

Evaluation report "Welfare at school"

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What is Welfare

The WHO model of subjective well-being (WHO, 1948) includes three spheres of life: physical well-being, mental well-being and social well-being. In order to achieve satisfaction and well-being, each of these spheres needs to be taken care of. These spheres interrelate and influence each other.

The Geneva Charter on Wellbeing 2021¹, which builds on discussions of the World Health Conference, lists spiritual wellbeing as part of the definition of health, in addition to mental, physical, social wellbeing. Unlike physical or mental wellbeing, whose measures are often more objective and easier to measure, spiritual wellbeing is more subjective and more difficult to assess objectively. For this reason, this issue was not addressed in the project.

Physical well-being is the satisfaction with the functioning of one's own body through, among other things, a healthy lifestyle and regular activity, maintenance of the diurnal rhythm, exposure to hormetic factors. Teachers in the pre-survey - survey 2021 (D.Ziętek, A. Mykowska 2023²) relatively often indicated the use of stress regulation methods through body-based methods.

Social well-being is a sense of belonging and social integration, relationships with others, a sense of support from others. According to our 2021 study (D.Ziętek, A. Mykowska 2023³) teachers are keen to receive support from family, other teachers and social groups.

Psychological well-being according to Diener⁴ is "three distinct but often interrelated elements of well-being: frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect and cognitive appraisals such as satisfaction with life". Relatively popular among teachers (D.Ziętek, A. Mykowska 2023⁵) are techniques based on positive thinking, meditation etc., which build the potential for positive affect in life.

¹ The Geneva Charter for Well-being; <https://www.who.int/activities/promoting-well-being>

² D.Ziętek, A. Mykowska, ODPORNOŚĆ PSYCHICZNA W ZAWODZIE NAUCZYCIELA”, 2023: <https://understanding.pl/raport-badawczy-odpornosc-psychiczna-w-zawodzie-nauczyciela/>

³ Ibid

⁴ Tov, William; Diener, Ed. *Subjective Well-Being*. Research Collection School of Social Sciences. Paper 1395. archived from the original on 5 June 2017. Retrieved 14 June 2017.

⁵ D.Ziętek, A. Mykowska, 2023.

Welfare at school Programme

"The project aimed to develop and implement innovative educational methods and tools on mental resilience for teachers and school children and to conduct a pilot study, report and recommendations during the 2-year project with a minimum of 110 teachers. "

The programme was developed in an eclectic approach and included concepts and practical exercises derived from eleven methodologies affecting the three zones of well-being building, i.e. physical, psycho-emotional, social.

Reading and video preparation stage

The stage of preparing the text and video materials was an important part of the educational process. The textual content was edited for clarity, comprehensibility and correctness. The developed educational materials and instructional videos were reviewed by 4 teachers and 1 school director. Suggestions for changes were implemented.

A selection of reviews on parts of the guide:

Positive psychology

"To be honest, I'm delighted:) I think this is an article that should start a handbook. Psychological concepts and phenomena are presented in a clear, lucid and accessible way for the layman. I think it is extremely important that positive psychology is like a motivational spark to also do the exercises of the other methods that will be presented in the handbook. The exercises on expressing gratitude are particularly close to my heart and I strongly encourage everyone to write a gratitude journal."

Monika Błażowska

Positive discipline

"Very friendly text for beginners or those completely new to the subject of PD. Written in accessible language, it is a good read. After reading it, there is an urge to delve deeper into the subject and reach for more professional literature. The bullet points for each topic make it very easy to absorb the content.

The proposed exercises are simple to follow, without requiring any specialised prerequisites. The infographics included in the text are useful. They reinforce the content covered".

Marta Rokicka

Self-regulation

"This part of the guide will be particularly valuable for teachers because of the good dose of

advice and suggestions for working with students. An adjusted teacher is a difficult but doable task; it is great that the author emphasises that you should first take care of your self-regulation. The 5 steps of self-regulation and the examples and exercise suggestions given appeal to me. There's a great post on methods to minimise stressors'.

Ela Gawęda

Qigong

"I am a teacher with only two years' experience. At the same time, I am a mother of two children - a teenager and a first-grader. As if that wasn't enough, I am a highly sensitive person and my daughters also possess this undoubted asset. My high sensitivity is an extraordinary gift in this profession. I see the full range of emotions painted on people's faces. When I enter a classroom, I first look carefully into the faces of the students. I feel every anxiety or joy

and see it very clearly. Working with my students gives me enormous satisfaction, not only for selfish reasons (I just feel needed), but also, or perhaps especially, because I feel like I am removing pebbles from their path. I have several such encounters and hugs a day. When I get home, my sensitivities often have their own dramas that I can't move past.

High sensitivity is my gift, but it is also often like an open wound for me... The result is frequent migraines, a sense of fear and anxiety accompanying me with every new challenge, a constant harsh evaluation of myself and every role I play in life.

Life has taught me that there are no magic methods that are a cure-all. When I heard about Qigong and Tai Chi, the first information I checked was whether the exercises take a long time and whether they require a lot of effort. And paradoxically, I wasn't convinced by learning the theory, but I was convinced by my younger daughter, who picked up on a Qigong exercise video I was watching. We are currently trying to practise together, and we are enjoying not only the time we spend together. We are learning to be together in silence side by side."

Monika Błażowska

Expert training

In November 2022 an LTT expert training was organised, where experts and practitioners presented selected content. Three teacher-reviewers also participated in this training. The experts and practitioners presented 11 methods for taking care of one's wellbeing in a workshop format. Below is a selected opinion piece:

"The training on the Welfare at school Project was delivered with integrity and at a high level of content. The exercises took the form of professional workshops conducted by experts in various fields.

I heartily recommend reading both the articles by specialists and watching the recordings.

I encourage you to get inspired and find solutions and methods that, among other things, improve the daily work of teachers, reduce tension and feelings of stress and even discover a new path in their professional work.

As a teacher, I wholeheartedly recommend and am convinced that every educator will find something practical for themselves."

Maria Kochan - participant in the test training

Pilot stage

Teachers were offered a range of learning activities: their choice was largely autonomous and assumed to correspond to their interests or needs, which should foster motivation to pursue their chosen practices and, consequently, the effectiveness of their impact.

Stationary training

In April 2023, 2 residential workshops were held in Krakow. They lasted 3 days for 4.5 hours. These trainings were introductory to the online training. A total of 30 participants attended.

Topic scope of the residential training:

1. What is wellbeing and how to build it.
2. 3 levels of well-being building (stress management, recovery, increased resilience).
3. How to build healthy habits and improve quality of life.
4. Selected methods for building well-being in and out of school - exercises, presentations and exchange of experiences.

Selected statements from post-training surveys

"The training made me realise that I have the right to think for myself, that there are methods to help negate fear and fatigue..."

"I gained theoretical and practical knowledge. It allowed me to stop for a while and start building my self-worth."

"The training showed me that I was on the right track to building my own wellbeing. It allowed me to sort out certain things and values in my head. It encouraged me to work on

myself and take care of my own mental wellbeing. The methods proposed are relatively simple, universal and easy to implement right away."

"I don't think I am able to choose one of the meetings. All of them for me were valuable, needed and well run. I rate 5!!! the whole training. Valuable in every aspect - knowledge, practice and socially. It should be mandatory in every school."

Online training

Participants were invited to the online platform between May and September 2023. They were given access to chapters from the handbook as well as training recordings, descriptive exercises and short exercise videos.

The materials are divided into thematic courses:

1. Introduction - short motivational recordings introducing each method.
2. Neuroscience for teachers - content and exercises to build a sense of security and emotional stability.
3. Self-regulation - content and exercises to support the identification and reduction of stressors, analysis of areas where mental resilience resources can be built.
4. Positive Discipline - content and exercises on how to work systemically with the class to maximise student cooperation.
5. Positive and cognitive psychology - content and exercises: psychological tools for building psychological well-being.
6. NVC: Non-Violent Communication - content and exercises: communication based on respect, kindness and empathy.
7. Breathing techniques: content and exercises describing the benefits and methods of breathing techniques.
8. Yoga and meditation - content and exercises demonstrating physical exercise and mindfulness practice to support mental resilience building and recovery.
9. Qigong - a physical exercise that releases tension from the body, calming and relaxing.
10. EFT - content and exercises: the tapping method, learning to accept emotions.

In addition, as a way of motivating participants between May and the end of the project (31 December 2023), we sent emails to participants registered on the platform encouraging them to enter the platform. Additional content was posted on the platform:

- the "Good Beginnings" competition - as part of which 3 webinars were held, prizes were designated for participants to write an essay outlining the implementation of well-being-building habits (a total of 27 people took part in the webinars),

- bonuses and motivators, where challenges - short tasks motivating the implementation of new habits, answers to questions in the form of so-called FAQs in short articles - are placed.

[Kurs: Bonusy i motywatory \(understanding.pl\)](#), [Kurs: Wyzwania \(understanding.pl\)](#), [Kurs: Dobry początek - konkurs dla nauczycieli \(understanding.pl\)](#)

Quantitative research

Research group

In April and May 2023, a group of teachers were recruited to complete a questionnaire that constituted the PRETEST of the study and included a scale, related to wellbeing and mental resilience. Subsequently, some of them took part in the Welfare at school Project and some did not. After six months (October-November 2023), the respondents who were successfully contacted completed the survey again, which constituted the POSTTEST of the study.

Membership of the study and control groups was not randomised. Those who expressed an interest in the programme and applied for it themselves participated. The others, according to the announcement addressed to them, may not have participated in the training, but after completing the pretest and posttest they were given full access to it, as well as a reward for participating in the study. The numbers obtained in the quantitative survey do not refer to all participants in the training, but only to those who completed the initial survey (pretest) and the final survey (posttest). was completed 112 times and the posttest 58 times. Finally, the responses of 28 people from the study group, i.e. those participating in the programme, and 20 people from the control group, i.e. those not participating in the programme acknowledged

Table 1

Declarations how many participants use every Modul - elements of the Well-being at School programme. Total number of people n=28

Training platform	
Module	Number of participants
Positive psychology	20
Self-regulation	13
NVC: non-violent communication	13
Positive discipline	16
Neuroscience	9
Qigong	6
EFT	5
Yoga and meditation	10
Breathe	16
Additional activities	
Stationary training	14
Motivational webinars	11

Respondents most liked the psychological topics, i.e. positive psychology (20), positive discipline (16) and self-regulation (13). Breathing (16) and NVC relationship-building methods (13), as well as yoga and meditation (10), were also very popular.

Table 2.

Participants' declared degree of implementation of the practical exercises proposed in the training. Total number of people n=28

Degree of implementation (frequency of exercises)	Number of participants
<i>To a very large extent - 5-7 times a week</i>	0
<i>To a large extent - 3-4 times a week</i>	6
<i>Medium - I use from time to time</i>	12
<i>In a small way - I have succeeded a few times</i>	7
<i>Not at all</i>	3

As many as 18 people out of the 28 surveyed declare that they exercise to an average or high degree (65% of the group) and 7 people that they exercise to a low degree. Only 3 people out of 28 declare that they do not exercise at all.

Results of quantitative studies

Impact of training on mental toughness

The study conducted did not confirm the effect of participation in the training on the increase of participants' mental toughness (measured with the CD-RISC 10 tool, Connor & Davidson, 2003⁶). It is interesting to note that, according to the results of the study, participants showing higher levels of mental toughness enrolled in the training, while those with lower levels of mental toughness only participated in the study and were the control group. A higher starting level of mental toughness may be a hindrance to achieving an even higher level.

For some participants, perhaps the period of practice of the various methods was too short to induce a significant increase in mental resilience. Another possible explanation could be that the training itself was insufficient to significantly affect participants' mental resilience, although there are many potential reasons for this. The intensity or duration of the training may have been too limited and, in addition, participants may have

⁶ Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. T. (2003). *Development of a new resilience scale: the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CDRISC)*. *Depression and Anxiety*, 18, 76-82.

inappropriately adapted the methods learnt to their individual needs. Lack of commitment to practice, for example due to insufficient time, is also an important factor that may have reduced the effectiveness of the programme.

The impact of training on taking care of one's well-being

Although the hypothesis regarding an increase in participants' psychological resilience was not confirmed, the study showed an impact of the training (as well as practising the exercises proposed by the training) on some aspects of teachers' functioning that are beneficial from a well-being-building perspective. Participating teachers declared a statistically significant change (compared to the control group and compared to the pretest) in:

- a sense of regular self-care and well-being,
- a sense of having favourite ways to help oneself through difficult times.

The results seem to be understandable in light of the objectives of the training, which were to familiarise participants with different support methods and then encourage them to practice them. Bearing in mind the relatively small research sample, it is worth mentioning that on the borderline of relevance there was also a

- the impact of practising exercise on a sense of familiarity with one's own body and methods of caring for it.

The result close to significance can be explained by the fact that the exercises proposed within the modules: "Yoga", "Breathing", "Qigong", "EFT" and "Neuroscience" of the Welfare at school programme, were very often based on bodywork, which could translate into beneficial effects in this respect.

Interestingly, when a statistical analysis was carried out, dividing the subjects into a practising group (declaring implementation average and above) and a non-exercising group (practising little, not at all, and a control group) - then it was found that those who had received training and had started to implement more/better than the others, as well as more/better than before the training:

- take regular care of their well-being;
- know the sources of their stress and use methods to reduce tension in the body;
- have favourite ways of helping themselves when overwhelmed;
- strive to approach themselves and others with kindness and acceptance.

Choice and autonomy during the "Well-being at School" programme

The training was non-standardised, and participants had a great deal of freedom in their choice of content and methods, which may have influenced the variation in outcomes.

In the **Well-being at School** programme, we placed emphasis on ensuring autonomy, i.e. the participants' freedom to choose the training content. The specifics of the programme also allowed participants to engage in practising the proposed methods at different times, leading to varying lengths of practice. The participant autonomy provided was intended to increase participant motivation according to self-determination theory (Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L.; 2000).⁷ The aim of the training was to provide techniques that could be used autonomously by the participants, so we tried to increase the chance of inducing intrinsic motivation. However, a possible reason for the reduced effectiveness of training may have been the offering of too many proposed methods. The phenomenon known as the 'paradox of choice' suggests that a large choice does not necessarily translate into greater comfort and efficiency in decision-making (Schwartz, 2004⁸)

Teachers attending the training may have been overwhelmed by having to choose a method from so many suggestions, which may have resulted in lower levels of engagement and uptake of specific techniques.

In the light of our results, in the future we suggest balancing the freedom of choice of training content with adequate support for participants. It is also necessary, in our opinion, to consider reducing the number of methods proposed and to increase support for participants in the process of selecting and learning new techniques.

Qualitative results

Of those completing the posttest, 14 people answered the question "What did you like most about the project or what would you change about it".

In most statements, participants expressed positive impressions of their participation in the programme, finding the whole thing interesting and well planned. They liked it best:

⁷ Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). *Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being*. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.

⁸ Schwartz, B. (2004). *The paradox of choice: Why more is less*. New York.

- 1. Accessibility and thoughtful presentation:** Respondents note that the content was presented in an accessible and thoughtful way, which made it easy to use the materials. They also appreciate the ease and freedom to use the available information.
"I found the whole thing interesting, the content presented in an accessible, thoughtful way, the material easy and free to use."
- 2. Programme topics:** Statements suggest that they liked the proposed range of training topics. They also mentioned some topics such as yoga, breathing, positive discipline.
*"A wide range of methods available to learn."
"It touched on important aspects of life."*
- 3. Practicality:** Four statements referred to the practicality of the training.
"The openness of the leading coaches, the opportunity for discussion, good time during the exercises and learning about a range of possibilities for further self-regulation."
- 4. The exchange of experiences** with other teachers was mentioned three times as an important element.
- 5. Materials and graphics:** Respondents express admiration for the interesting materials and the beautiful graphics provided during the programme.
- 6. Several people emphasised the motivation of the trainers, the good dynamics and atmosphere of the training sessions**
*"Leaders' motivation."
"The openness of the leading coaches, the opportunity for discussion, good time during the exercises and learning about a range of possibilities for further self-regulation."*
- 7. Suggestions for extending residential training:**
"I think it would be nice if the training lasted, for example, 5 days and there would be more time for the theoretical part, e.g. about positive psychology and even more exercises to find ways to build well-being in yourself."
- 8. There was also a reported lack of time** by some participants, which limited them from taking full advantage of the proposal.
*"For reasons of a difficult family situation and taking on a first grade class, and consequently a huge amount of work at home after school, I did not have the strength to take up your offer."
"Unfortunately, I ran out of free time to benefit as much as I wanted to."*

In summary, most participants praise its diversity, the interactivity of and the friendly atmosphere. They only suggest minor modifications in terms of and the depth of the topics discussed

Summary

Project successes

As many as 18 of the 28 interviewed people (65%) participating in the programme declared that they had started practising the chosen methods and techniques. It is worth mentioning that 2 people (out of 14 giving qualitative statements) declared that they were not able to implement the learned exercises due to lack of time and life circumstances.

91 people were enrolled on the www.edu.uderstanding.pl platform during the period of the quantitative study, i.e. until the end of October 2023. 54 people were actively using it (data at the end of December 2023). At the end of January 2024, the number of people enrolled on the platform had increased to 130. This demonstrates the interest of the target group. It is likely that additional people signed up under the influence of a referral and an ongoing social media campaign.

Eleven people participated in the 'Good Beginnings' competition and we finally received six essays. Below is an excerpt from one of them:

Above all, the training "Well-being at School" opens teachers' eyes and makes them reflect. In our work, we tend to put the children-students, their needs, requirements and well-being first completely forgetting about ourselves.

Our attention is focused on the students: we solve their problems, conflicts, help them overcome limitations and difficulties sometimes at the expense of their own well-being.

We forget that if we are nervous, stressed, if there is no inner peace in us, our students will not achieve it either.

Publication on the page with all 6 essays:

https://understanding.pl/fundusze-eog/konkurs-dobry-poczatek/?fbclid=IwAR2reP340kejsdm6yHPIMQVm6EKH1FuHEEiGHCrAA1_3lj1LQu95TkROErQ

There were also 3 motivational webinars in August-September 2023 - a total of 27 participants. [\(47\) Konkurs "Dobry początek" - YouTube](#)

The closing gala was attended by 30 people stationary and 50 people watched the conference live online. Even after the conference, participants kept coming back to the recording, and new viewers also arrived - the 2.5-hour conference video now has 137 views: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGliui0pj5Y&t=2972s>

The 'Project Feedback' video already had more than 500 views at the end of December 2024.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= hioE0881vE&t=9s>

Recommendations

Supporting teachers' motivation to practice well-being-building methods - an analysis of research implications

As analyses of questionnaires, participant statements, informal conversations and observations have shown: the implementation of exercises and practices to support wellbeing is not an easy task, and simply learning the methods does not guarantee automatic changes in stress reduction or increased resilience.

Based on the research, we note that the implementation of well-being-building methods among teachers, does not always have the expected results. Many teachers expressed the need for more activities to support the motivation to practise these methods in everyday life.

It is also worth noting that, despite the good intentions of participants, there may be factors that make it difficult to change habits. Therefore, follow-up activities should take these potential difficulties into account and provide participants with appropriate tools and coping strategies.

In our opinion, increasing the effectiveness of the Programme could be achieved through more frequent in-person training or periodic motivational webinars. This form of support could better engage participants and provide them with inspirational incentives to actively participate in well-being practices. As the analysis of the results of the pilot Programme shows, the provision of knowledge about wellbeing practice methods alone does not always translate into actual behavioural changes in participants. Therefore, in the future, it is worth putting more emphasis on:

→ an exchange of experience between practitioners,

- providing inspiring content to get teachers actively involved,
- social and motivational support in overcoming difficulties.

In summary, enhancing the effectiveness of teacher wellbeing support programmes requires addressing a variety of factors, such as the frequency of training, inspirational content and identifying and counteracting factors that hinder habit change. Tailoring programmes to the individual needs and preferences of participants and continuous monitoring and adjustment of activities based on feedback analysis can be key elements of effective support for teachers in wellbeing practice.

In the context of future activities, we recommend a greater commitment to motivating and supporting habit change, through increased classroom training, face-to-face interactions, webinars or regular one-to-one meetings using mentoring, coaching or supervision. We recommend a minimum of 5 days of training, preferably staggered so that participants have the opportunity to work with the methods learned. Similar recommendations for training frequency and follow-up are also provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as part of their self-help training.

Autonomy and intrinsic motivation versus excess choice

Our experiences and analysis of the data collected lead to conclusions that may have important implications for the further development of welfare projects.

We took a holistic and eclectic approach to the Welfare at school programme, which aimed to provide a variety of methods to improve wellbeing to meet the diverse needs of our participants. However, when analysing the respondents' statements, we noticed a correlation between autonomy, intrinsic motivation and an excess of choice. Some teachers noted the positive effects of participating in our training courses, pointing to a change in habits, regular practice of the methods learnt and their beneficial impact on their daily lives both professionally and personally. At the same time, they pointed to the variety of methods, which sets us apart from other educational offers on the market.

However, we also noted that the eclectic nature of the programme can be challenging for some participants. An overabundance of choice options can lead to cognitive overwhelm and reduced motivation. Too many options can make it difficult for participants to decide which method to practice, as well as problematic to consistently practice the chosen method or methods. Therefore, our recommendations focus on the need to provide support in the process of choosing methods and practising them in everyday life. We suggest that the programme should end with a declaration of choosing the best adapted method for the participant. Furthermore, we suggest the creation of more or less formal

support groups to help participants
practice their chosen method and to prevent the feeling of overwhelm associated
with an excess of choice

Our experience of the Welfare at school programme suggests that, although the eclectic nature of the project methods benefits by being tailored to the individual needs of the participants, it must be balanced with the danger of an excess of choice.

Adequate support and the reduction of an excess of choices can support participants to effectively implement wellbeing practices in their daily professional and personal lives.

Thanks for your contribution to the "Welfare at school" project

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