns regarding the clarity of the guidelines. For example, one participant raised concerns regarding the indicators of wellbeing espoused by the guidelines.

 *"…to be quite honest, I don't use those indicators in the classroom. I don't use that vocabulary. I think it's way too vague. The ideas behind them are fantastic and if you had all of those you'd be feeling very well , but it's…I just think it's too abstract" [P4].*

In this example, the participant was able to relate the indicators to a sense of wellness, but found them too vague and too abstract for practical use within the classroom. The argument in this case pointed toward the difficulty in delivering SEL to students using the vocabulary of wellbeing as ascribed by the wellbeing guidelines. While participant four understood the indicators of wellbeing, they were unclear as to how to communicate these indicators to students and subsequently abandoned their use in the classroom. Research has identified that an appropriate introduction can have a significant positive impact upon the sustainability of new SEL or wellbeing-orientated interventions or practices. This research found that an appropriate introduction, coupled with continued interaction and support, was important in keeping educators adequately informed and motivated to attend to such tasks (Hill et al., 2015). In the present study, participants provided a consistent narrative of receiving little in the way of an introduction to the wellbeing guidelines. While some participants were unsure as to how they first became aware of the guidelines, several spoke of first being introduced to the guidelines by their principal, vice-principal or a member of their school's pastoral care team. That said, participants tended to be uncertain as to how well informed these staff members were with regard to the guidelines, and were able to

offer little elaboration in terms of subsequent interaction or support that they may have received in relation to the guidelines.

> "*That was our vice-principal and SPHE coordinator – I think one of them might have gone to a meeting? Yeah, they talked us through the guidelines*" [P10].

> "*Erm…I don't really know anything about them…to be honest. You know…I mean…I know they're there. I don't remember how I became aware of them, to be honest. Probably my principal?*" [P6].

Participants' discernible lack of familiarity with the wellbeing guidelines, presents a narrative of under-preparedness to attend to the task of promoting student wellbeing. This most commonly manifested among participants as a feeling of being insufficiently informed to make judgements regarding student wellbeing. Participants often spoke of making 'common sense' decisions in response to their students' wellbeing needs, but feeling insecure that the help they offered was, in fact, beneficial: "*…if someone's struggling a bit with their schoolwork and it's getting them down a bit, it's common sense that determines what we say to them, or how we approach them*" [P2]. This participant's concern highlights the lack of a theoretical basis upon which educators may be able to base their informal support in such scenarios. This issue was also evident with regard to more formalised wellbeing-related issues.

> "*There's no real criteria for when we escalate things. Like, if there's an issue with a student and you're working on it, and you're not getting anywhere…or maybe it's actually getting worse, there's no criteria for…you know…when you call the parents. That's kind of down to your judgement and discretion*" [P9].

That participant nine described using their 'judgement and discretion' as to when to escalate wellbeing-related issues may also point to the absence of a theoretically informed understanding of how such decisions should be made. It could also be suggested that there may be a systemic issue in relation to this participant's school's policies. The decision to escalate a student's wellbeing issue to the point of contacting parents should arguably not be solely at the discretion of the educator, particularly in the absence of appropriate wellbeing training. Research conducted in England identified that educators are acutely

aware of the need to supplement pedagogic skills with mental health and wellbeing training in this regard. This research also suggested that educators should be very familiar with the mechanisms available in their school to illuminate and manage individual concerns they may have regarding their students' wellbeing (Rothi et al., 2008). In the present study, participant nine's perception that escalation of wellbeing issues is discretionary may be informed by either a lack of awareness of a relevant policy within their school, or an absence of such school policy.

It is also telling that participants rarely discussed wellbeing outside of lay terms. As a matter of negative evidence, it is instructive to consider that at no point did any participant attempt to adopt the language of wellbeing espoused by the wellbeing guidelines or curriculum (e.g. the aspects of wellbeing or indicators of wellbeing) throughout their interview. While participants were able to identify many different factors that may affect their students' wellbeing in one way or another, there seemed to be an absence of knowledge of a theoretical or evidence-based interpretation of wellbeing. Research conducted by Barry et al. (2017) has suggested that theoretically informed and evidence-based practices in social and emotional skills development are indeed far from clearly established in Irish post-primary schools. This was observable in the present study, with participants expressing confusion regarding the constitution of wellbeing.

> *"Like, I read that wellbeing doesn't always mean happiness, but it feels like the aim is to have 'happy' students! So, if a student is sad, that's bad for their wellbeing so we have to fix that. But students can't always be happy, that's not realistic. And, the reading says that! That being sad or upset is necessary. So, what are we supposed to do?"* [P1].

This participant was also frustrated at their inability to reconcile what they perceived to be mixed messages in the literature. Participant one appropriately identified that persistent positive affect is not necessarily the defining correlate of wellbeing, as negative affect serves an important role in psychological adjustment and meaning making. This is indeed in keeping with the eudaimonic tradition of wellbeing (Nawijn & Biran, 2018). However, a perception remained that the intended outcome of wellbeing promotion is to produce 'happy students'. The wellbeing guidelines offer little clarification in this regard. It is stated in the guidelines that wellbeing promotion should incorporate an appreciation for

both positive and negative affect (NCCA, 2017). However, while there is much elaboration upon how to pursue and maintain positive affect, there is no guidance in terms of how to address negative affect as if it were in fact a valuable or necessary factor in students' wellbeing.

Most participants also seemed to have difficulty ascertaining whether their efforts were in fact efficacious in addressing their students' wellbeing needs: *"How can you tell if somebody's wellbeing has improved because of what you did, or if they're just in a better mood that day?" [P5]*. Again, it appears that participants felt that monitoring and assessment of students' progress in developing their wellbeing was contingent upon their informal judgements. As one individual proposed: *"there's no set criteria to tell if a student is 'well'" [P5]*. Some participants were particularly aggrieved by the perceived absence of a formal method of assessment in this regard.

> *"….there's no measure of whether or not it's working. I mean, we have exams in all the other subjects, and CA's (continuous assessments) in the other subjects. So, we have a way of measuring the progress of pupils in those subjects. But, there's no way of measuring whether or not all this wellbeing stuff is working. I mean, there's no exams or anything […] What's the point in all this time and effort if we don't even know whether or not it works!?" [P8].*

When considering the way in which participants spoke of 'students being well', 'wellbeing improving', and, 'wellbeing promotion working', it can be interpreted that concerns expressed in relation to assessment predominantly pertain to the measurement of potential changes in students' subjective wellbeing. Participants appeared to feel unsure and unprepared in terms of how they may be able to make judgements regarding the progress students may or may not be making in relation to their subjective wellbeing. It is also evident that participants believed formal methods of assessing subjective wellbeing should be adopted. Many such formal assessment methods exist, such as the 'Satisfaction with Life' scale or the 'Growth Mindset Scale', which are frequently used in relation to the PERMA Framework (Kern et al., 2014).

The assessment of explicit or codified knowledge of wellbeing would arguably be more akin to assessment methods educators would regularly use in relation to the core

curriculum and, thus, be less problematic for educators to adopt. In addition, the wellbeing guidelines provide practical examples of methods for assessing students' explicit knowledge of wellbeing, including poster presentations and photography and video assignments (NCCA, 2017). For the most part, participants in this study provided no negative accounts in relation to the assessment of students' explicit knowledge of wellbeing. However, one participant stood contrary to this trend by highlighting the cessation of formal examinations (of explicit knowledge) in CSPE.

> *"And there's no exam anymore either! Last year (2019) was the last year*
> *there was an exam. They did away with the exam [confused expression].*
> *What sense does it make to make CSPE mandatory but then do away with the*
> *exam?" [P10].*

Under-preparedness to attend to student wellbeing appeared to be further informed by difficulties in availing of appropriate wellbeing-related training. Many participants reported either receiving no wellbeing-related CPD or not enough wellbeing-related CPD. For non-wellbeing educators, the outcome was typically that they received no wellbeing CPD. Often, such participants would initially indicate a perception that no wellbeing CPD is available. However, with further probing, these participants refined their arguments to acknowledge the existence of wellbeing-related CPD, but highlighted the difficulty in availing of such training.

> *"I don't do SPHE, to be honest, so I wouldn't have received any training in*
> *that. I did for a while a few years ago, but that was more plugging a hole, kind*
> *of, short-term. We have the JCT (Junior-Cycle for Teachers) stuff…erm…but no,*
> *no training" [P5].*

> *"Well, it's not explicit, you're not told 'you can't go!'. But, again, time is a bit*
> *of an issue. So, if there's only so many, kind of, free hours to give to sending*
> *people to these workshops and training events, it obviously has to go to the*
> *SPHE teachers and the guidance counsellors. So, it's a bit of an illusion. The*
> *training exists, but I guess it's very difficult for everyone to avail of it! [P2].*

Participant five implied a relationship between their status as a non-wellbeing educator and a reduced capacity to avail of wellbeing-related CPD. This participant stated

that they had availed of JCT training, but that none of this training was in relation to wellbeing. The gravity of the issue for this participant was realised through a succeeding conversation regarding their previous experience of delivering SPHE. Participant five reported being unfamiliar with SPHE and feeling that their delivery of this subject was unengaging for students and largely ineffective: *"I struggled…to be honest…when I was doing it. I could see students zoning out, and what am I going to do, give out to them for not paying attention? That doesn't work!" [P5]*. Participant two corroborated this position and made the relationship between wellbeing/non-wellbeing status and capacity to avail of wellbeing-related CPD more explicit. For this participant, the prioritisation of wellbeing educators in relation to wellbeing-related CPD was a measure of time constraints (discussed further in theme three) as much as particular skillset requirements. Participants two and five offered compelling examples of the necessity to provide wellbeing-related CPD to all school staff members as each provided predominantly negative accounts of their respective experiences of delivering SPHE. This is further compounded when considering the NCCA and Department of Education and Science's (2000 p.6) historic assertion that "given the importance of the whole-school climate for successful SPHE, it is clear that in many ways every teacher in a school is a teacher of SPHE".

The perception of a stratified capacity to avail of wellbeing-related CPD was also shared among some participants who identified as wellbeing educators. However, one such participant highlighted that an inability to avail of wellbeing-related CPD is an issue that is not exclusive to non-wellbeing educators.

> *"And, there are lots of workshops and training programmes you can go to, but not everyone gets to go to them. I mean, I teach SPHE so I – in my school, I would be prioritised. But schools don't have the resources to make sure everyone can go. Our PE teachers can go sometimes too because PE is part of the wellbeing curriculum. He does – he teaches Civics as well though. He does CSPE. But, the rest of the staff don't get training" [P9].*

That this participants' colleague, who delivers two subjects pertaining to the wellbeing curriculum, can 'sometimes' attend wellbeing-related CPD is indicative of the difficulty schools face in achieving a fully trained body of staff in relation to wellbeing promotion. Indeed, previous research has found that one in three SPHE teachers had

received no training in relation to this subject (Moynihan et al., 2016). While participants who identified as being a wellbeing educator rarely spoke negatively of the available training and CPD, concerns regarding their training were communicated at a latent level. Wellbeing educators, particularly those who deliver SPHE, communicated a degree of trepidation with regard to their ability to deliver the wellbeing curriculum.

> *"Erm… I think we really have to – I find I have to grapple with the terminology! And then, I feel, you know, you have to simplify all of that to make it real for the students. I think it's quite vague – I think it's very well-meaning. But I think it's quite vague"* [P4].

This participant reported finding it difficult to deliver the wellbeing curriculum. For participant four (as well as others), this difficulty arose from the way in which abstract concepts, such as emotional health, are discussed in the curriculum texts. Participant four presented a clear argument of how they felt they needed to decipher and translate wellbeing terminology in order to deliver the wellbeing curriculum to students in a way they might better understand. It was, in fact, common that participants reported some such behaviour, with numerous participants – participant four included – stating they would rarely use the language of wellbeing as espoused by the wellbeing curriculum or guidelines. Based on the communicated difficulty in delivering aspects of the wellbeing curriculum, it could be suggested that the training undertaken by respective participants may be in some way inadequate.

A principal consideration in this regard may be to examine a potential failing in the pedagogic function of training, which Jourdan (2011) identified to be provision of expertise to achieve an appropriate standard among trainees in performing a related task. However, no negative perceptions of wellbeing-related CPD were documented among participants who reported having availed of such training. Rather than the issue being with the delivery of expertise, it may be that some necessary areas of expertise are not being included or delivered. This may be unbeknownst to both trainer and trainee, and may be perpetuated by educators labelling aspects of the wellbeing curriculum as difficult or vague. This may then be an issue with the technical function of training, which is concerned with training creation criteria, such as design, planning and evaluation (Jourdan, 2011). In other words, the problem may lie with *what* training is delivered rather than *how* training is delivered.

The fact that many educators continue to struggle with some aspects of the wellbeing curriculum may also implicate the support function of training (Jourdan, 2011). This is the function training provides whereby trainees are afforded the opportunity to feedback their experiences and needs, and to elicit the specific support they need to achieve an appropriate standard of practice. Jourdan argued that the support function of training is particularly important in relation to health education, as trainees are often provoked into questioning the usual ways in which they would attend to their tasks (in this case, delivering the core and/or wellbeing curriculum). This is evidenced in the present study by the way in which some participants, such as participant four, reported moving away from the language of wellbeing espoused by the wellbeing curriculum and guidelines, and using their own terminology when delivering lessons. Rather than solely being a potential technical shortcoming of wellbeing-related CPD, this issue could also be attributed to educators' lack of ability to feedback their particular concerns regarding the language of wellbeing to an appropriate body. As such, it could be suggested that educators may not be privy to the support function of CPD, as discussed by Jourdan (2011).

Perhaps unsurprisingly considering their difficulties in availing of wellbeing-related CPD and their concerns regarding their lack of knowledge of wellbeing, participants felt their level of wellbeing-related training was inadequate and needed to improve. There was a clear sense that, considering the now mandatory nature of wellbeing as an area of learning, the way in which wellbeing-related CPD is provided needs to be improved, and that such training should be available to all staff members: *"I think 'being tasked' with it (promoting student wellbeing) changes things a bit. I think there needs to be a bit more support across the board. There needs to be more training for everyone" [P9]*. One participant argued the necessity of a corresponding mandate for training, particularly for wellbeing educators: *"make it (CPD) mandatory for anyone who will be delivering wellbeing lessons" [P1]*. However, there were also concerted arguments against a perceived heavy dependency upon CPD to inculcate in educators an appropriate level of wellbeing-related expertise.

> *"The training needs to start earlier. Especially now that it's (the wellbeing curriculum) mandatory. Teachers need to be able to teach SPHE from the get-go. CPD is all well and good, but it actually shouldn't be necessary, you know – or as necessary! Teachers should be able to confidently and competently*

*teach SPHE from the start of their career. They shouldn't have to upskill on the job, you know?" [P9].*

This participant – an SPHE educator – presented a compelling summative statement of the current state-of-the-art in terms of SPHE training. The implication of this statement is that insufficient training in SPHE is available for pre-service educators enrolled in consecutive or concurrent teacher training programmes. This is reflective of previous research, which highlighted that while some third-level institutes offer postgraduate courses that to some degree address SPHE, most do not. Further, variation in the provision of SPHE training was noted at an undergraduate level with some institutes offering little or no exposure to such training. It was strongly recommended that health education receive more consideration on the curriculum for pre-service educators (Mannix McNamara et al., 2012). Considering the proposition made by participant nine, it can be considered that as of yet, this issue remains unresolved.

### 6.5.1 Conclusion

Theme four provided a narrative of educators' under-preparedness to attend to the task of wellbeing promotion and highlighted the factors inherent in this unpreparedness. The most salient factors in this regard were insufficient knowledge of appropriate instructional literature and insufficient participation in appropriate wellbeing-related training. Participants' reports strongly suggest that their understanding of the concept of wellbeing is largely atheoretical and that the actions they take to address their students' wellbeing concerns are typically informed by experience and best intentions. A key finding here was the considerable gaps in participants' theoretical knowledge of wellbeing and their awareness of same, and the subsequent implications regarding best practice in wellbeing promotion.

The overall narrative of theme four suggests that many of the ways in which participants attend to the task of wellbeing promotion can be conceptualised as being informed by incompletely theorised agreements. Sunstein's thesis of 'incompletely theorised agreements' was originally proposed in relation to constitutional law to facilitate answering the difficult question of how diverse societies can work together under conditions of mutual respect in the absence of agreement about what may be right, just or

good. Incompletely theorised agreements are typically prevalent with regard to either agreements on abstract formulation (e.g. freedom of speech) or agreements on existing rules, laws or doctrines (Sunstein, 2007). In the present study, considering the abstract nature of wellbeing, participants' incompletely theorised agreements can be seen to relate to the former. Incompletely theorised agreements are not an inherently negative outcome of the absence of consensus, and can often expedite an agreed upon action in the absence of agreement as to why this action is appropriate (Sunstein, 1994). For example, by observing such agreements, participants in the present study were able pursue the task of wellbeing promotion to the best of their ability in the evident absence of a shared, theoretically informed, understanding of wellbeing.

Where the participants of this study deviate from Sunstein's original proposal, and where the use of incompletely theorised agreements becomes problematic with regard to wellbeing promotion, is the motivation for using such agreements. Sunstein's original consideration of incompletely theorised agreements was framed in relation to situations where there was agreement on the action to be taken, but a lack of agreement as to why the action should be taken. This in turn clarifies how incompletely theorised agreements can be valuable. If there is an agreement that an action is worthwhile, differing theories or rationales as to why the action is worthwhile need not inhibit pursuit of the action. Thus, incompletely theorised agreements overcome the boundary of such differences and allow the action to be pursued (Sunstein, 1995). In the present study, however, incompletely theorised agreements were adopted because participants were not privy to a theoretical basis upon which to base the legitimacy of their actions. The lack of agreement on an underlying theory that informed participants' actions was not due to differing theoretical perspectives, but rather a complete lack of theoretical perspectives. This is extremely problematic and has significant implications in terms of best practice in wellbeing promotion.

In Sunstein's writings, the action in question is agreed upon by each party on the basis of different theoretical understandings of why the action is worthwhile. Incompletely theorised agreements arise when parties do not fully recognise the legitimacy of other theories of why the action is worthwhile, but can legitimise the action on the basis of their own theoretical understanding (Sunstein, 2007). In this way, each party can offer some kind

of substantive rationale as to why to pursue the action. In the present study, participants had little theoretical understanding of wellbeing, and so had little in the way of a substantive rationale to legitimise their actions. Participants were acutely aware of this and were evidently concerned that their efforts may not be having a positive effect on their students' wellbeing. That participants provided numerous accounts of using their discretion or common sense when attending to their students' wellbeing issues further supports this assertion. Interestingly, the rationale participants provided for some of their actions can be theoretically justified, such as the way in which aspects of best practice in wellbeing promotion proposed by participants can be mapped onto the student/teacher dialectical framework, as per theme one. However, it remains that participants appear largely unaware that these actions are theoretically justifiable. While this illustrates how incompletely theorised agreements can be advantageous, it should not be overlooked that the functionality of incompletely theorised agreements, as demonstrated by participants in this study, points to the potential reality that standard practice in wellbeing promotion is, to some degree, theoretically uninformed.

## 6.6    Theme Five: Recognising Educator Wellbeing

Theme five provides an account of the factors that participants perceived to represent a threat to their own wellbeing. These factors were interpreted in the context of two sub-themes. The first, "work-related negative affect", encompasses factors such as workload, classroom management and parent/educator relationships in highlighting participants' perceptions that educators' wellbeing needs are often overlooked. Sub-theme two, "the impact of wellbeing promotion", highlights participants' arguments that the formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning has compounded pre-existing factors and increased their propensity to experience negative affect.

### 6.6.1    Sub-theme One: Work-Related Negative Affect

Educators can very often be at risk of negative affect throughout the course of the school day (Ennis, 2019). While general administrative issues such as workload and timetabling difficulties could be considered ubiquitous to working life, participants identified factors particular to the work-life experience of educators that were perceived to be potentially deleterious to their wellbeing. One such factor was the difficulty and stress

experienced when attempting to manage the classroom. Some participants quantified the difficulty of classroom management, seemingly relating it back to the size of the classroom: *"well, as a regular classroom teacher, I suppose we all just have to realise that we're teaching a bunch of, maybe 28 individuals, which can be hard when you've one class coming in after the other" [P4].* For the most part, though, participants discussed classroom management in relation to behavioural difficulties. When asked what aspect of their day-to-day responsibilities they found to be difficult or stressful, one participant replied, *"…probably controlling the class […] you have to put a stop to that pretty quick" [P2].*

It has been argued that the disciplinarian role of the teacher is giving way to an emphasis upon positive education and behavioural development, with teachers now recognised as exerting a significant influence upon the socialisation of young people into appropriate moral frameworks (Hyland, 2014). When classroom management tends toward the immediate correction of undesirable behaviour, it arguably cedes from pedagogic merit or instruction that may be beneficial to student learning outcomes (Eisenman, Edwards & Cushman, 2015). Such directly controlling teacher behaviours (DCTB's) can not only negatively affect student autonomy, but can also be harmful to student/teacher relationships (Pikó & Pinczés, 2015). While participant two was the only participant to communicate an explicit tendency toward ending classroom disturbances in an immediate manner, several participants did use somewhat authoritarian language when discussing classroom management. In particular, there were several references to 'keeping on top of' behavioural issues, which may imply an adversarial view in terms of classroom management.

> *"I think…behaviour in the class – and in the yard as well! And, in the corridors on the way to class – I think keeping on top of that can be very difficult" [P8].*

> *"Keeping on top of the class is a nightmare sometimes! Erm…it's very, very difficult sometimes…and that can get to you. I'm at the stage now where I wouldn't let it make me doubt my ability to deliver my subjects. But, it doesn't mean it doesn't stress you out a bit. You just have to get on with it" [P5].*

When discussing this issue, participant five identified that attending to disruptive behaviour can be a source of stress, but suggested that their level of experience as an

educator helped to insulate against a potential threat to their self-concept as a teacher. Indeed, Eisenman et al. (2015) drew upon numerous studies in highlighting that early-career teachers perceived weak classroom management skills to be among the most significant threats to their self-concept as a 'good teacher'. This is particularly interesting when paired with participant eight's assertion that an educator's function as a moderator of student behaviour extends to the greater school context, and that the requirement for classroom management skills is not necessarily particular to the classroom. It is evident that participants view classroom management as a significant requisite skill for all educators, and that the absence of such skill can contribute to the onset of increased stress. This is in line with previous research that identified the prevalence of classroom management difficulties experienced by educators and the subsequent impact upon both students and educator wellbeing (Eisenmann et al., 2015; Miller, 2003, Pikó & Pinczés, 2015). To this end, several participants proposed that increased support with regard to classroom management would have a positive impact upon educator wellbeing: *"I think maybe more supports for teachers in terms of discipline. A lot of teachers find the discipline a big stressor in their lives"* [P4].

Another pressing concern and a recurring finding, was the difficulty often experienced by educators when they were required to interact with parents. Many participants reported sometimes finding it very difficult firstly to secure parental involvement, but also to establish an amicable relationship within which to work through a given issue: *"I think it can be very difficult to get parents involved sometimes. Or, when parents are involved, they can be difficult to deal with"* [P11]. Difficulties in securing parental involvement were said to begin as early as the first instance of communication, with participants detailing the perceived reluctance of some parents to become involved in school affairs: *"Like, when we call home. We don't take that lightly, we don't do it for no good reason. But sometimes when you call home, they're (parents) not very receptive to…to working with you"* [P7]. The idea of 'making that first phone call' seemed to represent escalation of an issue that could not be otherwise resolved within the school. This resonated among several participants, and this initial call to the pupil's home appeared to sometimes be accompanied by a sense of reluctance and dread. One participant aptly captured the trepidation with which educators sometimes made this call.

*"Parents!! Gosh, don't start me! Parents are like a double-edged sword. They can be either – you can get these parents who are absolutely brilliant! And, you can lift the phone to them and talk to them about anything about their child. And, there's these (parents) then that you would nearly talk to a lawyer before you would lift the phone to them. Some parents are really difficult to deal with!" [P3].*

This participant succinctly described the sentiment communicated by most participants in that, while many parents can be very helpful and pleasant to work with, the difficulty in working with some parents could be a source of great stress and anxiety. Participants were, however, acutely aware of the importance of working amicably with parents in order to achieve optimum outcomes for their students:

*"The reality is, you need to work as a team (parents and teachers). And, some parents are fantastic! Some parents are really accommodating, and will really get involved. But, the others… [shakes head]" [P9].*

Research conducted in elementary schools in the United States in fact argued beyond the need for amicable relationships, stating the importance of congruence in teacher and parent perceptions of appropriate academic, social and behavioural outcomes for students (Minke, Sheridan, Kim, Ryoo & Koziol, 2014). However, the perception among some participants in the present study was that the stress of dealing with some parents could be so significant that often they did not wish to work with some parents: *"(working with parents) can be a big source of stress. And, you can get so frustrated that you just don't want to work with 'that parent' anymore" [P5].* Furthermore, participants reported holding attitudes and perceptions of appropriate action that were incongruent with those they believed were held by parents. This was particularly evident with regard to student wellbeing, with participants often holding the view that parents believed it to be the schools' responsibility to nurture their children's wellbeing.

*"I mean, it's their job to raise their kids. It's our job to educate them – to provide them with an academic education. It's their (the parents) job to teach them right from wrong, and teach them the life-lessons. And, the wellbeing curriculum, that's just – that should just be considered supplementary to what*

*the parents should be doing at home. Parents should be looking after their*
*kids' wellbeing before anybody else" [P9].*

In this example, participant nine seemed to assess the level of some parents' involvement in their children's wellbeing based purely on a potential lack of involvement in the school context. It has been proposed historically that educators tend to interpret a perceived lack of parental involvement in the school context as an absence of parental support for their children's education. This, in turn, was said to precipitate unproductive parent/educator working relationships (Lawson, 2003). Participant nine's scepticism with regard to parental involvement would arguably be a contributory factor in precipitating the unproductive working relationships highlighted by Lawson.

Also evident among participants was a tendency to feel censured by some parents, but to attribute blame to these parents with regard to potential failings in addressing student's behavioural issues.

*"… first, it's nearly impossible to get them down to the school to talk to them,*
*second; you just get an earful! They don't want to hear it! It's always your*
*fault! It's always your responsibility! It's your job, and you're not doing it*
*properly! But, it's their job! Ultimately, it's the parents' job to raise their kids!"*
*[P6].*

Participant six emphatically communicated a perception that some parents hold educators entirely accountable for student outcomes. However, this participant also demonstrated a propensity toward recrimination by highlighting that 'ultimately, it's the parents' job to raise their kids'. In research that drew upon several international studies, Miller (2003) proposed that prominent factors inherent in difficult parent/educator relationships were mutual suspicion, recrimination and blame. Miller found that both parents and educators tended to be suspicious of the other party's level of involvement, while also attempting to attribute blame to the other party for shortcomings or misgivings in achieving positive outcomes for students. Indeed, Heyder (2019) noted that an emphasis upon the importance of educators with regard to positive student outcomes was associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among educators, while an emphasis upon the student's family was associated with lower levels of job satisfaction and increased stress

among educators. Feelings of suspicion and a tendency toward recrimination were frequently evident among participants in the present study when discussing parental involvement and were clearly exemplified by participant six and participant nine above.

There was much evidence in the data that relationships between parents and educators could often be tense and sometimes adversarial. Miller (2003) argued that these types of relationships are not uncommon and can very often stem from communication difficulties. Miller further argued that communication difficulties could be exacerbated when educators lack certain interaction skills. This was also evident in the present study, with some participants suggesting that upskilling in this area would be advantageous when working with parents. For example, one participant proposed the introduction of guidelines specific to parent/educator relationships: *"…maybe if there was some support or guidance on how to deal with difficult parents […] Or a workshop on how to deal with those parents"* *[P10].* This sentiment was shared among a number of participants. Further, it was evident that these participants saw the perceived resistance encountered with some parents as a barrier to positive outcomes, and believed augmenting their communication and interaction skills may help to overcome this barrier.

> *"You know, you would think that, when you're dealing with parents, that it would be two adults having a conversation. But, sometimes the parents are worse than their kids! And, you have to stay professional. Negotiating skills, maybe that's what we need – what we should be training in. I mean, sometimes you need to talk these people out of their own way!" [P9].*

Perhaps unsurprisingly considering the reported high workload and the numerous obligations that can be extremely taxing in terms of emotional labour, participants were almost unanimous in stating that they generally felt they were under too much pressure in any given school day. Workload was frequently identified as standing among the most prominent stressors for educators, and a reduction in workload was very often proposed as a palliative measure with regard to educator wellbeing: *"What would help our wellbeing? Well less work of course! If you talk to somebody who retired maybe 10-15 years ago, they would be shocked at the amount of extra work that has to be done" [P4]; "A bit of support! It doesn't even need to be directly about our wellbeing. A more manageable workload would make a huge difference! That's where the stress is coming from!" [P1].* One participant

explicitly clarified that teaching was a stressful and high-pressure occupation long before recognition of wellbeing came to the fore: *"I mean, teachers have been under too much pressure long before the move toward attending to student wellbeing, as you say. It's probably compounded it alright! But teachers need more support, regardless"* [P1]. In this sense, wellbeing promotion and difficulties with parents or students seem to be compounding factors in relation to pervasive pre-existing concerns regarding a high workload to which many participants appeared to be somewhat resigned. In an attempt to alleviate the stress of some of these compounding factors, particularly in relation to emotionally laborious tasks, such as addressing student behavioural issues or meeting with parents, some participants reported seeking refuge in the staffroom.

> *"You can go into the staffroom and have a bit of a vent – that's actually really important! You know, you know there's always going to be someone in there who can relate. And, it can be reassuring, you know, to know you're not the only one having an issue with a particular student – or a particular parent! Or that you're not the only one that's a bit stressed by the workload"* [P2].

While this may provide rudimentary support with regard to the basic psychological needs of educators by building relatedness and helping to insulate against threats to their sense of competence (Brady & Wilson, 2020), some participants provided converse accounts of the staffroom environment. Specifically, there were reports that the degree of negativity in the staffroom could sometimes be overbearing and that there were some instances of colleagues being outwardly hostile to one another.

> *"And you can go back to the canteen and vent, or you go home and vent. But that's not very good because the environment in the canteen can become quite…erm…oppressive. You know, if everyone is having an issue. It's just not a nice place to be. And that's not what you want"* [P10].

> *"The staffroom can be very difficult sometimes. I had some difficulties with that before. I'm very happy where I am now, but at a school where I previously worked, there was a very…negative atmosphere in the staffroom. It was a very difficult school to maintain control of a large amount of the student population and that manifested in the staffroom. Some people really*

*weren't very friendly with each other sometimes. And, there was nothing that*
*could be done. There were no internal or external resources available for*
*teachers"* [P7].

Participant seven's account of a negative staffroom atmosphere can again be traced
back (at least, in part) to student behaviour management, which is recognised in the
literature to be a profoundly emotionally laborious task (Kinman et al., 2011). It is also
worth noting that this participant reported a perception that there were no resources
available to attend to educator wellbeing. To some degree, all participants shared the
sentiment that not enough is being done in relation to educator wellbeing. Some
participants identified measures they recognised as aimed at addressing their wellbeing, but
questioned the efficacy of these measures. Others believed there were simply no measures
in place to address educator wellbeing.

*"No, that's not really something that [pause] no. I mean, there are things in*
*place in fairness. We have – we get lunches ordered in for us every now and*
*then. We do a 'teacher's wellbeing day'…the last two years. But, nothing*
*that's really good enough. Nothing that addresses the stress or – yeah*
*nothing that I would say is actually beneficial for our wellbeing"* [P5].

*"I do wish there was more done to look after us, though. You know, teaching*
*can be quite a stressful job! I think that's undersold…or underappreciated!*
*There just isn't – there are no measures in place for us. There's nothing formal*
*in place for us!"* [P10].

*"I don't really know of anything that's in place for us, really"* [P6].

The degree to which educators appear to be over-stressed and under-supported
with regard to their wellbeing has, by one participant's account, led to a widespread
tendency toward school refusal among educators: *"…a lot of teachers do feel very stressed.*
*Some schools, you'll find there's huge absenteeism among teachers [P4].* This is consistent
with previous research, which identified occupational stress, as well as job dissatisfaction, to
be strong predictors of absenteeism among Irish post-primary educators (Ennis, 2019).
Moreover, research conducted in England found that teachers are more likely to report
symptoms of stress and depression than are the general population (Health and Safety

Executive, 2017), and that such teachers were twice as likely to have taken sick leave in the preceding month compared to colleagues with fewer wellbeing concerns (Kidger et al., 2016). More strikingly, it has been suggested that poor wellbeing is the primary contributory factor in teachers' decisions to leave the profession (CooperGibson, 2018).

### 6.6.2   Sub-theme Two: The Impact of Wellbeing Promotion

The recent recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning was argued to have significantly increased educators' workload. Participants identified an uptick in wellbeing-related tasks and responsibilities since the formalisation of the wellbeing curriculum and related practices. Numerous participants suggested that the formalisation of wellbeing promotion had increased the pressure of delivering their classes and, subsequently, the levels of stress and anxiety they experienced during their workday.

> *"Nothing has been cut back to make room for it so…it's funny, I suppose in that way, looking after wellbeing, or 'promoting student wellbeing', does have a bit of an impact on our wellbeing, because it increases the workload, and it increases the pressure to teach your classes" [P8].*

> *"The biggest difficulty is probably the anxiety. And, it's probably increased since the guidelines (were introduced). And now that it's formalised and we 'have to' do a certain amount of wellbeing lessons, it just highlights it" [P1].*

While participant eight alluded to the pressure associated with the increased workload, participant one directly linked their anxiety to the formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning by highlighting the necessity to allocate a set amount of time to wellbeing lessons. This participant's observation of a required time allocation is reflective of the NCCA mandate that all schools are to allocate 300 hours to wellbeing lessons over the course of the junior-cycle (NCCA, 2017). While arguably appropriate with regard to the promotion of student wellbeing, it seems apparent that this mandate may negatively affect educator wellbeing. Indeed, Jourdan (2011) previously proposed that the implementation of a quota of hours in relation to any such health and wellbeing initiative might result in an increase in the pressure experienced by educators to deliver such initiatives. Participant one went on to discuss how they felt that, since formalisation, there were increased expectations of educators in terms of their ability to attend to student wellbeing. It was said

that prior to the formalisation of wellbeing promotion, it was accepted that educators would address the wellbeing concerns of their students as best they could. However, it was also argued that, since the introduction of the new wellbeing curriculum and the wellbeing guidelines, educators were expected to be proficient with regard to attending to student wellbeing.

> *"Now that it's formalised, it feels like there is more of an expectation that I can fix all these problems and make everyone happy. Like I said earlier, I've always wanted to look after my students as best I can. But, before, there wasn't as much pressure, you just did the best you could. Now we are expected to be experts and we're not! I'm not anyway!"* [P1].

It is notable that participant one teaches PE, which is a component of the wellbeing curriculum, yet openly professed their lack of expertise with regard to wellbeing promotion. The source of participant one's insecurity regarding wellbeing promotion can be interpreted by observing the difference between the provision of instruction and the provision of education. Jourdan (2011) explained this through the example of sex education. Until recently, the role of schools was to provide instruction with regard to anatomy, reproductive physiology, contraception methods etc., while families were responsible for the broader education regarding sexuality, ethics, sexual relationships etc. However, in recent years, schools have become more and more responsible for providing their students with the personal and social skills necessary to determine their own sexuality in all forms, and ultimately to realise their own actualising tendency. From this perspective, it could be argued that, while participant one may be confident and competent in delivering instruction with regard to PE, the source of their insecurity may be the delivery of education regarding the less tangible aspects of wellbeing. Indeed, this would appear to be a significant issue in an Irish context. Research regarding SPHE has indicated that, while educators are expected to deliver health and wellbeing promotion using more interactive and experimental pedagogies, educators are very often insufficiently trained in such pedagogies (Mannix McNamara et al., 2012). The increased responsibility for student wellbeing, and perceived lack of a relative increase in appropriate training, resulted in the perception of unrealistic expectations of educators in this regard.

Many participants also indicated that they felt parents often had unrealistic expectations of educators with regard to the wellbeing outcomes of their students. It was often believed that parents were of the position that educators were responsible for children's wellbeing outcomes. Further, when educators attempted to suggest that parents should acknowledge their responsibilities regarding their children's wellbeing, the perception was that some parents saw this as educators abdicating their responsibilities toward their students.

> *"…some of the parents seem to think it's our responsibility to raise their kids! They think we're going to 'fix' their daughters wellbeing or something like that. And, you just can't get through to them that that's not the way that it works. Look at their History homework. Look at their English homework. Look at their Maths, you know. There's clearly something much bigger going on, and that starts at home. But you can never get that across, that's just you trying to avoid your responsibilities" [P9].*

Discussions regarding parents could often be fractious. For example, it was suggested that some parents could be wholly uninterested and uninvolved in their children's wellbeing education: *"I think parents COMPLETELY buy-out of their responsibility to teach their youngsters – their own children – about what needs to happen (regarding their wellbeing)" [P3].* For their part, participants tended to hold similarly high expectations of parents in this regard. It was repeatedly communicated that participants expected more from parents in terms of their involvement in educating their children about their wellbeing. For example, a commonly held perception regarding social and emotional wellbeing, which seemed to reflect the thesis discussed by Jourdan (2011), was that parents are the true educators and teachers are the providers of supplementary instruction.

> *"Parents should be on top of this stuff! Ultimately, it's the parents that are responsible for the wellbeing of their children! I think there are a lot of – well, some parents that send their children in to school and think it's our job to teach them everything. But, it's the parents that should be teaching their kids manners…and respect" [P8].*

Participant eight pointed toward the social aspect of wellbeing, indicating that parents should be doing more to instil in their children a set of social values that would facilitate their integration into the social world. A common manifestation of participants' expectations of parents was that parents adequately prepare their children to participate in their wellbeing education in the school setting.

*"…it's their (the parents) job to raise their kids, you know! All this wellbeing stuff starts with them! And, you can see the kid's that aren't coming in with a….a foundation!" [P6].*

The accounts provided by participants in this regard further contributed to a narrative of suspicion and recrimination, as documented in sub-theme one. It was often heavily implied, and sometimes outwardly stated, that some parents were not doing enough to satisfy educators expectations, let alone make meaningful contributions to the development of their children's wellbeing. These kinds of views likely contributed to the acrimonious relationships that often seemed to exist between parents and educators, which, in turn, would only compound the pre-existing stress of managing these relationships. However, there were some accounts of parental participation and involvement that were more empathetic.

*"I think they need to be involved too. But, some parents are – some might genuinely not be that good at this stuff. They might really want to get involved and be good Mums and Dads, you know? But, they might just struggle a bit with, you know, talking about sex and puberty, and the dangers of drugs. You know, having those difficult conversations" [P10].*

Many participants demonstrated an understanding that some educators may be uncomfortable with some aspects of wellbeing promotion, or that some educators may not have an innate ability to handle wellbeing-related issues very well. Participant ten was the only participant to extend this understanding to parents. In terms of the psychology of participant ten's perspective, taking such an empathetic perspective moves toward humanising the other (i.e. the parents), and may facilitate a transition from detached concern regarding parental involvement to an openness to more emotional connections with parents (Jeffrey, 2016). This openness was largely absent among participants, and this

may have led to overly harsh assessments of parental involvement in wellbeing promotion. Indeed, it has previously been suggested that some Irish parents would, in fact, like to know more about different aspects of the wellbeing curriculum, such as SPHE, and would generally like to be more involved in their child's wellbeing education (O'Higgins et al., 2013).

While the expectations of educators with regard to students' wellbeing outcomes appeared to become something of a focal point subsequent to the formalisation of the wellbeing curriculum, participants frequently pointed out that the wellbeing curriculum and the requirement to attend to student wellbeing have always existed in some capacity. Participants were quick to highlight this when discussing the expectations that seemed to accompany formalisation: *"Well, first of all, to an extent, I think it (the wellbeing promotion) was probably already there in some shape or form already"* [P3]; *"If you ask anyone, they'll tell you that it has always been part of their job – a big part of their job!"* [P2]; *"...remember, this isn't new. It's been given a nice new label, but we've been doing this for years. Wellbeing has always been part of your job as a teacher. They've just formalised the curriculum"* [P5]. Implications that wellbeing promotion was a recent phenomenon seemed to further inform participants' perceptions that educators' efforts with regard to wellbeing promotion were often unappreciated or not acknowledged. Participants reported feeling that the amount of time and work they put into attending to student wellbeing, and the extra effort they would regularly apply in this regard tended to go largely overlooked. This could be a source of disappointment and frustration for some participants: *"I don't know, maybe…maybe acknowledge the work we do. You know, I guess that's something that maybe bothers me sometimes"* [P6]. Other participants attempted to highlight the lack of recognition of their efforts more so in relation to the accompanying pressure and stress that they feel: *"Erm, [pause] maybe just…if people could see that we do everything that we do. You know, we do an awful lot, and it can take its toll every now and then"* [P8]. One participant demonstrated how this pressure and stress could be exacerbated by negative public perceptions by recalling their sense of trepidation at the time of a high profile court case regarding an alleged sexual assault.

> *"This is something that really bugs me about society. The minute something happens, for example, if you remember the rugby case…the rape case. I*

*remember being in school, and I'd already talked to my youngsters about*

*consent [...] But, what happens is, I knew by Monday, it would all be the*

*schools fault! 'There's not enough sex education, and we're not educating*

*them about consent'. And, that's just not true! We are doing all of*

*this...Society loves to blame us!" [P3].*

Participant three's account is quite illuminating, in that it builds upon the previous 'lack of acknowledgement' narrative to provide an image of educators existing in a state of preparedness to be held accountable for societal misgivings. The accounts provided by participants suggest that educators can generally be defensive and sceptical or suspicious of how they are perceived by third parties, which is consistent with international research (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; Heffernan, Longmuir, Bright & Kim, 2019). However, Heffernan et al. (2019) did note that, more often than not, the public actually acknowledged and greatly appreciated the efforts of educators, but that educators tended not to recognise this public sentiment and felt unappreciated nonetheless. The incongruence between educators' defensive and sceptical dispositions and the potential reality that third parties do indeed recognise educators' efforts may act as a barrier to reconciling difficult parent/teacher relationships, which evidently contribute to the potential for educators to experience negative affect when attending to the task of promoting student wellbeing.

In addition to feeling underappreciated and feeling stressed and anxious due to the increased workload, participants were able to identify several ways in which the requirement to attend to student wellbeing could more directly bear a negative influence upon their own wellbeing. Principal among these was the effect of perceived inadequacies in training regarding wellbeing promotion upon participants' sense of job satisfaction. This was communicated as a lack of confidence that actions pursued by participants to address a given wellbeing concern were, in fact, beneficial in terms of the student's wellbeing.

*"You know you can draw on your experience as a teacher, and you know, even*

*if you're a parent, that can help. But, especially now that it's (wellbeing*

*promotion) mandatory, you could do with having that bit of security that*

*you're doing the right thing. You know, not having any kind of training or*

*background information can give you that little bit of a doubt that maybe*

*you're not handling that situation so well"* [P9].

Participant nine implicates a lack of appropriate training and requisite knowledge in their insecurity with regard to wellbeing promotion. To this end, participant nine discussed calling upon any relevant experience that may be of use, which, in this example, was their experience as a teacher and a parent. This is reflective of Sunstein's thesis of incompletely theorised agreements, as participant nine acknowledged the absence of what Sunstein (1997 p.1740-1741) might refer to as "high-level theory" of wellbeing, and subsequently resorted to "low-level principles" of good caring. This seemed to bring participant nine to an acute awareness of a lack of preparedness to attend to the task of promoting student wellbeing. When questioned further as to how this lack of preparedness made them feel, participants shared concerns regarding their self-image as a 'good teacher': *"Not great, to be honest! You want to be good at your job, and I don't feel that I'm…..as good at this as I should be….or would like to be"* [P1]. This phenomenon was observed among several participants, including one who, despite having received no appropriate training, had previously been temporarily tasked with delivering SPHE in their school.

> *"I mean…I think I'm good at my job. But doing the SPHE, I know I'm not doing*
> *a good job at it! It's just – it needs to be taught differently and I don't know – I*
> *never learned how to do that. It doesn't feel good to not be good at your job.*
> *It can knock your confidence. I mean, the only thing – what kept me sane is*
> *that I'm not an SPHE teacher and I didn't get all that training"* [P2].

This participant expressed a high degree of confidence with regard to their ability to deliver the subjects for which they are typically responsible. However, this confidence evaporated when discussing their temporary assignment to deliver SPHE. Participant two was absolute in their perception that they did not deliver SPHE well. While a subsequent drop in confidence was discussed, participant two reported attempting to insulate their self-image by remaining cognisant that they were not trained in the necessary pedagogies to appropriately deliver SPHE (see Mannix McNamara et al., 2012). Participants' accounts of their feelings regarding their lack of preparedness to deliver wellbeing promotion suggests a threat to their ability to develop a sense of competence in this regard (Deci & Ryan, 2010). The implications of an inability to achieve a sense of competence was not lost on

participants, with some – participant two included – indicating an understanding of potential negative outcomes for both students and educators: *"…it's bad because, not only does it affect the students and their ability to learn this stuff, but…it kind of knocks your confidence!" [P2].* Participant two's observation is very much in line with the student/teacher dialectical framework, as educators' negative perceptions of their levels of competence may not only be deleterious to their own self-image, but can also precipitate the abandonment of teaching methods and pedagogies that students find most engaging (Deci & Ryan, 2000; 2010). Another way in which educator wellbeing was said to be at risk was the degree to which some educators were believed to be uncomfortable with delivering wellbeing promotion.

> *"I think there are those teachers that struggle with this stuff – that aren't as comfortable answering those questions as other teachers" [P10].*

> *"…there are some topics that not everyone will be comfortable with, you know, comfortable with teaching" [P11].*

> *"…some people – some teachers aren't that comfortable with that sort of thing. And you're putting yourself out there. What if you say the wrong thing and you get a call from an angry parent!?" [p2].*

Participants ten and two were each speaking of the whole-school requirement to be available for students, while participant eleven spoke more specifically about delivery of the wellbeing curriculum. In each example, there is evidence that a lack of comfort may see educators not only cede from the appropriate delivery of the wellbeing curriculum, but also become reticent to address students' wellbeing concerns in a more informal matter. Each account exemplifies the potential for educators to feel embarrassed, while participant two also highlighted a fear of reprimand should they address a given wellbeing issue incorrectly. This is consistent with previous research, which observed similar sentiments of discomfort, embarrassment and fear among Irish educators, and argued that these sentiments posed significant barriers to the appropriate implementation of aspects of SPHE (Mayock et al., 2007). Some participants expressed a further concern in this regard, in that some students were able to identify educators' discomfort or embarrassment and use this to denigrate the educator.

*"I don't think just anyone can be an SPHE teacher. A lot of teachers would be quite uncomfortable with some of that stuff…and they (students) can spot it a mile away! And, they'll let you know! So, yeah, you need to be comfortable with it, and I don't think that's taken seriously enough!" [P5].*

It was argued that many of the participants' concerns could be addressed with appropriate training. Participants were also aware of the reflexive benefits appropriate training could have in terms of their own wellbeing. For example, one participant – an SPHE teacher – spoke of how a 'teaching mindfulness' course they undertook independently affirmed the way in which such training was also beneficial to the teacher's wellbeing:

*"I mean, that course I did – the mindfulness one – they really emphasised that that course was for the students AND us! They made sure you understood how the stuff in that course could be beneficial to our wellbeing as well" [P9].*

Another participant offered their perception of how appropriate training could reduce stress and promote a healthy self-image:

*"The wellbeing thing is causing stress because I'm not trained, and I don't feel confident with it. If I was trained, it wouldn't be so stressful, and that would then benefit the students because I could do a better job delivering the lessons!" [P1].*

However, some participants expressed a degree of hopelessness and resignation in communicating that they felt unable to overcome many of the barriers to appropriate implementation of wellbeing promotion. For example, one participant spoke of their acquiescence to the fact that they were simply unable to secure the investment of some students in wellbeing learning, *"…there's just no getting through to them […] You get to a point and you just have to be like; 'ok, I tried'" [P8].* Another participant demonstrated their apathy with regard to the potential to redress difficult parent/educator relationships: *"Ack, look, I dunno! I think, I don't know what to do about parents and stuff like that, which for me, is the stressor. I'm not really sure there is anything anyone could do!" [P3].* In yet another example, one participant clearly demonstrated an external locus of control with regard to educators' ability to avail of appropriate training: *"I mean it's kind of out of my hands. There are courses that come up, but it's nearly impossible to make time to go to*

*them. I don't think I can do much to fix this issue, they just need to put more thought into the planning" [P1].* The inability of some participants to identify ways to overcome these obstacles presents the potential reality that participants are (to a degree) incapable of bringing about desired outcomes and that they may not feel satisfied in the ownership of their actions. This would represent a significant threat to participants' sense of competence and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2010), which would be a reflexively compounding barrier to achieving optimum states of wellbeing for both students and educators.

### 6.6.3   Conclusion

Theme five presented the numerous ways in which participants believe they are at risk of work-related negative affect. Workload, a lack of appropriate training, classroom management and difficult parent/educator relationships were identified as among the most salient causes of negative affect. These concerns were argued to have been compounded by the formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning, with participants frequently speaking of the increased stress and anxiety they felt in this regard. The potential for educators to experience negative affect was further exacerbated by perceptions that much of the work they do often goes overlooked or unacknowledged. Prominent remedial measures proposed by participants include a reduction in workload, additional training in wellbeing and wellbeing-related activities, additional support with regard to classroom management and parent/educator interactions, and appropriate recognition of educators' efforts.

The narrative of this theme was quite reflexive, as many of the issues discussed carry significant implications in terms of the wellbeing of both students and educators. This can be aptly interpreted from a eudaimonic perspective. For example, difficulties regarding classroom management can result in an unsettled environment within which educators must attempt to promote student wellbeing, but may also threaten a sense of relatedness for both students and educators. Insufficient training and self-perceptions of under-preparedness may precipitate sub-optimum conditions within which educators attempt facilitate student wellbeing and deliver wellbeing curricula, while also representing a significant threat to educators' sense of competence. Finally, the inability of some participants to identify ways to overcome barriers to wellbeing promotion may perpetuate

sub-optimum conditions with regard to student wellbeing, as well as present a threat to educators' sense of autonomy.

## 6.7 Chapter summary

Reflexive thematic analysis of the data resulted in the interpretation of five themes. Theme One related to factors which participants considered conducive to best practice in the promotion of student wellbeing. These included pro-actively pursuing opportunities to engage with students and the use of active methods of augmenting wellbeing, such as yoga and meditation. Participants also highlighted the importance of a whole-school approach to promoting student wellbeing, while also recognising the importance of selecting an 'appropriate educator' for specific wellbeing-related school positions, such as those who deliver the wellbeing curriculum.

Theme Two examined the value participants perceived to be ascribed to wellbeing promotion by both educators and students. It was noted that, although educators were perceived to recognise the intrinsic value of promoting student wellbeing, systematic issues often resulted in educators affording the wellbeing curriculum and related activities less value than the core curriculum and related activities. Participants' accounts of the value students ascribe to wellbeing promotion were almost wholly negative, which is a departure from accounts provided in the available literature.

Theme Three addressed numerous time constraints that could inhibit the promotion of student wellbeing. These were predominantly related to workload. I was also noted that recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning on the Junior Cycle increased a pre-existing high workload (typically through administrative duties), further inhibiting wellbeing promotion.

Theme Four recognised that educators were often underprepared to attend to students' wellbeing needs and provided an account of the way in which educators attempted to pursue this task. Educators' lack of training and subsequent reliance upon atheoretical approaches to promoting student was conceptualised as 'incompletely theorised agreements'.

Finally, theme Five addressed educators' wellbeing. It was found that pre-existing work-related stress had become compounded by the formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning and educators' subsequent responsibility to attend to student wellbeing in a forma manner.

Participants identified a number of factors to be crucial in achieving best practice in the promotion of student wellbeing, including appropriate levels of appreciation for the wellbeing curriculum and related activities, adequate levels of wellbeing-related training and having sufficient time for the delivery of the wellbeing curriculum and related activities. A lack of training and an unsustainable workload also appeared to be salient influential factors with regard to educators' own wellbeing. Indeed, participants' accounts suggest that educators are at considerable risk of negative affect, which is not only problematic in its own right, but presents further challenges in terms of the promotion of student wellbeing. The next chapter will discuss the implications of these findings, as well as Phase One findings, with regard to the research questions of this study.

# Chapter Seven: Discussion

## 7.1 Introduction

This study employed a two-phase sequential mixed methods design, which was informed by an interpretive/constructivist paradigm, to examine the attitudes of post-primary educators with regard to the promotion of students' social and emotional wellbeing. Phase One involved the administration of a specifically designed test instrument to quantify the positivity or negativity of educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of student wellbeing, the available wellbeing policies and curriculum, and the NCCA wellbeing guidelines. Phase Two utilised reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020) to conduct a qualitative examination of educators' attitudes. This phase was primarily aimed at identifying potential barriers and facilitators to promoting student wellbeing, as well as identifying potential areas of improvement with regard to the wellbeing curriculum.

This chapter will synthesise Phase One and Phase Two findings, and directly address each of the four research questions outlined in Chapter One. Phase Two data were discussed and contextualised with reference to the wider literature as and when they were presented in the respective results chapter, so the literature presented in the early part of this chapter only relates to Phase One findings. However, the findings for both phases of the study will then be synthesised in light of the goals of the present study. A number of strengths and limitations pertaining to this study will then be discussed, followed by several recommendations for practice and policy, and possible avenues for future research.

## 7.2 Interpreting Phase One Findings

### 7.2.1 Gender by Age

Gender was constituent in two separate interactions with other variables, the first of which was age. Differences in attitudes appeared to be informed by considerations for the available wellbeing policies and curriculum, with no statistically significant differences observed in terms of attitudes pertaining to the task of promoting student wellbeing. Inter-gender differences were observed with regard to ATWP and Pol_Cur at the latter two age groups (50+ was non-significant for Pol_Cur). This seemed to be informed by a marked decrease in mean scores among male educators in the latter two age groups when compared to the two earliest age groups. Indeed, male educators aged 30-39 demonstrated statistically significantly more positive attitudes than did their counterparts aged 40-49, as

well as those over 50 years of age. Additionally, the magnitude of the difference between the 18-29 year-old age group and each of the latter two age groups would suggest that these mean differences may be statistically significant, but for the small sample size of the 18-29 year-old age group.

Understanding how these differences may have manifested is rather difficult as, to the researcher's knowledge, there is no available literature examining age differences in attitudes toward the promotion of student wellbeing, let alone interactions with gender. Numerous studies examine age or experience[17] in relation to factors that may be analogous to, or informative of, cognitive or affective aspects of educators' attitudes. However, many of these appear to be inconclusive in terms of explaining the gender and age differences noted in the present study. For example, research in American middle-schools examined potential relationships between teacher wellbeing and the quality of student/teacher interactions. It was found that, while teacher wellbeing may inform the quality of student/teacher interactions, no significant differences were observed regarding gender or years teaching (Braun et al., 2018). Another study examined levels of passion among Italian primary-, middle-, and high-schools teachers. 'Harmonious passion' – or the intrinsic enjoyment of attitude-congruent activity (i.e. teaching) – was linked to positive affect and greater self-efficacy among teachers, but did not differ according to gender or age (Moè, 2016). Yet another study conducted in 11 schools across European countries, including Ireland, examined factors that may inform teachers' readiness to help students with mental health problems. It was found that when they were more satisfied with the general school climate, had higher levels of wellbeing, and were more capable of understanding students' mental health problems, teachers demonstrated higher levels of readiness to help students with mental health problems. Once again, these findings did not vary according to gender or work experience (Sisask et al., 2013). The constructs in these studies broadly reflect the cognitive and affective components of attitude (Kothandapani, 1971) and, while these factors may inform educators' potential proclivity toward the promotion of student wellbeing, none of these factors vary with regard to age or gender. One particular line of

---

[17] Literature examining educators' level of experience is also being considered here as age and experience have been found to be correlated in both the present study and the international literature (see Yeo et al 2008; Moè 2016).

inquiry that may provide factors that do in fact vary with regard to age or gender is research regarding personality.

Research regarding the Big Five model of personality has noted a strong tendency for different aspects of personality to vary by age and gender. What may be of particular interest in relation to the findings of the present study is the consistent finding that, generally speaking, openness to new experiences tends to decline at older age (see Lucas & Donnellan, 2011; Schwaba, Luhmann, Denissen, Chung & Bleidorn, 2017; Specht, Egloff & Schmukle, 2011; Wortman, Lucas & Donnellan, 2012). In fact, some studies have observed a curvilinear pattern in this regard, with openness increasing until middle-age (roughly 40-50 years of age) and then declining into older age (Srivastava, John, Gosling & Potter, 2003; Specht et al., 2011). Furthermore, women tend to present as more open to new experiences than do men (Costa et al., 1986; Srivastava et al., 2003), and it has been suggested that the decrease in openness in later years can be more sharply expressed among men than women (Srivastava et al., 2003). This may be reflected in the present study, as both inter- and intra-gender differences in ATWP and Pol_Cur mean scores were largely influenced by a marked decrease in positivity among older male participants. As such, it may be the case that older male educators are less open to recent policies advancing the cause of wellbeing promotion and/or the recently codified wellbeing curriculum.

Openness may also go some way toward explaining the lack of such differences for Well_Pro mean scores. It could be argued that such differences may not manifest with regard to the task of promoting student wellbeing because educators have long understood the promotion of student wellbeing to be a fundamental task for which they are responsible (as noted in Phase Two). Openness and attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing may therefore remain more stable across age. Conversely, formal recognition of wellbeing as an aspect of learning (Department of Education and Skills, 2015) precipitated changes to relevant policies and curricula, to which older educators (particularly male educators) may be less open and less positively disposed. Indeed, younger educators in Ireland have reported perceiving their older counterparts to be more ambivalent about, and disinterested in, aspects of the wellbeing curriculum (Mayock et al., 2007). Allying this to generally higher levels of reticence among male educators to become involved in wellbeing-related policies or practices (Mannix McNamara et al., 2012) supports the proposition that

openness may be influential in the observed differences in attitudes. However, this proposition does not explain the bimodal distribution of female mean scores across age groups for both ATWP and Pol_Cur. Female pre-service educators holding positive attitudes regarding aspects of the wellbeing curriculum (Mannix McNamara et al., 2012) may explain the higher levels of positivity observed among 18-29 year old female participants. However, further research is recommended in order to understand the potential interaction between female gender and age with regard to the observed attitudinal differences.

### 7.2.2   Gender by School type

The other statistically significant interaction observed with respect to gender involved the single-sex/co-educational status of participants' respective schools. Attitudes regarding the available wellbeing policies and curricula did not appear to influence mean differences in ATWP scores. Rather, mean differences appeared to be informed by attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing. In this regard, female educators held more positive attitudes in both all-girls and co-educational schools than did male educators. This is somewhat congruent with previous research, as female educators have been found to advocate more strongly and optimistically for SEL and wellbeing promoting practices than have male educators (Molina, Cahill & Dadvand, 2021). Specific to the Irish context, female educators have been noted to be more receptive to both training and participation in SEL and wellbeing-orientated activities and practices (Mayock et al., 2007), and to be more altruistically motivated to become involved in such (Mannix McNamara et al., 2012). The finding that the inter-gender difference is substantially larger in all-girls schools than in co-educational schools, and appears to be due to an increase in positivity among female educators in all-girls schools, suggests that all-girls schools are female educators' preferred setting within which to attend to student wellbeing. Indeed, existing evidence suggests that female educators often tend to form closer and potentially more fulfilling relationships with female students than with male students (Spilt et al., 2012; Tobia, Greco, Steca & Marzocchi, 2018). Female educators may also have an awareness, conscious or otherwise, that these relationships tend to be more efficacious for female students' wellbeing (and arguably their own wellbeing) in the single-sex setting (Mael et al., 2005; Streitmatter, 2012). This could also be interpreted to indicate that female educators' preferred student identity when attending to student wellbeing is feminine, thereby supporting the historical

216

assertion that, generally speaking, educators' preferred student identity is indeed feminine (Francis, 2002; Myhill, 2002; Beaman et al., 2006).

The attitudes of male educators somewhat contrasted with those of female educators. The former indicated positive attitudes across the three school settings, but their mean ATWP and Well_Pro scores were markedly lower than were those of female educators, with the aforementioned statistically significant differences noted in the all-girls and co-education contexts. Socio-cultural factors may be implicit in explaining the differing attitudes toward the promotion of student wellbeing among male and female educators. Attitudes toward the provision of SEL or wellbeing-related activities may be subject to gender-norms that orient males toward stoicism, independence and introversion when addressing social or emotional health issues. Conversely, female educators may typically be oriented toward a sense of responsibility and caregiving in response to students' displays of emotionality (Molina et al., 2021). In Ireland, it has been noted that male educators are under-represented in SPHE service training (Mayock et al., 2007) and, unsurprisingly, in the population of educators tasked with delivering SPHE (O'Higgins et al., 2013). The predominance of female educators delivering SPHE may be self-perpetuating, in that it may mean that female educators continue to be seen as carrying greater responsibility for delivering aspects of the wellbeing curriculum than male educators (Mayock et al., 2007).

The potential absence of openness to a caregiving role among male educators may be problematic in terms of the long-term delivery of SPHE (O'Higgins et al., 2013). This issue may also be compounded by latent expectations of the role of male educators in school. Male educators can often prefer to adopt more dominant and authoritative approaches to their relationships with students (Martino, 2008; Martino & Frank, 2006; Navarro-Mateu et al., 2019; Split et al., 2012). The tacit expectation that male educators are good authority figures and effective disciplinarians (Mills, Hass & Charlton, 2008) may further normalise them into these relationships, and away from the caregiving role. In this regard, it is not surprising to observe that male educators' attitudes toward the task of promoting student wellbeing were more positive in all-boys schools than in both all-girls and co-educational schools.

Previous research has established that boys are often more disruptive, more conflictual, and pose greater challenges regarding classroom management than girls

(Francis, 2002; Jackson & Smith, 2000; Split et al., 2012). It has also been found that boys tend to become more aggressive in the all-boys context, while girls appear to have a 'civilising effect' upon boys in the co-educational context (Jackson & Smith, 2000). Male educators may see the potentially less hospitable environment of all-boys schools as a pertinent fit to their preference for dominant and authoritarian interpersonal relationships with students. For example, boys tend to present a greater challenge with regard to the delivery of some aspects of SPHE, notably RSE. However, evidence suggests that this challenge typically manifests as disruptive externalising behaviour, rather than issues pertaining to SEL or student wellbeing concerns (Myock et al., 2007). On the other hand, girls can be more likely to seek the support of a caregiver in relation to their wellbeing needs (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993). In this regard, student gender presents an interesting caveat when examining gender differences in educators' attendance to student wellbeing.

In the context of SEL, wellbeing, and sex and sexuality, male students can be more likely to intentionally 'make things uncomfortable' for teachers. Indeed, teachers in Ireland have been noted to experience a degree of reluctance, and even fear, with regard to the delivery of certain aspects of SPHE. Furthermore, embarrassment when teaching RSE in particular, has been found to be common and was considered a prominent barrier to the appropriate implementation of RSE (Mayock et al., 2007). It seems apparent that female educators are, to some degree, insulated against or less susceptible to embarrassment or discomfort when attending to the SEL, wellbeing, or sexual health needs of their students. Indeed, one study of teacher profiles in the context of SEL referred to female teachers as 'SEL-thrivers'; suggesting female teachers were more likely to be confident, supported and committed in supporting SEL. Male teachers were believed to be uncomfortable, unsupported, but nevertheless committed, and were referred to as 'SEL-strivers' (Collie et al., 2015). Discomfort, dissatisfaction and uncertainty may be latent features of male educators' dominant interpersonal style (Van Petegem, Creemers, Rossel & Aelterman, 2005). While boys may be more challenging in terms of classroom management, it could be argued that male educators may feel more vindicated in embracing a disciplinarian role in the all-boys context – perhaps ceding the caregiver role to female educators – and may feel they are less inclined to encounter students seeking the caregiver function from their teachers. This would be highly problematic, as it essentially constructs the all-boys context

218

as a place where male educators may feel less obliged to attend to student wellbeing in an appropriate pastoral manner. This in turn would suggest that, contrary to historical assertions, the preferred student identity among male educators' when attending to student wellbeing is in fact masculine.

### 7.2.3   Streaming/Vertical Education

The extent to which schools employed streaming and/or vertical education was also found to be an important factor in this study. The findings suggest that the presence of both streaming and vertical education practices in participants' schools is most deleterious to educators' attitudes toward wellbeing promotion when compared to the presence of one or neither of these practices. Interestingly, the attitudes of participants in schools that employed vertical education were not statistically significantly different from those of the *neither* group, whereas participants in the *streaming* group demonstrated a statistically significantly lower level of positivity on the ATWP – and Well_Pro in the urban setting – than did the *neither* group. This would suggest that streaming may be the more influential factor in the consistently lower levels of positivity observed among *both* group participants.

Attempts to organise learning according to ability groupings in Ireland are well documented and the practice has also been widely debated in both the national and international literature (Hallam & Ireson, 2003; O'Brien, 2008; Smyth et al., 2006; Stevens & Vermeersch, 2010). The effects of streaming upon Irish students are often negative, with students in lower stream classes tending to receive a higher number of negative teacher interactions. Interestingly, lower stream students also tend to receive a higher number of positive interactions (Smyth et al., 2006). However, negative interactions, or indeed any factor that may precipitate negative affect, can often be more effectual in affecting the wellbeing state of an individual (Seligman, 2002). In other words, negative interactions can be more efficacious in bringing about negative affect than positive interactions are at bringing about positive affect. A particular source of anxiety for students is the potential for streaming to threaten friendships between students across different streams (O'Brien, 2008). Evidence from the literature also suggests that a lower study culture, or even an anti-school counter-culture, can sometimes develop in lower stream classes (Hallam & Ireson, 2003; O'Brien, 2008; Stevens & Vermeersch, 2010). This has previously been reflected in educators' attitudes, with educators stating that students in lower streams can be more

difficult to teach and can present a greater challenge with regard to classroom management (Hallam & Ireson, 2003; Stevens & Vermeersch, 2010). The findings of the present study appear to be congruent with the literature in this regard, as participants were found to hold less positive attitudes toward wellbeing promotion in contexts where streaming was utilised (i.e. in the *streaming* and *both* groups). While educators may perceive streaming as beneficial to the organisation of learning (Hallam & Ireson, 2003), it is possible that the increased difficulty of managing lower streams have a negative impact upon participants' attitudes toward wellbeing promotion.

The findings indicate no statistically significant differences between the *neither* group and the *vertical education* group across the three models, suggesting that vertical education has little impact upon educators' attitudes toward wellbeing promotion. Very little research into vertical education in post-primary schools currently exists. Vertical education appears to be more widely practiced in primary schools, and this is reflected in the quantity of availably literature. In primary schools, although educators can often be untrained in how to manage a multi-grade classroom or may incur a (perceived) heavier workload (Mulryan-Kyne, 2004; Proehl, Douglas, Elias, Johnson & Westsmith, 2013), educators' attitudes toward vertical education are often positive. Several benefits of vertical education have been noted by educators, including, improved peer-to-peer support, flexible student-focused learning and increased social and on-task student/teacher interaction (Mulryan-Kyne, 2004; Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015).

The fact that, in the present study, *both* group mean scores were statistically significantly different from *streaming* group scores across all three models[18] suggests that, while not an influential factor in and of itself, vertical education may be a compounding factor in the presence of other educational practices. Alternatively, it could be suggested that the presence of vertical education and/or streaming may be indicative of larger issues in relevant schools that may be deleterious to educators' attitudes toward wellbeing promotion. Indeed, it has been widely argued that the adoption of such practices is rarely undertaken on the basis of pedagogic merit, but rather is precipitated by factors such as low pupil intake, a lack of staff or resources, or an over-emphasis of academic attainment (see

---

[18] A statistically significant difference was observed with regard to Well_Pro in the urban context.

Hallam & Ireson, 2003; Taylor et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2016). As such, vertical education and/or streaming may not necessarily be the actual factors that influence participants' attitudes, but rather may be indicative of wider structural or functional issues present in relevant schools. Indeed, insufficient staff and resources, and an over-emphasis upon academic attainment are strongly linked to poorer wellbeing outcomes for students and educators alike (Ennis, 2019; Miller, 2003; O'Higgins et al., 2013; Smyth, 2017). Additional research would be necessary to further interpret the potential implications of these findings.

### 7.2.4   Position

Principals/vice-principals demonstrated more positive attitudes than did teachers across all three models, with all differences in attitudes being statistically significant. In addition, guidance counsellors were statistically significantly more positive regarding the available wellbeing policies and curriculum than were teachers. A small but non-significant difference in ATWP scores suggests that guidance counsellors were more positive about wellbeing promotion than were teachers. This may have been statistically significant but for the small size of the guidance counsellor group. Interestingly, there was also a small non-significant difference in Well_Pro scores that suggests principals/vice principals were more positive about the task of wellbeing promotion than were guidance counsellors. Overall, it appears that teachers tended to hold less positive attitudes, while principals'/vice-principals' and guidance counsellors' attitudes were comparable in most regards, with the (potential) notable exception of the task of promoting student wellbeing.

The extant literature suggests a number of explanations as to why teachers might present with less positive attitudes toward wellbeing promotion than principals/vice-principals or guidance counsellors. For example, it has been widely reported that an overcrowded curriculum or a perceived heavy workload can have a negative effect upon teachers' perceptions of wellbeing-related policies, curricula and practices (Apostolidou & Fontana, 2003; Moynihan & Mannix McNamara, 2012; O'Higgins et al., 2013; Hill et al., 2015). While teachers may see the value in caring for student wellbeing needs, when workload becomes overburdened in this way, SEL activities typically become de-prioritised in favour of academic activities. SEL activities are subsequently afforded less time in the school day (Barry et al., 2017). Jourdan et al. (2010) went further to suggest that teachers

may have a general tendency to prioritise the core curriculum and academic attainment over considerations for student wellbeing, while principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors may be more cognisant of their responsibility regarding students' wellbeing needs. Indeed, Irish post-primary teachers have been found to be somewhat resentful of losing their core curriculum subjects to facilitate wellbeing-related activities (O'Higgins et al., 2013). As such, teachers may feel more obliged toward core curricular tasks and may be less positively disposed toward SEL and the promotion of student health and wellbeing. Conversely, guidance counsellors in Irish post-primary schools have argued for their need to attend to the pastoral care of their students rather than being involved in core curricular activities (Hearne & Galvin, 2014; Hearne et al., 2017). With this in mind, it could be argued that guidance counsellors' low Well_Pro scores in the present study may reflect a reduced capacity to attend to their students' wellbeing because of a requirement to undertake core curricular activities. Indeed, non-guidance related tasks have been identified as prominent predictors of negative affect and burnout among guidance counsellors (Moyer, 2011). In this sense, the requirement for guidance counsellors to undertake non-guidance related tasks appears to have been deleterious to their attitudes regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing.

Level of appropriate training received may also help to explain the differing levels of positivity demonstrated by participants. For example, a lack of appropriate training has been noted among Irish post-primary teachers who were tasked with SEL and health- and wellbeing-related activities (Mannix McNamara et al., 2012; O'Higgins et al., 2013). It has also been widely noted that a lack of appropriate training can result in negative perceptions of such activities (Apostolidou & Fontana, 2003; Mannix McNamara et al., 2012; O'Higgins et al., 2013; Byrne et al., 2018). Perhaps more pertinently, the Phase Two results reported here suggest that access to appropriate training may in fact be stratified, with non-wellbeing educators less likely to receive training than principals/vice-principals, guidance counsellors or wellbeing educators. This might explain, at least in part, core curriculum teachers' lower levels of positivity regarding wellbeing promotion. Furthermore, a lack of training can precipitate a number of factors that could compound negative perceptions of wellbeing promotion. For example, insufficient training might inform a tendency for teachers to experience discomfort when attending to students' SEL or health and wellbeing issues

(Mayock et al., 2007; Rothì et al., 2008; Shannon & Smith, 2015), which in turn can be deleterious to teachers' attitudes toward such responsibilities. Insufficient training can also leave teachers under-prepared for, or not fully understanding, their role within a whole-school approach to wellbeing. For example, in the context of a whole-school approach to guidance counselling, Hearne et al. (2017) found that teachers sometimes understood their role within the whole-school approach to be merely a referral role to the guidance service.

Finally, the differences in educators' attitudes might be explained by differing levels of responsibility or accountability incurred by different positions within the school. Principals/vice principals and guidance counsellors appear to share a high degree of responsibility for the planning and development of wellbeing-related policies and practices, and therefore may be more communicative with each other than with core curriculum teachers about such (Jourdan et al., 2010; Hearne & Galvin, 2014; Hearne et al., 2017). This could result in principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors sharing similar attitudes and perceptions regarding wellbeing promotion, which is indeed reflected in the Phase One findings. It was also proposed in Phase Two that school leadership figures and 'wellbeing educators', such as guidance counsellors, should play a prominent role in the development and implementation of policies and practices. Previous research has gone as far as arguing that such figures should in fact be exemplars who model adaptive wellbeing-promoting behaviour (Merrell & Gueldner, 2010). It should then be acknowledged that principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors may be aware of their increased responsibility for student wellbeing and may be cognisant to appear positively disposed to the promotion of student wellbeing. To some degree, this may have resulted in principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors providing socially desirable responses.

## 7.3    Addressing the Research Questions

### 7.3.1    The Attitudes and Opinions of Post-Primary Educators toward the Promotion of Students' Wellbeing

Overall, participants' attitudes toward the promotion of students' wellbeing in Irish post-primary schools were largely positive. Phase One indicated that mean scores were almost consistently higher than median possible scores across all groups analysed, suggesting that almost all groupings of participants demonstrated some degree of positivity

regarding wellbeing promotion. An exception was observed regarding rural participants in schools that practice both streaming and vertical education, as well as those who were unsure if either practice was employed in their school. These groups each presented with mean scores that were lower than the median possible score, indicating an observably negative perception of the task of promoting student wellbeing. The underlying positivity of Phase One participants was reflected in the Phase Two findings, with participants readily identifying the merit of the recent formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning (Department of Education and Skills, 2015). Participants appeared to be cognisant of the many wellbeing threats students face, and welcomed the introduction of measures directly aimed at insulating students against such threats. Participants also demonstrated some degree of awareness (or what often appeared to be a subconscious awareness) of the reflexive nature of wellbeing promotion; identifying a sense of contentment when they felt they were successful in addressing student wellbeing issues, and equally, a sense of discontentment when they felt their efforts to address student wellbeing were unfruitful. Participants advocated an active and proactive approach to promoting student wellbeing.

To this end, practical core curricular subjects, such as art, woodwork and home economics were merited as highly conducive to student wellbeing. Proactivity was conceptualised as the propensity for educators to seek out opportunities to attend to and promote student wellbeing, and was argued to precipitate a whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion. However, it appears that participants' understanding of the concept of wellbeing and the language of wellbeing, as espoused by the wellbeing curriculum and wellbeing guidelines, is limited. An analysis of accounts provided by participants suggest that they tend to address student wellbeing in an atheoretical manner. Participants were frequently forthcoming regarding their reliance upon 'common sense' to guide their judgement and decision making. Furthermore, participants reported experiencing difficulty in assessing student wellbeing and often being unsure if their efforts to attend to students' wellbeing needs were in fact efficacious.

Phase One analyses suggested that participants' attitudes varied across a number of demographic variables, the most prominent of which was arguably gender. While male and female participants presented with positive attitudes, there were marked inter- and intra-gender differences when examined in relation to other variables. For example, a curvilinear

distribution was observed with regard to male attitudes toward the available wellbeing policies and curriculum, with positivity levels appearing to be highest in and around middle-age. While a potential curvilinear distribution of female educators' attitudes across age was broken by high levels of positivity among younger female participants, this could be explained by an increased exposure to appropriate training among female pre-service educators (Mannix McNamara et al., 2012). Notably, older male participants presented as markedly less positive than their younger male, and similarly aged female, counterparts. Indeed, older male participants were among the lowest scoring groups across the entire analysis. As such, it can be suggested that older male educators might not fit the criteria of an 'appropriate educator' for the delivery of wellbeing-related curricula and activities, as identified in Phase Two.

There were also gender-based differences in attitudes in the context of single-sex versus co-educational schools. With regard to the task of promoting student wellbeing, female participants demonstrated more positive attitudes in both all-girls and co-educational schools than did male participants. Participants appeared to be most positive in the single-sex context that matched their own gender. In other words, male participants were most positive in all-boys schools, while female participants were most positive in all-girls schools. These gendered preferences may be informed by socio-cultural factors that tend to push male and female educators into preferred disciplinarian and caregiver roles respectively. This would be highly problematic, as it essentially constructs each context as 'sanctuary' for respective educators, with male educators potentially less inclined to be required to perform the caregiver role in all-boys schools, and female educators potentially less inclined to be required to perform the disciplinarian role in all-girls schools. This poses an interesting challenge to the preconception that the preferred student identity is feminine, with male educators seemingly preferring masculine students in the context of wellbeing promotion. It is interesting to note, however, that the opinions of participants in Phase Two regarding students' perceptions and valuations of wellbeing promotion were almost exclusively negative.

Participants' attitudes also varied according to their position within their school. Perhaps unsurprisingly, principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors presented with more positive attitudes toward the available policies and curricula than did teachers. An

examination of the literature offers a number of potential explanations for this attitudinal difference, including a systemic devaluing of the wellbeing curriculum and related activities in favour of the core curriculum and related activities that may be more acutely expressed by teachers (McNamara et al, 2012; O'Higgins et al., 2013). Indeed, participants in Phase Two provided detailed accounts of a bias toward academia and the core curriculum. This was not due to an intrinsic devaluing of wellbeing promotion (although, participants did sometimes appear sceptical of some of their colleagues' appreciation for the importance of wellbeing), but rather a result of time constraints, heavy teacher workload and an overburdened general curriculum. Working under these conditions appears to negatively influence teachers' attitudes toward wellbeing promotion, and may inform teachers' necessity to attend to core curriculum activities at the expense of wellbeing curriculum activities. Interestingly, these conditions can result in guidance counsellors being assigned core curriculum activities, which can negatively affect their ability to attend to their students' wellbeing in an appropriate pastoral manner (Hearne & Galvin, 2014; Hearne et al., 2017). This might inform guidance counsellors' lower levels of positivity with regard to the task of promoting student wellbeing.

Discrepancies in levels of training may also explain attitudinal differences across various school staff roles/positions. A lack of training in SEL and health- and wellbeing-related activities can result in negative perceptions of such activities, and it has been noted that Irish post-primary educators are in fact very often under-trained in this area (Mannix McNamara et al., 2012; O'Higgins et al., 2013). Accounts provided by participants in Phase Two suggest that access to such training may be stratified, with principal/vice-principals, guidance counsellors and wellbeing coordinators more likely to receive such training than core curriculum teachers. However, it should be noted that principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors would tend to work closely together on the development of wellbeing-related policies, curriculum and practices and may be aware of the tacit expectation for them to present as positively disposed to wellbeing promotion. As such, the more positive attitudes of these groups may reflect some level of social desirability bias.

Finally, participants' attitudes varied with regard to the presence of particular educational practices in their school. Levels of positivity were typically lowest when both streaming and vertical education were employed, while positivity tended to be highest

when neither of these practices, or only vertical education, was employed. With regard to the task of promoting student wellbeing, educators' attitudes in the rural context were observed to be markedly lower than their urban counterparts. Indeed, attitudinal differences regarding the task of promoting student wellbeing were almost exclusively observed in the rural context. The implications of these findings should be interpreted carefully. The adoption of practices such as streaming or vertical education is rarely undertaken on the basis of pedagogic merit. Rather, it is often precipitated by factors such as low pupil intake, a lack of staff or resources, or an over-emphasis of academic attainment (see Hallam & Ireson, 2003; Taylor et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2016). As such, these findings may be indicative of wider structural or functional issues in these participants' schools that might be the true cause of the variation of educators' attitudes. These findings are summarised in Box 7.1.

---

**Box 7.1. Educators' Attitudes toward Wellbeing Promotion**

**A**ffective

- Overall, educators are positively disposed toward the promotion of student wellbeing.
- Educators appear to be more positively disposed toward the task of promoting student wellbeing when in a single-sex school that is reflective of their own gender.
- Older male educators ascribe less value to the available wellbeing policies and curriculum than do their younger male and similarly aged female counterparts.
- The presence of streaming, and both streaming and vertical education, appears to lead to marked decreases in positivity when compared to situations when neither of these practices are present.
- Principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors are more positively disposed toward wellbeing promotion than are teachers.

**B**ehavioural

- Despite the fact that the formalisation of wellbeing promotion is a relatively recent phenomenon, attending to student wellbeing is a task for which educators have long been responsible.
- In the absence of a theoretical or evidence-based understanding of how best to promote student wellbeing, educators often take a 'common sense' approach to addressing their students' wellbeing concerns.

**C**ognitive

- Educators recognise the importance of wellbeing promotion.
- Educators lack a theoretical understanding of wellbeing.
- Educators sometimes have trouble assessing the wellbeing of their students, and are often unsure if current measures aimed at promoting student wellbeing are effectual.

---

### 7.3.2 The Attitudes and Opinions of Post-Primary Educators toward the Current NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines

Participants presented as somewhat less positive regarding the NCCA wellbeing guidelines than they did regarding wellbeing promotion. Phase One findings indicated that participants' mean scores on each of the four non-composite wellbeing guidelines items were marginally higher than the median possible score. This suggests that participants believed; they were to some degree familiar with, and knowledgeable of, the wellbeing guidelines; that they used the information contained in the guidelines to some degree, and; that they perceived the guidelines to be somewhat beneficial to the promotion of student wellbeing. The GLMs for Phase One analyses presented with extremely poor fit for each of the non-composite items, meaning it was not possible to provide an examination of the data further than the illustration of a nominal degree of positivity across the four non-composite items. However, Phase Two afforded rich data pertaining to participants' attitudes toward the wellbeing guidelines.

The nominal level of positivity regarding the wellbeing guidelines was, to a minor degree, reflected in the Phase Two findings. Participants offered a number of examples of how they felt the wellbeing guidelines were beneficial to the promotion of student wellbeing. Principally, the wellbeing guidelines were viewed as a useful tool with which schools could 'audit' their current wellbeing policies and practices to help ensure such policies and practices were appropriate and fit for task. These accounts appear to be congruent between phases one and two, as Phase One participants provided the highest mean score with regard to their perceptions of the wellbeing guidelines as beneficial to the promotion of student wellbeing. However, positive attitudes in Phase Two appeared to be limited to select perceived potential benefits of the guidelines, with the data portraying a particularly negative narrative regarding participants' attitudes toward their content

Indeed, Phase Two participants appeared to attribute little value to the wellbeing guidelines. While participants often argued the limited scope and potential application of the guidelines, a prominent concern appeared to be that much of the content of the guidelines was unrelatable for students and therefore unsuitable for use in the classroom. Particularly concerted critiques were levied against the indicators of wellbeing, which were considered generic, vague or difficult to interpret, and unrepresentative of the way in which

students perceive their wellbeing. Interestingly, participants' lack of value for the wellbeing guidelines was sometimes incongruent with their accounts of the benefits of the guidelines. The perceived impermanence and erstwhile nature of the guidelines argued by participants contradicted the numerous accounts of the benefits of the guidelines in iteratively auditing wellbeing policies and practices. While some participants proposed the auditing process to be a 'once off', others referenced returning to the guidelines periodically.

There were also accounts of improvements in participants' schools' capacity to promote student wellbeing that seemed to be a result of, but were not necessarily accredited to, the introduction of the guidelines. It is apparent that participants did not always have the fullest understanding of how the wellbeing guidelines could be, and indeed sometimes were, of benefit to the promotion of student wellbeing. This seemed to stem from a widespread lack of familiarity with the guidelines. Participants were quite forthcoming in admitting they had not afforded much effort to become familiar with the guidelines. Even participants who appeared to have some knowledge of the guidelines, or those who could rationally be expected to have engaged with the guidelines in their capacity as a wellbeing educator, openly acknowledged that they or their colleagues have likely not engaged with the guidelines to a sufficient degree. Worryingly, some participants who admitted to having not read the guidelines, nevertheless assumed their schools were adhering to the standards they believed were ascribed by the wellbeing guidelines. Some non-wellbeing educator participants were dismissive of any kind of obligation to read the wellbeing guidelines, assuming this to be the responsibility of wellbeing educators. These participants were then unsure as to how their colleagues may have used the guidelines, or even that their colleagues had actually engaged with the guidelines themselves. Ultimately, while there were reports of initial engagement with the guidelines, it appears that participants have eschewed using the language or contents of the wellbeing guidelines (such as the aspects of wellbeing or the indicators of wellbeing) in a practical or pedagogic sense when attending to the SEL and wellbeing needs of their students. Indeed, participants eschewed the language and contents of the wellbeing guidelines when discussing wellbeing promotion in their respective interviews. These findings are summarised in Box 7.2.

---

**Box 7.2. Educators' Attitudes toward the Wellbeing Guidelines**

---

**A**ffective

- While Phase One suggested nominal levels of positivity among educators, Phase Two suggested educators ascribe little value to the wellbeing guidelines.

**B**ehavioural

- It is apparent that many educators have not engaged with the wellbeing guidelines, or have not engaged to a sufficient degree.
- Educators who did engage with the wellbeing guidelines appear to have ceded from using the information contained in the wellbeing guidelines when attending to, or promoting, student wellbeing.

**C**ognitive

- Educators appear to lack sufficient knowledge and understanding of the guidelines.
- Educators find the wellbeing guidelines to be generic, vague or difficult to interpret.
- Educators believe the language of wellbeing used in the wellbeing guidelines does not reflect the way in which students understand their wellbeing.

---

### 7.3.3 Issues or Barriers that Educators Believe Pertain to the Development of Students' Wellbeing

The principal concern participants expressed with regard to potential issues or barriers to the development of student wellbeing was arguably a lack of appropriate training. After receiving initial training (JCT), participants reported having trouble with availing of wellbeing-related CPD, which often left them feeling under-prepared for the task of promoting student wellbeing. Access to appropriate CPD also seemed to be stratified, with wellbeing educators (e.g. principals/vice-principals, guidance counsellors, wellbeing coordinators and wellbeing curriculum educators) prioritised over non-wellbeing educators (e.g. core curriculum teachers). It was said that wellbeing-related knowledge acquisition for non-wellbeing educators sometimes took the form of wellbeing educators returning from CPD workshops and sharing what they had learned with other staff. While wellbeing educators had more access to appropriate training and often rated training highly, the training that has been undertaken by wellbeing educators still appears to be insufficient. Both wellbeing and non-wellbeing educator participants expressed little theoretical knowledge of wellbeing or wellbeing promoting practices, and often provided accounts of using 'common sense' when attending to their students' wellbeing. Participants appeared

unsure how to assess student wellbeing or how to identify whether or not their attempts to promote student wellbeing were effectual. This presented as a widespread issue and it appears that wellbeing policies and practices were very often informed by incompletely theorised agreements.

Availing of wellbeing CPD was significantly inhibited by pre-existing time constraints, which appeared to inform the stratified access to training among wellbeing and non-wellbeing educators. In fact, time constraints also presented as a barrier to wellbeing promotion in their own right. Participants argued that an ever-increasing workload left very little time in the school day to attend to student wellbeing, let alone avail of wellbeing-related CPD. Participants reported attempting to circumvent these time constraints by moving wellbeing promotion into non-teaching times. Some participants reported attending to student wellbeing between classes or during free periods. Some said they would aim to attend to wellbeing issues during the lunch period, while others recounted sometimes taking lunch with students as an informal measure of relationship building.

With regard to training, wellbeing educators reported a willingness to use their free time to pursue wellbeing-related CPD, while non-wellbeing educators appeared reticent to sacrifice their free time for this type of training. Moving wellbeing promotion into non-teaching time is indicative of the compounding influence wellbeing promotion had upon pre-existing issues of workload and time constraints. Participants reported a further increased workload since the formalisation of the promotion of student wellbeing. The increased workload was not a result of increased wellbeing-related interactions between educators and students, but rather a result of increased administrative duties including paperwork completion and attendance at meetings. Participants argued that the increased 'wellbeing' workload negatively affected their ability to attend to student wellbeing.

Another barrier to wellbeing promotion presented in relation to a perceptibly overburdened curriculum. This was viewed to be a compounding factor in students' potential to experience academic stress. An overburdened curriculum was also recognised as a prominent source of work-related time constraints, with participants' struggling to fit the duties of the core curriculum and wellbeing curriculum into the school day. While the value of promoting student wellbeing was easily recognisable, participants stated that they felt more obliged toward academic outcomes, and subsequently felt required to prioritise

231

the delivery of the core curriculum over the wellbeing curriculum. In this regard, participants provided accounts of core curricular activities being attended to during time allocated to wellbeing curricular activities (e.g. completing paperwork during SPHE class).

Finally, numerous threats to educators' own wellbeing were documented. Issues of training, workload and time constraints, and an emphasis upon the core curriculum over the wellbeing curriculum were deleterious to educator wellbeing, as well as student wellbeing. While ubiquitous concerns regarding workload, insufficient support and time management issues were expressed, participants highlight classroom management and parent/educator relationships as particularly prominent sources of negative affect. Educators' perceptions of their own wellbeing can have a significant impact upon their perceptions of measures aimed at promoting student wellbeing. Accounts provided by participants in the present study suggest that educators' perceptions of their own wellbeing may not be very positive. Worryingly, participants' perceptions of their own wellbeing seemed to be negatively affected by the aforementioned concerns regarding the promotion of student wellbeing. While reported as being mostly positive, accounts of parent/educator interactions regarding student wellbeing were sometimes visceral and even combative.

Participants also reported feeling stressed and sometimes feeling uncomfortable when attempting to attend to student wellbeing in the absence of appropriate training, and tended to experience increased stress due to workload and the difficulties of balancing the core and wellbeing curriculum. In some cases, a lack of training, timetabling issues and a devaluing of the wellbeing curriculum in favour of the core curriculum seem to have contributed to the potential for an 'inappropriate educator' to have been assigned to the delivery of wellbeing curriculum subjects. Ultimately, the observed potential for wellbeing promotion to increase participants' likelihood to experience negative affect would arguably be deleterious to their propensity to fully engage in the promotion of student wellbeing. These findings are summarised in Box 7.3.

### 7.3.4 Changes Educators Believe Should be made to the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Curriculum

For the most part, participants were positively disposed toward the wellbeing curriculum. Participants believed the wellbeing curriculum to be a complimentary aspect of the wider curriculum in terms of delivering a holistic educational experience, and believed most aspects of the wellbeing curriculum to be valuable to students' SEL and to the development of students' health and wellbeing. Formal recognition of wellbeing as an area of learning was argued to be timely and beneficial to the wellbeing curriculum, and was said to help demonstrate the value of the wellbeing curriculum. However, participants did express some concerns regarding the content of the wellbeing curriculum. As was noted regarding the wellbeing guidelines, it was believed that some aspects of the wellbeing curriculum could be unrelatable for students. It was said that the wellbeing curriculum could be 'quite textbook' and does not necessarily reflect the way in which students perceive their wellbeing. Noted areas of concern were RSE – particularly puberty and reproduction – and substance abuse. Participants also stated that these aspects of the wellbeing curriculum were often duplicated in other core curricular subjects. Repeatedly learning about the same topics, via what seemed to be very similar pedagogic methods, was argued to fatigue students and result in apathy and disinterest regarding these topics. It was proposed that the wellbeing curriculum should be reviewed, with necessary aspects redrafted in a manner that would be more relatable for students, and areas of duplication removed as and when

appropriate. In this regard, participants argued that students should be more involved in the design and delivery of the wellbeing curriculum, with the involvement of age-appropriate peer groups also being advocated.

Another recommendation did not necessarily relate to the content of the wellbeing curriculum, but rather pertained to its delivery. Participants reported that the delivery of SPHE would often be assigned to an 'inappropriate educator', which was conceptualised as someone who is not adequately trained in appropriate pedagogies, does not adequately value the promotion of student wellbeing, and/or is uncomfortable with attending to student wellbeing. Participants offered numerous accounts of how an 'inappropriate educator' being assigned to deliver a wellbeing curriculum subject would be deleterious to best practice in promoting student wellbeing. It was tacitly proposed that the assignment of educators to the delivery of wellbeing curriculum subjects in this way should be discontinued, and that only educators who are appropriately trained, who are positively disposed to wellbeing promotion, and who are comfortable attending to student wellbeing should be assigned to the delivery of such subjects. Recommended changes to the wellbeing curriculum are summarised in Box 7.4.

---

**Box 7.4. Recommended Changes to the Wellbeing Curriculum**

- A review of the wellbeing curriculum should be conducted, with necessary aspects of the curriculum (namely, RSE and substance abuse) redrafted in a manner that would be more relatable for students.
- A review of the wellbeing curriculum should also aim to identify areas of duplication between the core and wellbeing curriculum, with duplication removed as and when appropriate.
- Students should be more involved in the design and delivery of the wellbeing curriculum.
- Only educators who are appropriately trained and who are comfortable with, and positively disposed to, the promotion of student wellbeing should be assigned to the delivery of wellbeing curriculum subjects.

---

## 7.4   Study Strengths

To the researcher's knowledge, this study represents the first attempt to quantify educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of students' social and emotional wellbeing. While numerous previous studies in this area have adopted quantitative methods (see Mannix McNamara et al., 2012; O'Higgins et al., 2013; Moynihan et al., 2016), they have

tended to focus on measuring the number of educators who may be positively or negatively disposed toward the promotion of student wellbeing or related activities or issues. To the researcher's knowledge, the present study is the first to examine the degree to which educators are positively or negatively disposed to the promotion of student wellbeing. This was pursued using a purpose built test instrument (Byrne et al., 2021), which was developed concurrently at the early stages of the study. Use of the 'ATWP scale' was instrumental in producing novel data, which was analysed in relation to a wide range of demographic factors, affording unique and diverse understandings of educators' attitudes and widening the field of potential future research.

A strategy of 'sense-checking' the validity, reliability and rigor of this study was undertaken, which involved pursuing the publication of relevant methodological and analytical papers in appropriate peer-reviewed journals. A synopsis of the literature review was published in 'Irish Educational Studies' (see Byrne, Carthy & McGilloway, 2019) in order to ensure that relevant aspects of student wellbeing were addressed, and that a representative account of educators' attitudes (as currently understood) regarding the promotion of student wellbeing was presented. The method by which the ATWP scale was developed was also published in 'Irish Educational Studies' (see Byrne et al., 2021) to ensure the test instrument used in Phase One was of an appropriate standard. Finally, a worked example of the implementation of the analytical method used in Phase Two (reflexive thematic analysis) was published in 'Quality & Quantity'. This publication was instrumental in ensuring fidelity and dependability with regard to the implementation of a *reflexive* thematic analysis. Undertaking this sense-checking strategy was highly advantageous, as it allowed for the solicitation of feedback from field experts regarding the various aspects of the study, which could then be integrated into the study before the publication of any results.

The research has been widely disseminated, both nationally and internationally, via peer-reviewed publications and presentations at appropriate conferences (see Appendix 9. List of Publications and Presentations). The aforementioned sense-checking strategy has informed the way in which this study was conducted, thus raising awareness of the study, as well as the issues examined therein. Further dissemination of the results is also underway, with a paper discussing Phase Two findings recently published in the 'International Journal

of Qualitative Studies on Health and Wellbeing', and a paper discussing Phase One findings currently being prepared. The research and findings have also been disseminated at a number of national and international conferences. While attendance at international conferences was somewhat curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it was still possible to present findings internationally via virtual means. The dissemination of different aspects of this study via different means has arguably been conducive to augmenting knowledge exchange. In this regard, knowledge exchange does not only pertain to the findings of the study vis-à-vis educators' attitudes toward the promotion of student wellbeing, but also includes methodological and analytical knowledge exchange.

## 7.5   Study Limitations

While the use of a newly developed composite test instrument can be understood to be a strength in terms of the novel data that can be collected, it should be acknowledged that the novelty of this data presents a limitation with regard to the researcher's ability to contextualise Phase One findings. As mentioned, several previous national and international studies in this area have used quantitative measures (see Apostolidou & Fontana, 2003; Mannix McNamara et al., 2012; Byrne et al., 2018). However, these studies have tended to examine the number of educators who may hold a particular attitude. In addition, these studies also typically pertain to attitudes regarding health and wellbeing pedagogy. While it is possible to draw inferences from these studies to corroborate the findings of the present study, none of these previous studies provide an adequate analogue against which to assess criterion validity (Field, 2013). In other words, while it is possible to assess the general positivity or negativity of educators observed in the present study against other studies, it is much more difficult to demonstrate support for the findings regarding the degree to which educators are positively or negatively disposed toward wellbeing promotion. As such, the ability to make practical or policy recommendations based on Phase One findings is limited. Arguably, recommendations predicated on Phase One findings should be limited to recommendations for further research, with a view to support or disconfirm the present findings.

There were also some challenges with recruitment and sampling that should be considered. An opportunistic sampling method was used when recruiting for both phases of the study. The most accurate way to fulfil an opportunistic sampling method would have

been to directly contact Irish post-primary educators and request their participation in this study (Etikan et al., 2016). However, GDPR prohibited the researcher from accessing educators' contact information (European Commission, 2018). Invitations to participate in the study were therefore submitted by email to a point of contact at each school (typically a principal, vice-principal or secretarial/administrative staff member), with this point of contact requested to forward the invitation to their colleagues. It was therefore not possible to ascertain how many points of contact did indeed share the study information with their colleagues, or how many emails to points of contact ended up in spam folders. As such, it is not possible to ascertain accurate response/non-response rates for either phase of this study.

There were also some limitations in terms of sample size in relation to both phases of the study. While the overall sample size for Phase One was demonstrated to be appropriate via power analysis, there were a number of pairwise comparisons that presented with small samples in one or both groups. For example, comparisons involving guidance counsellors or the 18-29 year old age group were sometimes found to be non-significant despite the presence of a medium effect size. This is arguably due to a lack of power, resulting from small samples in these specific comparisons, and is indicative of the potential occurrence of type ll errors (Field, 2013). With regard to Phase Two, the sample was relatively small. Educators' willingness to participate in Phase Two may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, participants who partook in virtual interviews, as well as the one person who withdrew from participation, alluded to the imposition of time constraints as a result of working from home. Although the sample size for Phase Two was relatively small, saturation point was achieved, with rich data collected that informed 'thick' illustrative and analytical narratives of participants' attitudes toward wellbeing promotion (Braun & Clarke, 2012; 2014).

Opportunity sampling can also present difficulties with regard to achieving a sample that could be considered representative of, or generalisable to, the population (Etikan et al., 2016). The sample for Phase Two was relatively diverse in terms of gender, location, subjects taught and wellbeing/non-wellbeing position[19] of participants. However, the

---

[19] i.e. wellbeing curriculum teachers, pastoral team members, guidance counsellors/core curriculum teachers

sample was quite homogenous in terms of position, with teachers somewhat over-represented. In addition, all-boys schools were not represented in the sample. However, the degree of congruence noted between Phase Two findings and previous research suggests that conceptual generalisability has been achieved (Creswell, 2009). A similar issue may have presented to a degree in Phase One. As mentioned, a number of groups for IVs presented with small sample sizes. Indeed, some group sample sizes were so small as to preclude their involvement in analyses (e.g. secretarial/administration group for the 'position' IV). In this regard, it may have been beneficial to adopt a purposive sampling method during Phase One so as to solicit the participation of appropriate numbers for each group (Etikan et al., 2016). However, purposive sampling was not possible due to the lack of direct access to the target population. In addition, the large number of independent variables being explored and the large number of groups inherent in some of these IVs mean that purposive sampling would have been extremely time consuming and quite impractical.

The analytical model developed for Phase One demonstrated extremely poor fit with regard to the 'wellbeing guidelines' Likert items. The fact that the analytical model demonstrated good fit with regard to the composite DVs supports the appropriateness of this model for use in the context of this study. It is then possible that poor fit may have been due, at least in part, to the design of the wellbeing guidelines Likert items. Alternatively, the analytical model may not have been able to explain variation in educators' attitudes regarding the wellbeing guidelines because educators appear to be unfamiliar with the guidelines, or when they are familiar with the guidelines, argue that they lack clarity (as per Phase Two). In this regard, it is possible that educators' attitudes regarding the guidelines simply do not vary according to the measured IVs, as most educators appear to have an insufficient understanding of the guidelines to present with varying attitudes (although, this is unlikely). The reason for the poor fit is not inherently clear. However, the outcome is that, although overall attitudes were presented, the examination of variation in educators' attitudes regarding the wellbeing guidelines was inconclusive.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that Phase One analyses are susceptible to type I error due to the large number of tests conducted and the absence of an alpha value correction (which was omitted as Phase One was conceptualised as exploratory). While not

necessarily a limitation, as this was a feature of the research design aimed at examining a broad array of areas for potential future research, the potential for type l errors should nevertheless be considered when interpreting Phase One findings.

## 7.6    Implications for Practice and Policy

Arguably, the most prominent barrier to the promotion of student wellbeing identified in this study was the lack of appropriate training for educators. Based on accounts provided by participants, it appears that educators who are tasked with delivering the wellbeing curriculum are very often inadequately trained in appropriate pedagogies. A more fundamental concern also seems to characterise the wider population of educators is that there seems to be a lack of understanding of wellbeing, such that they might attend to students' wellbeing concerns in a theoretically informed manner. These issues appear to be compounded by severe time-constraints related to workload, and a systemic prioritisation of the core curriculum, both of which seem to inform a lack of uptake in wellbeing-related CPD. As such, while it is eminently clear that educators require additional wellbeing-related training and support, it would arguably be ineffectual to suggest the provision of additional supporting documents/circulars or CPD-based training. Indeed, considering how widely these issues have been documented in Irish schools (see Mayock et al., 2007; Mannix McNamara et al., 2012; Moynihan & Mannix McNamara, 2012; O'Higgins et al., 2013; Moynihan et al., 2016; Barry et al., 2017), it is perhaps necessary to adopt a more preventative approach to addressing the issue of educators' lack of appropriate training. As such, it is suggested that educators' wellbeing-related training should be addressed pre-service.

Although wellbeing has been a recognised area of learning in Ireland since 2015 (Department of Education and Skills, 2015), the wellbeing curriculum occupies an unusual grey area among relevant stakeholders. For example, the 2017 draft of The Teaching Council registration 'curriculum subject requirements', which outlines the requisite skills and accreditation to deliver each subject of the post-primary curriculum, only addresses two (CSPE and PE) of the three subjects that comprise the wellbeing curriculum (The Teaching Council, 2017)[20]. As of yet, SPHE is not recognised. It is therefore recommended that

---

[20] CSPE does not appear on the 2020 draft, as it is to be phased out by 2023 (The Teaching Council 2020).

appropriate subject requirements be established for SPHE, which prospective teachers would be required to meet in order to register with The Teaching Council to deliver this subject (see Appendix 8. Draft SPHE Curricular Subject Requirements). This would oblige all consecutive and concurrent teacher-education programmes to offer a learning pathway that would lead to an accredited qualification to teach SPHE. Furthermore, as wellbeing promotion is conceptualised as a whole-school practice for which all educators are responsible (NCCA, 2017), all educators should be provided with the necessary knowledge and skillset to attend to this task pre-service. It is therefore also recommended that a requisite base-level wellbeing-orientated knowledge and skillset be mandatory for all educators in order to register as a post-primary teacher with The Teaching Council, regardless of their chosen subject. This would require that all prospective educators undergo some degree of pre-service training and that this training be recognised as a requisite criterion to register as a teacher with The Teaching Council. This training could take the form of a mandatory 'wellbeing' module(s) on all accredited concurrent and consecutive teacher-education programmes and could encompass indicated areas of concern, such as theories of wellbeing, practical approaches to promoting wellbeing, conflict management and parent/educator relationships.

The benefits of the recommended measures regarding pre-service training would potentially be wide reaching, accounting for best practice in wellbeing promotion, as well as potentially supporting both student and educator wellbeing. The introduction of an accredited SPHE learning pathway would help to ensure theoretically informed best practice in delivery of the wellbeing curriculum. Such a programme would reduce reliance on CPD and overcome time constraints as a barrier to adequate training by establishing an appropriate level of knowledge and skill pre-service. Accreditation requirements would potentially reduce the propensity for 'inappropriate educators' to deliver SPHE, and would ensure that educators are not 'thrown into' SPHE to fill free hours, as unqualified educators would (or should) no longer be allowed to deliver SPHE. As per the arguments of Hearne and Galvin (2014) regarding the role of guidance counsellors as wellbeing leaders, having fully trained SPHE teachers could facilitate improved wellbeing culture and ethos in schools. In this regard, a requisite base-level of pre-service training would help to ensure theoretically informed best practice with regard to the implementation of whole-school

approaches to wellbeing promotion, further contributing to wellbeing culture and ethos in schools. An accredited SPHE learning pathway and general base-level training could also help to enhance educators' attitudes and perceptions regarding the wellbeing curriculum in relation to the core curriculum, and help to redress the axiological balance of these curricula (although, considering the work of Hearne and Galvin [2014] and Geary et al. [2017] regarding guidance counsellors, effects in this regard may be limited).

Another apparent area of concern highlighted by participants related to the wellbeing curriculum. Although both Phase One and Phase Two findings suggest that educators, by-and-large, hold positive attitudes regarding the wellbeing curriculum, the Phase Two presented suggest that students sometimes do not relate particularly well to the wellbeing curriculum. It was also stated that the wellbeing curriculum could be overbearing for students, and that there were numerous areas of duplication between content delivered in the wellbeing curriculum and that delivered in the core curriculum. This appears to have led to negative perceptions of the curriculum among some students and challenges for teachers in achieving student engagement during SPHE[21]. It is therefore recommended that a review of the wellbeing curriculum be conducted to identify and amend any potential areas of the wellbeing curriculum that may in fact be unrelatable or repeated in the core curriculum. Based on participants' accounts, and indeed those noted in the available literature (see Mayock et al., 2007; NCCA, 2017; Barry et al., 2017), student input would be highly advantageous in any amendments to the wellbeing curriculum. Amending or removing duplication would not necessarily mean that a particular topic would only be delivered in one curriculum subject. Rather, it would allow for relevant topics to be discussed in an appropriate pedagogic manner in each subject. For example, sex/reproduction could be discussed in a physiological manner in science class, and in a socio-cultural manner in SPHE. This would contribute to optimum functionality of the wellbeing curriculum. It could also inform increased student engagement with a more streamlined and relatable wellbeing curriculum, thereby reducing the potential for some students to see SPHE as a 'doss class'.

---

[21] It should be noted that, while negative student accounts (as well as positive accounts) of the wellbeing curriculum are documented in the available literature, these accounts do not support the pervasive negativity participants in the present study have ascribed to students with regard to the wellbeing curriculum.

A similar review may be necessary with regard to the NCCA wellbeing guidelines. Many participants in Phase Two reported difficulty understanding or utilising the guidelines, while others were open in admitting they had not read them at all. The few participants who did have some degree of familiarity with the guidelines (typically wellbeing educators) made similar arguments to those regarding the wellbeing curriculum, in that they felt the guidelines were unrepresentative of the way in which students view their wellbeing, and were often difficult to implement in the classroom. A review of the wellbeing guidelines (again, informed by further research), with particular consideration for the indicators of wellbeing, may be beneficial in terms of reframing the language of wellbeing espoused by the guidelines in a more student-representative manner. It is also recommended that a review of the wellbeing guidelines aim to incorporate some consideration of educator wellbeing. Some educators appeared to be somewhat resentful in their perception that their efforts to attend to student wellbeing have not necessarily been fully acknowledged, while it was also argued that, to some degree, educators have always been responsible for the promotion of student wellbeing. This presented as yet another frustration added to the stress and anxiety of being required to attend to student wellbeing, not to mention the stress and anxiety of simply being an educator. Indeed, teaching can be a highly emotionally laborious profession that puts educators at significant risk of negative affect (Kinman & Strange, 2011), and this appears to be reflected in documented rates of absenteeism among Irish educators (Ennis, 2019). Indeed, while the NCCA (2017 p.29) propose that "wellbeing starts with the staff", this statement appears to fall short in terms of facilitating educator wellbeing. It should arguably be appreciated that educators should not be expected to attend to the social and emotional needs of their students in the absence of similar consideration for their own wellbeing[22].

Finally, accounts of time constraints resulting from high workload were numerous in Phase Two and are well documented in the literature (Mayock et al., 2007; Mannix McNamara et al., 2012; Moynihan & Mannix McNamara, 2012; O'Higgins et al., 2013). This was such a critical ongoing issue that respondents reported attempting to move wellbeing promotion into non-teaching/free time. While this is commendable, it is arguably self-

---

[22] While an updated draft of the NCCA wellbeing guidelines was published in 2021 (NCCA 2021b), areas of concern regarding the 2017 draft highlighted by participants appear to be unchanged.

evident that educators (and students) should not be required to spend lunch periods or free/personal time addressing students' wellbeing issues. Educators' workdays appear to be excessively full, to the point that participants reported work often 'following them home'. As argued in Phase Two, workload-related time constraints appear to be relevant to a number of factors including: an inability to avail of wellbeing-related CPD; an inability to focus appropriately on students' wellbeing concerns; a perceived necessity to prioritise the core curriculum over the wellbeing curriculum, and; an increased potential for educators to experience negative affect. All of these issues are potentially deleterious to best practice in the promotion of student wellbeing. Whilst it may be difficult to achieve, the findings of this study are congruent with the literature in suggesting that measures should be taken to reduce educator workload. The implications for practice and policy are outline in Box 7.5.

---

**Box 7.5. Implications for Practice and Policy**

- It is recommended that appropriate learning pathways culminating in an accredited qualification to teach SPHE be developed. These learning pathways should establish appropriate subject requirements, which prospective teachers would be required to meet in order to register with The Teaching Council to deliver this subject (see Appendix 8. Draft SPHE Curricular Subject Requirements.
- A requisite base-level wellbeing-orientated knowledge and skillset should be mandatory for all educators in order to register as a post-primary teacher with The Teaching Council. This knowledge and skillset should be delivered on all consecutive and concurrent teacher-education programmes.
- A review of the wellbeing curriculum should be conducted, with a view to improve relatability for students and redress potential areas of duplication with content delivered in other subjects.
- A review of the wellbeing curriculum should be conducted, with a view to reframe the language of wellbeing espoused by the guidelines in a more student-representative manner. This review should also aim to include recognition of educator wellbeing.
- Educator workload should be reviewed.

---

## 7.7    Directions for Future Research

As previously mentioned, one of the strengths of this study is the gathering of novel data during Phase One, which opens up a wide array of opportunities for future research. However, inherent in this strength is the limitation that practical and policy recommendations should arguably be withheld until further research is conducted, with a view to support or disconfirm the findings of the present study. Furthermore, the findings of

the present study should be understood as a snapshot of a particular context at a particular instance in time. Indeed, the context of wellbeing promotion appears to be changing, with CSPE due to be phased out of the wellbeing curriculum (The Teaching Council, 2020) and a new draft of the NCCA wellbeing guidelines (NCCA, 2021b) published just prior to the completion of this study. While Phase Two findings are largely congruent with previous research, further research would be necessary to support Phase One findings before respective recommendations could be considered evidence-based. It would also arguably be necessary to re-examine (quantitatively) educators' attitudes regarding the wellbeing guidelines, as analysis of variation in educators' attitudes in this regard was inconclusive in this study.

If Phase One findings were to be replicated, there are a number of areas that may benefit from additional research. For example, the interaction between gender and age could be more closely examined, with a view to exploring the hypothesis that older male educators might not fulfil the criteria of an 'appropriate educator' to deliver the wellbeing curriculum. As evidence in the literature suggests that older male educators' lower levels of positivity regarding the wellbeing curriculum may be related to lower levels of openness (Schwaba et al., 2017), this type of study may benefit from the inclusion of a measure of personality, such as The Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999). It may also be fruitful to explore the interaction between gender and single-sex/co-educational contexts. In this regard, additional research could examine the dual hypotheses that, with regard to wellbeing promotion, male educators' preferred student identity is masculine and female educators' preferred student identity is feminine. Such a study could make a valuable contribution to the historical narrative that, generally speaking, educators' preferred student identity is in fact feminine (Francis, 2002; Myhill, 2002; Beaman et al., 2006).

Additional research may also shed further light upon the observed discrepancy in attitudes of principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors and those of teachers. As previously discussed, there are a number of potential explanations as to why principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors appeared more positive than teachers. A qualitative approach to additional research in this regard could further illuminate the reasons for these differences, while potentially minimising the susceptibility to socially desirable responses that is inherent in self-report data. Observational or ethnographical approaches, in

particular, could be adopted to explore the ways in which educators' self-reported thoughts and feelings relate to their behaviour in promoting student wellbeing, and how well their behaviour might reflect their schools' wellbeing culture and ethos.

The last area of further research that can be recommended based on Phase One findings is an examination of the influence of non-wellbeing practices and policies upon best practice in wellbeing promotion. Previous research has identified that an emphasis on the core curriculum can negatively impact the delivery of the wellbeing curriculum and, more generally, the promotion of student wellbeing (Mayock et al., 2007; Mannix McNamara et al., 2012; Moynihan & Mannix McNamara, 2012; O'Higgins et al., 2013). It remains to be examined how policies and practices that are not necessarily reflective of the core or wellbeing curriculum might influence the promotion of student wellbeing. Phase One of the present study contributed to addressing this question by examining educators' attitudes toward wellbeing promotion with respect to the occurrence of streaming and/or vertical education in participants' schools. It transpired that educators' attitudes appear to be strongly and negatively affected by the occurrence of streaming and by the co-occurrence of both streaming and vertical education. However, considering the accounts of such practices provided in the literature (see Hallam & Ireson, 2003; Taylor et al., 2016; Francis et al., 2016), it is arguable that the use of these practices may be indicative of wider structural or functional issues in respective schools, which may in fact be the actual cause of differences in educators' attitudes. Further research could examine the influence of such structural and functional policies and practices upon the promotion of student wellbeing.

Reproducing Phase Two using alternative theoretical perspectives could solicit additional data that may contribute to a more holistic understanding of educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of student wellbeing. For example, as opposed to an experiential orientation to data interpretation, a critical perspective could be employed to conduct a deeper analysis of the socio-cultural factors that inform educators' attitudes. This type of study could explore the reasons for potential discrepancies between wellbeing educators and non-wellbeing educators, or could investigate why some participants were sceptical about their colleagues' perceptions and valuations of wellbeing promotion.

The absence of theoretical knowledge of wellbeing and appropriate wellbeing-related pedagogies was a prominent area of concern raised by participants in Phase Two.

This raises questions regarding the impact of the available wellbeing-related CPD upon educators' ability to attend to student wellbeing, as well as their ability to deliver the wellbeing curriculum. Interestingly, participants provided rather positive accounts of any wellbeing-related CPD they had undertaken, but presented with little theoretical knowledge of wellbeing, and were frequently unsure how to assess student wellbeing or if their attempts to promote student wellbeing were in fact efficacious. Participants' perceptions of wellbeing-related CPD may be overly-informed by perception of the pedagogic function of training (Jourdan, 2011), in that participants may indeed be pleased with the level of expertise they perceive had been provided during training. However, unbeknownst to both trainer and trainee, necessary areas of learning might not be covered in the available CPD programmes. This would suggest shortcomings with regard to the technical and support functions of wellbeing-related CPD training (Jourdan, 2011), as required areas of learning may not be addressed in training and it seems that the absence of these areas has not been fed back to trainers (or appropriate bodies) for one reason or another. Observational or case study approaches may be beneficial in investigating the potential for unidentified failings of the technical and support functions of available training. Directions for future research are summarised in Box 7.6.

---

**Box 7.6. Directions for Future Research**

---

- Phase One analyses could be reiterated, with a view to support or disconfirm the present findings of the present study.
- As analyses that explored differences in educators' attitudes regarding the wellbeing guidelines were inconclusive, this aspect of the study could be reconceptualise and reiterated.
- Several suggestions can be made to compliment the reiteration of Phase One analyses:
  - The hypothesis that older male educators do not meet the criteria of an 'appropriate educator' could be examined.
  - The dual hypotheses that, with regard to the promotion of student wellbeing, male educators' preferred student identity is masculine and female educators' preferred student identity is feminine could be examined.
  - The discrepancy between the attitudes of principals/vice-principals and guidance counsellors and those of teachers could be explored with consideration for their wellbeing-promoting behaviour.
  - The influence of structural and functional policies and practices upon the promotion of student wellbeing could be examined.
- Phase Two analysis could be reiterated with a critical orientation to data interpretation in order to examine the socio-cultural factors implicit in educators' varying attitudes.
- A case study of wellbeing-related CPD could be conducted to investigate the discrepancy between educators' positive perceptions of training (when undertaken) and their noted difficulties in attending to student wellbeing.

### 7.8    Conclusion

This study was designed to provide a comprehensive account of the attitudes of post-primary educators toward the promotion of students' social and emotional wellbeing. This was pursued using a two-phase sequential mixed methods design, with each phase tailored to provide specific information regarding educators' attitudes. The outcome of this study is that novel data has been gathered that, for the first time, quantified the degree to which educators may be positively or negatively disposed to the promotion of student wellbeing. Qualitative data has also been gathered, which contributes to and expands upon previously existing literature in providing a detailed and multi-faceted narrative of educators' experience of promoting student wellbeing and delivering the wellbeing curriculum. To the researcher's knowledge, this study also represents the first attempt to examine educators' attitudes with regard to the NCCA wellbeing guidelines. The findings of this study suggest that, while educators present with an underlying degree of positivity regarding the promotion of student wellbeing, there are many factors that threaten best practice in wellbeing promotion. A number of recommendations have been outlined, principal among which, is the requirement for appropriate pre-service learning pathways that culminate in an accredited qualification to teach SPHE. Recommendations have also been made with regard to potential avenues of future research.

Overall, the findings of this study complement and build upon previous research in suggesting that there is much work to be done to realise post-primary education as an environment in which young peoples' social and emotional wellbeing can thrive. Crucially though, key stakeholders in this regard have demonstrated very positive perceptions of the intrinsic value of promoting student wellbeing. Based on educators' accounts, barriers to the promotion of student wellbeing appear to be primarily structural and methodological. The recommendations of this study are aimed at addressing these specific inhibitory factors and supporting all key stakeholders in achieving their highest potential as wellbeing educators, as all educators are indeed wellbeing educators.

# References

Acton, R., & Glasgow, P. (2015). Teacher wellbeing in neoliberal contexts: A review of the literature. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *40*(8), 99-114. doi:10.14221/ajte.2015v40n8.6

Allison, C. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2011). Early menarche: Confluence of biological and contextual factors. *Sex Roles*, *68*(1-2), 55-64. doi:10.1007/s11199-011-9993-5

Allport, G. W. (1935). Attitudes. In C. Murchison (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 798-844). Worchester, MA: Clarke University Press.

Angold, A., Costello, E. J., & Worthman, C. M. (1998). Puberty and depression: the roles of age, pubertal status and pubertal timing. *Psychological Medicine*, *28*(1), 51-61. doi:10.1017/s003329179700593x

Apostolidou, M., & Fontana, D. (2003). Teacher attitudes towards health education in Greek-speaking Cyprus schools. *Health Education*, *103*(2), 75-82. doi:10.1108/09654280310467690

Arthur, J. (2005). The re-emergence of character education in British education policy. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *53*(3), 239-254. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8527.2005.00293.x

Assor, A., Kaplan, H., Kanat-Maymon, Y. & Roth, G. (2005). Directly controlling teacher behaviors as predictors of poor motivation and engagement in girls and boys: The role of anger and anxiety. *Learning and instruction. 15*(1). 397-413. doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2005.07.008

ASTI. (2021, April 21). Junior cycle wellbeing programme. Retrieved from https://www.asti.ie/news-campaigns/latest-news/junior-cycle-wellbeing-programme/

Aultman, L. P., Williams-Johnson, M. R., & Schutz, P. A. (2009). Boundary dilemmas in teacher–student relationships: Struggling with "the line". *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*(5), 636-646. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2008.10.002

Bagozzi, R. P., & Burnkrant, R. E. (1979). Attitude measurement and behavior change: a reconsideration of attitude organization and its relationship to behavior. In W. W.

Wilkie (Ed.), *Advances in consumer research volume 06* (pp. 295-302). Ann Arbour, MI: Association for Consumer Research.

Banks, J., & Smyth, E. (2015). 'Your whole life depends on it': academic stress and high-stakes testing in Ireland. *Journal of Youth Studies, 18*(5), 598-616. doi:10.1080/13676261.2014.992317

Bao, X., & Lam, S. (2008). Who Makes the Choice? Rethinking the Role of Autonomy and Relatedness in Chinese Children's Motivation. *Child Development*, *79*(2), 269-283. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01125.x

Barkan, S. E. (2012). *Sociology: Comprehensive Edition* (1st ed.). Retrieved from https://2012books.lardbucket.org/pdfs/sociology-comprehensive-edition.pdf

Barrow, R. (1981). *Philosophy of schooling*. London, UK: Wheatsheaf Books.

Barry, M. M., Clarke, A. M., & Dowling, K. (2017). Promoting social and emotional well-being in schools. *Health Education*, *117*(5), 434-451. doi.org/10.1108/HE-11-2016-0057

Barton, H., & Grant, M. (2006). A health map for the local human habitat. *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, *126*(6), 252-253. doi:10.1177/1466424006070466

Baumeister, R. F., Campbell, J. D., Krueger, J. I., & Vohs, K. D. (2003). Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles? *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *4*(1), 1-44. doi:10.1111/1529-1006.01431

Beaman, R., Wheldall, K., & Kemp, C. (2006). Differential teacher attention to boys and girls in the classroom. *Educational Review*, *58*(3), 339-366. doi:10.1080/00131910600748406

Beebe, J. R., & Sackris, D. (2016). Moral objectivism across the lifespan. *Philosophical Psychology*, *29*(6), 912-929. doi:10.1080/09515089.2016.1174843

Behling, D. (1994). School Uniforms and Person Perception. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *79*(2), 723-729. doi:10.2466/pms.1994.79.2.723

Behling, D. (1995). Influence of Dress on Perception of Intelligence and Scholastic Achievement in Urban Schools with Minority Populations. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, *13*(1), 11-16. doi:10.1177/0887302x9501300102

Behling, D. U., & Williams, E. A. (1991). Influence of Dress on Perception of Intelligence and Expectations of Scholastic Achievement. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, *9*(4), 1-7. doi:10.1177/0887302x9100900401

Bergin, C., Talley, S., & Hamer, L. (2003). Prosocial behaviours of young adolescents: a focus group study. *Journal of Adolescence*, *26*(1), 13-32. doi:10.1016/s0140-1971(02)00112-4

Bishop, J. A., & Inderbitzen, H. M. (1995). Peer acceptance and friendship: An investigation of their relation to self-esteem. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, *15*(4), 476-489. doi:10.1177/0272431695015004005

Blaikie, N., & Priest, J. (2017). *Social research: Paradigms in action*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Blomfied, C., & Barber, B. (2010). Australian adolescents' extracurricular activity participation and positive development: Is the relationship mediated by peer attributes? *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology*, *10*(1), 108-122. Retrieved from https://www.newcastle.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/100304/V10_blomfield_barber.pdf

Bond, E. J. (1996). *Ethics and human well-being: An introduction to moral philosophy*. Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing.

Booth, J. A., A. Farrell, and S. P. Varano. (2008). Social Control, Serious Delinquency, and Risky Behavior. *Crime & Delinquency 54*(3), 423–456. doi:10.1177/0011128707306121

Bould, H., De Stavola, B., Magnusson, C., Micali, N., Dal, H., Evans, J., … Lewis, G. (2016). The influence of school on whether girls develop eating disorders. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, *45*(2), 480-488. doi:10.1093/ije/dyw037

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss*. London, UK: The Hogarth Press.

Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (2011). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). Transforming qualitative information: Thematic Analysis and code development. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Brady, J., & Wilson, E. (2020). Teacher wellbeing in England: Teacher responses to school-level initiatives. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 1-19. doi:10.1080/0305764x.2020.1775789

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology: Vol. 2 research designs* (pp. 57-71). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2014). Thematic analysis. In T. Teo (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of critical psychology* (pp. 1947-1952). New York, NY: Springer.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), 589-597. doi:10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2020). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1-25. doi:10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238

Braun, S. S., Roeser, R. W., Mashburn, A. J., & Skinner, E. (2018). Middle school teachers' mindfulness, occupational health and well-being, and the quality of teacher-student interactions. *Mindfulness*, *10*(2), 245-255. doi:10.1007/s12671-018-0968-2

Breckler, S. J. (1984). Empirical validation of affect, behavior, and cognition as distinct components of attitude. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *47*(6), 1191-1205. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.47.6.1191

Brooks-Gunn, J. & Warren, M. P. (1992). *Revisiting theories of `storm and stress': The role of biology*, Annual Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence.

Brophy, J. E., & Good, T. L. (1970). Teachers' communication of differential expectations for children's classroom performance: Some behavioral data. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *61*(5), 365-374. doi:10.1037/h0029908

Brown, B. B., Von Bank, H., & Steinberg, L. (2007). Smoke in the looking glass: Effects of discordance between self- and peer rated crowd affiliation on adolescent anxiety, depression and self-feelings. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *37*(10), 1163-1177. doi:10.1007/s10964-007-9198-y

Buhrmester, D. (1990). Intimacy of friendship, interpersonal competence, and adjustment during preadolescence and adolescence. *Child Development*, *61*(4), 1101. doi:10.2307/1130878

Button, S., Pianta, R. C., & Marvin, R. S. (2001). Mothers' representations of relationships with their children: Relations with Parenting Behavior, Mother characteristics, and child disability status. *Social Development*, *10*(4), 455-472. doi:10.1111/1467-9507.00175

Byrne, D. (2021). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, 1-22. doi:10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y

Byrne, D., & Carthy, A. (2021). A qualitative exploration of post-primary educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of student wellbeing. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, *16*(1), 1-18. doi:10.1080/17482631.2021.1946928

Byrne, D., Carthy, A., & McGilloway, S. (2020). A review of the role of school-related factors in the promotion of student social and emotional wellbeing at post-primary level. *Irish Educational Studies*, *39*(4), 439-455. doi:10.1080/03323315.2019.1697949

Byrne, D., McGuinness, C., & Carthy, A. (2021). Developing a scale to assess post-primary educators' attitudes with regard to the promotion of student wellbeing. *Irish Educational Studies*, 1-24. doi: 10.1080/03323315.2021.1899025

Byrne, J., Rietdijk, W., & Pickett, K. (2018). Teachers as health promoters: Factors that influence early career teachers to engage with health and wellbeing education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 69*, 289-299. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2017.10.020

Byun, S., Kim, K., & Park, H. (2012). School choice and educational inequality in South Korea. *Journal of School Choice*, *6*(2), 158-183. doi:10.1080/15582159.2012.673854

Cadima, J., Leal, T., & Burchinal, M. (2010). The quality of teacher–student interactions: Associations with first graders' academic and behavioral outcomes. *Journal of School Psychology*, *48*(6), 457-482. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2010.09.001

Cance, J. D., Ennett, S. T., Morgan-Lopez, A. A., & Foshee, V. A. (2011). The stability of perceived pubertal timing across adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *41*(6), 764-775. doi:10.1007/s10964-011-9720-0

Carlson Jones, D. (2004). Body image among adolescent girls and boys: A longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology, 40*(5), 823–835. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.40.5.823

Carr, A. (2004). *Positive Psychology*. New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge.

Childgrowthfoundation.org. (2017, November 6). Puberty and the Tanner Stages. Retrieved from http://www.childgrowthfoundation.org/CMS/FILES/Puberty_and_the_Tanner_Stages.pdf

Caspi, A., & Moffitt, T. E. (1991). Individual differences are accentuated during periods of social change: The sample case of girls at puberty. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *61*(1), 157-168. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.61.1.157

Caspi, A., & Moffitt, T. E. (1993). When do individual differences matter? A paradoxical theory of personality coherence. *Psychological Inquiry*, *4*(4), 247-271. doi:10.1207/s15327965pli0404_1

Castellanos-Ryan, N., Parent, S., Vitaro, F., Tremblay, R. E., & Séguin, J. R. (2013). Pubertal development, personality, and substance use: A 10-year longitudinal study from childhood to adolescence. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *122*(3), 782-796. doi:10.1037/a0033133

Cho, U. (2004). Gender inequality and patriarchal order reexamined. *Korea Journal*, *44*(1), 22-41. Retrieved from https://www.ekoreajournal.net/issue/index2.htm?Idx=404#

Chory, R. M., & Goodboy, A. K. (2010). Power, compliance and resistance in the classroom. In D. L. Fassett & J. T. Warren (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of communication and instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Ciarrochi, J., Atkins, P. W., Hayes, L. L., Sahdra, B. K., & Parker, P. (2016). Contextual Positive Psychology: Policy Recommendations for Implementing Positive Psychology into Schools. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *7*(1561), 1-16. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01561

Cohall, A. T., Cohall, R., Dye, B., Dini, S., Vaughan, R. D., & Coots, S. (2007). Overheard in the Halls: What adolescents are saying, and what teachers are hearing, about health issues. *Journal of School Health, 77*(7), 344-350. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2007.00218.x

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge

Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., Perry, N. E., & Martin, A. J. (2015). Teachers' beliefs about social-emotional learning: Identifying teacher profiles and their relations with job stress and satisfaction. *Learning and Instruction*, *39*, 148-157. doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2015.06.002

Conley, C. S., & Rudolph, K. D. (2009). The emerging sex difference in adolescent depression: Interacting contributions of puberty and peer stress. *Development and Psychopathology*, *21*(2), 593-620. doi:10.1017/s0954579409000327

Connor, B. (2014). *Worrying times: An investigation into the ramifications of the removal of the ex-quota allocation for guidance counselling in seven post-primary schools in the east of Ireland* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://ulir.ul.ie/bitstream/handle/10344/4375/Connor_2014_investigation.pdf;jsessionid=982DCB32C834CE64D335AFF0781957EA?sequence=6

CooperGibson. (2018). *Factors affecting teacher retention: Qualitative investigation* (56). Retrieved from Department of Education website: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm

ent_data/file/686947/Factors_affecting_teacher_retention_-_qualitative_investigation.pdf

Corcoran, L., & McGuckin, C. (2014). Addressing bullying problems in Irish schools and in cyberspace: A challenge for school management. *Educational Research, 56*(1), 48-64. doi:10.1080/00131881.2013.874150

Costa, P. T., McCrae, R. R., Zonderman, A. B., Barbano, H. E., Lebowitz, B., & Larson, D. M. (1986). Cross-sectional studies of personality in a national sample: II. Stability in neuroticism, extraversion, and openness. *Psychology and Aging*, *1*(2), 144-149. doi:10.1037/0882-7974.1.2.144

Cotney, J. L., & Banerjee, R. (2017). Adolescents' conceptualizations of kindness and its links with well-being: A focus group study. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *36*(2), 599-617. doi:10.1177/0265407517738584

Cowie, H., Boardman, C., Dawkins, J., & Jennifer, D. (2004). *Emotional health and well-being: A practical guide for schools*. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Crosnoe, R., Riegle-Crumb, C., Field, S., Frank, K., & Muller, C. (2008). Peer group contexts of girls' and boys' academic experiences. *Child Development*, *79*(1), 139-155. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01116.x

Cuyvers, K., Weerd, G. D., Dupont, S., Mols, S., & Nuytten, C. (2010). *Well-being at school: does infrastructure matter?* Retrieved from University of Antwerp website: https://www.oecd.org/edu/innovation-education/centreforeffectivelearningenvironmentscele/49167628.pdf

Dahlgren, G., & Whitehead, M. (1991). *Policies and strategies to promote social equity in health. Background document to the WHO strategy paper for Europe*. Retrieved from https://ideas.repec.org/p/hhs/ifswps/2007_014.htmlhttps://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/6472456.pdf

Daniels, D., & Strauss, E. (2010). Mostly I'm driven to tears, and feeling totally unappreciated: Exploring the emotional wellness of high school teachers. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *9*, 1385-1393. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.12.339

Darling, N., Caldwell, L. L., & Smith, R. (2005). Participation in school-based extracurricular activities and adolescent adjustment. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *37*(1), 51-76. Retrieved from http://plaza.ufl.edu/asarkees/PSY%203220/ECsSelfEsteem/4-%20Darling.pdf

Darmody, M., Smyth, E., & Doherty, C. (2010). *Designing primary schools for the future* (16). Retrieved from Economic and Social Research Institute website: https://www.esri.ie/pubs/RS16.pdf

Davis, H. (2006). Exploring the contexts of relationship quality between middle school students and teachers. *The Elementary School Journal*, *106*(3), 193-223. doi:10.1086/501483

Deci, E. L., Koestner, R., & Ryan, R. M. (2001). Extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation in education: reconsidered once again. *Review of Educational Research*, *71*(1), 1-27. doi:10.3102/00346543071001001

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2010). Self-Determination. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, *11*(4), 227-268. doi:10.1207/s15327965pli1104_01

Deci, E. L., Ryan, R. M., & Guay, F. (2013). Self-determination theory and actualization of human potential. *Theory driving research: New wave perspectives on self process and human development*, 109-133. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284544099_Self-determination_theory_and_actualization_of_human_potential

Deci, E. L., Schwartz, A. J., Sheinman, L., & Ryan, R. M. (1981). An instrument to assess adults' orientations toward control versus autonomy with children: Reflections on

intrinsic motivation and perceived competence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *73*(5), 642-650. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.73.5.642

Delaney, P. (2013). *Sport and recreation participation and lifestyle behaviours in Waterford city adolescents*. Retrieved from The Irish sports council website: http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Adolescent_Lifestyle_2013_/Adolescent.pdf

Department of Children and Youth Affairs. (2014). *Better outcomes, brighter futures: The national policy framework for children & young people 2014-2020*. Retrieved from The Stationery Office website: https://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/cypp_framework/BetterOutcomesBetterFutureReport.pdf

Department of Education and Skills. (2018a). Wellbeing policy statement and framework for practice 2018-2023. Retrieved from https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/wellbeing-policy-statement-and-framework-for-practice-2018%E2%80%932023.pdf

Department of Education and Skills. (2018b). Data on Individual Schools. Retrieved from https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools/

Department of Education and Skills. (2017a). *Report on the Review of DEIS*. Retrieved from Department of Education and Skills website: https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Review-Report.pdf

Department of Education and Skills. (2017b). *Lifeskills survey 2015: Report on survey findings*. Retrieved from Department of Education and Skills website: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Lifeskills%20Survey%202015.pdf

Department of Education and Skills (2015). Framework for Junior Cycle. Department of Education and Skills. Retrieved from Department of Education and Skills website: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Framework-for-Junior-Cycle-2015.pdf.

Department of Education and Skills. (2013). Well-being in post-primary schools: Guidelines for mental health promotion and suicide prevention. Retrieved from https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well_Being_PP_Schools_Guidelines.pdf

Department of Education and Skills, Department of health, Health Service Executive, & National Educational Psychological Service Agency. (2013). *Well-being in post-primary schools: Guidelines for mental health promotion and suicide prevention*. Retrieved from Dept. of Education and Skills website: https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Resources-Guidance/Well-Being-in-Post-Primary-Schools-Guidelines-for-Mental-Health-Promotion-and-Suicide-Prevention-2013.pdf

Department of Health. (2013). *Healthy Ireland: A framework for improved health and wellbeing. 2013-2025*. Retrieved from Department of health website: http://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/HealthyIrelandBrochureWA2.pdf

Dodge, R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L. (2012). The challenge of defining wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, *2*(3), 222-235. doi:10.5502/ijw.v2i3.4

Doris, A., O'Niell, D., & Sweetman, O. (n.d.). *The Gender Maths Gap and Single-Sex Schooling*. Retrieved from NUI Maynooth website: http://www.esri.ie/pubs/Session_B_Paper_2_Doris__O_Neill__Sweetman.pdf

Doyle, E. (2017). "An Exploratory Study of the Perceived Benefits of SPHE (From a Teachers Perspective) for Junior Cycle Male Students and Its Implications for the Guidance Counselling Service." Master's thesis, University Limerick, Limerick, Rep. of Ireland. https://ulir.ul.ie/bitstream/handle/10344/6475/Doyle_2017_exploration.pdf?sequence=6

Doyle, P., & Gavin, A. (2006). *Emotional well-being among school children in Ireland* (16). Retrieved from NUI Galway website: http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/documents/fs_16_2006_july09.pdf

Dubas, J. S., Graber, J. A., & Petersen, A. C. (1991). The Effects of Pubertal Development on Achievement during Adolescence. *American Journal of Education*, *99*(4), 444-460. doi:10.1086/443993

Duckworth, A. L., & Seligman, M. E. (2006). Self-discipline gives girls the edge: Gender in self-discipline, grades, and achievement test scores. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *98*(1), 198-208. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.98.1.198

Durlak, J. and Weissberg, R. (2005) A major meta-analysis of positive youth development programs. Presentation at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association. Washington D.C.

EASSE. (2017, February 7). All-girls schools send more pupils on to universities. Retrieved from https://www.easse.org/en/content/499/All-girls+schools+send+more+pupils+on+to+universities/

Eaton, A. A., & Visser, P. S. (2008). Attitude importance: Understanding the causes and consequences of passionately held views. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *2*(4), 1719-1736. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00125.x

Eisenman, G., Edwards, S., & Cushman, C. (2015). Bringing reality to classroom management in teacher education. *The Professional Educator*, *39*(1), 1-12. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1062280.pdf

Ek, H., & Eriksson, R. (2013). Psychological factors behind truancy, school phobia, and school refusal: A literature study. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy*, *35*(3), 228-248. doi:10.1080/07317107.2013.818899

Engels, N., Aelterman, A., Petegem, K. V., & Schepens, A. (2004). Factors which influence the well-being of pupils in Flemish secondary schools. *Educational Studies*, *30*(2), 127-143. doi:10.1080/0305569032000159787

Ennis, S. A. (2019). *What is the Prevalence of Occupational Stress among Post-Primary Teachers in Ireland?* (Doctoral dissertation, Institute of Technology Carlow, Carlow, Ireland). Retrieved from https://research.thea.ie/bitstream/handle/20.500.12065/2991/Sally%20Ann%20Ennis%20MA%20Thesis%202019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Etikan, I., Muas, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, *5*(1), 1-4. doi:10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

European Commission. (2018, January 8). Rules for business and organisations. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/rules-business-and-organisations_en

Evans, A., Nistrup, A., Henderson, H., Allen-Collinson, J., & Siriwardena, N. (2018). Reflexivity in qualitative research: Two figurational studies. *SAGE Research Methods Cases.* doi:10.4135/9781526430656

Fahey, T., Delaney, L., & Gannon, B. (2005). *School children and sport in Ireland*. Retrieved from Economic and Social Research Institute website: http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/School_Children_Sport_2005_/ESRI_School_Children_.pdf

Fehily, R. (2016, May 10). The leap to co-ed: 'Mixed classes are a shock to the system'. *Irish Times* [Dublin]. Retrieved from https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/the-leap-to-co-ed-mixed-classes-are-a-shock-to-the-system-1.2636332

Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (4th ed., pp. 40-88). London, UK: SAGE.

Finlay, L. (2002a). Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, *2*(2), 209-230. doi:10.1177/146879410200200205

Finlay, L. (2002b). "Outing" the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*, *12*(4), 531-545. doi:10.1177/104973202129120052

Finlay, L. (1998). Reflexivity: An essential component for all research? *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *61*(10), 453-456. doi:10.1177/030802269806101005

Fontana, D., & Apostolidou, M. (2002). A survey of teachers' health lifestyles in Cyprus. *Health Education Journal*, *61*(1), 70-77. doi:10.1177/001789690206100107

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. London, UK: Harvester

Forman, S. G., Olin, S. S., Hoagwood, K. E., Crowe, M., & Saka, N. (2008). Evidence-based interventions in schools: Developers' views of implementation barriers and facilitators. *School Mental Health*, *1*(1), 26-36. doi:10.1007/s12310-008-9002-5

Francis, B. (2002). *Boys, girls and achievement: Addressing the classroom issues*. London, UK: Routledge.

Francis, B., Archer, L., Hodgen, J., Pepper, D., Taylor, B., & Travers, M. (2016). Exploring the relative lack of impact of research on 'ability grouping' in England: A discourse analytic account. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *47*(1), 1-17. doi:10.1080/0305764x.2015.1093095

Franzoi, S. L. (2010). *Psychology: A discovery experience* (1st ed.). Mason, OH: Cengage Learning.

Freckleton, R. P. (2009). The seven deadly sins of comparative analysis. *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*, *22*(7), 1367-1375. doi.org/10.1111/j.1420-9101.2009.01757.x

Fredricks, J. A., Alfeld-Liro, C. J., Hruda, L. Z., Eccles, J. S., Patrick, H., & Ryan, A. M. (2002). A Qualitative Exploration of Adolescents' Commitment to Athletics and the Arts. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *17*(1), 68-97. doi:10.1177/0743558402171004

Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2006). Is extracurricular participation associated with beneficial outcomes? Concurrent and longitudinal relations. *Developmental Psychology*, *42*(4), 698-713. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.42.4.698

Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2008). Participation in Extracurricular Activities in the Middle School Years: Are There Developmental Benefits for African American and European American Youth? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *37*(9), 1029-1043. doi:10.1007/s10964-008-9309-4

Frydenberg, E., & Lewis, R. (1993). Boys play sport and girls turn to others: age, gender and ethnicity as determinants of coping. *Journal of Adolescence*, *16*(3), 253-266. doi:10.1006/jado.1993.1024

Furrer, C., & Skinner, E. (2003). Sense of relatedness as a factor in children's academic engagement and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *95*(1), 148-162. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.95.1.148

Fuss, D. (1989). *Essentially speaking: Feminism, nature & difference*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Gaffney, H., Farrington, D. P., & Ttofi, M. M. (2019). Examining the effectiveness of school-bullying intervention programs globally: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention, 1*, 14-31. doi:10.17863/CAM.36367

Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. H. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *76*(4), 569-582. doi:10.1037//0022-0663.76.4.569

Gillison, F., Osborn, M., Standage, M., and Skevington, S. (2009). Exploring the experience of introjected regulation for exercise across gender in adolescence. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 10*(3), 309-319. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2008.10.004

Ging, D., Savage, J., & O'Higgins Norman, J. (2017). *Taking the temperature. Developing and piloting an LGBT-Positive School-Climate Evaluation Tool for Post-Primary Schools in Ireland*. Dublin City University. Report retrieved from: https://antibullyingcentre.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/TESIC-Report-Final.pdf

Golby, M. (1996). Teachers' emotions: an illustrated discussion. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *26*(3), 423-434. doi:10.1080/0305764960260310

Goleman, D. (1996). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. London: Bloomsbury.

Google Inc. (2019). Privacy policy – Privacy & terms – Google. Retrieved from https://policies.google.com/privacy?hl=en-GB

Gregory, T., & Brinkman, S. (2015). *Development of the Australian student wellbeing survey*. Retrieved from Fraser Mustard Centre website: https://www.decd.sa.gov.au/sites/g/files/net691/f/development-australian-student-wellbeing-survey-report.pdf

Gumora, G., & Arsenio, W. F. (2002). Emotionality, Emotion Regulation, and School Performance in Middle School Children. *Journal of School Psychology*, *40*(5), 395-413. doi:10.1016/s0022-4405(02)00108-5

Hallam, S., & Ireson, J. (2003). Secondary school teachers' attitudes towards and beliefs about ability grouping. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *73*(3), 343-356. doi:10.1348/000709903322275876

Haddock, G., & Maio, G. R. (2019). Inter-individual differences in attitude content: Cognition, affect, and attitudes. In J. M. Olson (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (pp. 53–102). Elsevier Academic Press.

Halpern, D. F., Eliot, L., Bigler, R. S., Fabes, R. A., Hanish, L. D., Hyde, J., … Martin, C. L. (2011). The Pseudoscience of Single-Sex Schooling. *Science*, *333*(6050), 1706-1707. doi:10.1126/science.1205031

Hamilton, J. L., Hamlat, E. J., Stange, J. P., Abramson, L. Y., & Alloy, L. B. (2014). Pubertal timing and vulnerabilities to depression in early adolescence: Differential pathways to depressive symptoms by sex. *Journal of Adolescence*, *37*(2), 165-174. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2013.11.010

Hargreaves, A. (2000). Mixed emotions: teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *16*(8), 811-826. doi:10.1016/s0742-051x(00)00028-7

Hartley, B. L., & Sutton, R. M. (2013). A Stereotype Threat Account of Boys' Academic Underachievement. *Child Development*, *84*(5), 1716-1733. doi:10.1111/cdev.12079

Hattie, J. (2003, October). *Teachers make a difference. What is the research evidence?* Paper presented at Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne.

Hayes, A. F., & Coutts, J. J. (2020). Use omega rather than Cronbach's Alpha for estimating reliability. But…. *Communication Methods and Measures*, *14*(1), 1-24. doi:10.1080/19312458.2020.1718629

Headey, B. (2007). Happiness: Revising set point theory and dynamic equilibrium theory to account for long term change. *Journal of Applied Social Science Studies*, *127*(1), 58-94.

Retrieved from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23645949_Happiness_Revising_Set-

Point_Theory_and_Dynamic_Equilibrium_Theory_to_Account_for_Long_Term_Change

Health and Safety Executive. (2017). *Health statistics – education sector*. Retrieved from HSE

website: www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/industry/education/index.htm

Hearne, L., & Galvin, J. (2014). The role of the regular teacher in a whole school approach to

guidance counselling in Ireland. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 43*(2), 229-

240. doi:10.1080/03069885.2014.952622

Hearne, L., Geary, T., & Martin, N. (2017) Guidance counselling as a whole school

responsibility in the Irish post primary sector *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling,*

*45*(2), 138-152, DOI: 10.1080/03069885.2016.1254725

Heatherton, T. F., & Vohs, K. D. (2000). Interpersonal evaluations following threats to self:

Role of self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *78*(4), 725-736.

doi:10.1037//0022-3514.78.4.725

Heffernan, A., Longmuir, F., Bright, D., & Kim, M. (2019). *Perceptions of teachers and*

*teaching in Australia*. Monash University. https://www.monash.edu/thank-your-

teacher/docs/Perceptions-of-Teachers-and-Teaching-in-Australia-report-Nov-2019.pdf

Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Johnson, B. (2015). *The Oxford handbook of multimethod and mixed*

*methods research inquiry*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA.

Heyder, A. (2019). Teachers' beliefs about the determinants of student achievement predict

job satisfaction and stress. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *86*, 1-10.

doi:10.1016/j.tate.2019.102926

Hill, J., Draper, C. E., De Villiers, A., Fourie, J. M., Mohamed, S., Parker, W., & Steyn, N.

(2015). Promoting healthy lifestyle behaviour through the Life-Orientation curriculum:

Teachers' perceptions of the HealthKick intervention. *South African Journal of*

*Education, 35*(1), 1-9. doi:10.15700/201503070003

Hoaglin, D. C., & Iglewicz, B. (1987). Fine-tuning some resistant rules for outlier labeling. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, *82*(400), 1147-1149. doi:10.1080/01621459.1987.10478551

Huan, V. S., See, Y. L., Ang, R. P., & Har, C. W. (2008). The impact of adolescent concerns on their academic stress. *Educational Review, 60*(2), 169-178. doi:10.1080/00131910801934045

Hughes, J. N., Cavell, T. A., & Willson, V. (2001). Further support for the developmental significance of the quality of the teacher–student relationship. *Journal of School Psychology*, *39*(4), 289-301. doi:10.1016/s0022-4405(01)00074-7

Huppert, F. A., & So, T. T. (2013). Flourishing across Europe: Application of a new conceptual framework for defining well-Being. *Social Indicators Research*, *110*(3), 837-861. Retrieved from doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9966-7

Hyland, L. (2014). *The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme in Ireland: A process evaluation and observational assessment of teacher-pupil outcomes* (Doctoral dissertation, NUI Maynooth, Maynooth, Rep. of Ireland). Retrieved from http://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/4998/

Hymel, S., & Swearer, S. M. (2015). Four decades of research on school bullying: An introduction. *American Psychologist, 70*(4), 293-299. doi:10.1037/a0038928

Hyry-Beihammer, E. K., & Hascher, T. (2015). Multi-grade teaching practices in Austrian and Finnish primary schools. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *74*, 104-113. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2015.07.002

Inchley, J., Currie, D., Young, T., Samda, O., Torsheim, T., Augustson, L., & Mathison, F. (2016). *Growing up unequal: Gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being; Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) Study: international report from the 2013/2014 survey* (7). Retrieved from WHO website: http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/303438/HSBC-No.7-Growing-up-unequal-Full-Report.pdf?ua=1

Institute of Guidance Counsellors (2016). *"National Audit of Guidance Counselling Practice in Second Level Schools & Colleges of Further Education in Ireland 2011/12 - 2015/16*

*(Audit 4)."* Institute of Guidance Counsellors.
http://www.igc.ie/download/1/IGC%20FINAL%20Audit%204%20REPORT%20-
%20May%205-2.pdf.

INTO. (2012). *Wellbeing in the Classroom: Discussion Document and Proceedings of the*
*Consultative Conference on Education 2012*. Dublin, Ireland: Irish National Teachers
Organisation.

Ivankova, N. V., Creswell, J. W., & Stick, S. L. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential
explanatory design: From theory to practice. Field Methods, 18(1), 3-20.
doi:10.1177/1525822x05282260

IWish. (2016). *2016 study of female students' attitudes to STEM*. Retrieved from iWish
website: http://www.iwish.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/iwish-brochure2016-
web00.pdf

Jackson, C., & Smith, I. D. (2000). Poles Apart? An exploration of single-sex and mixed-sex
educational environments in Australia and England. *Educational Studies*, *26*(4), 409-422.
doi:10.1080/03055690020003610

Jamtsho, S. (2015). *Implementing a whole-school approach to student wellbeing: A study*
*examining the implementation experiences of Bhutanese and Australian teachers in*
*wellbeing leadership roles* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Melbourne, Melbourne,
Australia). Retrieved from https://minerva-
access.unimelb.edu.au/bitstream/handle/11343/59152/Jamtsho_thesis_final.pdf?sequ
ence=1

Jeffrey, D. (2016). Clarifying empathy: The first step to more humane clinical care. *British*
*Journal of General Practice*, *66*(643), 143-145. https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp16x683761

Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The Prosocial Classroom: Teacher Social and
Emotional Competence in Relation to Student and Classroom Outcomes. *Review of*
*Educational Research*, *79*(1), 491-525. doi:10.3102/0034654308325693

Jiménez-Barbero, J. A., Ruiz-Hernández, J. A., Llor-Zaragoza, L., Pérez- García, M., & Llor-
Esteban, B. (2016). Effectiveness of anti-bullying school programs: A meta-analysis.
*Children and Youth services review, 61*, 165-175. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.12.015

John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). *The Big-Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives*. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), Handbook of personality: Theory and research (Vol. 2, pp. 102–138). New York: Guilford Press.

John-Akinola, Y. O., Gavin, A., O'Higgins, S. E., & Nic Gabhainn, S. (2013). Taking part in school life: views of children. *Health Education*, *114*(1), 20-42. doi:10.1108/he-02-2013-0007

Jourdan, D. (2011). *Health education in schools: The challenge of teacher training*. INPES, Saint Denis.
https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/sell/pdf/wellbeinghealth/Health-education-in-schools.pdf

Kahneman, D., Diener, E., & Schwarz, N. (Eds.). (1999). *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation Press.

Kern, M. L., Waters, L. E., Adler, A., & White, M. A. (2014). A multidimensional approach to measuring well-being in students: Application of the PERMA framework. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *10*(3), 262-271. doi:10.1080/17439760.2014.936962

Kern, M. A., Adler, A., Waters, L. E., & White, M. A. (2015). Measuring whole-school well-being in students and staff. In M. A. In White & A. S. In Murray (Eds.), *Evidence-based approaches in positive education: implementing a strategic framework for well-being in schools* (pp. 65-91). Measuring Whole-School Well-being in Students and Staff, Netherlands: Springer.

Kelly, A. (1988). Gender differences in teacher–pupil interactions: a meta-analytic review. *Research in Education*, *39*(1), 1-23. doi:10.1177/003452378803900101

Khattri, N., Riley, K. W., & Kane, M. B. (1997). Students at risk in poor, rural areas: A review of the research. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, *13*(2), 79-100. Retrieved from http://jrre.vmhost.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/13-2_5.pdf

Kidger, J., Brockman, R., Tilling, K., Campbell, R., Ford, T., Araya, R., … Gunnell, D. (2016). Teachers' wellbeing and depressive symptoms, and associated risk factors: A large cross sectional study in English secondary schools. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *1(*192), 76-82. doi:10.1016/j.jad.2015.11.054

Killeavy, M., Collinson, V., and Stephenson, H. J. (2003). Making curriculum relevant to the lives of second level students: Teachers' classroom practice. *Irish Educational Studies, 22*(1), 105-120. doi:10.1080/0332331030220110

King, R. (2017). *School organisation and pupil involvement: A study of secondary schools*. London, UK: Routledge.

Kinman, G., Wray, S., & Strange, C. (2011). Emotional labour, burnout and job satisfaction in UK teachers: The role of workplace social support. *Educational Psychology*, *31*(7), 843-856. doi:10.1080/01443410.2011.608650

Kirkland, T. (2015). *Relationships between positive and negative affect in happiness and hypomania risk* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu1435925962&disposition=inline

Kothandapani, V. (1971). Validation of feeling, belief, and intention to act as three components of attitude and their contribution to prediction of contraceptive behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *19*(3), 321-333. doi:10.1037/h0031448

Kruglanski, A. W., Baldner, C., Chernikova, M., Destro, C., & Pierro, A. (2018). A new perspective on the attitude-behavior relation: the essential function of goals. *Polish Psychological Bulletin*, *49*(1), 31-39. doi:10.1515/ppb-2018-00xx

Lammers, J., Goossens, F., Conrod, P., Engels, R., Wiers, R. W., & Kleinjan, M. (2017). Effectiveness of a selective alcohol prevention program targeting personality risk factors: Results of interaction analyses. *Addictive Behaviors*, *71*, 82-88. doi:10.1016/j.addbeh.2017.02.030

Lawson, M. A. (2003). School-family relations in context. *Urban Education*, *38*(1), 77-133. doi:10.1177/0042085902238687

Lazarus, R. S. (1991). *Emotion and adaptation*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Lester, L., & Cross, D. (2015). The relationship between school climate and mental and emotional wellbeing over the transition from primary to secondary school. *Psychology of Well-Being, 5*(9), 1-15. doi:10.1186/s13612-015-0037-8

Long, M., Wood, C., Littleton, K., Passenger, T., & Sheehy, K. (2011). *The psychology of education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Lucas, R. E., & Donnellan, M. B. (2011). Personality development across the life span: longitudinal analyses with a national sample from Germany. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101*(4), 847-861. doi: 10.1037/a0024298

Lyubomirsky, S., & Lepper, H. S. (1997). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. *Social Indicators Research*, *46*(2), 137-155. Retrieved from http://www.cnbc.pt/jpmatos/26.%20lyubomirsky.pdfmaut

Macionis, J. J., & Gerber, L. M. (2011). *Sociology Canadian edition* (7th ed.). Toronto, Canada: Pearson.

Mackenzie, N., & Knipe, S. (2006). Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology. *Issues in educational research*, *16*(2), 193-205. Retrieved from http://www.iier.org.au/iier16/mackenzie.html

Mael, F. A., Alonso, A., Gibson, D., Rogers, K., & Smith, M. (2005). *Single-sex versus coeducational schooling: A systematic review*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Department, Policy and Program Studies Service

Mahoney, J. L. (2000). School Extracurricular Activity Participation as a Moderator in the Development of Antisocial Patterns. *Child Development*, *71*(2), 502-516. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.00160

Mahoney, J. L., Larson, R., & Eccles, J. S. (2008). Organized activities as developmental contexts for children and adolescents. In *Organized activities as contexts of development: Extracurricular activities, after-school, and community programs*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Mahoney, J. L., Stattin, H., & Lord, H. (2004). Unstructured youth recreation centre participation and antisocial behaviour development: Selection influences and the moderating role of antisocial peers. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *28*(6), 553-560. doi:10.1080/01650250444000270

Maloney, J. E., Lawlor, M. S., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Whitehead, J. (2016). A mindfulness-based social and emotional learning curriculum for school-aged children: The MindUP program. In *Handbook of mindfulness in education. Mindfulness in behavioral health*, edited by K. Schonert-Reichl and R. W. Roeser, 313-334. New York, NY: Springer.

Mann, S. A., & Kelley, L. R. (1997). Standing at the crossroads of modernist thought. *Gender & Society*, *11*(4), 391-408. doi:10.1177/089124397011004002

Mannix McNamara, P., Moynihan, S., Jourdan, D., & Lynch, R. (2012). Pre-service teachers' experience of and attitudes to teaching SPHE in Ireland. *Health Education*, *112*(3), 199-216. doi:10.1108/09654281211217759

Marceau, K., Ram, N., Houts, R. M., Grimm, K. J., & Susman, E. J. (2011). Individual differences in boys' and girls' timing and tempo of puberty: Modeling development with nonlinear growth models. *Developmental Psychology*, *47*(5), 1389-1409. doi:10.1037/a0023838

Marsh, H. W., Smith, I. D., Marsh, M., & Owens, L. (1988). The transition from single-Ssex to coeducational high schools: effects on multiple dimensions of self-concept and on academic achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, *25*(2), 237-269. doi:10.3102/00028312025002237

Marshall, J. E., Fraser, D. M., & Baker, P. N. (2010). Reflexivity: the experience of undertaking an ethnographic study to explore issues of consent to intrapartum procedures. *Evidence Based Midwifery*. Retrieved from https://www.rcm.org.uk/learning-and-career/learning-and-research/ebm-articles/reflexivity-the-experience-of-undertaking-a-1

Martino, J., W. (2008). Male teachers as role models: Addressing issues of masculinity, pedagogy and the re-masculinization of schooling. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *38*(2), 189-223. doi:10.1111/j.1467-873x.2007.00405.x

Martino, W., & Frank, B. (2006). The tyranny of surveillance: Male teachers and the policing of masculinities in a single sex school. *Gender and Education*, *18*(1), 17-33. doi:10.1080/09540250500194914

Matsuoka, R. H. (2010). Student performance and high school landscapes: Examining the links. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *97*(4), 273-282. doi:10.1016/j.landurbplan.2010.06.011

Mautner, T. (2005). *The Penguin dictionary of philosophy*. London, UK: Penguin.

Mayock, P., Kitching, K., & Morgan, M. (2007). *RSE in the context of SPHE: An assessment of the challenges to full implementation of the programme in post-primary schools*. Retrieved March 22 2018 from Department of Education and Science website: https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Post-Primary-School-Policies/2007-RSE-in-the-context-of-SPHE-An-Assessment-of-the-Challenges-to-Full-Implementation-of-the-Programme-in-Post-Primary-Schools-Summary-Report-.pdf

McClellan, B. E. (1992). *Schools and the shaping of character: Moral education in America, 1607-present*. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education.

McDonald, F. (2016, June 28). Girls are going through puberty earlier than ever before, with long-term health risks. Retrieved from https://www.sciencealert.com/girls-are-going-through-puberty-earlier-than-ever-before-with-long-term-effects

Mendle, J., Harden, K. P., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Graber, J. A. (2010). Development's tortoise and hare: Pubertal timing, pubertal tempo, and depressive symptoms in boys and girls. *Developmental Psychology*, *46*(5), 1341-1353. doi:10.1037/a0020205

Mendle, J., Harden, K. P., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Graber, J. A. (2012). Peer relationships and depressive symptomatology in boys at puberty. *Developmental Psychology*, *48*(2), 429-435. doi:10.1037/a0026425

Mehta, S. B., Cornell, D., Fan, X., & Gregory, A. (2013). Bullying climate and school engagement in ninth-grade students. *Journal of School Health, 83*(1), 45-52. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2012.00746.x

Merrell, K. W., & Gueldner, B. A. (2010). *Social and emotional learning in the classroom: Promoting mental health and academic success*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Mikolajczak, M. (2010). Going beyond the ability-trait debate: The Three-Level Model of Emotional Intelligence. *E-Journal of Applied Psychology*, *5*(2), 25-31. doi:10.7790/ejap.v5i2.175Moran, J. (2009). From Catholic Church dominance to social partnership promise and now economic crisis, little changes in Irish social policy. *Irish Journal of Public Policy*, *2*(1). Retrieved from http://publish.ucc.ie/ijpp/2010/01/moran/01/en

Miller. (2003). *Teachers, parents and classroom behaviour*. Maidenhead, UK: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Mills, M., Haase, M., & Charlton, E. (2008). Being the 'right' kind of male teacher: The disciplining of John. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, *16*(1), 71-84. doi:10.1080/14681360701877792

Minke, K. M., Sheridan, S. M., Kim, E. M., Ryoo, J. H., & Koziol, N. A. (2014). Congruence in parent-teacher relationships: The role of shared perceptions. *The Elementary School Journal*, *114*(4), 527-546. doi.org/10.1086/675637

Minton, S. J. (2010). Students' experiences of aggressive behaviour and bully/victim problems in Irish schools. *Irish Educational Studies, 29*(2), 131-152. doi:10.1080/03323311003779035

Minton, S. J. (2014). Prejudice and effective anti-bullying intervention: Evidence from the bullying of "minorities". *Nordic Psychology, 66*(2), 108-120. doi:10.1080/19012276.2014.928485

Moè, A. (2016). Harmonious passion and its relationship with teacher well-being. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *59*, 431-437. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2016.07.017

Molina, A., Cahill, H., & Dadvand, B. (2021). The role of gender, setting and experience in teacher beliefs and intentions in social and emotional learning and respectful relationships education. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, n.p. doi:10.1007/s13384-020-00420-w

Moor, S., Ann, M., Hester, M., Elisabeth, W. J., Robert, E., Robert, W., & Caroline, B. (2007). Improving the recognition of depression in adolescence: Can we teach the teachers? *Journal of Adolescence, 30(*1), 81-95. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2005.12.001

Moyer, M. (2011). *Journal of School Counseling*, *9*(5), 1-31. Retrieved from
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ933171.pd

Moynihan, S., Jourdan, D., & Mannix McNamara, P. (2016). An examination of health
promoting schools in Ireland. *Health Education*, *116*(1), 16-33. doi:10.1108/he-03-2014-
0045

Moynihan, S., & Mannix McNamara, P. (2012). *The future of SPHE: Problems & possibilities:
Proceedings from SPHE network conference 29th September, 2012*. C. O'Sullivan, S.
Moynihan, B. Collins, G. Hayes, & A. Titley (Eds.). Retrieved from
https://sphenetwork.ie/wp-
content/uploads/2021/03/conference_proceedings_2012.pdf

Mrug, S., Elliott, M. N., Davies, S., Tortolero, S. R., Cuccaro, P., & Schuster, M. A. (2013).
Early Puberty, Negative Peer Influence, and Problem Behaviors in Adolescent Girls.
*PEDIATRICS*, *133*(1), 7-14. doi:10.1542/peds.2013-0628

Mruk, C. J. (2006). *Self-esteem research, theory, and practice: Toward a positive psychology
of self-esteem*. New York, NY: Springer Pub.

Mulryan-Kyne, C. (2004). Teaching and Learning in Multigrade Classrooms: What Teachers
Say. *The Irish Journal of Education / Iris Eireannach an Oideachais, 35*, 5-19. Retrieved
May 4, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/stable/30077492

Myhill, D. (2002). Bad boys and good girls? Patterns of interaction and response in whole
class teaching. *British Educational Research Journal*, *28*(3), 339-352.
doi:10.1080/01411920220137430

Nastasi, B. K., & Schensul, S. L. (2005). Contributions of qualitative research to the validity of
intervention research. *Journal of School Psychology*, *43*(3), 177-195.
doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2005.04.003

Navarro-Mateu, D., Franco-Ochoa, J., Valero-Moreno, S., & Prado-Gascó, V. (2019). To be or
not to be an inclusive teacher: Are empathy and social dominance relevant factors to
positive attitudes towards inclusive education? *PLOS ONE*, *14*(12), e0225993.
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0225993

Nawijn, J., & Biran, A. (2018). Negative emotions in tourism: A meaningful analysis. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *22*(19), 2386-2398. doi:10.1080/13683500.2018.1451495

NCCA. (2021a). Framework for junior cycle. Retrieved from https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/framework-for-junior-cycle/

NCCA. (2021b). *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines 2021*. https://ncca.ie/media/4940/updated_guidelines_2021.pdf

NCCA. (2017). *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines*. Retrieved from NCCA website: https://www.ncca.ie/media/2487/wellbeingguidelines_forjunior_cycle.pdf

NCCA, & Department of Education. (2021). *Short course Civic Social and Political Education*. Retrieved from Department of Education website: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/2a138f67-4aaf-47c8-aaa1-a1c79286fefd/2016-Junior-Cycle-Short-Course-CSPE-EN.pdf

NCCA, & Department of Education and Science. (2003). *Physical Education junior cycle syllabus*. Retrieved from Department of Education and Science website: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/ca078585-b4e2-4146-9d22-9fada4bd2478/JCSEC21_Physical_Edcuation_syllabus.pd

NCCA, & Department of Education and Science. (2000). *Social, Personal and Health Education junior cycle syllabus*. Retrieved from Department of Education and Science website: https://sphe.ie/downloads/RESOURCES/SPHE%20JUNIOR%20CYCLE%20SYLLABUS.pdf

NCCA, & Department of Education and Science. (1996). *Junior cycle Civic, Social and Political Education syllabus*. Retrieved from Department of Education and Science website: https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/CSPE%20Syllabus.pdf

NCCA, & Department of Education and Skills. (2016a). *Short course Social, Personal and Health Education*. Retrieved from Department of Education and Skills website: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/10a6e6be-40dd-425b-9463-dabfb2131fcd/NCCA-JC-Short-Course-SPHE.pdf

NCCA, & Department of Education and Skills. (2016b). *Junior cycle profile of achievement (JCPA) - Handbook for schools*. Retrieved from Department of education and skills website: https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Returns/Post-Primary-Online-Database-P-POD-Project/junior-cycle-profile-of-achievement-jcpa-handbook-for-schools-2017-.pdf

NCCA, & Department of Education and Skills. (2016c). *Short course Physical Education*. Retrieved from Department of Education and Skills website: https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/e54d94c9-935f-4dfd-a9e1-c5c94c7de88c/NCCA-JC-Short-Course-PE.pdf

Ngidi, D. P., & Sibaya, P. T. (2003). Student teacher anxieties related to practice teaching. *South African Journal of Education*, *23*(1), 18-22. Retrieved from https://www.ajol.info/index.php/saje/article/viewFile/24841/20597

Nic Gabhainn, S. (2005). *Children's understandings of Wellbeing*. Retrieved from Centre for Health Promotion Studies, NUI website: http://childrensdatabase.ie/documents/research/ChildrenUnderstandingofWellBeing.pdf

Niemiec, C. P., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom. *School Field*, *7*(2), 133-144. doi:10.1177/1477878509104318

Noble, T., & McGrath, H. (2012). Wellbeing and resilience in young people and the role of positive relationships. In *Positive relationships: Evidence based practice across the world*, edited by S. Roffey, 17-34. Berlin, Germany: Springer Science & Business Media

Noddings, N. (2003). *Happiness and education*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Nordqvist, O., & Johansson, S. (2019). Secondary school biology students' attitudes towards modern biotechnology characterised using structural equation modeling. *EURASIA Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, *16*(2), 1-19. doi:10.29333/ejmste/115016

Nottelmann, E. D., Inoff-Germain, G., Susman, E. J. & Chrousos, G. P. (1990). Hormones and behavior in puberty. In Bancroft & J. M. Reinisch (Ed.), *Adolescence and Puberty*, p.88-123. Oxford University Press: New York

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1), 1-13. doi:10.1177/1609406917733847

O'Brien, M. (2008) Well-being and Post-primary Schooling: A review of the literature and research. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Dublin. From http://www.ncca.ie/ga/Foilseach%C3%A1n/Tuarasc%C3%A1lacha/Well-being_and_Post_Primary_Schooling_A_review_of_the_literature_and_research.pdf

O'Connell, A. and Martin, S. (2012) How We See It: Report of a Survey on Young People's Body Image. Department of Children and Youth Affairs website: https://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/childyouthparticipation/BodyImage/DCYABodyImageReport.pdf

OECD. (2013). *Pisa in focus* (28). Retrieved from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development website: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/pisainfocus/pisa%20in%20focus%20n28%20%28eng%29--FINAL.pdf

OECD (2017a), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being.* PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA-2015-Results-Students-Well-being-Volume-III-Overview.pdf

OECD. (2017b, November 13). About the OECD - OECD. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/about/

O'Higgins S., Galvin M., Kennedy C., Nic Gabhinn S., & Barry B. (2013). *The implementation of SPHE at post-primary school level: A case study approach*. Retrieved from NUI Galway website: http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/documents/nuig__sphe_evaluation_full_report_english.pdf

Orpinas, P., & Horne, A. M. (2006). *Bullying prevention: creating a positive school climate and developing social competence*. Washington DC, VA: American Psychological Association.

Palaganas, E. C., Sanchez, M. C., Molintas, V. P., & Caricativo, R. D. (2017). Reflexivity in qualitative research: A journey of learning. *The Qualitative Report*, *22*(2), 426-438. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol22/iss2/5

Park, H., Behrman, J. R., & Choi, J. (2012). Causal effects of single-sex schools on college entrance exams and college attendance: random assignment in Seoul high schools. *Demography*, *50*(2), 447-469. doi:10.1007/s13524-012-0157-1

Patton, M. Q. (1990*). Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B., & Stuhlman, M. (2003). Relationships between teachers and children. In W. M. Reynolds & G. E. Miller (Eds.), Handbook of psychology: Educational psychology (Vol.7), p.199-234. Hoboken, NY: Wiley.

Pikó, B., & Pinczés, T. (2015). Autonomy support or direct control? High school students' experience of their teacher's behavior. *European Journal of Mental Health*, *10*(1), 106-117. doi:10.5708/ejmh.10.2015.1.7

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2006). The content validity index: Are you sure you know what's being reported? Critique and recommendations. *Research in Nursing & Health*, *29*(5), 489-497. doi:10.1002/nur.20147

Proehl, R. A., Douglas, S., Elias, D., Johnson, A., & Westsmith, W. (2013). A collaborative approach: Assessing the impact of multi-grade classrooms. *Journal of Catholic Education*, *16*(2), 417-440. doi:10.15365/joce.1602092013

Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B., & Stuhlman, M. (2003). Relationships between teachers and children. In W. M. Reynolds & G. E. Miller (Eds.), Handbook of psychology: Educational psychology (Vol.7), p.199-234. Hoboken, NY: Wiley.

Psychological Society of Ireland. (2019). Code of professional ethics. Dublin: The Psychological Society of Ireland.

Putwain, D. W. (2009). Assessment and examination stress in key stage 4. *British Educational Research Journal, 35*, 391-411. doi:10.1080/01411920802044404

Putwain, D. W., Connors, L., & Symes, W. (2010). Do cognitive distortions mediate the test anxiety–examination performance relationship? *Educational Psychology, 30*(1), 11-26. doi:10.1080/01443410903328866

Reeve, J. (2012). A self-determination theory perspective on student engagement. In S. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement*. New York, NY: Springer.

Reeve, J., Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2004). Self-determination theory: A dialectical framework for understanding the sociocultural influences on student motivation. In D. M. McInerney & S. Van Etten (Eds.), *Research on sociocultural influences on motivation and learning: big theories revisited*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Press.

Riordan, C. (1999). The silent gender gap: Reading, writing, and other problems for boys. *Education Week*, *19*(12), 46-49. Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/1999/11/17/12riordan.h19.html

Rothì, D. M., Leavey, G., & Best, R. (2008). On the front-line: Teachers as active observers of pupils' mental health. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(5), 1217-1231. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2007.09.011

RuralSettlementIreland.com. (2017). Rural Resettlement Ireland. Retrieved from http://www.ruralresettlement.com/live_schools.html

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 141-166. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141

Ryan, R. M., Mims, V., & Koestner, R. (1983). Relation of reward contingency and interpersonal context to intrinsic motivation: A review and test using cognitive evaluation theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *45*(4), 736-750. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.45.4.736

Ryff, C. D. (2014). Psychological well-being revisited: advances in the science and practice of eudaimonia. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, *83*(1), 10-28. doi:10.1159/000353263

Sak, R. (2018). Gender differences in Turkish early childhood teachers' job satisfaction, job burnout and organizational cynicism. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *46*(6), 643-653. doi:10.1007/s10643-018-0895-9

Salomone, R. C. (2002). *Same, different, equal: rethinking single-sex schooling*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Sancassiani, F., Pintus, E., Holte, A., Paulus, P., Moro, M. F., Cossu, G., Angermeyer, M.C., Carta, M. G., & Lindert, J. (2015). Enhancing the emotional and social skills of the youth to promote their wellbeing and positive development: A systematic review of universal school-based randomized controlled trials. *Clinical Practice & Epidemiology in Mental Health, 11*(1), 21-40. doi:10.2174/1745017901511010021

Saracho, O. (2016). *Contemporary perspectives on research on bullying and victimization in early childhood education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2017). Social and emotional learning and teachers. *The future of children*, *27*(1), 137-155. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1145076.pdf

Schutz, A. (1954). Concept and theory formation in the social sciences. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *51*(9), 257-273. doi:10.2307/2021812

Schwaba, T., Luhmann, M., Denissen, J. J., Chung, J. M., & Bleidorn, W. (2017). Openness to experience and culture-openness transactions across the lifespan. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *115*(1), 118-136. doi:10.31219/osf.io/u7tb2

Schwandt, T. A. (1998). Constructivist, Interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (pp. 221-259). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Seligman, M. E. (2012). *Flourish*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Seligman, M. E. (2011). *Learned optimism*. North Sydney, N.S.W: William Heinemann Australia.

Seligman, M. E. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfilment*. London, UK: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Seligman, M. E., Ernst, R. M., Gillham, J., Reivich, K., & Linkins, M. (2009). Positive education: positive psychology and classroom interventions. *Oxford Review of Education*, *35*(3), 293-311. doi:10.1080/03054980902934563

Shann, M. H. (1998). Professional commitment and satisfaction among teachers in urban middle schools. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *92*(2), 67-73. doi:10.1080/00220679809597578

Shannon, B., & Smith, S. J. (2015). 'A lot more to learn than where babies come from': controversy, language and agenda setting in the framing of school-based sexuality education curricula in Australia. *Sex Education, 15*(6), 641-654. doi:10.1080/14681811.2015.1055721

Sibley, C. G., & Overall, N. C. (2008). Modeling the hierarchical structure of attachment representations: A test of domain differentiation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *44*(1), 238-249. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2007.08.003

Simbula, S., Panari, C., Guglielmi, D., & Fraccaroli, F. (2012). Teachers' well-being and effectiveness: The role of the interplay between job demands and job resources. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *69*, 729-738. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.11.467

Sims, S. (2015, June 30). Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations - Badgeville. Retrieved from https://badgeville.com/intrinsic-and-extrinsic-motivations/

Sirin, S., McCreary, D., & Mahalik, J. (2004). Differential reactions to men and women's gender role transgressions: Perceptions of social status, sexual orientation, and value dissimilarity. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, *12*(2), 119-132. doi:10.3149/jms.1202.119

Sisask, M., Värnik, P., Värnik, A., Apter, A., Balazs, J., Balint, M., … Wasserman, D. (2013). Teacher satisfaction with school and psychological well-being affects their readiness to help children with mental health problems. *Health Education Journal*, *73*(4), 382-393. doi:10.1177/0017896913485742

Slater, A., & Tiggemann, M. (2010). "Uncool to do sport": A focus group study of adolescent girls' reasons for withdrawing from physical activity. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *11*(6), 619-626. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.07.006

Smoll, F. L., & Smith, R. E. (2002). *Children and youth in sport: A biopsychosocial perspective*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Pub.

Smyth, E. (2017). *Off to a good start? Primary school experiences and the transition to second-level education* (5). Retrieved from ESRI website: http://www.esri.ie/pubs/BKMNEXT343.pdf

Smyth, E. (2015). *Wellbeing and School Experiences among 9- and 13-Year-Olds: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study*. Retrieved from https://www.esri.ie/publications/wellbeing-and-school-experiences-among-9-and-13-year-olds-insights-from-the-growing-up-in-ireland-study/

Smyth, E., Dunne, A., Darmody, M. & McCoy, S. (2007). *Gearing Up for the Exam? The Experiences of Junior Certificate Students*. Dublin: Liffey Press/ESRI

Smyth, E, Dunne, A., McCoy, S. and Darmody, M. (2006) Pathways through the Junior Cycle: the Experience of Second Year Students. (Dublin, The Liffey Press)

Sparkes, A. C., & Smith, B. (2013). *Qualitative research methods in sport, exercise and health: from process to product*. London, England: Routledge.

Specht, J., Egloff, B., & Schmukle, S. C. (2011). Stability and change of personality across the life course: the impact of age and major life events on mean-level and rank-order stability of the Big Five. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101*(4), 862-882. doi: 10.1037/a0024950

Spilt, J. L., Koomen, H. M., & Jak, S. (2012). Are boys better off with male and girls with female teachers? A multilevel investigation of measurement invariance and gender match in teacher–student relationship quality. *Journal of School Psychology*, *50*(3), 363-378. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2011.12.002

Spilt, J. L., Koomen, H. M., & Thijs, J. T. (2011). Teacher Wellbeing: The Importance of Teacher–Student Relationships. *Educational Psychology Review*, *23*(4), 457-477. doi:10.1007/s10648-011-9170-y

Spratt, J., Shucksmith, J., Philip, K., & Watson, C. (2006). 'Part of Who we are as a School Should Include Responsibility for Well-Being': Links between the School Environment,

Mental Health and Behaviour. *Pastoral Care in Education*, *24*(3), 14-21. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0122.2006.00374.x

Srivastava, S., John, O. P., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2003). Development of personality in early and middle adulthood: Set like Plaster or persistent change? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*(5), 1041-1053. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.84.5.1041

Steger, M. F., Kashdan, T. B., & Oishi, S. (2008). Being good by doing good: Daily eudaimonic activity and well-being. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *42*(1), 22-42. doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2007.03.004

Stevens, V., Van Oost, P., & De Bourdeaudhuij, I. (2000). The effects of an anti-bullying intervention programme on peers' attitudes and behaviour. *Journal of Adolescence*, *23*(1), 21-34. doi:10.1006/jado.1999.0296

Stevens, P. A., & Vermeersch, H. (2010). Streaming in Flemish secondary schools: Exploring teachers' perceptions of and adaptations to students in different streams. *Oxford Review of Education*, *36*(3), 267-284. doi:10.1080/03054981003629862

Stice, E. (2003). Puberty and body image. In C. Hayward (Ed.), *Gender differences at puberty*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Streitmatter, J. (2012). Perceptions of a single-sex class experience: Females and males see it differently. In A. Datnow & L. Hubbard (Eds.), *Gender in policy and practice: perspectives on single sex and coeducational schooling* (pp. 212-216). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.

Stromquist, N. P. (2007). *The gender socialization process in schools: A cross-national comparison*. Retrieved from Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008 website: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001555/155587e.pdf

Struch, N., & Schwartz, S. H. (1989). Intergroup aggression: Its predictors and distinctness from in-group bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *56*(3), 364-373. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.56.3.364

Stuhlman, M. W., & Pianta, R. C. (2002). Teachers' narratives about their relationships with children: Associations with behavior in classrooms. *School Psychology Review*, *31*(2),

148-163. Retrieved from

https://search.proquest.com/openview/bd899c560fcf22eb1fa8f663fd187595/1?pq-

origsite=gscholar&cbl=48217

Sung Hong, J., & Espelage, D. L. (2012). A review of mixed methods research on bullying and

peer victimization in school. *Educational Review, 64*(1), 115-126.

doi:10.1080/00131911.2011.598917

Sunstein, C. R. (1995). Incompletely theorized agreements. Harvard Law Review, 108 (7):

1733-1772. https://doi.org/10.2307/1341816

Sunstein, C. R. (2007). *Incompletely theorized agreements in constitutional law* (147).

Retrieved from University of Chicago website:

http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1149&context=public

_law_and_legal_theory

Swerdloff, R. S., & Odell, W. D. (1975). Hormonal mechanisms in the onset of puberty.

*Postgraduate Medical Journal*, *51*(594), 200-208. doi:10.1136/pgmj.51.594.200

Taylor, B., Francis, B., Archer, L., Hodgen, J., Pepper, D., Tereshchenko, A., & Travers, M.

(2016). Factors deterring schools from mixed attainment teaching practice. *Pedagogy,

Culture & Society*, *25*(3), 327-345. doi:10.1080/14681366.2016.1256908

The Teaching Council. (2017). Teaching council registration: Curricular subject requirements

(post-primary).

https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/publications/registration/documents/curricular-

subject-requirments-after-january-2017.pdf

The Teaching Council. (2020). Teaching council registration: Curricular subject requirements

(post-primary). https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/news-events/latest-

news/curricular-subject-requirements.pdf

Telli, S., Den Brok, P., & Cakiroglu, J. (2007). Students' perceptions of science teachers'

interpersonal behaviour in secondary schools: Development of a Turkish version of the

Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction. *Learning Environments Research*, *10*(2), 115-129.

doi:10.1007/s10984-007-9023-2

Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. In C. Willig & W. S. Rogers (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*. London, UK: SAGE.

The Royal School. (2018, February 12). Well-being and Happiness - PERMA. Retrieved from https://royalschool.com/curriculum/well-being-and-happiness-perma/

Tobia, V., Greco, A., Steca, P., & Marzocchi, G. M. (2018). Children's wellbeing at school: A multi-dimensional and multi-informant approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *20*(3), 841-861. doi:10.1007/s10902-018-9974-2

Tong, A., Sainsbury, P., & Craig, J. (2007). Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): A 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, *19*(6), 349-357. doi:10.1093/intqhc/mzm042

Turner, L. (2017). School Uniform Helps Reduce Anxiety About Appearance. Retrieved from http://cwb-online.co/children-confirm-school-uniform-helps-reduce-anxiety-appearance/

Uprightproject.eu. (2018). *Upright*. Accessed June 12, 2018. http://uprightproject.eu/

Vaillant, G. E., & Davis, J. T. (2000). Social/emotional intelligence and midlife resilience in schoolboys with low tested intelligence. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *70*(2), 215-222. doi:10.1037/h0087783

Van Petegem, K., Creemers, B. P., Rossel, Y., & Aelterman, A. (2005). Relationships Between Teacher Characteristics, Interpersonal Teacher Behaviour and Teacher Wellbeing. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, *40*(2), 34-43. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ768688.pdf

Van Ryzin, M. J., Gravely, A. A. & Roseth, C J. (2009). Autonomy, Belongingness, and Engagement in School as Contributors to Adolescent Psychological Well-Being. *Journal of youth adolescence*. *38*(1). 1-12. doi:10.1007/s10964-007-9257-4

Van Uden, J. M., Ritzen, H., & Pieters, J. M. (2013). I think I can engage my students. Teachers' perceptions of student engagement and their beliefs about being a teacher. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *32*, 43-54. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2013.01.004

Van Uden, J. M., Ritzen, H., & Pieters, J. M. (2014). Engaging students: The role of teacher beliefs and interpersonal teacher behavior in fostering student engagement in vocational education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *37*, 21-32. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2013.08.005

Vaughn, L. (2015). Subjectivism, relativism, and emotivism. In *Doing ethics: Moral reasoning and contemporary issues* (4th ed., pp. 20-40). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Vostanis, P., Humphrey, N., Fitzgerald, N., Deighton, J., & Wolpert, M. (2012). How do schools promote emotional well-being among their pupils? Findings from a national scoping survey of mental health provision in English schools. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, *18*(3), 151-157. doi:10.1111/j.1475-3588.2012.00677.x

Vu, M. B., Murrie, D., Gonzalez, V., & Jobe, J. B. (2006). Listening to girls and boys talk about girls' physical activity behaviors. *Health Education & Behavior*, *33*(1), 81-96. doi:10.1177/1090198105282443

Walter, H. J., Gouze, K., & Lim, K. G. (2006). Teachers' beliefs about mental health needs in inner city elementary schools. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 45*(1), 61-68. doi:10.1097/01.chi.0000187243.17824.6c

Waters, S., Cross, D., & Shaw, T. (2010). Does the nature of schools matter? An exploration of selected school ecology factors on adolescent perceptions of school connectedness. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 80*(3), 381-402. doi:10.1348/000709909x484479

Watson, D., Emery, C., Bayliss, P., & Boushel, M. (2012). *Children's social and emotional wellbeing in schools: A critical perspective*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

Way, N., Reddy, R., & Rhodes, J. (2007). Students' perceptions of school climate during the middle school years: Associations with trajectories of psychological and behavioral adjustment. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 40*(3-4), 194-213. doi:10.1007/s10464-007-9143-y

Weber, M., & Parsons, T. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organisation* (A. M. Henderson, Trans.). T. Parsons (Ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Weir, S., Errity, D., & McAvinue, L. (2015). Factors associated with educational disadvantage in rural and urban areas. *The Irish journal of education*, 94-110. Retrieved from http://www.erc.ie/documents/vol40chp6.pdf

World Health Organisation. (2004). *The global burden of disease: 2004 update.* Retrieved from https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/43942

Wiesner, M., & Ittel, A. (2002). Relations of pubertal timing and depressive symptoms to substance use in early adolescence. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, *22*(1), 5-23. doi:10.1177/0272431602022001001

Willis, P. E. (1977). *Learning to labor: How working-class kids get working-class jobs*. London, UK: Saxon House.

Wortman, J., Lucas, R. E., & Donnellan, M. B. (2012). Stability and change in the Big Five personality domains: Evidence from a longitudinal study of Australians. *Psychology and Aging, 27*(4), 867-874. doi: 10.1037/a0029322

Wright, K. B. (2006). Researching internet-based populations: Advantages and disadvantages of online survey research, online questionnaire authoring software packages, and web survey services. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *10*(3). doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2005.tb00259.x

Yeo, L. S., Ang, R. P., Chong, W. H., Huan, V. S., & Quek, C. L. (2008). Teacher efficacy in the context of teaching low achieving students. *Current Psychology*, *27*(3), 192-204. doi:10.1007/s12144-008-9034-x

Young, J. F., Mufson, L., & Davies, M. (2006). Efficacy of interpersonal psychotherapy-adolescent skills training: An indicated preventive intervention for depression. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *47*, 1254-12626. doi:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2006.01667.x

Zahorik, J., Molnar, A., Ehrle, K., & Halbach, A. (2012). Smaller classes, better teaching? Effective teaching in reduced-size classes. Retrieved from http://epsl.asu.edu/sage/documents/SAGE-0000-12-SRP.pdf

Zanna, M. P., Goldberg, M. E., Gorn, G., & Pollay, W. (1990). Attitude function: Is it related to attitude structure? In *Advances in Consumer Research Volume 17* (pp. 98-100). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.

Zullig, K. J., Huebner, E. S., & Patton, J. M. (2010). Relationships among school climate domains and school satisfaction. *Psychology in the Schools*, *48*(2), 133-145. doi:10.1002/pits.20532

Zyngier, D. (2008). (Re)conceptualising student engagement: Doing education not doing time. Teaching and Teacher Education, 24(7), 1765-1776. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2007.09.004

# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Phase One Recruitment Letter/Information Sheet

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is David Byrne and I am a PhD student at Technological University Dublin. I am currently conducting research aimed at examining the attitudes of post-primary teachers toward the promotion of student wellbeing. I would like to invite you and your staff to participate in this research by completing a short survey.

The purpose of this research is to explore how teachers may feel about being tasked with promoting and maintaining the social and emotional wellbeing of their students. It is intended that this research may function as a forum for teachers to provide feedback on the recently published NCCA wellbeing guidelines and the greater wellbeing curriculum. I believe that the perspectives of teachers are among the most important with regard to the promotion of student wellbeing as it is they who share the daily classroom experience with their students. It is hoped that, through your participation, recommendations can be made, which will facilitate teachers in the delivery of the wellbeing guidelines/curriculum leading to the enhancement of students' social and emotional wellbeing.

The survey consists of twenty-eight items and should take roughly six minutes to complete. If there is any discomfort experienced in responding to any items, these should be skipped. Participants may also withdraw from completing the survey at any time and for any reason prior to submission. Withdrawal will not be possible after submission, as all responses are anonymous. The survey is hosted on Microsoft Forms and can be reached by clicking the link below. Alternatively, participants can copy and paste the web address into their web browser. If you have any questions about the research or the survey, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or my principal supervisor.

I would greatly appreciate any support you may be able to offer in this stage of my research by sharing this email with any staff who may be interested in participating in this study.

Kind Regards,

David Byrne


Primary Researcher: David Byrne
Email: david.byrne@mytudublin.ie

Principal Supervisor: Dr Aiden Carthy
Email: Aiden.Carthy@tudublin.ie


>>Direct link for survey here<<<

**Appendix 2. Phase Two Informed Consent Form**

| Consent and advice form | | |
|---|---|---|
| Institute of Technology Blanchardstown / Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Baile Bhlainséir (itb logo) | **4FRD04** | File Location: |
| | | Current Revision: 01 |
| | | Approved by: |
| | | Document Owner: Registrar |
| | 4FRD04.01 | Document Level: 4 |

# Consent and advice form given to subjects prior to their participation in research

## Revision History

| Revision | Date | Revision Description DCRT# | Originator |
|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | 16 September 2008 | New document | QA Officer |

Note:

A completed form is required for each participant and this is to be retained by the researcher for a period of 3 years.

| **Researcher's name:**<br>(use block capitals) | **Title:** |
|---|---|
| **School/Department:** | |
| **Title of study:** | |
| **Objective of study** | |
| **To be completed by the:**<br><br>**subject/patient/volunteer/informant/interviewee/parent/guardian** *(delete as necessary)* | |
| Have you been fully informed/read the information sheet about this study?<br>YES/NO | |

Is your participation given voluntarily?

YES/NO

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?

YES/NO

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?

YES/NO

Have you received enough information about this study and any associated health and safety implications if applicable? YES/NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study?

- at any time
- without giving a reason for withdrawing
- without affecting your future relationship with the Institute

YES/NO

Do you agree to take part in this study the results of which are likely to be published?

YES/NO

Have you been informed that this consent form shall be kept in the confidence of the researcher? YES/NO

---

Participant Signature     _____     Date _____

Name in block letters _____

Signature of researcher _____     Date _____

**Please note:**

- For persons under 18 years of age the consent of the parents or guardians must be obtained or an explanation given to the relevant Head of Department and the assent of the child/young person should be obtained to the degree possible dependent on the age of the child/young person.

**Please complete the consent form, 4FRD05, for research involving "less powerful subjects" or those under 18 years.**

- In some studies, witnessed consent may be appropriate.

- The researcher concerned must sign the consent form after having explained the project to the subject and after having answered his/her questions about the project.

## Appendix 3. Phase One Survey

1. Age
<div align="center">>Drop down menu 18-99<</div>

2. Gender

<div align="center">Male      Female      Other</div>

If other, please specify

3. Current position within your school

<div align="center">Principal    Vice Principal    Teacher    Guidance counsellor    Secretary/ Admin.    Other</div>

If other, please specify

4. Length of time teaching (in years)

5. How many pupils are enrolled in your school?

<div align="center">>Drop down menu 0-99<</div>

<div align="center">0-49   50-99   100-199   200-299   300-399   400-499   500-599   600+</div>

6. Is your school…

<div align="center">All boys    All girls    Co-educational</div>

7. Is your school…

<div align="center">Urban    Rural    Don't know</div>

8. Is your school…

<div align="center">Feepaying    Non-feepaying</div>

9. Is your school…

<div align="center">DEIS    Non-DEIS    Don't Know</div>

10. Does your school practise…

<div align="center">Streaming    Vertical Education    Both    Neither    Don't know</div>

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. The wellbeing curriculum is largely beneficial to student wellbeing | O | O | O | O | O |
| 12. Fulfilling some of the wellbeing policies in my school can sometimes make me feel | O | O | O | O | O |
| 13. I am pro-active in implementing my schools social/emotional wellbeing policies | O | O | O | O | O |
| 14. I tend to avoid dealing with students' social or emotional issues | O | O | O | O | O |
| 15. Attending to student wellbeing can sometimes make me feel uncomfortable | O | O | O | O | O |
| 16. I deliver the wellbeing curriculum on a regular ba | O | O | O | O | O |
| 17. Promoting student wellbeing makes me feel hap | O | O | O | O | O |
| 18. Teachers should not be tasked with the promotion of student wellbeing | O | O | O | O | O |
| 19. The policies that are currently available in my school are insufficient to facilitate student | O | O | O | O | O |
| 20. Promoting student wellbeing is a fulfilling experience for me | O | O | O | O | O |
| 21. I am familiar with the wellbeing guidelines | O | O | O | O | O |
| 22. I know how to use the wellbeing guidelines to facilitate student wellbeing | O | O | O | O | O |
| 23. The wellbeing guidelines are easy to | O | O | O | O | O |
| 24. The wellbeing guidelines are largely beneficial to student wellbeing | O | O | O | O | O |

25. Please identify any factors you have experienced in relation to wellbeing policies, curricula, or guidelines, that you believe facilitate the development of students' social and emotional wellbeing?

26. Please identify any factors you have experienced in relation to wellbeing policies, curricula, or guidelines, that you believe inhibit the development of students' social and emotional wellbeing?

27. What changes, if any, do you believe could be made to these policies, curricula, or guidelines to ensure the optimal promotion of student wellbeing?

28. Please include any other comments that you feel may contribute to the promotion of students' social and emotional wellbeing.

## Appendix 4. Phase Two Recruitment Letter/Information Sheet

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is David Byrne and I am a PhD student at Technological University Dublin. I am currently conducting research aimed at examining the attitudes of post-primary educators toward the promotion of student wellbeing. I would like to offer you and your staff the opportunity to be involved in this research by participating in a short interview.

The purpose of this research is to explore how teachers may feel about wellbeing promotion being included in the junior-cycle curriculum, and how best to deliver this aspect of the curriculum. This research is being conducted in two phases. Phase One was conducted in 2019 and consisted of an online survey, which was designed to examine educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of student wellbeing, the wellbeing curriculum, and the wellbeing guidelines. Phase Two is currently underway and consists of a series of interviews with post-primary educators from across Ireland. These interviews will garner information regarding potential barriers to achieving best practice in the promotion of student wellbeing, and solicit opinions as to how to overcome these barriers or otherwise improve the delivery of the wellbeing curriculum.

By participating in this research, you will be contributing to recommendations that will be fed back to governing bodies, such as the DES and NCCA, which will facilitate educators in the delivery of the wellbeing guidelines/curriculum, and enhance the social and emotional wellbeing of students. The perspectives of educators are among the most important with regard to the promotion of student wellbeing, as it is you who share the daily classroom experience with your students. It is therefore intended that any recommendations that will be offered to governing bodies as a result of this research will exclusively represent the position of you, the educator.

The interview will cover four distinct topics: wellbeing promotion; the wellbeing curriculum: the wellbeing guidelines, and; educator wellbeing. The interview should last no longer than 25 minutes and could easily be accommodated within a 'free period'. The interview can be conducted on site at the educator's school or, if preferred, an alternative location can be organised depending on location. If time or geographic constraints inhibit participation, the interview may be conducted via digital means (e.g. Skype). All information provided during the interview will be confidential and no information that could identify the interviewee or their school will be pursued. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw your participation for any reason (which you would be under no obligation to disclose) in full or in part, prior to, during, or after the interview has been conducted. If you have any questions about my research or how these interviews may be used, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or my principal supervisor.

I would greatly appreciate if you could disseminate this email among any of your staff who you believe may be interested in participating in an interview. Those who are interested in participating can contact me directly via email, or register their interest via the link below.

Kind regards,

David Byrne

Primary Researcher: David Byrne
Contact: david.byrne@mytudublin.ie

Principal Supervisor: Dr Aiden Carthy
Contact: aiden.carthy@tudublin.ie

**Appendix 5. Phase Two Interview Agenda**

<u>Introduction</u>

Good afternoon and thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview today. My name is David Byrne and I am a PhD student at TU Dublin. I am conducting this interview as part of a larger study aimed at assessing the attitudes of post-primary educators in relation to the promotion of junior-cycle students' wellbeing.

Today, I am going to be asking you about a number of topics in this area, including your experiences in delivering wellbeing promotion, how you feel about the wellbeing curriculum, the recently introduced NCCA wellbeing guidelines, and your own wellbeing.

This study is being conducted to provide your feedback and experiences in the promotion of student wellbeing to relevant governing bodies such as the NCCA and DES. The aim of this being to improve the facilitation of you, the educator, in utilising the wellbeing guidelines and delivering the wellbeing curriculum.

A few points to observe today:

- This interview should take 20-25 minutes.

- This interview will be audio recorded, but rest assured that everything discussed today will be considered confidential and will be anonymised for use in the study. No information that could identify you or your school will be used in the study.

- If there is any topic that you are not comfortable discussing, just let me know and we will move on.

- There are no right or wrong answers, so please do feel free to say exactly what is on your mind.

- After we have completed the interview, I will be asking you to read and complete a consent for, to allow me to use the information gathered here today in my research.

- Finally, I would appreciate it if you could turn your mobile phone off, or set it to silent. If you need to take a call, we can pause the recording and resume when you are ready.


Do you have any questions before we begin?

Ok, so let us start with the general idea of promoting student wellbeing...


<u>Wellbeing Promotion</u>

What are your thoughts regarding the inclusion of wellbeing promotion in the junior-cycle curriculum?

What do you believe is the best way to promote student wellbeing? *What is necessary to ensure student wellbeing is properly attended to? What should the wellbeing curriculum be teaching? How should it be taught? What do you need in order for you to be able to deliver wellbeing promotion?*

Have you encountered any issues that have made it more difficult for you to attend to the wellbeing of your students? *What are these issues? Were you able to overcome them? How?*

Are there any external factors, in terms of your students' wellbeing, that you feel may be influential in the school setting?


Wellbeing curriculum

How do you feel about the current wellbeing curriculum?

What training or instruction did you receive in terms of delivering the wellbeing curriculum?

Are there any challenges or difficulties that you have encountered in delivering the wellbeing curriculum? *What are these challenges? Were you able to overcome this challenge? How?*

Are there any changes that you would recommend that you feel might improve the delivery of the wellbeing curriculum? *What about wellbeing curriculum itself?*


Wellbeing Guidelines

How did you become aware of the NCCA wellbeing guidelines?

What training or instruction did you receive in terms of how to use the wellbeing guidelines to promote student wellbeing?

In terms of promoting student wellbeing, how are the guidelines utilised in your school?

Are there any changes that you would recommend that you feel might improve the implementation of the wellbeing guidelines? *What about the wellbeing guidelines themselves?*


Educator Wellbeing

How do you feel about being tasked with promoting student wellbeing?

What are some of the difficulties that you, as an educator, would face while attending to the day-to-day wellbeing of your students?

In light of the recent move toward attending to student wellbeing, do you feel that your wellbeing is adequately attended to?

How would you like to see your wellbeing accounted for?


I have asked all of my questions. Is there anything you would like to add regarding the topics we have discussed today?

Well, I would like to thank you again for your time. Your input is greatly appreciated

**Appendix 6. COREQ Checklist**

| No. Item | Guide questions/description |
|---|---|
| **Domain 1: Research team and reflexivity** | |
| *Personal Characteristics* | |
| 1. Inter viewer/facilitator | Which author/s conducted the interview or focus group?<br><br>*David Byrne.* |
| 2. Credentials | What were the researcher's credentials?<br><br>*B.A. (Hons.) Humanities (Psychology), Qualified emotional competencies assessor (EQ-I 2.0/EQ-I 360).* |
| 3. Occupation | What was their occupation at the time of the study?<br><br>*TU Dublin Research Scholar.* |
| 4. Gender | Was the researcher male or female?<br><br>*Male.* |
| 5. Experience and training | What experience or training did the researcher have?<br><br>*An academic background in psychology, as well as training in emotional competencies, ethics and qualitative research.* |
| *Relationship with participants* | |
| 6. Relationship established | Was a relationship established prior to study commencement?<br><br>*Pre-existing relationships with participants were not necessary in this study.* |
| 7. Participant knowledge of the interviewer | What did the participants know about the researcher?<br><br>*Participants has no prior knowledge of the researcher. At the time of recruitment, participants were informed that the researcher was a doctoral student at TU Dublin.* |
| 8. Interviewer characteristics | What characteristics were reported about the inter viewer/facilitator? e.g. Bias, assumptions, reasons and interests in the research topic<br><br>*Participants reported no biases about the researcher.* |

| Domain 2: study design | |
|---|---|
| *Theoretical framework* | |
| 9. Methodological orientation and Theory | What methodological orientation was stated to underpin the study? |
| | *The study was conducted using a sequential mixed methods design, which was pursued within an interpretivist constructivist research paradigm.* |
| *Participant selection* | |
| 10. Sampling | How were participants selected? |
| | *An opportunistic sampling method was used in both phases.* |
| 11. Method of approach | How were participants approached? |
| | *An invitation to participate in this study was emailed to a point of contact at post-primary schools with a request to forward this invitation to respective school personnel.* |
| 12. Sample size | How many participants were in the study? |
| | *In total, 327 completed the Phase One survey, while 11 participated in Phase Two interviews.* |
| 13. Non-participation | How many people refused to participate or dropped out? Reasons? |
| | *It is not possible to ascertain an accurate response rate due to the recruitment method. COVID-19 related time constraints saw one person withdraw from Phase Two interviews.* |
| *Setting* | |
| 14. Setting of data collection | Where was the data collected? |
| | *The Phase One survey was completed by participants online. Phase Two interviews were conducted either in participants' respective schools (using a classroom or pastoral care room) or in a hotel or community centre meeting room. Geographic restrictions meant one interview was conducted via Skype, while another was conducted by phone.* |
| 15. Presence of non-participants | Was anyone else present besides the participants and researchers? |
| | *No.* |
| 16. Description of sample | What are the important characteristics of the sample? |

*All participants were educators in post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Data collection* | | |
| 17. Interview guide | Were questions, prompts, guides provided by the authors? Was it pilot tested? | |
| | *Prompts were used when necessary. Interviews were not piloted, however, feedback was garnered regarding the interview agenda.* | |
| 18. Repeat interviews | Were repeat interviews carried out? If yes, how many? | |
| | *No repeat interviews were conducted.* | |
| 19. Audio/visual recording | Did the research use audio or visual recording to collect the data? | |
| | *Interviews were audio recorded.* | |
| 20. Field notes | Were field notes made during and/or after the interview or focus group? | |
| | *Notes were taken during and immediately after each interview.* | |
| 21. Duration | What was the duration of the interviews or focus group? | |
| | *Interviews typically lasted 25-30 minutes.* | |
| 22. Data saturation | Was data saturation discussed? | |
| | *Data saturation is addressed in the Chapter 7.* | |
| 23. Transcripts returned | Were transcripts returned to participants for comment and/or correction? | |
| | *No. Necessary points of clarification were addressed during the course on the interviews.* | |
| **Domain 3: analysis and findings** | | |
| *Data analysis* | | |
| 24. Number of data coders | How many data coders coded the data? | |
| | *Only the researcher coded data. An auditor was used to ensure consistency in the coding process.* | |
| 25. Coding tree coding tree | Did authors provide a description of the coding tree? | |

*A thematic framework is presented in the Chapter 6.*

| 26. Derivation of themes | Were themes identified in advance or derived from the data? |
| | |
| | *Themes were derived from the data.* |
| 27. Software | What software, if applicable, was used to manage the data? |
| | *Microsoft Excel 2016 was used to store and analyse data.* |
| 28. Participant checking | Did participants provide feedback on the findings? |
| | *Participant feedback was not sought as the researchers understanding of the data is an important aspect of interpretive analyses.* |

*Reporting*

| 29. Quotations presented | Were participant quotations presented to illustrate the themes/findings? Was each quotation identified? e.g. participant number |
| | |
| | *Quotations were used to illustrate themes, with relative participants identified by number.* |
| 30. Data and findings consistent | Was there consistency between the data presented and the findings? |
| | *The presentation of the data was consistent with the findings due to the measures undertaken in relation to the criterion of confirmability.* |
| 31. Clarity of major themes | Were major themes clearly presented in the findings? |
| | |
| | *Themes were presented in terms of the meaningfulness of relevant phenomena, as was interpreted to have been ascribed by participants. The concept of major/minor themes does not necessarily relate to RTA.* |
| 32. Clarity of minor themes | Is there a description of diverse cases or discussion of minor themes? |
| | *See above.* |

# Appendix 7. Phase Two Thematic Framework

| Best practice in wellbeing promotion | The axiology of wellbeing promotion | The influence of time | Incompletely theorised agreements | Recognising educator wellbeing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Active delivery of wellbeing promotion*** | ***Educators' valuation of wellbeing promotion*** | • Educator workload has increased in small unmeasured increments | • Educators lack familiarity with the wellbeing guidelines | ***Work-related negative affect*** |
| • Activities are beneficial to student engagement with wellbeing curriculum | • Core curriculum is prioritised over the wellbeing curriculum | • Educator workload negatively impacts wellbeing promotion | • Educators not fully informed to make judgements on student wellbeing | • Classroom management can be difficult in general |
| • Activities are beneficial to student wellbeing | • Educator positive perception of wellbeing CPD | • Lack of time inhibits ability to avail of wellbeing CPD | • Educators require more support with wellbeing promotion | • Classroom management is a source of stress for educators |
| • Wellbeing curriculum can be made relatable for students through practical measures | • Educator positive perception of wellbeing curriculum | • Paperwork causes time constraints with regard to wellbeing promotion | • Insufficient training in wellbeing curriculum | • Dealing with parents is a source of stress for educators |
| • Wellbeing curriculum should be delivered practically | • Educator positive perception regarding wellbeing promotion | • Paperwork has increased due to wellbeing promotion | • Lack of clarity in assessing student wellbeing | • Educator wellbeing is not adequately attended to |
| • Wellbeing guidelines can be made relatable for students through practical measures | • Educator positivity regarding recognition of wellbeing promotion | • Time constraints negatively impact wellbeing promotion | • Lack of resources inhibits educators availing of wellbeing CPD | • Educator workload has increased in small unmeasured increments |
| • Wellbeing promotion is an active process | • Some educators do not take the wellbeing curriculum seriously | • Wellbeing promotion has increased educator workload | • Lack of training inhibits the delivery of the wellbeing curriculum | • Educator workload should be reduced |
| • Wellbeing promotion should be pro-active | • Some educators do not take wellbeing promotion seriously | • Wellbeing promotion encroaches on educators' personal time | • More training is needed for wellbeing promotion | • Educators are under too much pressure in general |
| ***The whole-school approach*** | • Wellbeing guidelines serve no long-term purpose | | • No appropriate introduction to wellbeing guidelines | • Increased support when dealing with parents will positively impact educator wellbeing |
| • An appropriate educator should be chosen to deliver the wellbeing curriculum | ***Students' valuation of wellbeing promotion*** | | • School under-resourced to attend to student wellbeing | • Increased support with classroom management will positively impact educator wellbeing |
| • Best practice in wellbeing promotion is often non-tangible | • Difficulty achieving student engagement regarding wellbeing promotion | | • Wellbeing CPD not undertaken by educator | • Parents can be difficult to deal with |
| • Educator buy-in is important to wellbeing promotion | • Students do not take the wellbeing curriculum seriously | | • Wellbeing curriculum lacks clarity | • Reducing workload will positively impact educator wellbeing |
| • Pastoral care team is beneficial to wellbeing promotion | • Students do not take wellbeing promotion seriously | | • Wellbeing guidelines have limited application | • Staffroom is a source of stress for educators |
| • School culture is important to wellbeing promotion | • Lack of exam negatively impacts student engagement with wellbeing curriculum | | • Wellbeing guidelines lack clarity | ***The impact of wellbeing promotion*** |
| • School ethos is important to wellbeing promotion | • Student/educator relationships are beneficial to student engagement with wellbeing curriculum | | | • Classroom management can be difficult when delivering wellbeing curriculum |
| • Students should be involved in wellbeing promotion | • Wellbeing curriculum needs to be updated | | | • Educators' efforts in wellbeing promotion are not acknowledged |
| • Wellbeing promotion should be actioned through a whole-school approach | • Wellbeing curriculum is not relatable for students | | | • Educators feel unable to overcome obstacles to wellbeing promotion |
| • Wellbeing promotion should involve a relatable peer-group | • Wellbeing guidelines are not relatable for students | | | • Educators may be uncomfortable with wellbeing promotion |
| • Working knowledge of wellbeing policies/curriculum necessary for all educators | | | | • Formalisation increases pressure on educators |
| | | | | • Increased Wellbeing CPD will positively impact educator wellbeing |
| | | | | • Lack of training negatively impacts upon job satisfaction |
| | | | | • Unrealistic expectations of educators regarding wellbeing promotion |
| | | | | • Wellbeing promotion can negatively impacts educator wellbeing |
| | | | | • Wellbeing promotion has increased educator workload |
| | | | | • Wellbeing promotion is not new |

302

## Appendix 8. Draft SPHE Curricular Subject Requirements

*(Note: The criteria set forth for an accredited SPHE learning pathway are drafted based on existing curricular subject requirements. Topics of study listed in section two are hypothesised based on available research (including the present study) and areas of learning in SPHE classes).*

In order to meet the registration requirements set down in The Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations in respect of the curricular subject of SPHE, an applicant must meet **all** of the following criteria:

1. (a) Applicants must hold a degree-level qualification, with SPHE studied up to and including third-year level or higher (or modular equivalent).

   (b) The qualifying degree must be equivalent to at least Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and with a minimum pass[23] result in all examinations pertinent to the subject of SPHE.

   (c) The qualifying degree must carry at least 180 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits (or equivalent) with the specific study of SPHE comprising at least 60 ECTS credits (or equivalent) and with not less than 10ECTS credits (or equivalent) studied at third-year level or higher (or modular equivalent).

2. The study of SPHE during the degree must show that the holder has acquired sufficient knowledge, skills and understanding to teach the SPHE syllabus[24] to the highest level in post-primary education (see www.curriculumonline.ie). To meet the requirement the degree should have 60 ECTS credits in SPHE, to be comprised by the study of an appropriate selection of the following topics:

| **Theory** | **Methodology** | **SPHE Modules** |
|---|---|---|
| • Psychology of Development | • Introduction to Wellbeing Pedagogies | • Gender, Sex and Sexuality |
| • Psychology of Education | • Advanced Wellbeing Pedagogies | • Wellbeing and Technology |
| • Sociology of Development | • Wellbeing-orientated activities | • Substance use and personal safety |
| • Sociology of Education | • A Whole-School Approach to Wellbeing | • Friendships and Identity |
| • Theories of Wellbeing | • Self-care | |
| • Emotional Intelligence | | |

3. Applicants must also have completed a programme of post-primary initial teacher education (age range 12-18 years) carrying a minimum of 120 ECTS credits (or equivalent). The programme should include a methodology module(s) on the teaching of SPHE carrying a minimum of 5 ECTS credits (or equivalent)[25].

---

[23] which includes pass by compensation.

[24] as approved by the Minister for Education & Skills, and published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

[25] Applicants who have completed a specialist concurrent degree in Sociology or Politics must meet all of the requirements detailed above. This course should be equivalent to a minimum of 240 ECTS credits.

**Appendix 9. List of Publications and Presentations**

*Peer-reviewed publications:*

Byrne, D. (2021). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, 1-22. doi:10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y

Byrne, D., & Carthy, A. (2021). A qualitative exploration of post-primary educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of student wellbeing. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, *16*(1), 1-18. doi:10.1080/17482631.2021.1946928

Byrne, D., & Carthy, A. (2020). An argument against sex segregation in post-primary schools: Examining wellbeing perspectives. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 1-12. doi:10.1080/19419899.2020.1861072

Byrne, D., Carthy, A., & McGilloway, S. (2020). A review of the role of school-related factors in the promotion of student social and emotional wellbeing at post-primary level. *Irish Educational Studies*, *39*(4), 439-455. doi:10.1080/03323315.2019.1697949

Byrne, D., McGuinness, C., & Carthy, A. (2021). Developing a scale to assess post-primary educators' attitudes with regard to the promotion of student wellbeing. *Irish Educational Studies*, 1-24. doi: 10.1080/03323315.2021.1899025

*Planned Publications:*

Byrne, D. (*in preparation*). *Do post-primary educators value the promotion of student wellbeing? Quantifying educators attitudes (working title)*

*Presentations:*

Byrne, D., & Carthy, A. (2021, July). *Best practice in delivering wellbeing promotion to post-primary students: educators' perspectives*. Oral presentation at International School Psychology Association Annual Conference 2021, Virtual.

Byrne, D., & Carthy, A. (2019, August). *Examining Irish educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of students' social and emotional wellbeing: Preliminary findings*. Oral presentation at Children's Research Network PhD Symposium 2019, NUI Galway.

Byrne, D., Carthy, A., & McGilloway, S. (2018, October). *Student wellbeing at junior cycle level: Teachers' perceptions of relevant policies and curricula*. Oral presentation at Ireland International Conference on Education 2018, Dublin.

Byrne, D., Carthy, A., & McGilloway, S. (2018, July). *An examination of factors influencing emotional and social wellbeing in Irish post-primary schools*. Oral presentation at Irish Social Policy Association Conference 2018, Dublin.

Byrne, D., McGuinness, C., & Carthy, A. (2020, November). *A quantitative analysis of educators' attitudes toward wellbeing promotion in Irish post-primary schools*. Oral presentation at Psychological Society of Ireland Annual Conference 2020, Virtual.