

## **School improvement and wellbeing: Implications of a scoping review**

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Over the past two decades the intentional promotion of wellbeing has become recognised as an essential dimension of quality schooling. At this time, however, almost no significant research has yet been directed towards understanding how the construct of wellbeing is applied within the praxis of school improvement. This paper presents findings from a scoping review that examined how wellbeing is considered within the school improvement literature and what limitations exist within the extant literature that represent gaps and silences within the school improvement discourse.

A scoping review was selected as the most appropriate research methodology as its primary function is to identify gaps in existing research and a preliminary scan of the relevant body of school improvement literature indicated its extremely limited range and scope. The study was undertaken through four phases: (1) identifying potentially relevant studies; (2) confirming relevant studies for analysis; (3) abstracting the data; and (4) synthesising the data. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) model was employed through Phases 1 and 2 to facilitate decision-making on the inclusion or exclusion of articles. Through Phases 3 and 4, thematic analysis methods drawn from grounded theory were employed to inductively code and categorise the articles' content. From this process of analysis and synthesis, the researchers identified a set of three core concepts that encompass how wellbeing is presented as an operative construct within the school improvement discourse.

The study's conclusions assert that the core concepts affirm the importance of wellbeing as an operative construct within the praxis of school improvement. The three core concepts identified were: a) the development of personal wellbeing and academic capability are complementary objectives; b) structural and cultural reforms are required for schools to substantively attend to wellbeing as a school improvement imperative; and c) positive leadership is a determining factor in a school's capability to substantively attend to wellbeing. These concepts point to the need for a re-thinking of assumptions, priorities, and methodologies that continue to inform school improvement efforts.

While the concepts have significant implications for how schools undertake improvement initiatives, the research base underpinning them is currently meagre and methodologically limited. This presents a considerable opportunity for future research into how school improvement efforts may be shaped by consideration of wellbeing as an operative construct.