

# The Role of Teacher-Student Relationships in the Promotion of Student Wellbeing

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**Abstract:** With the development of the economy, people's spiritual needs have gained greater attention, in which wellbeing is one of the most important related factor. And many schools have been made efforts to promote student wellbeing (SW), such as improving the quality of school design and an enhanced understanding of the complexity of teachers' roles (Dudek, 2000; Woolner et al., 2010).

**Keywords:** Teacher-student; Relationships; Student wellbeing; Role; Influence

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Aside from social, relationship, physical and mental health, the term of SW also included their experience of participating in life and learning (Cahill et al., 2014). Hence, student wellbeing could be defined as the main indicator of educational quality (Van Petegem et al., 2008). Besides, Holfve-Sabel (2014) identified that, as students' activities and needs primarily revolved around school, SW is closely related to learning and intra-student and teacher-student relationships (TSRs). According to Roorda et al. (2011), TSRs were particularly important to SW, as it is the most basic interpersonal relationship in schools. Positive TSRs promoted students' and teachers' motivation and participation in the learning and teaching processes. Conversely, a negative TSR produced barriers between the student and teacher, resulting in unhealthy communication within the classroom. Therefore, this essay will explore how TRSs influence SW in schools from four perspectives.

## 1. Factors that influence wellbeing

Diener (2000) stated that subjective wellbeing, such as one's environment and family, was a measurement and factor of wellbeing.

Wulanyani and Vembriaty (2017) indicated that some psychological factors, such as traits, needs, cognitive and social intelligence, coordinated to influence wellbeing.

Positive student-student relationships enable students to communicate and better cooperate with others while studying, influencing their wellbeing. Moreover, wellbeing improves alongside learning. For example, positive learning can help students better understand knowledge, while a better learning environment can make students happy. In addition, improved learning outcomes can provide students with greater confidence to continue their studies.

## 2. TSRs and SW

Positive TSRs indicate that teachers and students can conduct teaching activities with mutual respect and cooperation.

According to Drugli (2013), barrier-free communication occurred in the classroom when the teacher cared for their students and provided them with adequate support in their learning process. Positive interaction with teachers also developed a rapport with their students, thus bringing benefits to their learning ability and motivation (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

With negative TSRs, conflict between teachers and students was inevitable, possibly causing students to engage in substance abuse, violence or truancy (Cahill et al., 2014).

## 3. Ositive TSRs and SW

In positive TSRs, students built a closer relationship with their surroundings including students, teachers and the school. This was beneficial to their learning experience and helped them engage with learning, thus improving their academic performance (Cahill et al., 2014). Besides, positive TSRs helped build efficient and effective communication between teachers and students. A positive communication process allowed teachers and students to freely share thoughts and deepen their understanding of each other. This was a virtuous circle that enabled students to experience a deeper sense of wellbeing in campus life.

Furthermore, positive TSRs helped disadvantaged students to achieve in the learning process (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers were more inclined to assist students with difficulty when positive TSRs were established. For instance, teachers might change the course design, provide special learning activities. As a result, disadvantaged students progressed and SW is likely to increase (Cahill et al., 2014). In short, positive TSRs positively impacted on SW because of constructive interaction between teachers, students and the learning environment.

#### 4. Positive teaching practices and their impact on wellbeing.

Positive teacher practices, such as encouragement, respect and patience, impact on teaching, irrespective of the teaching process, environment or outcomes. Such practices result in positive TSRs.

Jamal et al. (2013) found that positive TSRs were important for SW. They were associated with positive student outcomes, such as affective, behavioural and cognitive outcomes (Kidger et al., 2012), which were important elements of wellbeing. More importantly, students were less likely to suffer from depression as a result (Hughes & Kwok, 2007).

#### 5. Stating implications and future actions

In my teaching context, my colleagues and I explored the role of TSRs on SW in developing countries. We used social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes, which included teaching students the necessary skills to increase self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, social management and critical and creative thinking (Cahill et al., 2014). And as suggested by Cahill et al. (2014), we adopted a whole-school approach such as building a responsible environment, using positive classroom management methods, supporting high-quality teaching exercise, adopting precise social and emotional skills teaching and providing more support to the necessary students. We believed that these methods were the key to increasing SW.

In terms of future action, we think the most crucial step is to attempt to establish positive TSRs. This was inspired by the educational context of developing countries, where it is the norm for many students to be neglected in the educational system, such as is the case in many underdeveloped areas of China. These children do not have parental support or lack a stable learning environment or adequate learning resources for the development of their wellbeing.

As positive teaching practice is beneficial to SW, I am determined to proactively promote emotional involvement, increase self-efficacy, facilitate effective communication with students to improve their wellbeing. Meanwhile, I intend to further my research for a theoretical framework and relevant expertise while adhering to the whole-school approach and SEL programmes. This will allow me to apply more knowledge to the promotion of SW.

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