Schools as nurturing environments – an educational approach to mental health in schools

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The Teacher and Counselling
Douglas Hamblin
1974

Counselling in Schools
Keith Bovair and Colleen McLaughlin
A David Fulton Book

Therapy with Children and Young People
Integrative Counselling in Schools and other Settings
Colleen McLaughlin and Carol Holliday
2014
TIME FOR CHANGE
4 reasons for change

- Historical
- Educational
- Philosophical
- Empirical
AN ANALOGY – INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS

1944 11 types of handicap – specialist treatments – special schools – medical model

Mental health as the province of health specialists and particularly medical

Inclusive approach and environments which are the responsibility of all

Educational communities of wellbeing involving all adults + students
Mental health amongst young people is getting worse

Increase in diagnosable mental health issues

Need an increase in specialist services of which there are not enough

Schools and teachers are anxious

Need mental health professionals - this is a public health issue

Current model
DIFFERENT INTERVENTIONS ARE NEEDED AND SO ARE SPECIALIST SERVICES

- 10% of children and young people (aged 5-16 years) have clinically diagnosable mental problems.

- 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age.

- Counselling and mental health services are necessary, effective and appropriate.
THE SCHOOLS CONTRIBUTION

.. Schooling does matter greatly. Moreover, the benefits can be surprisingly long lasting. ... It is crucial to appreciate that these long-term benefits rely on both effects on cognitive performance (in terms of learning specific skills, improved task orientation and better persistence) and effects of self-esteem and self-efficacy (with respect to better attitudes to learning, raised parental expectations and more positive teacher responses because the children are more rewarding to teach). In some circumstances positive school experiences of both academic and non-academic kinds can have a protective effect for children under stress and living otherwise unrewarding lives. These last points remind us once again that school provides a set of a social experiences for children as well as a place for scholastic learning, and that effective schools have both aspects of children's lives as part of their goals.

(Rutter, 1991, p. 9).
How are our young people doing? Context matters

- Good childhood enquiry 2019
  - Different answer for different groups
  - Education and disadvantage – poverty
  - gender
- Mental health panic
- Doing well academically?
  - Equality of outcome a serious issue
- Nurturing environment for all key with a wide vision of development of young people
The Good Childhood Index

The Good Childhood Index measures children’s overall well-being and their happiness with 10 aspects of life that children and young people tell us are crucial for their well-being. The latest Good Childhood Index results for 2019 are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Latest figures for The Good Childhood Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average scores (out of 10)</th>
<th>% with low scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time use</td>
<td>7.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>8.0</td>
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<td>Friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>6.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Children's Society's household survey, Wave 18, June-July 2019, 10 to 17 year olds, Great Britain. Equally weighted by age and gender.
A significant decrease in happiness with **life as a whole**.

The proportion of children with low well-being (a score below the midpoint on a 0 to 10 scale) was:

**4.8%** in 2016–17.

This would be equivalent to over **219,000** children in the population as a whole based on 2018 ONS mid-year population estimates.
A significant dip in happiness with **school** (not seen in last year’s report) in 2016–17.

While not reflective of a long-term downward trend (as the dip is in the latest wave of data), it will be important to monitor any changes in this measure next year.
Schools as nurturing environment

“...individual competences cannot thrive in a system that is not, itself, competent, i.e. a system that does not provide the enabling conditions for individuals to be fully nurtured.” Jean Gordon
Schools have a powerful impact

Schooling matters greatly and the benefits can be long lasting - In some circumstances positive school experiences of both academic and a non-academic kind can have a protective effect for children under stress

Cognitive performance (learning specific skills, improved task orientation and better persistence) + self efficacy

(Rutter 1992)
Approaches

- Individual - genes
- Social and environmental
- Educational

- Rutter arguing for social and educational - importance of self efficacy, academic competency and views of self - chain reactions in life
WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE LEARNING ABOUT THEMSELVES AT SCHOOL AND HOW DOES IT IMPACT UPON MENTAL HEALTH?

- Learning about self - self efficacy
- Learning about how to act in the world - agency
- How to solve and engage with problems
- How to relate and handle interpersonal difficulties

We can create cycles of empowerment or cycles of alienation.
RELATIONAL WORLD
- Peer to peer
- Adult to student
- Non conflictual
- Social and emotional competence

THE SCHOOL

THE CLASSROOM
- Latent curriculum
- Pedagogy
- Self efficacy - fear of failure
- Learning mindset
- Gender
- Value

CONNECTEDNESS

AGENCY

PARTICIPATION

BELONGING
A three-dimensional wheel for describing school-based approaches to well-being.
SO WHAT IS IMPORTANT?

Accept the task is complex – thinking + practice

See the school as a web of connected systems that impact on young people
IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVING THE WHOLE SCHOOL

• Organisation and coordination of school systems, structures and policies to foster school connectedness
• Pedagogical principles of good teaching and learning - self efficacy, confidence + skill
• Specific curricula to promote social and emotional skills
• Work of specialist staff and services with in the school and as a bridge to the external
• Integrating universal work for all pupils + targeted work for vulnerable individuals and groups
AN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY OF WELL BEING

Listens to staff, students and parents
Responds
Shapes and builds - putting wellbeing at its core
Develops the capacity of staff and pupils
Sees wellbeing as its responsibility
Evaluates and reflects on its practices
Works with others