

The tricky case of assessing wellbeing across the SPECTRUM

A consideration of some of the factors in assessing & promoting child wellbeing in the context of education

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Introduction

- Senior Lecturer – Manchester Institute of Education, University of Manchester

Programme Director '[M.Ed Psychology of Education](#)'

Convener of the 'Education & Psychology' (E&P) Research group

- Evaluation of universal school-based mental health interventions
 - Intervention & universal promotion (prevention science)
- Specific interest in how terms are defined and assessed
 - ***A systematic tool review of measures of child & adolescent social, personal, emotional and character skills (SPECTRUM)***
 - ***Programmes to practices: Identifying effective, evidence-based social and emotional learning strategies for teachers and schools***
 - *Meta-analysis of Social and Emotional Learning programmes*
 - *Cluster-RCT of the FRIENDS programme, designed to address childhood anxiety and depression*
 - *Inclusive (Secondary behaviour – UCL); SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning); PATHS (Promoting Alternative THinking strategies; AFA (Achievement for All)*

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Introduction - Role of school?

- There continues a debate regarding the role of the school developing wider outcomes for children. However, school is:
- Universal
- Begins early in life
- Entails periods of prolonged engagement (totaling over 15,000 hours - (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979) during which effective intervention strategies can be implemented.
- Mental health and wellbeing relates to school outcomes:
 - Those children with good MHWB are likely to attend and achieve in school (Meltzer et al, 2000; Petrides, Fredrickson & Furnham, 2004)
- *“By virtue of their central role ...and their broad reach... schools are the primary setting in which many initial concerns arise and can be effectively remediated” Greenberg (2010), p28.*
- Recent Governmental policy (2018) highlights an **intersection** between education and health

Overview

- Complexity of terminology
- Implications
 - Whole School
 - Practices
 - Assessment
 - Individual differences
- Where next?
- Resource & references

Terminology

- Clear criteria is essential:
 - Shared understanding
 - malleability,
 - sensitivity to change
 - developmental & normative expectations
 - Intended use (e.g. screening, monitoring, evaluation)

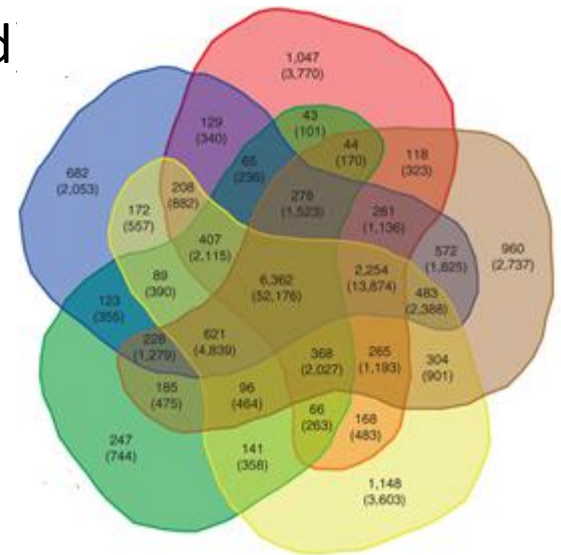
- ‘broad constellation of skills and attributes beyond those directly associated with academic aptitude’ (Levin, 2013).

Go to www.menti.com and use the code **38 65 38**

What term(s) best describes the pupil outcome you are focused on?

Terminology

- In Education, a range of terms have been used to define areas of interest in skills and competences *beyond* attainment
 - Non-cognitive skills
 - Soft skills
 - Emotional intelligence (trait/ ability / mixed)
 - Emotional literacy
 - Social and emotional competence
 - Wellbeing / well-being / well being
 - Emotional health
 - Mental health
 - Resilience
 - 'Grit'
 - Character
 - Personality
 - Emotional self-efficacy...



'Wider' outcomes in children

- Clear criteria is essential
 - Shared understanding of skills, developmental & normative expectations, assessment/evaluation, etc...

Non-academic skills (Arthur, Powell, & Lin, 2014): attitudes, behaviors, and strategies that facilitate success in school and workplace, such as motivation, perseverance, self-control

Personal qualities (Arthur, Powell, & Lin, 2014): Interrelated set of personal values and virtues that normally guide conduct, character is about who we are and who we become (Arthur, Powell, & Lin, 2014)

Soft skills?

Personal qualities?

Grit, personality, resilience, wellbeing, EQ, ...

Even more complexity...

- ‘Jingle-Jangle’ fallacy (Marsh, 1994):
 - Jingle: Erroneous assumption that two different things are the same because they bear the same name.
 - E.g. ‘emotional intelligence’
 - Jangle :Erroneous assumption that two identical or almost identical things are different because they are labelled differently.
 - E.g. ‘emotional self-efficacy’ and ‘emotional literacy’



Policy context



“it [is] the role of schools to develop pupils’ **character** ... there is nothing **soft** about these so-called soft skills....these things around **character** and **resilience** are important for what anybody can achieve in life...”

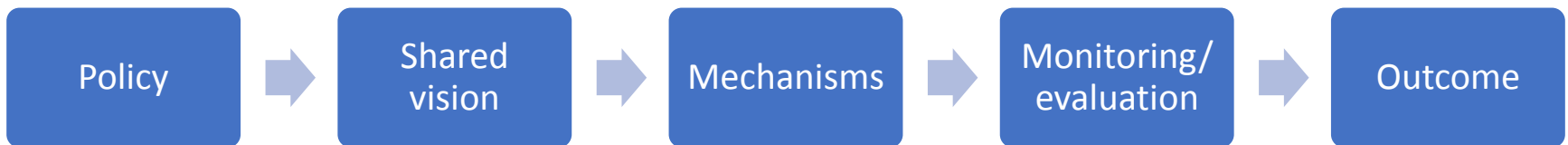
Damien Hinds, first speech as education secretary (Jan 2018)

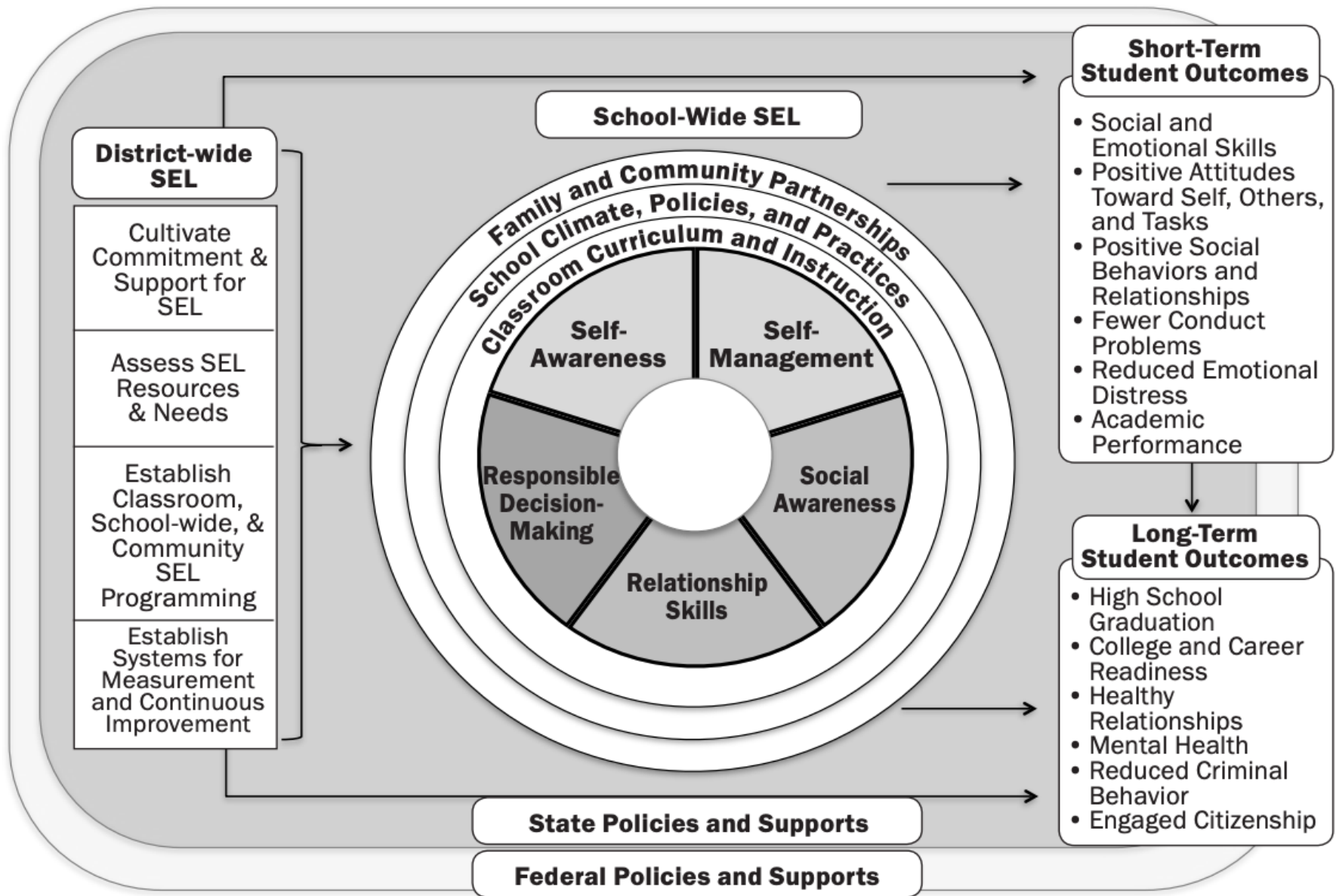
“**Character** and **resilience** are the qualities, the inner resources that we call on to get us through the frustrations and setbacks that are part and parcel of life. How do we instil this in young people, how do we make sure they are ready to make their way in the world as **robust** and **confident individuals?**”

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-sets-out-vision-for-character-and-resilience> (2019)

Implications

- **Inherent child-focus**, with little/no commentary around wider enabling environment
- Very little commentary about mechanisms and practices
- Lack of precise definition makes assessment and monitoring tricky
- Little consideration for context & individual differences





Expanded conceptual model of SEL. Taken from Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak (2017))

Whole school

The co-ordination of activities in which practice is continually and consistently embedded into the school

- Described as essential (e.g. Cefai, 2017), However:
- Research findings are mixed (Wigelsworth et al, 2019)
- E.g. - Meta Analysis of WH approaches showed an effect size of 0.22 in SEL skills
- Difficulty establishing which components and how they interact:
 - Whole-school behaviour strategy
 - Staff training ('readiness for change' vs. skill-based vs. self-efficacy/ familiarisation vs. participant)
 - Family and community partnerships
 - Extended services
 - Integration and fit with other initiatives
- A current limitation in research -difficulty in capturing differences in which components are/ are not implemented and the complexity of how various components might interact

Classroom Practice

- Specific curriculum packages arguably dominate a significant part of the SEL landscape
 - Overall there is a strong evidence base (Corcoran, Cheung, Kim, & Xie, 2017; Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012; Wigelsworth et al., 2016)
 - Effect sizes between 0.21 – 0.70

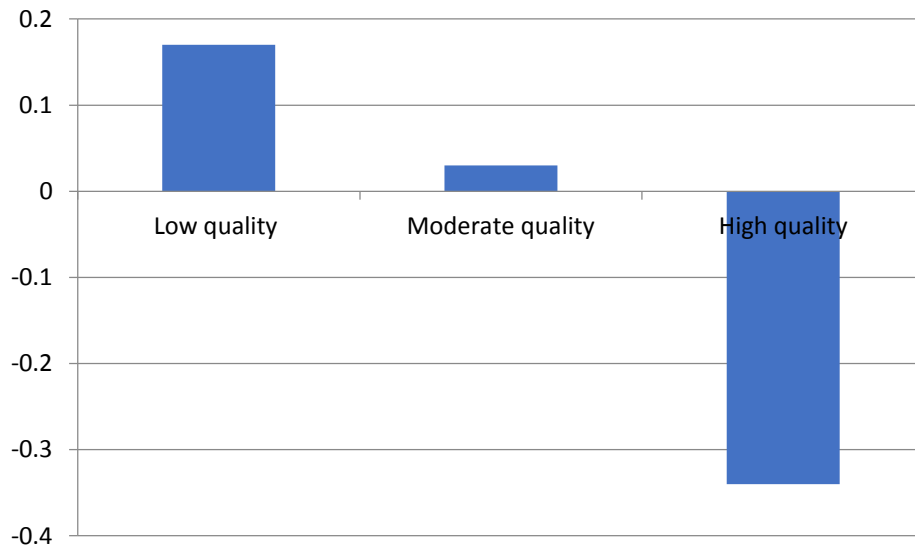
However, although *generally* effective:

- Vary widely on their scope, specificity and evidence base
- Increasingly, mental health programmes are included within promotion frameworks (Rones & Hoagwood, 2000)
- Implementation and cultural transferability issues...

Implementation

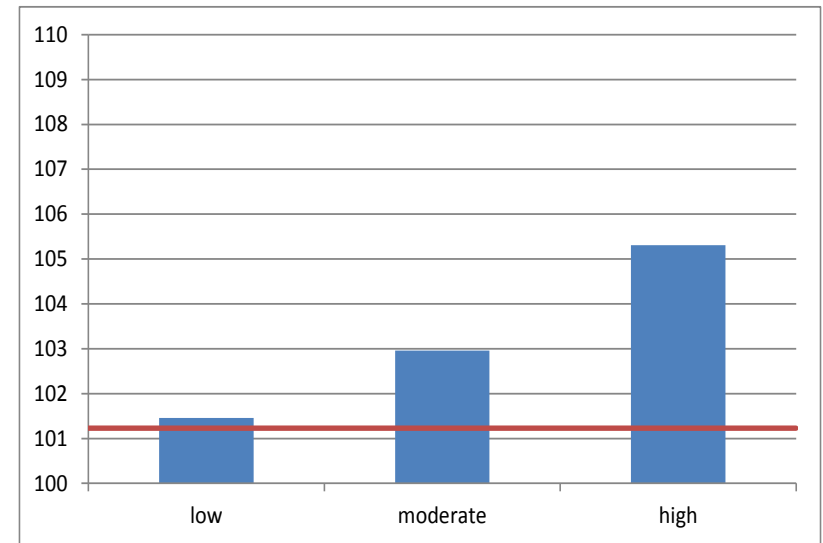
- Implementation

- Interventions rarely (if ever!) implemented as planned
- Implementation variability in terms of fidelity, quality, dosage, reach, (etc) influences intervention outcomes
- Relative lack of 'relational' (e.g. implementation-outcomes) analyses in research reporting on universal school based interventions



Secondary SEAL evaluation (Wigelsworth, Humphrey & Lendrum, 2013)

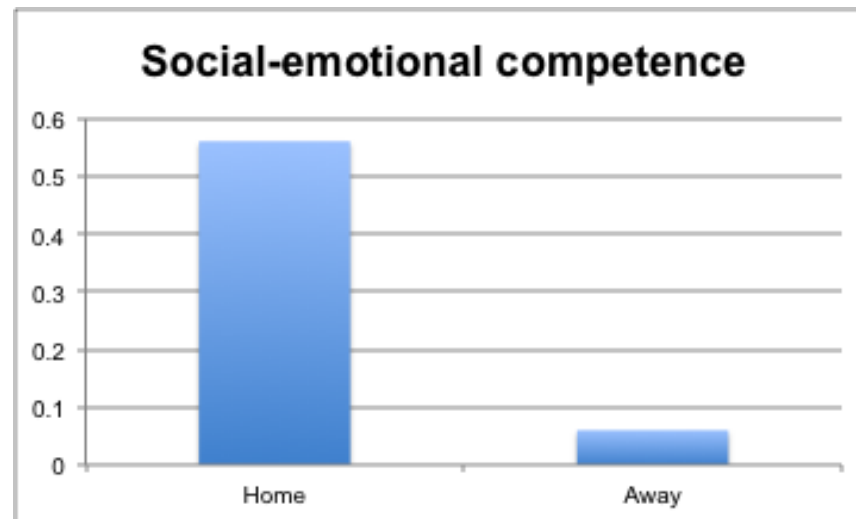
Implementation quality as a moderator of changes in student conduct problems (ES = 0.14)



PATHS to success (Humphrey et al, 2018) – Social skills vs. Implementation quality

Cultural Transferability

- Literature notes challenges in implementing across cultural and international boundaries...
 - Perception of need & logic (appropriate but not congruent)?
 - Critical infrastructure (internally valid but ‘poor soil’)



Wigelsworth et al. (for 4 of 7 outcomes measured)



Assessment and Monitoring

- Several resources for selecting measures (e.g. SPECTRUM, CORC)
- What ‘counts’ as change (Hill, Bloom, Black, & Lipsey, 2008)?
- *Normative expectations for growth over time?*
- *Policy-relevant gaps by demographic group or school performance?*
- *Effect size results from past research for similar interventions and target populations?*

However:

- Patchy data available, and not easily accessible (though changing – e.g Tableau)
- Potential issue – league tabling?
- *everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted” (Cameron, 1963, p.13).*

Individual differences

- Dominance of RCT Design (Torgerson & Torgerson, 2001).
- Subgroups are normally examined (e.g. FSM)

However – This is *variable* centred, not *person* centred modelling



Where next?

- Programmes -> practices
- Better, more accessible resources for *interpreting* assessments
- More sophisticated approaches in examining differential uptake of intervention work
- Continuing rise in accountability and responsibility for schools (awaiting new Ofsted framework)

Resources

Terminology:

<https://easel.gse.harvard.edu/taxonomy-project>

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Evaluation/SPECTRUM/EEF_SPECTRUM_Guidance_Document_Conceptual_mapping.pdf

UK based 'what works' databases:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-tool-kit>

<https://www.eif.org.uk/resources>

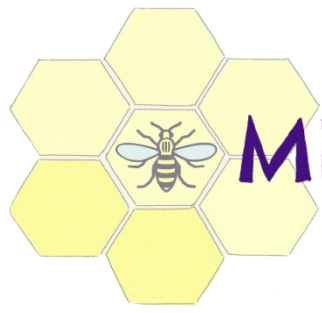
Measure databases

<http://spectrum-review.info/>

<https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/core-measurement-tools/>

Programmes to practices (due end of summer):

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/>



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Any questions?

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