

Assessment as a pedagogical tool: Wellbeing in the wake of the pandemic

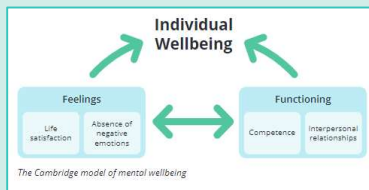
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Introduction

Many educationalists support a holistic approach to understanding and supporting students. Appreciating each student as a whole person can really help to understand how well they are doing in school, and why. Wellbeing is one of several different areas of insight that every teacher can gain, to build a student profile.

Put simply, wellbeing is a combination of both feeling well and functioning well. As it is a transient psychological state, it is worth monitoring over time.



Since wellbeing is included in many curricula internationally, including England's national curriculum, we developed an online assessment, the 'Cambridge Wellbeing Check', for schools to use with their students.

It was first developed as a research instrument by researchers in the Faculty of Education within the University of Cambridge, and it was used with 5170 students across 40 English primary and secondary schools (McLellan and Steward, 2015). We converted the instrument into a pedagogical tool for classroom use. Our idea was that it could be used together with lesson plans to:

- educate students about what wellbeing is
- create a classroom culture that is emotionally literate, sensitive, and aware of others' emotions
- provide students with a sense of interpersonal connectedness and intrapersonal understanding
- involve students in the co-development of a whole-school wellbeing policy.

Methodology

We extended the original instrument into a 22-item digital assessment with improved coverage of hedonic (feelings) and eudaimonic (functioning) wellbeing. Users self-report the frequency with which they experience a range of feelings in school using a 5-point Likert scale. These feelings are associated with the four areas of wellbeing: competence, interpersonal, life satisfaction and negative emotions.

We created four linked, age-appropriate lesson plans to teach children about wellbeing, for lower and upper primary and for lower and upper secondary students. In each plan, teachers taught Part 1, administered the assessment, then taught Part 2.

We trialled the pedagogical process with 1800 children aged 7-18 across 22 schools in multiple countries, obtaining feedback through a teacher questionnaire and interviews.

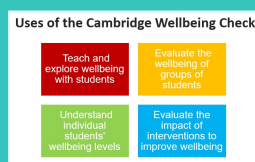
Example item and example report:

When I am at school I feel people are friendly

Never Not often Sometimes Often Always

Cambridge Wellbeing Check		Example Report				
Class One	Date of Wellbeing Check: 09/09/2020	Number of students: 5				
The bar graphs below show the reported average scores (responses to the full extent of wellbeing)						
Area of Wellbeing	Mean Score	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Competence Wellbeing	2.8	0	1	2	2	0
Interpersonal Wellbeing	2.4	0	1	2	2	0
Life Satisfaction	2.4	0	1	2	2	0
Negative Emotions	2.2	0	1	2	2	0

Results



Exploratory factor analysis of the response data indicated broadly similar loadings of items to wellbeing areas as in the original study.

Teachers appreciated the assessment's pedagogical value. Some also used it to successfully evaluate class wellbeing or to take a holistic approach to understanding children, identifying individuals with low wellbeing. After receiving feedback from trial schools, we developed a series of reports designed for both students and teachers that enable wellbeing to be monitored at an individual student level, class/group or year group. The reports are designed to support teachers in each of the assessment's four uses.

Conclusion

Our assessment has multiple complementary purposes, and overall, understanding and tracking wellbeing can contribute to a positive school ethos. Through using the assessment, students understand more about what wellbeing is, and potentially become more confident to express their feelings. The assessment is also formative, providing teachers with information about their students. This could help with tracking wellbeing, and in identifying individuals needing more support. It could also help with evaluating interventions to improve wellbeing.

Reference

McLellan, R. & Steward, S. (2015). Measuring children and young people's wellbeing in the school context, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 45(3), 307-332.



For further information see: <https://www.cem.org/wellbeing>