Editorial

Special issue: Promotion of Mental Health and Wellbeing in Young People

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Welcome to the special edition of the International Journal of Emotional Education on the Promotion of Mental Health and Wellbeing in Young People. The purpose of this issue is to highlight research methodologies used to promote mental health in children and young people.

This edition has been supported by the Edith Cowan University Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Collaborative Research Network (CRN) and the Flinders Centre for Student Wellbeing and the Prevention of Violence (SWAPv)ⁱ. This special edition draws together a number of major streams of research which focus on different methodologies used to research mental health in young people. Mental health is a national and international priority (see special edition of ‘The Psychology of Education Review’ edited by Humphrey and Qualter, 2013, and the reviews by Carta et al., 2015). For example, in the Australian context the Council of Australian Government’s National Action Plan for Mental Health 2006–2011 (COAG, 2010) and the recent Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform 2012–2022 (COAG, 2012) identified promotion, prevention and early intervention for positive mental health as essential actions for governments and organisations to undertake. National evaluations of KidsMatter Mental Health have been undertaken in Australia highlighting the delivery of effective school-based mental health interventions (Slee et al., 2009; Slee et al., 2013). Another Australian initiative has been the ‘Cyber Friendly Schools’ intervention led by Donna Cross. This was one of the first intervention projects to empirically evaluate over a three year period the effectiveness of cyberbullying intervention that actively involved secondary school students. The five papers in this special edition make a unique contribution to the corpus of our practical and theoretical

¹ SWAPv website: http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/swapv/

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understanding of methodologies to enhance wellbeing in educational settings.

The paper by Monks et al. (Australia) addresses the issue of social media use by young people. The authors investigate how young people perceive the feasibility and acceptability of social media when used as a research tool to investigate various issues relevant to their mental health and wellbeing. In her paper Lysaght (Ireland) traces the design, development and pilot of the Assessment for Learning Audit instrument (AfLAI) - a research tool for measuring Irish teachers’ understanding and deployment of formative teaching, learning and assessment practices. Particular consideration is given to the issue of pupils’ self-regulation as part of their classroom learning. The paper by Cross and colleagues (Australia) describes the active engagement of ‘student voice’ to develop and implement an intervention to reduce cyberbullying in the Australian school context. The authors evaluated this novel intervention as part of a longitudinal project. In their study of Indian school students, Skrzypiec and colleagues (Australia) investigated the nature of bullying in the Punjab region of India using the PhotoStory Method. They also enabled student voice and sought to discover how young people in India perceived and experienced incidents of bullying using photo images. The fifth paper by Brighi and colleagues (Italy) provides unique insight into the affiliative peer networks of pre-school children using a socio-metric procedure specifically adapted for use with young children. Their findings highlight the role of socio-emotional functioning and linguistic skills in understanding the dynamics of peer affiliation.

This special edition reflects well on an earlier call by Benbenishty and Astor (2008) for global cooperation in the field of mental health and violence prevention. Supported by the vision of the editors of this journal, this edition includes papers from around the globe that provide invaluable insight into the range of innovative methodologies (qualitative, quantitative, mixed method) can be creatively employed to provide insight for practitioners, researchers and policy makers into matters pertaining to mental health and violence prevention in our schools and communities. The demonstrable rigour and thoughtful analysis underpinning all of the papers provides evidence-based surety to advance the scientific understanding of how best to promote the wellbeing and mental health needs of the most vulnerable in our community.

References

