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Teachers' Knowledge and Opinion of Their Own Classes with High or Low Students' Attitudes of Wellbeing

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The teacher as a socializing agent with competence to promote social goals is not mentioned among students of education portraying an ideal teacher (1). However, the teacher has great responsibility for teacher-student relationships in classrooms. Also non-verbal behaviours have impact (2). Understanding teacher behaviour encompasses socio-communicative style e.g. a willingness to listen to students. The instructional outcomes including student's interest towards both the teacher and the course content was shown to rely on collective communication behaviours (3). Teachers' social and emotional competences develop supportive relationships and management of the classroom and thereby increasing effectiveness and reducing stress (4). A meta-analysis on learner-centred teacher-students relationships pointed out a number of personal teacher variables. Among the individual teacher characteristics nondirective style, empathy and warmth were associated with student outcomes. The largest association was however related to positive teacher-student relationship (5).

To fully comprehend this aspect the learner's situation becomes of interest. Features of the school and the classrooms may influence student motivation. The assumption was that contextual environmental conditions and lack of motivation were intervened (6). In this sense educators become responsible. According to Baker (7) children need relationships to construct the views about themselves and of the social world all in line with the attachment theory. A positive learning situation balances the conflict between academic press and support.

Through the whole elementary school period relatively little is known about the development of the nature in teacher-student relationship. Academic competence increases during late middle-school. Similarly the student's beliefs, attitudes and motivational sets regarding schooling differentiate. Peer relationships become central for the individual after grade 5 and students' become more engaged in peer acceptance.

Parallel teachers report less positive relationships with boys, including conflicts, than with girls. Individuals at risk of poor school outcomes, who would benefit from closer relationships with a non-familial adult, have the same strong need for peer acceptance. Students with behavioural or learning problems seem more teacher dependent. Across grades, gender, and types of school outcomes students with positive teacher relationship were significantly advantaged compared to affected peers without this (7). Students' perception of the relationship with their teacher was related to how they evaluated their academic work (8). At least four aspects were argued to influence teacher – student relationship. These were: the context of the teacher, the individual student, the peers, and the interpersonal culture of the classroom and the surrounding school (9). For students to manage teacher expectations, interference between feelings of confidence and appreciation within the classroom is substantial. Teacher expectations were thus important but they regarded classroom relationships either as central or superficial. The authors (9) concluded that few studies have examined teachers' perceptions of the interpersonal school climate with effects on outcomes.

The purpose of the present study was to explore teachers' knowledge and opinion of classrooms with either high or low students' attitudes towards wellbeing. The intention was to reveal important characteristics of relational and learning qualities inside differing school environments.

Methodology, Methods, Research Instruments or Sources Used

An investigation of students' self-reports on attitudes to school, teacher and peers included 1540 students from 78 classes in grade 6. The students and their teachers answered questionnaires using a five point scale. The 78 teachers also responded to 45 background questions about themselves, their students and the conditions in classroom and school (10). Before the results were sampled the author observed the quality of social competence of the students of the class and the quality of teacher-student interaction using a 3 point scale. Class means were calculated for each student item. Students' Wellbeing was constructed from 13 student items (Cronbach's α 0.86), Students' Learning from another 14 statements (α 0.77), and finally Students' Judgement of Teacher-Student Relationships from another 10 statements (α 0.92). The teachers knowledge and opinion of their classes with the highest ($n=15$) and the lowest ($n=15$) scores of Students' Wellbeing were compared using independent t-test or Mann-Whitney test. Statistics were calculated using SPSS 19.0. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings

Observed Interaction Teacher-Students correlated with observed Social Competence ($r=0.38$, $p=0.001$). The variable Students' Wellbeing highly correlated to Students' Learning ($r^2=0.65$) and to Students' Judgement of Teacher-Student Relationships ($r^2=0.63$). Considerable variation between schools and between classes was found. Classes with high scorings of Students' Wellbeing (> 50) were compared with those of low scorings (< 45) regarding teachers' opinion of their own class. In classes with high scorings; academic work was characterized by less frequent plenary teaching, more use of computers, higher school work ambitions, boys and girls worked better together, and students took more responsibility for free choice of work. Teachers reported that work conditions were better, the school environment was less messy, the teachers did not wish to switch to another class, were more fond of their class, and had been teaching the class for a longer period of time. In the classes scoring high on Student wellbeing teachers also reported less disturbance between students, fewer peer groups, less bullying among students, and the students seemed less stressed.

The results include both excellent and catastrophic classroom attitudes and relationships. Teachers need awareness of the impact on student outcomes from factors in the context, e.g. relationships and environment.

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