

School Matters –

Research informed perspective on promoting student well-being at school experiences from Finland

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Orientation

The presentation will discuss recent research evidence on socio-pedagogical means for advancing student comprehensive well-being at school :

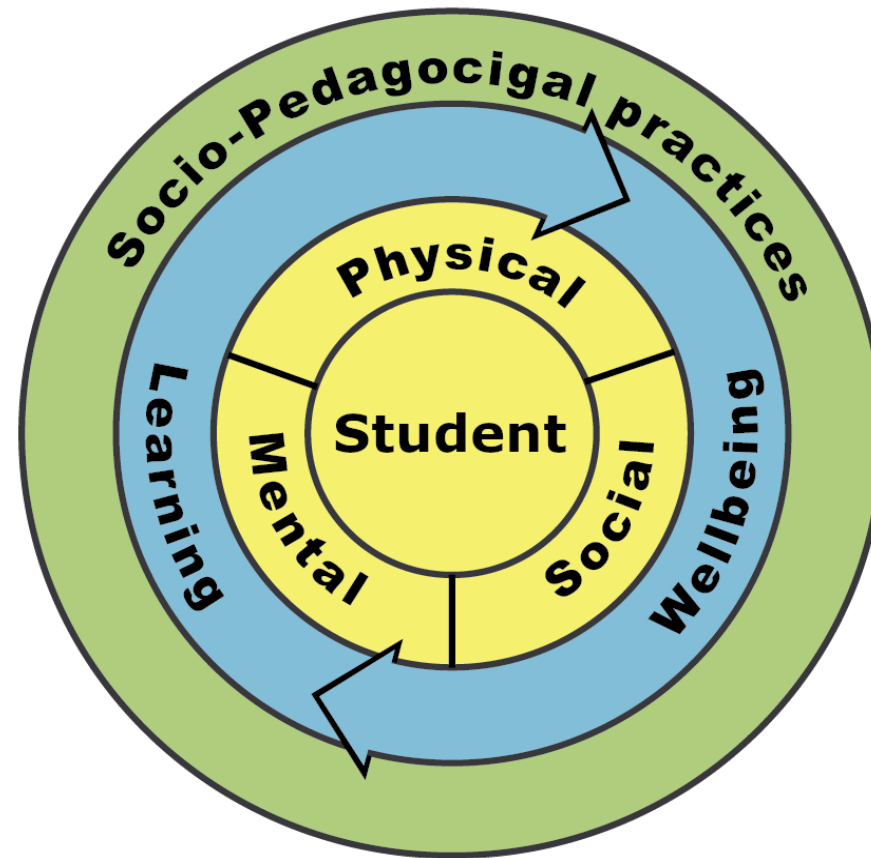
- The interrelation between student well-being and learning at school.
- Research informed perspective on promoting well-being at school: evidence of effective well-being interventions.
- Key characteristics of Finnish way in promoting student well-being at school.
- Evidence on effective strategies for promoting student well-being at school.
- Most recent policy initiatives for promoting student well-being in Finland.

Rationale

The effectiveness of school-based policies for promoting student well-being depends primarily on:

1. whether the policies are well-targeted i.e. are fit for the demand, and
2. on the efficacy of the implementation strategies

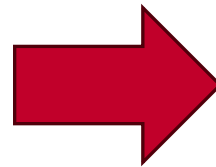
Pedagogical well-being



Characteristics of effective policies for promoting student well-being –research informed perspective 1/2

INVESTING IN PROMOTING

- 1) Engaging the school community involving fostering socioemotional and physical safety, promoting positive social interactions, and implementing collaborative pedagogical practices (Thapa *et al.*, 2013).
- 2) The student sense of belonging (Allen *et al.*, 2018; Goodenow & Grady, 1993).
- 3) Socio-emotional competences encompassing both intra- and interpersonal attitudes, knowledge, and skills.



BETTER

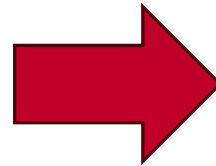
- Psychosocial well-being
- Pro-social behaviour
- Higher levels of happiness, psychological functioning, and self-esteem
- School adjustment
- Increased learning motivation
- Higher achievement
- Professional development and increase in occupational well-being

(Pittman & Richmond, 2007; Jose *et al.*, 2012; Law *et al.*, 2013; McGilloway *et al.*, 2014; Nutbrown & Clough, 2009; Oberle *et al.*, 2016 O'Rourke & Cooper, 2010; Thapa *et al.*, 2013)

Characteristics of effective policies for promoting student well-being –research informed perspective 2/2

INVESTING IN PROMOTING

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LESS

- Mental health problems
- Bullying
- Risk behaviours
- Lower incidents of fighting, vandalism, and substance use
- Reduce anxiety
- Depression
- Emotional distress

(Aldridge & McChesney, 2018; Allen *et al.*, 2018; Lonczak *et al.*, 2002; van Ryzin *et al.*, 2009; Wike & Fraser, 2009; Cefai *et al.*, 2018; Durlak *et al.*, 2011; Sklad *et al.*, 2012; Taylor *et al.*, 2017; van Noorden *et al.*, 2016; Weare & Nind, 2011; Wilson & Lipsey, 2007)

Finnish way of promoting student well-being at comprehensive school 1/4

- One of the foundational principles of Finnish educational policy is promoting equity and equality (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998).
- The aim is also reflected in a comprehensive approach on promoting student well-being throughout their educational track.
- Promoting student well-being and safety is explicated as one of the core goals of Finnish basic education (Finnish Basic Education Act 628/1998; Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014).
- The Finnish strategy for promoting the aim can be characterised as comprehensive, inclusive, preventive, and whole school based.

Finnish way of promoting student well-being at comprehensive school: 2/4

- Pre-primary and primary and lower secondary education are free for the students.
- They also get free learning materials, daily school meal, health and dental care, and transport from home to school if the way to school is long or dangerous.
- The student welfare services, such as the services of psychologists, special needs support, school social workers as well as student healthcare services are integrated into the fabric of education free of charge.
- The students with special educational needs are integrated into the regular classes.

Finnish way of promoting student well-being at comprehensive school 3/4

- Student welfare is primarily implemented through the whole school community approach.
- Building school culture that promotes learning, interaction, participation, well-being, and a sustainable way of living is also set as a core aim of basic education in the National Core Curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014).
- The focus in promoting student well-being is on prevention.
- In addition to universal whole school support for student well-being, students are also entitled to individualised support.

Finnish way of promoting student well-being at comprehensive school 4/4

- Finnish educational policies for promoting student well-being are research informed.
 - Characteristics of national programs for promoting student wellbeing is that they are research-based, their effectiveness have been studied/tested in controlled trials, and/or they are evaluated.
 - Constant dialogue with researchers and educational administrators.
 - Teachers are educated at the research-intensive universities (i.e., have MA degrees).
 - School reforms are studied.

Why well-being policies do not often live up to expectations?

- Well-being measures are not integrated into the socio-pedagogical processes of the school, despite evidence highlighting the strong interconnection between well-being and learning outcomes.
- A tendency to focus on individual components in well-being promotion, rather than adopting a comprehensive approach.
- Interventions are not specifically designed for schools and may not be effectively integrated into the socio-pedagogical processes of the educational environment.
- Treating, teachers, children and youths as objects in developing and implementing the means.
- The lack of a systemic approach in promoting well-being at school.

Characteristics of effective intervention implementation - strategies research informed approach

- School-based interventions aimed at promoting students' mental health and well-being are more likely to be effective if they are organised within a systemic, whole-school approach (Simões *et al.*, 2021).
- Are integrated into the curriculum and fabric of the school over time (Sanchez *et al.*, 2018).
- Are integrated into students' academic learning (Scholz *et al.*, 2022; Wigelsworth *et al.*, 2020).
- Are administered by teachers (Fenwick-Smith *et al.*, 2018; Liu *et al.*, 2020).
- Apply multi-component approach (Domitrovich *et al.*, 2017; Stallard *et al.*, 2012).
- Involve professional development support for teachers (Goldberg *et al.*, 2019; Sanchez *et al.*, 2018; Thomas & Aggleton, 2016).

Most recent educational policy initiatives in Finland

- Preventive Work and Collaboration with Organizations
- Development of Student Welfare Services
- Development of Comprehensive Education
- Investment in Basic Skills Learning
- Stabilizing Equal Funding for Basic Education
- Reform of the Three-level Support System
- Competence Guarantee
- Authority of Teachers and Principals

Thank for your attention

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