Exploring Individual and Collective Responsibility for Wellbeing through Education Policy in Aotearoa New Zealand

Abstract
The right to be well is universal. Nestled within burgeoning international wellbeing literature, notions vary regarding the distribution of individual and collective responsibility. Holistic education frames the promotion of wellbeing in policy and potential for practice. Ecological systems, Appreciative Inquiry and a model of holistic wellbeing, Te Whare Tapa Whā, underpin this analysis of wellbeing within education policy documents from Aotearoa New Zealand. Text mining software was used to analyse seminal policy documents for wellbeing, identifying concepts, categories and category clusters. Findings provide considerations regarding the conceptualization of wellbeing within education policy as contextualized, relational and nebulous. We argue that it is critical to explore the distribution of responsibility for wellbeing within education policy for the good of all stakeholders.

(1) Objectives/purposes
The 2021 conference theme provokes an exploration of the distribution of responsibility for wellbeing within education policy. We examine how wellbeing of stakeholder groups is woven across various policy documents. We argue that it is critical to explore individual and collective responsibility for wellbeing within educational settings of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Wellbeing is a slippery construct and is elusive to define (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008). Theorists investigating wellbeing have elected divergent pathways in seeking a definition, some choosing to focus on psychological wellbeing, others on subjective or experienced wellbeing (Keyes, Shmotkin & Ryff, 2002). Dodge and colleagues (2012) describe wellbeing "as the balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced" (p.213). Yet in public and political arenas, with increasing popularity wellbeing features as a ubiquitous term. The United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have been particularly influential in the focus on wellbeing within policy. In 2015, the UN envisioned a world where there is an assurance of wellbeing, physically, mentally and socially. Their vision and focus heightened global awareness of wellbeing across countries and sectors. The same year the OECD launched a new project: *The Future of Education and Skills 2030*. The foundations and transformative competencies of the project include physical, mental, social and emotional elements of wellbeing (2018). Prompted by international developments, the current government of Aotearoa New Zealand has launched the first-ever 'Wellbeing Budget'.

Theorists agree on several characteristics of wellbeing: it is a construct that is multi-dimensional, complex, and based on 'good'. Capturing the 'good' characteristic of wellbeing, theorists champion 'feeling and functioning well' (Waters, 2011). For the purpose of this piece, we draw on McCallum and Price's (2016) definition of wellbeing because it encapsulates its multidimensional and relational complexity as follows:

> "Wellbeing is diverse and fluid respecting individual, family and community beliefs, values, experiences, culture, opportunities and contexts across time and change. It is something we all aim for, underpinned by positive notions, yet is unique to each of us and provides us with a sense of who we are which needs to be respected" (p.17).

We note that in the literature the terms 'wellness' or 'welfare' are used interchangeably with 'wellbeing' while carrying the same intended meaning (Brasfield, 2015; Pfieffer, 2017), whereas the term 'flourishing' pertains to a high level of wellbeing (Huppert & So, 2011).

(2) Perspectives or theoretical framework
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization states that "solid, coherent policies and plans are the bedrock on which to build sustainable education systems, achieve educational development

goals and contribute effectively to lifelong learning" (n.d.). As Foucault notes, "every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it" (1972, p.227). Ogza builds on this notion adding that social and economic influences also impact education policy (2000). Furthermore from a historical perspective, policy can be viewed as a discourse reflecting a variety of influences and ideas over time (Hard, Lee & Dockett, 2018). Thus education policy can be conceptualised as a narrative (Prior, Hughes & Peckham, 2012) within political, social, economic and historical contexts, illustrating the power and potential of policy for public good.

The complexity of unpacking the interwoven nature of wellbeing across multi-layers and multiple contexts prompted the adoption of a multi-theoretical approach (Tobin & Ritchie, 2012). We draw on three theoretical frameworks to inform this analysis of education policy: ecological systems, appreciative inquiry and Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1994). Conceptualizing education policy research through an ecology metaphor (Weaver-Hightower, 2008) recognises the complexity and messiness of the policy process. Taking each policy as an ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that is "complex, interdependent, and intensely political" (Weaver-Hightower, 2008, p. 154) highlights the multiple dynamics arising from stakeholder collaboration for a policy issue such as wellbeing.

Appreciative Inquiry is the second theoretical underpinning for this piece. Developed for the business sector by David Cooperider in 1986, Appreciative Inquiry provides a philosophy that focuses on potential, involvement and cooperation to create positive sustainable thinking and change. Appreciative Inquiry provides a strengths-based approach to the policy analysis, seeking explanations and possibilities to explore in maximising potential.

The political imperative arising out of the bicultural setting of Aotearoa New Zealand, under the obligations of the Treaty of Waitangi partnership, calls for both Māori (indigenous) and Non-Māori knowledge to inform policy (Durie, 2011). In response to this policy setting, the third theoretical framework is a Māori model of hauora (holistic wellbeing), Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie,1994). Adopted within New Zealand health and education sectors, the model is a house with four walls, each representing a dimension of hauora: taha tinana (physical), taha hinengaro (mental and emotional), taha whānau (social) and taha wairua (spiritual). Each interdependent dimension or wall requires development to metaphorically hold up the roof. Hauora provides a holistic lens and multi-dimensional approach for wellbeing conceptualisation in this paper.

(3) Method, techniques or modes of inquiry

One of the key questions in public policy studies is when or under what circumstances is there a receptiveness towards new (reform) ideas (Kingdon, 2003). A term frequently used, 'policy window' points to the temporal dimension of policy formation, and concerns identifying the catalytic moment for policy change. In comparative education policy research "we implicitly draw from a window of opportunity concept to explain the likelihood of cross-national policy borrowing" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006, p.670).

Considering policy as narrative (Prior, Hughes & Peckham, 2012), the notion of wellbeing spans fifteen policy documents related to education. To do this we generated an initial list of concepts using automated text mining techniques through the application of IBM SPSS Modeler (2018). This text mining programme was used to address two common issues in document analysis: researcher bias in the qualitative analysis process; and also examination of large sets of text data.

Five thousand concepts were initially identified from word frequency weightings inclusive of elementary word associations following Prior's (2014) content analysis that distinguish the most important concepts across the documents. Wellbeing, as the third most common concept across documents, was mapped on a concept cluster showing co-occurrent links between textual elements. Text mining algorithms applied rules of selection and analysis to show the policy narrative of wellbeing told across these documents. Next the relative occurrence of key concepts in groups of documents was tracked. Groupings were based on the intended functions of documents.

(4) Data sources or evidence

Documents selected met the following inclusion criteria: generated in Aotearoa New Zealand; intended for use in the education sector; released within the last twenty years; has legal status and/or referenced to an official document and included reference to the construct of wellbeing. In performing this analysis, we firstly acknowledge the diverse time periods, purposes and organisational influences across the collection, and the purposeful mindfulness of these factors for the duration of the process.

The data sources included 15 policy documents: three curricula (MOE, 1999; 2007; 2017); system evaluation and improvement (ERO, 2013; 2015a; 2015b; 2016); professional standards (TCANZ, 2017; 2018; NZCER, 2018); legal and regulatory frameworks (MOE 2016; 2017); and leadership guidelines (MOE, 2008; 2010; 2012).

(5) Results and Conclusions

Each of the following three category clusters illustrates how wellbeing emerges as a conceptualization across education policy documents. Taking an appreciative approach, we highlight strong examples of nuanced wellbeing for each category cluster.

1. Wellbeing as contextualised

The text analysis established a category cluster that emphasised stakeholder groups. Relative link strength within the cluster indicated ‘students’, ‘leaders’ and ‘community’ strongly connected with wellbeing, whereas ‘teachers’ and ‘educators’ had the lowest levels of co-occurrence. The New Zealand Curriculum states, "learning is inseparable from its social and cultural context" (MOE, 2007, p.34). Conceptualizing wellbeing as diverse, situated and contextualised within an ecological frame (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) enables a consideration of coherence and alignment within and across policy documents.

In terms of wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand, policy documents draw on bicultural perspectives that are holistically and culturally contextualised. The challenge is to see the possiblities of indigenous knowledge while attending to potential issues of appropriation through a de-contextual and tokenistic interpretation of Māori constructs (McKinley, 2005). Thus wellbeing concepts in these policy documents lacked coherence across ecological strata.

2. Wellbeing as relational and interdependent

The analysis found relative link strength indicating ‘practice’ and ‘relationships’ as highest levels of co-occurrence with ‘wellbeing’ across policy documents. Wellbeing as a relational practice was identified through the analysis, featuring in a dialectic sense that emphasises that both groups and individuals need to be seen as a single entity “where each contains the other and cannot exist separately” (Alexakos, 2015, p.15). Stepping beyond wellbeing promotion for stakeholders within ecological strata, some documents described a relational interdependence of wellbeing between and across strata. Firstly, wellbeing as highly relational was found within *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum (2017), which explicitly states “the wellbeing of each child is interdependent with the wellbeing of their kaiako(educators), parents and whānau(family)” (p.20). A second nuanced example was *Tū Rangatira: Māori-medium educational leadership* (2010), where promoting wellbeing for learners, staff and whānau (family) was at the core of effective leadership practice. Interdependence of wellbeing between stakeholders was nuanced within contextual settings.

3. Wellbeing as a social and cultural mirage

As a nebulous social and cultural construct, wellbeing is found across the policy documents as a mirage. Ereaut & Whiting (2008) claim, “wellbeing acts like a cultural mirage: it looks like a solid construct, but when we approach it, it fragments or disappears” (p.5). Consequently, these authors argue for an approach to cater for multiple discourses of wellbeing. Within the bicultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand, multiple and competing discourses exist across policy documents. The single conceptualisation of wellbeing adopted in

these policy documents was Durie's (1994) Te Whare Tapa Whā, which only featured in three curricula and two system evaluation and improvement pieces. The remaining two-thirds of the documents were void of any explanation of wellbeing, even if it was a document focus. A range of wellbeing depth occurred across documents, from nuanced approaches in the key competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum (2007) to explicit approaches in Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum (1999).

(6) Significance of the work

In considering individual and collective responsibility for wellbeing within education policy, our analysis revealed the misalignment of wellbeing concepts across ecological strata, highlighting not only the complexity and slippery notion of wellbeing, but also the complexity of the policy process itself. However, examining policy from an ecological and an appreciative perspective provides opportunities to see power and responsibilities within the complexities. Additionally, policy documents written in partnership with Māori champion wellbeing as interdependent and contextualised.

When creating ecological policy, the impact of development on differing scales, from micro to macro levels requires consideration. Within Aotearoa New Zealand education policy, wellbeing as a concept has been almost exclusively focused on students. Although our education system appropriately places student learning and wellbeing at the core, policy also needs to reflect the ecological complexities of wellbeing. When interdependently embedded in policy across ecological strata, wellbeing provides responsibilities and possibilities for deliberate and ecological connections. Incorporating diversity within wellbeing conceptualisation provides opportunities for researchers and stakeholders to embrace individual and collective responsibility for wellbeing within educational settings of Aotearoa New Zealand.

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