

Wellbeing

The education sector is prioritising wellbeing for students and staff. Wellbeing underpins students' academic success and retention as well as talent attraction, performance and retention of staff.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WELLBEING

Academic achievement is a major driver in the choice of educational establishments from schools through to further and higher education. Notwithstanding this, wellbeing policy and practice underpins learning and is a critical component of academic success.

Wellbeing is of particular importance when students relocate internationally and face different cultural and academic norms. Regular movement affects learning continuity. Curriculum and language differences, and the pressure to do well academically, can have a detrimental effect on wellbeing.

WELLBEING STRATEGIES

Policy and practice need to address the inter-related challenges of student and staff mobility, cultural differences at the societal, organisational and professional levels, and curriculum complexity in a coordinated manner.

There should be clear evidence that wellbeing is valued. Timetables including wellbeing, community groups that foster integration, mentors and peer relationship facilitation, class buddy systems and parental inclusion in school/college events are valuable interventions.

Support for staff from the leadership

team demonstrates commitment to wellbeing. Leadership wellbeing should also be addressed, for instance, via peer networks and professional support.

TURNOVER

Turnover of the student body as families' international assignments take them to different places results in the breakup of friendship groups and the need to build new support networks in different countries.

Teaching staff may also relocate. This affects their wellbeing as they need to adapt to different country and organisational cultures, and teach across a range of curricula. Staff turnover also affects learning continuity for students and can cause stress through disruption of student-teacher relationships.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Cultural understanding and competence underpin coping with everyday life. Shared cultural values are needed at a variety of levels. Societal culture determines what is deemed acceptable in the country. Organisational culture will reflect the individual ethos of the school/college. Professional culture shapes teaching practice; this can vary widely as it reflects elements including both societal and organisational culture as well as educational disciplines.

WELLBEING ACTIONS

Wellbeing can be embedded in mission and value statements and be clearly articulated in strategy. Cultural values must be collectively owned, with staff, students and parents involved in a coherent cultural community.

Embedding wellbeing in the curriculum enables students to understand the challenges they face and develop strategies to build relationships and manage stress. Staff can be supported through induction



and by peer mentoring. Wellbeing policy and practice can be supported by specialist interventions such as counselling.

Partnering with external providers can help to understand and manage the challenges posed by cultural differences and frequent global mobility.

DATA INFORMED PRACTICE

Data driven decision-making is needed. Data-drawn evidence can justify expenditure on wellbeing and be used to report progress on achieving strategic goals.

Surveys can reveal areas where action can be taken; feedback on wellbeing interventions can help tailor and target ongoing support. Research into engagement, friendships and confidence provide some examples from which leadership can build appropriate wellbeing interventions for staff, students and parents.

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