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Ranatunga, Jacqueline B. (2024) *Cultivating wellbeing dispositions in Australian primary education: A qualitative mixed-methods arts-based case study*. PhD Thesis, James Cook University.

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<https://doi.org/10.25903/qpt4%2Drd96>

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Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions in Australian Primary Education: A Qualitative

Mixed-Methods Arts-Based Case Study

Submitted by

Jacqueline B. Ranatunga

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts, Society and Education

James Cook University Australia

-April 2024-

Author ORCID iDs (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5886-8422>)

Contact information (jacqueline.ranatunga@my.jcu.edu.au)



Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Australian lands where I live, learn, and work. I pay my respects to Elders past, present, and emerging and recognise Indigenous peoples' profound and enduring connection to these lands. I honour the unique cultures, histories, and ongoing contributions to the wellbeing of their communities and our shared society.

I express my sincere and deepest gratitude to the participants in this study. Your contributions were not just data but the heart and soul of this research. Your willingness to share your time and inner world with me has been invaluable. Thank you for entrusting me to communicate your stories about wellbeing and create new knowledge.

I sincerely thank my Primary Advisor, Professor Ryan Daniel, for his belief in me and my work. Your mentorship, gentle guidance, unwavering support, and positive encouragement have shaped this research. I appreciate all my advisors, past and present [Associate Professor Reesa Sorin, Associate Professor Paul Pagliano, Professor Margaret-Anne Carter and Associate Professor Snowy Evens], for their supervision and feedback at different stages of my research journey. Your expertise broadened and strengthened my perspectives, challenged my thinking, and enriched my work. I am deeply grateful to my wellbeing counsellor, Judy Warner, who helped me through the gloomy days and reminded me about sunshine, self-worth and flourishing.

I am deeply grateful to my colleagues and peers, whose friendship, encouragement, and unwavering belief in me have been a constant source of strength throughout this journey. Your support and camaraderie have made this research not just a solitary pursuit but a shared endeavour. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the College of Arts, Society and Education, The Graduate Research School, Alissa McCormick, and Kerry Knight. I am also fortunate to have

had the guidance and support of Associate Professor Theresa Petray and Associate Professor Louisa Tomas Engel, whose belief in my potential has been instrumental to my academic growth. I am indebted to James Cook University and the Commonwealth-Supported Research Stipend for the resources and support that made my doctoral studies and research possible.

I am deeply grateful to my son, Tyrone Ranatunga, for his invaluable expertise in transforming numerous sketches and diagrams into professional artifacts, figures, and tables. Your meticulous work has enhanced the quality of my thesis. To my daughters, Cassandra Ranatunga Cooray and Samantha Leaso, thank you for your time and effort in reading sections of my thesis and for your constant encouragement. I am also grateful to my husband, Shiran Ranatunga, for his unwavering support. To my mother, Aloma Martil, and all my family and friends, your stories, photos, artefacts, and writing contributions have enriched my thesis. Your love, patience, and understanding have been my pillars of strength. I also extend my gratitude to all those whose names may not appear here but have contributed, in various ways, to my academic and personal growth during this pursuit of knowledge. I appreciate your support and understanding in this academic journey.

I dedicate this thesis to my father, Brian Jansz, and grandmothers, Carman Jansz, Alma Anthonisz, and Wyoming (Gerreyn) Henricus, who, in their living years, helped me develop the gifts of self-belief, positive mindset, inner strength, courage, perseverance, and resilience.

Abstract

The significance of wellbeing in education for learners and educators is increasingly acknowledged. Existing research highlights low levels of wellbeing among these groups, with the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbating the situation. Reports indicate that at least one in seven (13.9%) young people (Lawrence et al., 2015; 2023) and more than half (52%) of Australian teachers (Black Dog Institute, 2023) were assessed or reported as experiencing mental health challenges. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) highlights the importance of additional research on children's wellbeing. More data on how children perceive their school experiences for population-level monitoring is crucial, and the existing data needs to be updated (2023). The literature on children and arts-based research (ABR) is also limited, revealing critical gaps in this crucial learning area (the Arts).

Equally crucial is the wellbeing of educators, which influences their life satisfaction, career longevity, and, by extension, the overall wellbeing within the classroom. Research indicates that personal and workload pressure, stress, burnout, and a lack of support for educators challenge their wellbeing. The Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leadership (AITSL) highlights the demanding nature of teaching and the need for educator support. In a recent press release, the Black Dog Institute (2023) indicated that nearly half (46.8%) of Australia's teachers were considering leaving the profession. Globally, there is a reported shortage of educators, as they exit the profession prematurely. Emotionally exhausted educators can influence adverse classroom climate, further impacting overall wellbeing.

The current state of wellbeing among educators and learners underscores the urgent need for focused attention and targeted interventions in wellbeing education. Recognising the pivotal role of positive educators and student wellbeing as a catalyst for successful learning highlights its

importance in fostering engagement, academic achievement, and overall life satisfaction. In light of this, the study investigates the multifaceted nature of educational wellbeing and effective ways to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. This research aims to answer the following crucial questions:

What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education?

How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom?

With its emergent design within a transformative paradigm, this qualitative mixed-method arts-based case study is poised to unveil insights that will inform innovative approaches to wellbeing education. The qualitative mixed methods employed in this research primarily focus on qualitative data, utilising thematic analysis and mixing and supplementing quantitative data. The reflexivity, crystallisation and triangulation ensured a more layered exploration. The adaptability of the emergent design and the transformative paradigm provides a framework to understand wellbeing in education as a social justice and human rights concern, making this study a unique and valuable addition to the field. The potential impact of this research on education and wellbeing is significant, promising to inspire and inform innovative approaches to wellbeing education.

The research journey unfolds in three distinct phases, commencing with an autoethnographic introspection of the researcher's history and background. This initial exploration offers a personal lens to comprehend the complexities, source of nourishment and transformation (the wellspring) of wellbeing in education. The data from Phase One underscored the requirement to develop a Wellbeing Literacy Framework encompassing *Nature, Nurture, Culture, and Discourse*. This introspective first phase sets the stage for the subsequent phases. It provides a transparent and unique perspective on the researcher's motivations and connections to this study, laying a solid foundation for the research process.

Expanding beyond personal introspection, in Phases Two and Three, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process is utilised with 32 educators and six class groups of 126 primary students across five-year levels (1-5). The initial focus was to appreciate the diverse perspectives of educators and learners to understand their source of nourishment and transformation (the wellspring) for educational wellbeing. The framework enhanced the wellbeing literacy and understanding (why wellbeing is challenging education) of the researcher, educator, and learner participants. This study embraces and elaborates on MMETTAS Pedagogy (Mindfulness, Material Engagement Theory [MET], The Arts, and Story) as a comprehensive, innovative approach to tackling the complexity of wellbeing. Together, the Wellbeing Literacy Framework and MMETTAS Pedagogy serve to understand, sustain, and nurture body-mind connections and cultivate positive expressions of wellbeing dispositions in education.

The data from all three phases span a variety of methods, including autoethnography, reflections, observations, surveys, audio-recorded focus groups (formal discussions), yarning circles (informal discussions) and innovative wellbeing explorations through MMETTAS-pedagogy-based activities and the creation of intricate artefacts. The creative, multifaceted exploration deepens and provides a comprehensive understanding of the diverse factors influencing wellbeing within the primary education context. Understanding the holistic perspective and complex interplay between wellbeing and education paves the way for targeted and innovative interventions.

The thematic analysis served as a flexible and valuable method to explore the complex phenomena in educational wellbeing. The findings from this research contribute to the field of education and wellbeing by illuminating specific enablers (being grateful, feeling safe, finding contentment and work-life balance, moving to wellbeing beyond happiness, focusing on

wholeness, holistic health), impactors (the blame game, the fear factor) and facilitators (being mindful, practising what they preached, managing the time factor, being, belonging and becoming) required to achieve a state of equilibrium in primary school wellbeing. By understanding *Nature* and *Nurture*, creating *Culture* and *Discourse*, addressing challenges (impactors) and revealing enablers and facilitators, this study contributes to holistic, innovative wellbeing education.

The implications of this study extend far beyond its immediate context, offering insights that enhance our understanding of the intricate dynamics involved in primary educational wellbeing. By providing a comprehensive and innovative approach, this research contributes to an enlightened and inclusive understanding of the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions in education, enhancing the lives of learners and educators. This study sets the stage for ongoing research that includes understanding *Nature*, *Nurture*, *Culture*, and *Discourse* to create innovative pedagogy and nurture supportive environments within the primary education wellbeing landscapes.

Keywords: wellbeing, educators, students, primary education, cultivating, dispositions, Arts, MMETTAS, pedagogy.

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List of Abbreviations

ABR -Arts-Based Research

ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics

ABC – Australian Broadcasting Corporation

ACARA – Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

ACECQA – Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority

ACER – Australian Council of Educational Research

ACU – Australian Catholic University

AEDC – Australian Early Developmental Census

AGDE – Australian Government Department of Education

APPA – Australian Primary Principals Association

ARACY – The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

AIHW – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

AIPC – Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors

AITSL – Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

APA – American Psychology Association

BCE – Brisbane Catholic Education

CASEL - Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

CBT – Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

CESE – Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

DECS – Department of Education and Child Development

DECSSA – Department of Education and Children’s Services South Australia

DET – Department of Education and Training

DEEWR - Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

ECA - Early Childhood Australia

ESA– Education Services Australia

EYLF – Early Years Framework

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GNH – Gross National Happiness Index

HASS – Humanities and Social Sciences

HPE – Health and Physical Education

HREC – Human Research Ethics Committee

ICSEA – Index of Community Socio-Education Advantage

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

IDT – Interactive Drawing Therapy

IQ – Intelligence Quotient

JCU – The James Cook University

LBOTE – Language Background Other Than English

MCEETYA – Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

MET – Material Engagement Theory

MIT – Multiple Intelligence Theory

MMETTAS – Mindfulness, Metta, MET, The Arts, Story

NAPLAN – National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy

NCEC – The National Catholic Education Commission

NCES – National Centre for Education Statistics

NIMH - The National Institute on Mental Health

NMHC – National Mental Health Commission

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PAR – Participatory Action Research

PERMA – Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment

QCAA – Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

RT – Reality Therapy

SDQ – Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

SEL – Social and Emotional Learning

SEW – Social and Emotional Wellbeing

SWB – Subjective wellbeing

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

UPR – Unconditional Positive Regard

WAHPSA – Western Australian Health Promoting Schools Association

WHO – World Health Organisation

ZPD – Zone of Proximal Development

Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions in Australian Primary Education: A Qualitative Mixed-Methods Arts-Based Case Study

Chapter One - The Beginning: Seeking to Cultivate Wellbeing Dispositions

Wellbeing is “ the balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced” (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230).

Overview and Structure (Chapter One)

At the heart of primary education resides a pivotal opportunity to cultivate a future where every educator and every child flourishes. Primary means earliest or chief importance; as the word implies, it is the main or first half of education children are expected to experience. Cultivating refers to intentional and systematic nurturing or fostering. Flourishing is a state of optimal functioning with a sense of fulfilment and thriving. In *The Art of Wellbeing*, Meredith Gaston states, “Wellbeing is a joyous and holistic experience of vitality in which we feel energised, comfortable, connected and inspired...” (2017, p. 16). The central term ‘well-being’ in this thesis is fused with the single word ‘wellbeing’ to convey a sense of wholeness and holistic health.

The definitions and measures of wellbeing are currently not universally agreed upon. This thesis chapter commences with the quote referring to wellbeing as a state of equilibrium influenced by resources and challenges (Dodge et al., 2012). This research adopts Rachel Dodge and colleagues' definition of wellbeing, focusing on the state of equilibrium. Wellbeing is a flourishing, holistic state balanced by external and internal life events, experiences and

challenges. Experiencing wellbeing is viewed as a state of feeling energised, connected, inspired and joyful.

Wellbeing in education encompasses the educators, the learners, and the environment. The terms teacher and educator, student, and learner will be used interchangeably in this thesis, and all significant terms will be explained and defined as they are mentioned. Throughout this thesis, I shift between the first-person and third-person perspectives. I employ this stylistic approach to highlight my autoethnographic contributions and reflections while upholding an academic tone. Creativity and personal reflection are integral to this research. Arts-based research (ABR) and autoethnography emphasise creative, expressive, and reflective methods. Furthermore, this stylistic writing process provides clarity and context for my insights and contributes to the overall understanding of the education and research community.

Introspection is an important part of this study, and continuous reflection on the ethical decision-making process is vital for this exploration. Self-awareness is essential to understanding others and their experiences. Therefore, this research prioritises internal exploration alongside external learning experiences, aiming to cultivate wellbeing dispositions in education by first understanding the researcher and then the participants.

The first chapter embarks on a journey of exploration and articulation, delving into the research and shedding light on the researcher cultivating wellbeing dispositions. The focus is on understanding and exploring the challenges and enabling factors influencing wellbeing in primary education. A unique three-phase approach focuses on innovative methods to understand the research topic comprehensively. The methodology involves a qualitative mixed-methods arts-based case study in which the research literature is embedded into the story.

Given the abundance of research on wellbeing and the diverse theoretical perspectives surrounding this topic, this study takes a unique arts-based approach, unfolding in three distinct phases, each reported separately. The first phase commences with exploring the researcher's background and personal narrative, providing a foundation for understanding wellbeing. This unique approach not only engages the reader but also provides a fresh perspective, as it allows for a more personal and introspective understanding of the topic, potentially leading to more nuanced insights not commonly found in traditional research.

In Phase One, autoethnographic exploration reflects on my history and background, providing a personal lens to understand the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions. This phase offers an intimate glimpse into the researcher behind this study—myself. The exploration begins in this chapter and continues in Chapter Four. It involves personal reflections, historical recounts, information from informal discussions with family and friends, and stories and poems from personal experiences. Arts-based research (ABR) backs these artistic encounters and enhances the research process, providing relatable and unique perspectives.

In Phase Two, Participatory Action Research (PAR) is conducted with 32 educators and their role in cultivating wellbeing dispositions. This phase involves surveys, observations, a series of workshop sessions inclusive of reflections, six audio-recorded focus group discussions, yarning circles, and MMETTAS-based (Mindfulness, Material Engagement Theory [MET], The Arts, Story) activities with teachers and other educational staff (school officers, administration).

In Phase Three, PAR involves six educators and six class groups of 126 learners from five-year levels (1-5), exploring their experiences cultivating wellbeing dispositions. This phase engages observations, surveys, workshop sessions involving reflections, two audio-recorded

focus group discussions, yarning circles, and MMETTAS-based activities with class groups of students. The PAR approach, which emphasises collaboration and active involvement of all stakeholders, is particularly valuable in this study as it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of educators' and learners' experiences and perspectives. The study aims to provide a thorough and cohesive narrative, explaining developments as the research design progresses. The outcomes and findings of these phases are expected to contribute to understanding wellbeing in primary education and inform future interventions.

The study's goals and objectives are explained, highlighting the intended outcomes and significance of the research within the broader academic and practical context. This chapter culminates with a comprehensive summary, encapsulating the key points discussed and providing an overview of the thesis. It sets the stage for the subsequent chapters, guiding the reader on a captivating journey of exploration and discovery, cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

Research Focus and Question

This research explores wellbeing in primary education, specifically focusing on cultivating wellbeing dispositions with educators and learners. Wellbeing, a holistic concept influenced by many factors, is perceived as having a vital connection to learning and education. Student wellbeing is associated with academic achievement and is essential in preventing social and emotional challenges (Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE], 2018; 2023; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2018; 2022; 2023). The currently available data shows that at least one in seven young people are experiencing mental health challenges, and mental health challenges are on the rise (Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care [AGDH], 2021; Lawrence et al., 2015; 2023; Young Minds, 2016).

Similarly, stress, anxiety, workload pressure and burnout-related challenges influence educator wellbeing (Bintliff, 2020; Dabrowski, 2020; Ferdig et al., 2020; Lee, 2020; Lemon, 2021; Sudibjo & Manihuruk, 2022). Educators, as the key players in the educational system, play a pivotal role in supporting student wellbeing. This role is not only crucial but also outlined explicitly in policy documents, highlighting the recognition of the importance of educator wellbeing in the overall wellbeing of the educational community (Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care [AGDH], 2021; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2017; 2022). There has been an increasing focus on wellbeing in educational settings over the past two decades.

The state of wellbeing among educators and learners has continued to deteriorate and intensify by the recent natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic (AIHW, 2023; AITSL, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the mental health of children and adults alike. Substantial deterioration of wellbeing was noted, particularly during lockdowns and among those with pre-existing conditions or financial distress. Surveys conducted with parents and caregivers in 2020 and 2021 reported that 35-61% observed negative effects on their children's mental health (Biddle et al., 2021; Renshaw & Seriamlu, 2021; The Royal Children's Hospital National Child Health Poll [RCHpoll], 2021).

The most recent research highlights the urgent need to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for educators and learners; however, several major gaps still need to be addressed in our understanding of educational wellbeing. According to many scholars, wellbeing research is expanding, yet uncertainty remains about defining wellbeing, understanding (determinants), and evaluating wellbeing (Dodge et al., 2012; Ruggeri et al., 2020; Sabe et al., 2022). As Chapter Two highlights, the literature review exposes critical gaps in educational wellbeing among

learners and educators. These gaps specifically relate to the limited investment in wellbeing research with educators and young people (primary-age students) and the limited studies on young people and the Arts.

The wellbeing of individuals and communities can be affected by several internal and external factors, such as personal characteristics, family, work, school, community, and environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; National Mental Health Commission [NMHC], 2024; Pankhania et al., 2018). The conversion of research into practice, equity, cultural sensitivity, and sustainability (long-term impact) of available programs and interventions are other educational wellbeing-related challenges that demand immediate attention. Therefore, understanding the unique dynamics of wellbeing in educational settings is essential to this research.

Acknowledging the distinctive nature of primary educational wellbeing, this study aims to unearth the factors (challenges) that impact the wellbeing of both educators and learners. The focus is also on identifying facilitators and enabling factors within education. Thus, the research questions were framed as follows: What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education? How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom? By concentrating on the specific context, insights can inform targeted interventions, fostering a positive and conducive atmosphere for teaching, learning and development. The study aims to contribute to this expanding field and provide valuable insights for improving primary educational wellbeing. This research focuses on cultivating wellbeing dispositions among educators and learners. Next, I will elaborate on and discuss what cultivating wellbeing dispositions in education means to this research.

Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions

Cultivating means to improve or prepare. This term is used widely in many fields, especially education and positive psychology literature. For example, Martin Seligman (2002) discusses the three dimensions that can be cultivated to achieve happiness (a pleasant, good, and meaningful life). Daniel Goleman and Richard Davidson (2012) examine cultivating emotional skills, and Andrew Villamil and colleagues (2019) discuss the cultivation of wellbeing through three pillars of mind training. These are focused attention, open awareness, and kind intention.

Wellbeing and mental health are often used interchangeably. Mental health is commonly used to refer to various mental illnesses and disorders. Wellbeing encompasses mental health and is shaped by interpersonal (occurring between people) and intrapersonal (occurring within the individual) influences (AITSL, 2017, 2022), positive emotions, life satisfaction, a sense of purpose, and social connection (Bhutoria & Hooja, 2018; Seligman, 2011). Wellbeing refers to a balance between resources and challenges, while dispositions are described as the tendency to behave in a particular manner. Cultivating wellbeing dispositions, therefore, is articulated as an individual's undertaking to nurture and develop healthy tendencies to balance their resource pool with the challenges they face. This balancing process involves a personal performance within a collective awareness. An individual's challenges and resources combine to produce an enactment within the broader sociocultural community context in which that individual finds themselves (Carter & Andersen, 2019a; McCallum, 2023; McCallum & Price, 2016).

For Ron Ritchhart (2002), dispositions are “patterns of behaviours, thinking, and interactions” (2002, p. 9). These form in various situations over an extended period and possess a transformation that actively shapes our experiences. Dispositions bring balance and nurture

individuals' lives, thereby sustaining wellbeing. Dispositions are passive traits and active agents that can shape and redefine experiences (Costa & Kallick, 2009). When reflecting on personality, dispositions are given a more formal definition where they are thought of as: “any hypothesised organisation of mental and physical aspects of a person, which is expressed as a stable, consistent tendency to exhibit particular patterns of behaviour in a broad range of circumstances” (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 208).

John Dewey (1916; 1934) discusses dispositions in his work on education. Dewey (1916) believes education should focus on developing dispositions or habits of mind that enable individuals to engage actively and responsibly in democratic societies. He emphasises cultivating curiosity, open-mindedness, critical thinking, problem-solving and reflection. These dispositions are beneficial for individual wellbeing and crucial for the functioning and progress of democratic societies, highlighting the societal influence on the development of dispositions.

The term “disposition” is adopted by the Australian Department of Education and Training (DET) to refer to those: “enduring habits of mind and actions, and tendencies to respond in characteristic ways to situations” (2019, p. 1). These are nominated as essential characteristics for an individual to maintain “an optimistic outlook, being willing to persevere, and approaching new experiences with confidence” (DET, 2019, p. 1).

Various models and frameworks identify wellbeing skills, components, strengths, characteristics, and dispositions. Davidson (2016) discusses four key constituents of wellbeing (resilience, outlook, attention, generosity), stating that these elements exhibit plasticity and can be strengthened with repetition. The PERMA model, proposed by Seligman (2011), includes Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement, all closely related to

dispositions. Peterson and Seligman (2018) identify character strengths such as grit, gratitude, kindness, and empathy. Siegel (2012; 2017; 2022) introduces the concept of mindsight as a frame of mind or spirit skill. Practising skills of wellbeing and cultivating positive interactions and experiences can shape and develop positive dispositions (Rimm-Kaufman & Hulleman, 2015; Waters & Loton, 2019). The search for wellbeing in education focuses on cultivating a range of wellbeing skills, mental states, and dispositions. Several are elaborated on next.

Resilience is adapting and recovering from adversities, challenges, or life stressors. It is a dynamic process that can be developed and strengthened through personal characteristics, social support, problem-solving skills, positive emotions, and cognitive flexibility. Resilience involves coping effectively with difficult situations, maintaining mental and emotional wellbeing, and functioning and thriving despite hardships (Lee et al., 2018; Mansfield, 2021; Mansfield et al., 2016; Masten, 2018; Osório et al., 2017; Reid, 2016; Seligman, 2011). Resilience is developed by creating supportive environments, learning skills to manage stress, and encouraging a growth mindset.

- o **Social and emotional competencies** are self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills (Durlak et al., 2011). The significance of these competencies in promoting the cultivation of wellbeing and developing positive mental and emotional wellbeing is discussed extensively in the research (Carter, 2016; McCallum & Price, 2016; McCallum et al., 2017; Noble & McGrath, 2015).
- o **Emotional regulation** refers to effectively recognising, understanding, and managing emotions. It is crucial in promoting overall wellbeing by influencing how individuals navigate and respond to life situations (Gross, 2015; Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010;

Sheppes et al., 2015; Troy et al., 2010). Emotional regulation contributes to effective teaching and learning and the overall classroom climate.

- o **Mindsight** is a concept coined by Siegel (2017). It is the cognitive ability to perceive and comprehend the inner world of oneself and others, encompassing thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Developing mindsight involves cultivating awareness and insight into individuals' mental and emotional states, promoting empathy, compassion, and meaningful connection (Siegel, 2012; 2017; 2022). Social-emotional skills, mindfulness, and creative activities promote self-awareness, empathy, and mindsight.
- o **Grit** is a concept popularised by Duckworth (2016) and refers to a personality trait characterised by perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Individuals with grit demonstrate sustained effort, resilience, and the ability to overcome obstacles to achieve their objectives (Duckworth, 2016; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Grit is considered a wellbeing disposition as it contributes to positive outcomes in various domains, including education, career success, and personal development.
- o **Gratitude** is the disposition to appreciate and be thankful for the positive aspects of one's life. It is associated with various benefits for wellbeing, including improved relationships, developing strong social connections, enhanced positive emotions, promoting mental health, and enhanced physical health (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Calkins et al., 2017; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Seligman et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2010). For instance, in an educational setting, cultivating a disposition of gratitude can enhance students' relationships with their peers and teachers, promote a positive classroom environment, and improve overall wellbeing.

- o **Kindness** is a pro-social behaviour characterised by compassion, empathy, and benevolence towards others (Nelson et al., 2016). It involves genuine concern for the wellbeing and happiness of others, often expressed through acts of generosity, support, and understanding (2016). Kindness is considered a disposition of wellbeing as it has been found to positively affect both the giver and the recipient, promoting overall psychological wellbeing and positive social relationships.
- o **Empathy** involves the ability to understand and share the feelings and perspectives of others, demonstrate compassion, and respond with care and support (Abramson, 2021; Davis, 1983; Decety & Ickes, 2011; Klimecki et al., 2016). Practising empathy enhances social interactions and communication, fosters a sense of connection, strengthens interpersonal relationships, and builds positive relationships (Davis, 1983; Decety & Ickes, 2011). Empathy is linked to prosocial behaviours, such as helping others, engaging in acts of kindness and volunteering, which contribute to a sense of connectedness and belonging (Decety & Ickes, 2011; Klimecki et al., 2016). Empathy influences personal wellbeing and satisfaction, promoting psychological and emotional wellbeing.
- o **Mindfulness** is the ability to be present in the moment and focus on one's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings, and it has been recognised as a valuable wellbeing skill (Ackerman, 2019; Allen et al., 2021; Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2020; 2003; Shapiro et al., 2007). Mindfulness, a powerful tool, has been discussed in SEL and positive psychology as an effective intervention to promote mental health and wellbeing. It has been shown to reduce stress, improve focus, and increase self-awareness, providing a comforting reassurance in the journey towards wellbeing.

- o **Reflection** is a cognitive process that involves thoughtful consideration and analysis of one's experiences, actions, thoughts, and emotions (Bass et al., 2017; Boud et al., 1985; Dewey, 1938a). It involves stepping back from a situation or event, examining it from different perspectives, and extracting meaning or insight from experience (Moon, 2004; Schön, 1987). Reflection is often used in various fields, such as education, psychology, nursing, and professional development, to enhance learning, personal growth, and professional practice.
- o **Flow**, popularised by Csikszentmihalyi, is a concept that refers to an optimal psychological state in which individuals are fully immersed and deeply engaged in an activity (2014). This state is characterised by energised focus, complete absorption, and enjoyment of the activity (Walker, 2010a). During the flow state, individuals often experience a loss of self-consciousness and a distorted sense of time, feeling completely in the present moment and fully connected to the task at hand (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Koehn et al., 2013).

The above-discussed dispositions, which refer to mental states, inherent qualities, characteristics, or tendencies, can be developed and strengthened through practice and modelling by significant others. In this research, significant others are seen as parents, guardians, family members, educators, mentors, coaches, and other influential figures in an individual's life. Dispositions are natural inclinations or tendencies that influence how an individual or group will respond to various situations, experiences, and challenges. These dispositions can influence how wellbeing is experienced.

The conditions or factors that support and hinder the development of wellbeing dispositions are discussed extensively in the literature (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Lyubomirsky et

al., 2005; Ryff, 2021; Seligman, 2018). According to Carter and Andersen (2019a), educators can work with primary school-aged students to promote positive wellbeing and reduce possible negative impacts. When discussing wellbeing, Carter and Andersen (Carter, 2016; Carter & Andersen, 2019b) draw attention to enablers and impactors. They state that an enabler promotes “a feeling of control to create and maintain life balance”, whereas an impactor detracts from feelings of control (2019, n. p.).

The concepts of enablers and impactors were crucial in my continued reflection and exploration of innovative ideas to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. These concepts highlight the role of factors that either promote a sense of control and life balance or detract from it, respectively (Carter & Andersen, 2019a). A mixed-method arts-based exploration was important in delving into the multifaceted landscape of impactors and enablers influencing wellbeing. To find answers to the research question, identifying the factors and capturing the depth and richness of individual experiences was necessary to understand the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions.

Human development and learning occur within a sociocultural, political, community, and historical context (Immordino-Yang et al., 2019; Miller P. H., 2011; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018; Vygotsky, 1986; 1994). This understanding led me to ponder social and economic inequalities that compromise wellbeing on a global scale. My search for an introspective research method would enable me to understand my wellbeing journey within a broader sociocultural community context. I adopted a tactic of looking inwards and outwards to help me avoid making my story too egocentric (McGirr, 2021). I utilised

autoethnography and ABR to focus on retelling my story, and I will begin this exploration in the next section, Researcher's Background: The Beginning of Phase One.

Researcher's Background: The Beginning of Phase One

My positionality within the communities I grew up in and continue to live and work in will continue to strongly influence who I am as a person and how I view and interpret the world as a researcher. According to Oxford Lexico (n.d.) positionality in sociology is defined as “the occupation or adoption of a particular position about others, usually concerning issues of culture, ethnicity, or gender” (Oxford Lexico, n.d., p. 1). Because individuals change over time, as does their awareness of self, gaining insight into my adoption of positionality has been convoluted. This positionality becomes even more complex when I bring in the concept of my wellbeing.

As a child and young person in the 1970s and early 1980s, my formal school education in Sri Lanka was constrained by civil unrest and devastating life events, particularly the death of my father and societal prejudice associated with being female and from mixed ethnicities. I was classed as a Burgher, which meant I had both Sri Lankan and European ancestry.

Sri Lanka, formally known as Ceylon, is a multicultural country in the Indian Ocean. There is evidence of trade, new settlements, and inhabitants in Sri Lanka from 1500 BC. Throughout its long history, the island became a key trading base. Because of this, before gaining independence in 1948, Sri Lanka endured more than 440 years of European colonisation. Initially, it was colonised by the Portuguese (1505-1658), then the Dutch (1658-1796) and finally the British (1796-1948) (Peiris et al., 2021).

The population of Sri Lanka in the 1970s, when I began school, was approximately 12 million and rose to 15 million in the 1980s (PopulationPyramid.net). The current population is just under the 22 million mark (PopulationPyramid.net). The largest ethnic group, the Sinhalese, comprises about 75% of the population and is predominantly Buddhist (Szczepanski, 2020). The second largest group, the Tamils, comprise about 11% and are predominantly Hindu (Szczepanski, 2020). The remaining 14% comprise minority groups. These are the Malays and Moors (descendants of Arab traders and settlers), who are predominantly Muslim; the Burghers (descendants of European traders and settlers), who are predominantly Christian; the Chetties (descendants of Indian traders and settlers), who are either Christian or Hindu; the Chinese (descendants from Chinese traders and settlers) who are predominantly Buddhist (Müller, 2006; Peebles, 2015; Reeves, 2014) the Africans (descendants of mercenaries, musicians, labourers) who are from various religions (Jayasuriya, 2005) and the Indigenous group who call themselves Wanniyalaeto, meaning forest or nature dwellers, who believe in the transmigration of the human spirit (Blundell, 2012; Rathnayake, 2023).

According to Gamer (1988), Sri Lanka was once the envy of developing countries for its advanced healthcare and education systems; however, a protracted civil war (1983-2009) threw the country into chaos. The origins of the civil war lie in the hostility between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, dating as far back as 1956. This was when The Sinhala (language) Only Act was passed in the parliament to reclaim Sri Lankan identity from past colonisation. All other cultures, ethnicities, religions, and peoples were minimised in recognition and power (Anandakugan, 2020). This caused massive upheaval, with many fleeing Sri Lanka, particularly the Burghers.

I attended school during this turmoil. The education system I encountered in Sri Lanka focused primarily on academia. While I was a capable student and excelled at cognitive and academic tasks, the system needed to provide more support for me to reach my highest potential. If anything, I was battling against hidden barriers that seemed to belittle me. I intuitively felt that educators treated me differently from my Sinhalese peers throughout my schooling. Looking back, I cannot remember any inspiring or empowering stories that relate to my interactions with my school educators – not one! Interestingly, when I asked my old school friends, mainly Malay and Burgher students, they expressed similar opinions about themselves.

This treatment was because I was viewed as different, an influencer and a leader among my peers, trying to take on prominent roles to advance social justice. In my experience, education was about accomplishment and competition, not collaboration. I was repeatedly trying to prove myself, isolated but battling to fit in and to be regarded the same as everyone else. Unfortunately, the goalposts constantly moved to ensure I did not become an accepted member because I was of mixed race. It was like living in quicksand. My wellbeing was not discussed with me, nor was it addressed in ways that I thought acknowledged my situation nor helped me to deal with it effectively. There needed to be more collaboration with me. I should have been regarded as a partner in the learning process.

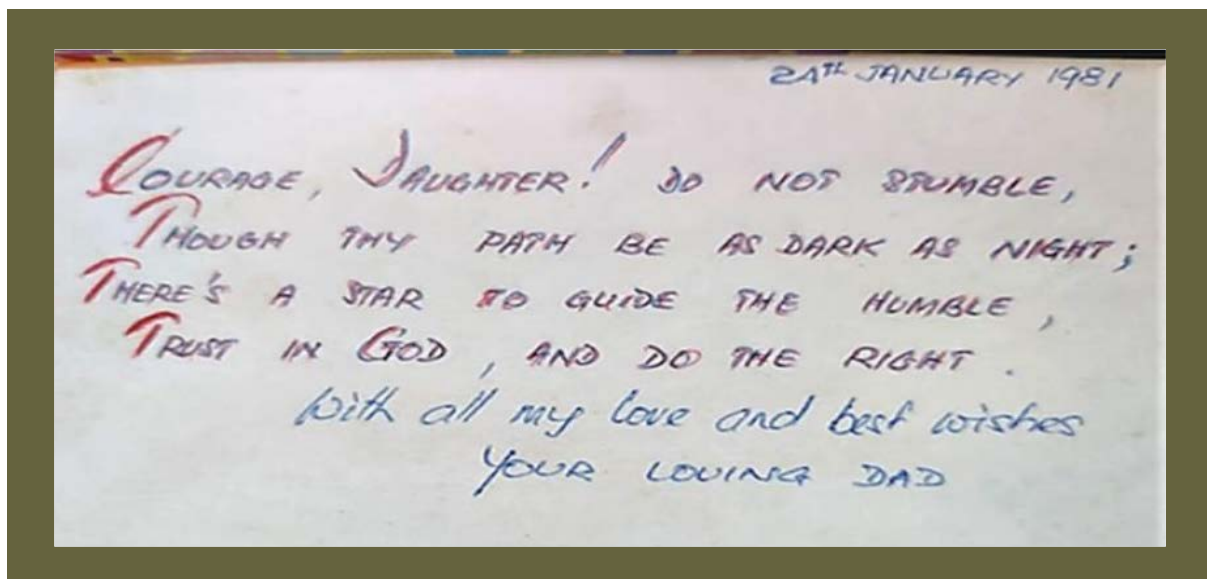
I still have recollections of conversations (I overheard) between Sinhalese educators and Sinhalese parents and students about them needing to do better than the minority ethnic groups (especially me, whom they saw as competition). I recall educators telling me to give others a chance at getting top marks and awards. These statements, whether explicit or implicit, made me feel even more determined to prove myself and never give up.

Nevertheless, at age 15, losing my father, my strength, role model and mentor, made me contemplate defeat. I was becoming weary of the persistent struggle against these seemingly invisible battles. Nowadays, I recognise that what happened to me was part of the hidden curriculum (Anyon, 1980; Giroux, 1983; Jackson, 1968).

Giroux and Penna (1983) use the term hidden curriculum to describe the lessons students learn that are not overtly stated as goals or objectives. There was a pecking order in my school that had nothing to do with my ability. Paradoxically, the hidden curriculum I experienced in my childhood helped shape my understanding of and regard for the importance of wellbeing.

As the oldest child, I became the protector, supporter, and role model when my father died. As such, my goal was to make wellbeing more visible in my life and promote its value and potential to those near and dear to me. This idea was partly inspired by a message my father wrote in one of my memorable books about a year before he died (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



A Note from My Father – poem adapted from (Macleod, 1872, p. 513).

This message is a reaffirmation of the importance of courage, perseverance, and faith during challenging times. It highlights the significance of trusting a guiding force to navigate the uncertainties of life. It also encourages us to remain committed to doing what is right, even when faced with difficulty, as guidance and hope are always available. In my journey, I have always had a deep desire to assist individuals and empower them to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. By using the term “wellbeing dispositions”, I refer to individuals' innate inclinations or tendencies towards achieving wellbeing. Looking back, I now realise that this ingrained attitude made me an advocate for wellbeing, even though I did not fully comprehend this meaning then. I was unwavering in my determination to work through my challenges and impactors.

I migrated to Australia with my mother and sister just before my 17th birthday for a better life. Even though I had relatives living in Australia, life as a migrant was challenging. I missed my culture, old familiar life, extended family, and friends I had left behind. I quickly learned that migrating to a foreign land is a lonely and disorientating experience. My age and prior educational experiences amplified this sense of confused isolation. I was a teenager entering early adulthood. The pressures of life and the decisions and choices I had to make were, at times, overwhelmingly challenging and disenfranchising.

Looking back, on the positive side, these experiences intensified my understanding of the importance of having a supportive community and personal wellbeing. I had a yearning to further my education. I dreamed of becoming a human rights lawyer in the Australian education system. The reality, however, was distinctly different. For pragmatic reasons, I was required to enter the workforce and be obliged to accept whatever job became available. I eventually found

myself working in production, retail and then accounting. I married and left the workforce to have our three children.

I then had an opportunity to move tentatively into the education arena. Becoming a mother was an unexpectedly enlightening and empowering experience. It aroused my interest in wellbeing even more, specifically the wellbeing of young people. When our children started school, I began volunteering at their school and helping as best I could. I assisted students from linguistically diverse backgrounds in reading and writing English. I was bilingual from birth (English and Sinhala). I also learned to read and write a third language at school (Tamil) and then learnt a fourth language in adulthood (Spanish), so I was particularly well suited to this work with migrants. I worked hard to help these students achieve greater agency in their lives. This work, in turn, helped boost my confidence and my sense of agency.

Next, I supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The school personnel regularly remarked on my passion and ability to connect with the students. I was trained and employed to work with students with disabilities, specifically hearing impairment. My work subsequently extended to helping students with learning and behavioural needs, individually and in groups. I was slowly gaining inroads into the Australian education system and developing an interest in the helping professions.

Consequently, I decided to study to become a qualified counsellor. While studying counselling, I naturally gravitated towards arts-based therapies such as drawing therapy, art therapy and sand play therapy. Upon graduation, I set up my private practice, assisting young people and adults to achieve greater personal wellbeing. It was gratifying to see how, once my clients started to feel better about themselves, they became more willing and able to take on new

challenges. As a counsellor through therapy, I observed a process of change and growth (Rogers, 1951; 1961; 1969), indicating wellbeing as a holistic concept.

I also continued to volunteer, particularly at the local school and community centre. Volunteering my services to support those who experienced disadvantage and working in my practice, where clients paid for my services, provided me with deep insights into the elusive nature of wellbeing. I was also focused on the connection between personal wellbeing and learning. My experiences mirror what is stated on the Department of Education and Children's Services South Australia Website (DECSSA): “Children and young people with good wellbeing are more engaged and successful learners” (2022, p. 1).

Meanwhile, I furthered my studies in nutrition and mental health. These studies led me to think of wellbeing as a holistic concept. Perhaps it was my disparate cultural background, my own life experiences, what I was reading at the time, or a combination of all these influences; however, understanding wellbeing as a holistic concept resonated with me and strongly influenced my thoughts about the social world.

The American Heritage Dictionary 5th Edition (2016) defines holistic as: “emphasising the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts” (2016, n. p.). I embraced this definition and immediately thought of human wellbeing as a whole-of-life concept with many interconnecting parts: the historical, physical, biological, social, cultural (Oshry, 2008), and even the environmental aspects. The intellectual (mental, cognitive), emotional, spiritual, moral and aesthetic are other components discussed in the literature (Council of Australian Governments - Education Council, 2020).

The idea of wellbeing as a whole-of-life concept prompted me to refocus on the role of educational wellbeing. I then embarked on a life-changing journey of becoming a primary school teacher. At the time, being a primary school educator would enable me to consider wellbeing from diverse perspectives: learner, parent, counsellor, and educator. The reality proved to be substantially more overwhelming than I had imagined.

Even though there were two decades between when I left school as a student and my return as an educator (plus a change of country and the education system), my discomfort with the lack of attention given to students' and educators' wellbeing persisted across all levels of education. I was not the only individual whose wellbeing was being peripherally considered. For this reason, I found returning to the classroom particularly unnerving. I was distressed to see so many children underachieving. These children seemed caught in the same quicksand and discrimination I had experienced.

The lack of adequate fulfilment of school wellbeing policies motivated me to develop a teaching approach that integrates wellbeing into the learning process, allowing students to find their flow to thrive academically and emotionally. Despite thoroughly studying various policy documents and frameworks that emphasised the importance of wellbeing for learning, including those by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2015, 2020, 2023), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2000, 2016, 2022), the Melbourne Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008), the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2020), my experiences as a preservice and qualified teacher revealed the insufficient enactment of these policies in the schools where I worked. Instead, I observed a persistent emphasis on the academic

curriculum while overlooking the importance of wellbeing. Witnessing this display ignited a desire to explore a teaching approach where wellbeing becomes a central component of the learning process, intertwining seamlessly with academic growth. I aspired to create a classroom environment that develops students' self-esteem, enabling them to work to their full potential on their educational journey.

My first opportunity came towards the end of my education studies when I completed an honours research project. It was an *Action Research study on Arts-based pedagogy to enhance social-emotional wellbeing in young children* (Ranatunga, 2013). This project provided insight into understanding one classroom group of preparatory year students and their educators from various perspectives regarding arts-based pedagogy and wellbeing.

My humble finding was that classroom educators in this research project did appear to have the power to create helpful change in wellbeing in that group of children (24), in that classroom and at that time. In Chapter Three, I will describe the Arts-based strategies I used in the classroom. In brief, they mainly comprised sensory (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) and mindful experiences, which were developed from a synthesis of Mindfulness, Material Engagement Theory (MET) (Malafouris, 2004; 2012; 2013; 2018), The Arts (dance, drama, media, music, visual arts, literature) and Story (through media, verbal, books) (Ranatunga, 2013; Ranatunga & Pagliano, 2017; Ranatunga et al., 2014).

This pedagogy showed potential in helping students and educators express a greater sense of overall wellbeing within the learning environment. I interpreted this observation as meaning that wellbeing did not have to be considered as something separate from the curriculum. There could be a more deliberate interconnection between learning and wellbeing.

While it is essential to acknowledge that the honours study was unique to its time, setting and participants, I was curious to investigate whether the know-how gained might be relevant to other settings. Therefore, I devised ways to continue the research, which inspired me to conduct a more extensive study on cultivating wellbeing dispositions in education utilising a flexible culturally adaptive framework and arts-based pedagogy. Hence, this PhD research and thesis.

After completing my honours thesis, I adopted Dodge et al.'s (2012) definition of wellbeing, focusing on a balance point between resources and challenges. The authors explain that "the multi-faceted nature of wellbeing can help individuals and policymakers move forward in their understanding" (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 222). The definition appealed to me because it resonated with my life experiences and linked my views on education and wellbeing. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), one achieves happiness by balancing personal ability with task challenge. This balance enables the individual to enter a state of flow or complete absorption, where learning is maximised. The Dodge et al. (2012) definition of wellbeing expands on this notion of balance by highlighting the importance of awareness of the learner's resource pool and the challenges they face inside and outside the classroom.

Planning for Phases Two and Three

At the time of the inception of this PhD study, I was registered as a counsellor and primary school teacher. I was employed as a casual supply and specialist language teacher at a local Catholic primary school in a metropolitan city in Australia. I was counselling part-time in my consulting practice, facilitating wellbeing workshops for adults and conducting after-school wellbeing sessions with small groups of students.

My interest, background, experience, knowledge, and know-how all equipped me for this new research project. It was essential to be acutely aware that bias could be impeding. Therefore, it was vital to carefully frame the study to recognise, minimise and mitigate preconceptions and notions that would inevitably distort the research. While I accept that it is never entirely possible to free oneself of preconceived notions, I sincerely hope that increased awareness of my experiences provides deeper insights and understanding regarding my research focus.

I started to search for a particular type of research approach that would be rigorous but still allow me to work within my strengths and motivations. I sought a research approach that fits my identity and research focus. My search for the right research approach took up much time and energy and caused me some stress. At first, I seriously explored critical realism (Archer, 2012; Bhaskar, 2008; Scott, 2010; 2019), but I needed to gain more control of the research process. I was also concerned that the work I was doing would not be able to be easily understood by regular primary school educators.

I searched for a research approach that would give me more freedom to blend counselling and education. I was searching for an approach that would enable me to emphasise pedagogy and narrative more. While narrative research was appealing, I was unconvinced it had all the answers. This led me to adopt a qualitative mixed-methods arts-based case study approach, a decision that was carefully considered and aligned with the unique aspects of my research focus.

A Qualitative Mixed Methods Arts-based Case Study Approach

Creswell (2012) describes qualitative research as using broad questions to study, explore, and understand a central phenomenon. Qualitative research provides a detailed view of concepts,

participants' opinions, and experiences through words, text, images, video, and audio. When conducting qualitative research, the researcher decides what data to collect, how to interpret it, what to share, and how best to share it. The data are collected and analysed for description and themes. Research that relies on collecting qualitative data has strengths and weaknesses. The strength is that the research has the potential to provide rich ideographic insights. The weakness is that the research has the potential for bias to negatively impact its trustworthiness.

Researcher bias is ever-present when the researcher collects qualitative data by assuming a subjective stance. Creswell (2012) points out that the researcher must ensure that the research procedures produce credible, transferrable, confirmable, and dependable findings to counter bias. The researcher must ensure the research is rigorous and credible (Johnson et al., 2020; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Maher et al., 2018). Therefore, safeguards such as researcher reflection or reflexivity, crystallisation and triangulation must be factored into the research process (Creswell J. W., 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Morgan H. H., 2024). According to Campbell et al. (2020) and Morgan (2024), triangulation involves using multiple data sets and several methods or theories to investigate the research question. While reflexivity focuses on the researcher reflecting on their biases and assumptions, crystallisation allows for a deeper understanding, embracing multiple perspectives and methods to understand the research phenomena and allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the data (Ellingson, 2009; Richardson, 2000).

Creswell (2014) and Kuhn (1966) assert that these processes begin with the researcher being upfront with the reader about who they are and their motivation behind conducting the research. This commitment to transparency reassures the integrity of the study. Qualitative data collection requires the researcher to be positioned within the research context. In so doing, the

researcher influences the research by bringing their values and understandings. Hence, this thesis includes information about me, my background, and my understanding of wellbeing. I explore who I am as a researcher and my relationship to the research focus, fostering a sense of empathy and understanding. This story is intended to explain what the topic of wellbeing in primary school means to me personally and share an understanding of how the concept has evolved.

Creswell (2012) describes quantitative research as an inquiry to discover facts about a social phenomenon. It is used to describe trends and explain relationships among variables. Narrow questions and formulated instruments are used to gather and measure data. Quantitative data can lack context, and emphasis is placed on the researcher being as objective as possible. A mixed-method approach was chosen, considering the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative data.

A qualitative mixed methods approach predominantly collects qualitative data from a specified unit but is supplemented by adding quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Yin, 2018). Furthermore, Creswell and Plano Clark argue that (2017), mixed methods research collects, analyses, and combines qualitative and quantitative data in a single study. Greene (2008) further explains that

A mixed method way of thinking is an orientation towards social inquiry that actively invites us to participate in dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is essential and to be valued and cherished (Greene, 2008, p. 20).

While this study uses a mixed-methods approach, most of the data collected is qualitative, and the quantitative data used is descriptive. Quantitative descriptive statistics assist in comprehending, describing, and summarising the critical characteristics without getting lost in raw data. Descriptive statistics help interpret the data in context. The deliberate choice to include quantitative data was to provide another perspective—an additional way to help reduce bias. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) argue that the intentional integration of qualitative and quantitative data helps the researcher mitigate potential biases, maximise the strengths, and minimise the weaknesses of each type of data collection. It can also assist the researcher in investigating the research focus more effectively, in this case, wellbeing in primary school. Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2010) argument supports my decision to include qualitative and quantitative data to gain a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of wellbeing in primary school. Therefore, a mixed methods research approach, which was predominantly qualitative, was adopted.

The goal was to incorporate several data collection methods, including arts-based activities, and provide opportunities to reflect deeply. I planned to ask open questions, listen to and observe participants, and allow them to have conversations and interact freely. This comprehensive approach aimed to gain deep insight and a robust explanation of understanding wellbeing from diverse perspectives using various methods. When research is robust, it is reliable and trustworthy, providing a solid foundation for the conclusions drawn.

The use of the Arts in therapy is gaining popularity. I was keen to investigate an arts-based pedagogy within education. Arts-based research (ABR) is a participatory research method of qualitative inquiry that leverages artistic processes and techniques to explore and represent

social phenomena (Baron & Eisner, 2012; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Leavy, 2020; McNiff, 2008; Morris & Paris, 2021). This approach uniquely develops a deeper emotional and aesthetic connection between the researcher and participants, a connection that traditional data presentation methods may lack (Baron & Eisner, 2012). Baron and Eisner further state that ABR provides an understanding from multiple angles (methodological pluralism) and is intended to “enlarge human understanding” (2012, p. 8).

The arts are a primary way of understanding and examining the researcher's experiences and the researched phenomenon (Morris & Paris, 2021). Shaun McNiff (1998; 2008), a pioneer in art therapy, emphasises the therapeutic and transformative potential of art in research, arguing that creative expression can lead to profound insights and healing. McNiff integrated all arts into therapy and founded the first graduate program, Expressive Arts Therapy. By employing arts-based learning experiences and ABR, this study not only becomes more tangible and accessible to young participants and participants of all abilities but also inspires with its innovative approach.

A case study means the research is bounded within a specific place or group of people (Johnson et al., 2007; Yin, 2018). Case study research is considered thoughtful, in-depth research to understand why things are as they are within a bounded space or group (Easton, 2010; Yin, 2018). Using personal stories as a research approach can provide a unique and valuable perspective on the topic (Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2014; Ellis & Bochner, 2016; Ellis et al., 2011). Moreover, it can help to illuminate the complex and multifaceted nature of wellbeing in the primary school setting. This approach aligns with the aim of this study, which is to explore the subjective experiences (culture, value, and context) of

educators and learners concerning wellbeing in primary school. Subjective wellbeing (SWB) is the overall evaluation of a person's life quality from their perspective (Diener et al., 2018).

Preparing the application for ethics approval enabled deep consideration of what was needed to be achieved in this research. It also entailed deciding how to design and conduct it (see Appendix I - Ethics Approval). The James Cook University (JCU) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) approved the research to be conducted at level four. This meant it was regarded as: “Research with the potential to cause genuine but not severe psychological distress or physical pain with no long-term effects. Deception may be involved regarding the true nature of the research” (James Cook University [JCU], 2016, p. 1). Therefore, gaining ethics at level four meant focusing more deeply on my design and ethical decision-making process.

As an educator and counsellor, I have seen first-hand the toll that stress and burnout can take on educators and students. This motivated me to embark on a research journey to explore a framework and pedagogy that integrates wellbeing practices and could transform the classroom experience for all involved. The research needs to be more than extending or testing theory. The idea of a pedagogy where wellbeing was a part of the vehicle for learning was motivating. All classroom members were to be included: the students, the teachers, and the non-teaching staff. The research process needed flexibility, which meant incorporating an emergent design.

An Emergent Design

An emergent design adds to the richness of the research because it allows the researcher to modify research decisions during the research process. It would enable me to provide details of the research methods employed as they arise and concentrate on my ethical decision-making

process. Unlike rigid processes, emergent design is flexible and open to unanticipated information. This adaptability allows the researcher to incorporate cues from every stage of the study, adopting an open-minded approach to research (Pailthorpe, 2017).

Emergent design is embedded from the conception of the study through to the final publication. According to Pailthorpe (2017), an emergent design means that the entire study reflects varying levels of emergent characteristics, embracing new findings, concepts, and ideas as they arise. It is not limited merely to data collection or analysis. A by-product of having an emergent design is the requirement that I learn to conduct the research by conducting the research.

The most productive and popular student lessons within my teaching encounters have been arts-based, kinaesthetic and hands-on experiences. Student feedback and my insight revealed that this approach consistently provides the most favourable outcomes. By employing a predominantly learning-by-doing principle (Dewey, 1938a; Freire, 1970; Kerr, 1999; Montessori, 1914; Reese, 2011) along with Arts-based activities, this study is more tangible and accessible to young participants and participants of all abilities.

Learning-by-Doing and Lived Experiences

Reese (2011) explains that learning from experiences directly resulting from an individual's actions rather than simply reading instructions or watching others in action is termed learning by doing. Reese (2011) elaborates, stating that when an individual experiences sensory contact and makes meaning of experiences, they actively learn by doing. Montessori's (1935; 1914) philosophy was that children learn best when actively engaged with their environment.

Sensory stimulation and hands-on experiences allow young people to explore, manipulate and interact with materials and the environment to understand concepts and ideas better (Lillard, 2005; Montessori, 1964).

During my teaching training, several philosophies deeply resonated with me. I was particularly interested in experiential learning, hands-on approaches to learning, and the learning-by-doing philosophies. Many educational theorists elaborated on experiential learning and active participation in education. I will discuss Bruner, Piaget and Dewey as relevant here and other theorists in the following chapters.

Bruner (1957; 1977; 1986) emphasises the role of the adult in education and believes that symbolic representation is crucial for cognitive development. He introduced the Spiral Curriculum, which emphasises active learning, problem-solving, and discovery in the learning process. Bruner was a constructivist and attached greater importance to determining cognitive development.

Piaget's (1962; 1970) theory is rooted in constructivism, emphasising thoughts and schemas. It proposes that language is limited to the child's stage of development and reflects rather than influences schemas. Piaget's comprehensive cognitive developmental model highlights the importance of a responsive learning environment with a child-centred focus, where learning occurs through play, social interaction, and collaboration. Piaget's theory specifies that children actively construct their learning, understanding, knowledge, and development through their experiences and interactions with the environment (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

Dewey (1910; 1916; 1934) emphasised the role of cultural structures and meaning in perpetuating higher forms of human thought. “Dewey’s (1938b; 2005; 2008) educational philosophy highlights pragmatism; he saw the purpose of education as the cultivation of thoughtful, critically reflective, and socially engaged individuals rather than passive recipients of established knowledge” (Nickerson, 2024, p. 4). Pragmatists believe that reality must be experienced, and we learn through hands-on approaches (Dewey, 1910; 1916; James, 1897; 1902). Children must interact with the environment to learn. Dewey (1938a; 1938b) also emphasises the nurture of independent reasoning, similar to the aspects of Piaget’s theory (1962; 1970). According to Dewey (1910), We learn from reflecting on our experiences (introspection), and profound learning occurs when these experiences become hands-on interactions within an individual’s environment.

“Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations and construction by other people” is seen as “lived experiences” (Chandler & Munday, 2020, p. 1). In qualitative phenomenological research, lived experiences are defined as the choices and experiences of an individual and the knowledge they gain from these choices and experiences (Frechette et al., 2020; Mapp, 2008). In the mental health workforce, including individuals with lived experiences is considered best practice. The Australian Government supports the development of the lived experience workforce in the mental health working community. The NMHC has compiled the current workforce development guidelines to include lived experiences (2022). My lived experiences have provided valuable insights into hands-on learning methods and practical applications. My experiences equipped me to understand the nuances of wellbeing and positioned me as an insider researcher.

Insider Researcher

Conducting research in a school where I had previously worked posed some challenges. I shared some history with those at the research site, which made me an insider researcher (Mercer, 2007). Therefore, I needed to consider what being an insider researcher meant for my research and carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages.

The more I read about the insider research topic, the more interesting it became. I learnt that researcher positionality (insider or outsider) is not static. It moves along a continuum, influencing many aspects of the research process (Chavez, 2008). The researcher influences all stages of the research; as Rose states, “There is only less or greater awareness of one’s biases” (1985, p. 77). Therefore, the researcher must develop a greater awareness of the fluidity and multilayered complexity of the human experience (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Awareness of these influences is vital to conducting high-quality research; this involves ongoing reflection.

In mixed-methods qualitatively focused research, the research process stretches from the research focus, access to the site and the participants (the power relationships, the interactions with participants, the degree of connection) to how the research is analysed and reported (Fleming, 2019a). One subtle dimension is that of specific markers, for example, title, status, occupation, skill, commitment, religion, gender, class, culture, physical appearance, and style. According to Carling and colleagues (2014), these markers may influence insider and outsider research. Some are apparent, while others may be adapted and communicated selectively. Therefore, I will need to pay careful attention to my researcher’s positionality and specific markers throughout my research. I have disclosed several of these in my story and will continue to do so in Chapter Four.

Many advantages of being an insider researcher relate to the research process (Pugh et al., 2000). Prior involvement, familiarity with local conditions, and understanding of the prevailing culture can make gaining access easier (Fleming, 2019b). This knowledge can, in turn, simplify and speed up the process of establishing rapport and maintaining the flow of social interaction (Fleming, 2019a). Because insider researchers are seen as members of the group, not strangers, the researcher can gain trust, acceptance, and cooperation more quickly. If intelligently managed, establishing intimacy between the researcher and participants can facilitate more high-quality interactions and reduce the construction of stereotypes (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002).

The disadvantages of being an insider researcher relate to how ethically the research is conceived, conducted, and reported. There is also the danger that the insider researcher can become more reliant on participants with whom they feel comfortable, thereby missing or ignoring other pertinent information (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). Likewise, there can be bias in interpreting findings, mainly if the researcher focuses more on the dramatic than the routine (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Chavez, 2008). Such findings can make it difficult for the researcher to re-establish ties once the research has been completed (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). Role conflict may occur when the insider is viewed more as an advocate than a researcher (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Fleming, 2019a). This realisation posed new insight for me to consider and form the next part of my emergent design.

The potential for transformative insights drove the final decision to conduct my investigation at this school. Researching in a familiar context provides valuable insights and activates the research. It would enable me to quickly identify an open and trusting group of participants. Importantly, conducting insider research can be a catalyst for change, as it involves

research where there is “an attempt to improve practice through understanding, influencing and changing the direction and position of others” (Fleming, 2019b, p. 312). While this fitted neatly into my research plan aspiration, I needed to find a research approach that would enable me to be both a researcher and an advocate.

I wanted to make wellbeing conversations more acceptable and open, a natural part of the school's daily life so that it was not an either/or situation, but rather an either/and situation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). This aspiration cemented my intention to be a wellbeing advocate. It meant that besides being an insider researcher, my research would need to incorporate a transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2010). As an insider researcher, I recognise the importance of promoting wellbeing within the school community.

Incorporating a Transformative Paradigm

A transformative paradigm provides a framework to address social justice causes, inequalities, human rights, and social issues (Kara, 2021; Mertens, 2005). The framework helps understand wellbeing in the primary classroom as a social justice and human rights (axiological) concern (Mertens, 2007). The emphasis in a transformative paradigm is placed on making advocacy more ethical. Paying close attention to the power imbalances at each research stage is insightful (Mertens, 2004), especially for ethical decision-making. This process involves identifying, addressing, and reducing power imbalances (Mertens, 2005) by increasing opportunities for participatory involvement of the populations being studied (Kara, 2021).

Mertens (2010) contends that to create positive change, it is necessary to move beyond difficulties and use ethical decision-making to work cooperatively towards eradicating power

imbalances wherever possible. The researcher's role in establishing participant trust and ascertaining their needs through ongoing communication is crucial. The aim is to conduct research designed to get to the heart of the situation (Kara, 2021). I collaborate with participants to uncover those versions they identify as sustaining oppression and to make those versions they believe have the potential to enhance social justice more visible. My early experiences as a student in the margins influenced my research design and objective.

Mertens (2007; 2009) argues that research carries a significant moral imperative, particularly with populations facing social justice issues. It is not enough for the researcher to merely uncover new information. The research must be of lasting value for the studied population striving to instigate a change for the better and be transformative (2007; 2009). This highlights the importance of exploring the concept of wellbeing in the immediate context of the primary classroom and considering it within the broader sociocultural community context. Mertens (2012) asserts that within a transformative paradigm, the researcher is responsible for revealing different versions of reality (ontology) and identifying and respecting the cultural norms and beliefs within each context (epistemology). Methodologically, the ability to pay specific attention to “culturally appropriate methods” to engage in critical dialogue (hermeneutical explorations), to be responsive to the information needs at every stage in the project, and the ability to design the research in a “cyclical manner” (Mertens, 2012, pp. 809-811) enhances the data collection.

Using a transformative paradigm within my research setting is justified because wellbeing in primary school is a crucial social justice issue. The transformative paradigm is a complex design that provides an orientating lens (Creswell J. W., 2012). In this mixed-method

study, at least one of four mixed-method models (triangulation, embedded, convergent, exploratory, or explanatory) will be utilised (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). However, adopting a transformative paradigm research approach involves an extended exploration period. This process began while looking for a suitable school to conduct the research. I observed that some educators in positions of power seemed reluctant to discuss the topic of wellbeing or its relationship with education.

There were situations where I believed greater attention was being directed towards preparing for NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) than attending to student wellbeing. One seemed to be occurring at the expense of the other. I, therefore, resolved to start my research by introducing the concept of wellbeing to the school community and encouraging the school community to learn more about it. I would then work to make the idea more acceptable in the daily life of the school, its students, and its staff. In line with the transformative paradigm, the intention is to continually refocus the research to achieve more beneficial outcomes for the participants regarding their wellbeing. Once ethics approval was gained, the next task was to find a school where the research could be conducted.

Finding a School

Since the research plan required me to spend considerable time at the chosen school, the school's location needed to be within easy travelling distance of my home; however, finding a school to conduct the study proved surprisingly challenging from my perspective. I began by making phone calls to all the local schools. I left messages and made in-person visits only to quickly discover that many were not interested in conducting a research project on wellbeing in their school. Some said they might be interested in research into literacy or numeracy but not

wellbeing. I was left with the impression that they thought the topic of wellbeing might be too sensitive, not part of their remit, or both. Some even appeared to be somewhat defensive about the need for wellbeing. I empathised with their initial reluctance, understanding the sensitive nature of the topic.

Despite the challenges and the disheartening nature of the search, I remained committed to finding a school for my study. The initial rejections only fueled my determination to refine my research proposal. I understood that building rapport with my future participants, getting them on board, ensuring they understood the research plan, and trusting me would be paramount. The challenges did not deter my commitment to the study; if anything, they strengthened it, demonstrating my unwavering dedication to the research.

After numerous attempts to gain access, I was eventually granted permission to conduct the study at a school where I had previously worked casually in various teaching roles. To maintain confidentiality, I gave this school a fictitious name, 'Saint Benessere's Primary School'. This name was chosen because Benessere is the Italian word for wellbeing, and the principal at the school was of Italian heritage. The school was a Catholic school, so I added saint to the title. To my knowledge, there is no actual Saint Benessere's Primary School located anywhere in the world, nor is there, in reality, a Saint Benessere.

Once approval was received from the school principal, I applied to Catholic Education to obtain formal permission to conduct the research (see Appendix II - Catholic Education Formal Permission to Conduct the Research). This application was accepted, and a letter of approval was obtained from the school principal (see Appendix III - Letters of Approval from School Principal) The principal provided ongoing support and access to conduct the research.

Getting to Know the School Better – The Background

During this first week, I researched related school websites, searched for relevant documents, engaged in discussions with the foundation staff, and delved into the school's history. This research was essential to understand the research setting and context deeply. Saint Benessere's Primary School, which caters to students from prep to year 6, was opened about two decades ago with 15 staff and 94 students aged 5 to 9 years. The school accepted students from preschool to year 3 in the first year and grew with them as they progressed into higher year levels.

Saint Benessere's is a Catholic, co-educational primary school located in an outer-metropolitan suburb of a major city in Australia. Nestled in a rapidly growing geographic area, the school stands out with unique features. The school was meticulously designed with a strong focus on sustainability and a natural setting, occupying 3.5 hectares of tree-studded land adjacent to City Council parklands. This distinctive environment, which I found particularly conducive to my research, aligns with my belief in the role of the environment in nurturing wellbeing.

My feelings about this setting and school have remained consistent since my initial encounter approximately five years before this research when I first started working there. The caring and supportive nature and strong team focus create a sense of belonging and community. Most staff have been part of this community for five or more years. The recent change in leadership, with a new principal appointed the year before the start of this project, signals further growth and evolution.

At the start of my PhD study, I had the privilege of conversing with the school's five founding staff members. Their shared sentiment, 'We were very team-focused back then', highlights the school's strong community spirit. This sense of belonging and community (Baumeister et al., 1995; Erickson, 1994; Maslow, 1943; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969), is a cornerstone of wellbeing and a defining feature of the school's culture. These ideas (themes) were deeply evident in the discussions and interactions.

The ICSEA was created by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to achieve valuable comparisons of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (2016). The ICSEA is a measure that considers subjective indicators such as parental occupation, parental education, geographic location, and proportion of Indigenous students in a school. It is used to determine the level of educational advantage of students attending a particular school (ACARA, 2017). The benchmark or average ICSEA is set at 1000, and it is stated that the higher the ICSEA value (up to 1300), the higher the educational (socioeconomic) advantage of students who attend that school. The lower the ICSEA value (down to 500), the lower the level of educational advantage. With an ICSEA of 1046, Saint Benessere's Primary School had a school population above the Australian average. The total enrolment was 505 students, with 264 girls and 241 boys. One per cent of students were Indigenous, and 10% had a Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE). Saint Benessere had 36 teaching staff and 17 non-teaching staff during the inception of this study.

According to ACARA (2017), research indicates that students' academic outcomes in school are influenced by factors such as their parents' occupation, their parent's level of education, and non-school education. Additionally, research has shown that school-level factors,

including the school's geographical location and the proportion of Indigenous students it serves, should be considered when assessing educational advantages or disadvantages at the school level (ACARA, 2017). The ICSEA has, however, been criticised because of the pervasive generalised assumptions between student educational advantage and parental occupation, education, geographic location, and indigeneity (Bonnor, 2010). Navigating the intricacies of educational advantage and recognising the potential pitfalls of generalisations with the ICSEA framework, I was keen to develop a comprehensive understanding from diverse perspectives.

The Saint Benessere's Primary School website reports that the school is committed to nurturing each child's spirituality and faith development—the education program at St Benessere's centres around an outcomes-based curriculum. The child's academic, creative, cultural, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual developmental needs are at the forefront. A commitment to wellbeing comes from the top, with clearly enunciated policies from the Australian Government Department of Education (AGDE, 2018) and Catholic Education.

The AGDE states that “schools play a vital role in supporting the wellbeing of students and student resilience, both emotionally and academically, is essential for young Australians’ development” (2023, para. 1). The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) echoes this sentiment stating that “strengthening the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is crucial to supporting student learning and outcomes” (2023, para. 2). The NCEC further states that student mental health and wellbeing issues have increased in the past decades. Wellbeing is addressed in policy documents, and all Australian schools and Catholic education use various resources and programs to support student mental health and wellbeing (2023).

Safety and wellbeing policy documents identify wellbeing as paramount in the design and conduct of school affairs.

The NCEC (2023a) guidelines on wellbeing policies follow guidelines from the AITSL (2017). The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (AGDE, 2018; Education Services Australia, [ESA] 2020) emphasises student safety, inclusion, and wellbeing. The Australian Government funds the AITSL (2017; 2022) and works with state and territory governments, education providers and the teaching profession to set and maintain high standards of teacher education, professional practice, and school leadership (AITSL, 2023). This is a national organisation that promotes excellence in teaching and educational leadership. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers states the importance of “create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments” (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011, p. 4).

The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework provides schools with a vision and guiding principles to build positive learning environments and opportunities to improve and review their policy and support mechanisms (AITSL, 2023). The framework has been revised and extended to support Australian schools in providing every student with the most robust foundation to reach their aspirations in learning and life (Education Services Australia, 2020). The framework promotes better safety, wellbeing and learning through five interconnected elements (leadership, inclusion, student voice, support, and partnership). Student wellbeing improves learning outcomes, and the framework's vision is that Australian schools are learning communities promoting wellbeing (ESA, 2020). The framework will be explored further in Chapter Two.

The school's website reiterates its commitment to community involvement. It takes pride in continuing the traditional parent-teacher team involvement and maintaining the collaboration focus established in the early years. This emphasis on community involvement is critical to the school's success in enhancing learning and living. The strong encouragement for parents and community members to participate in school programs indicates how everyone's contribution is valued. This was evident during the group getting-to-know-you activities discussed next, where the group made an unprompted commitment to support each other's wellbeing

The Getting to Know You (Participants) Session

I initiated communication with all school staff by emailing the entire cohort of educators (53 teaching and non-teaching staff). I provided an introductory pre-recorded PowerPoint about wellbeing and my research. Many staff spontaneously showed interest; some even indicated curiosity about the research. This was attributed to being a familiar person at the school and the topic of discussion. This level of interest then made me feel even more accepted and trusted.

Initially, I wanted to meet all school staff in person and discuss and answer their questions about my project. I wanted to give them ample opportunity to gain a rudimentary understanding of how this project would take shape. I, therefore, followed up on this first email by running a short getting-to-know-you session at an afternoon staff meeting. At this session, I planned to obtain their approval to be involved in the research. Many of my ideas about how to *break the ice* came from my experiences of being part of several groups in the community and conducting wellbeing workshops and presentations in Australia, Canada, China, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and the United Kingdom (UK). I also wanted to organise how the workshop sessions and wellbeing experiences would be set out and implemented.

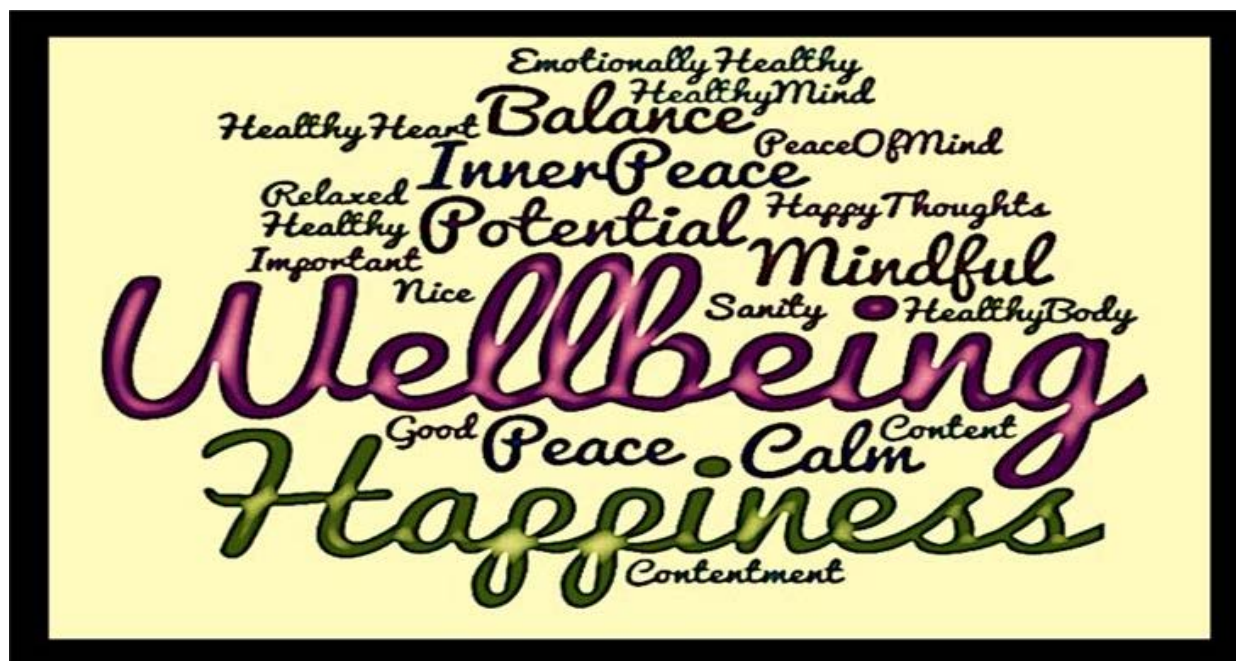
My plan for the Getting-to-know-you session was to play two games, gently introduce the project to the participants, spontaneously answer questions, and responsively provide more in-depth details about the study. The games (discussed in Chapter Three - Crafting a Wellbeing Exploration: The Methodology and the Methods and Chapter Five - Phase Two: Educators Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions) were intended to be an icebreaker to help create a sense of community and provide an initial orientation to the research project. During these games and activities, we focused on wellbeing. What it *looked like* and *felt like* for the educators. We focused on the language of wellbeing, created artefacts (word clouds) and focused on material engagement (ball of yarn, coloured post-it notes). These games were to build rapport, have fun and enhance the getting-to-know-you process.

Word clouds were created from the wellbeing word games played with educators. In game one, the group stood in a circle. Each educator was given two Post-it notes, one pink and one green. On the pink one, they were asked to write a word depicting what they thought wellbeing was. Then, on the green post-it notes, they were asked to write what they thought wellbeing was not. Next, post-it notes were passed around the group for each person to observe and respond to what others had written. Once this had occurred, all Post-it notes were collected, and the pink Post-it notes were used to create a word cloud. Word clouds were used in the school during classroom learning, and the educators were familiar with them. The word cloud (see Figure 2) became an artefact presented to the group during the first session. This artefact enhanced the concept of wellbeing in the group and helped with participant insight.

The word cloud depicted each individual's perception of wellbeing and the whole group's overall perception. In the word cloud, the word size represents the number of responses received,

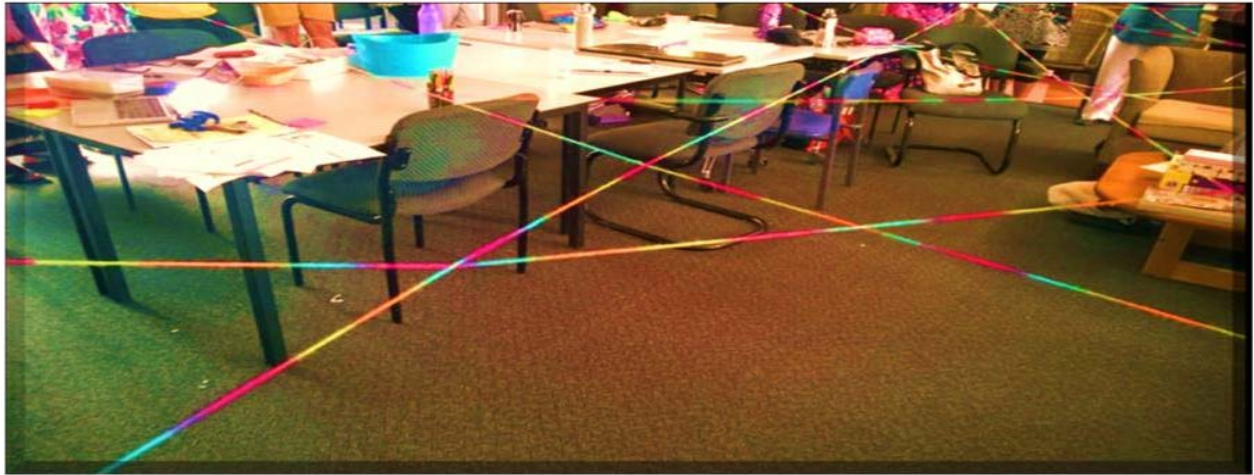
ranging from a single response for the most minor to four for the most prominent responses. The term wellbeing was not a response; it was added to highlight the topic and for visual appeal.

Figure 2



Wellbeing in one word (Educators)

The second game, 'Weaving a Web of Connection ' (see Figure 3), was designed to symbolise the idea of wellbeing playing a more prominent role in educator interactions. The game involved active participation from each educator, who was asked to call out a word for wellbeing that resonated with them, retain their end of the wool, and toss the unfurling ball to another member. This active involvement ensured that everyone was connected to the group in a concrete way, highlighting the importance of supporting each other's wellbeing in the school community.

Figure 3*Our Web of Wellbeing – Connection*

This activity was designed to symbolise the idea of wellbeing playing a more prominent role in educator interactions. The web creation highlighted the connections and showed how support for each other might work. The group spontaneously committed to supporting each other's wellbeing. The long strand of wool was then cut into pieces and shared among the staff. These became tangible reminders of our connections. They were to become a token of our commitment to promoting wellbeing in the school, to be our aide-mémoire regarding our agreed decision to look out for one another.

These insightful Arts-Based Research (ABR) activities have been instrumental in advancing rich, immersive learning experiences. ABR facilitates a unique way of knowing and understanding through artistic practices, allowing participants to interact, reflect, express and explore complex ideas creatively and meaningfully. The material engagement and the learning-by-doing process inherent in ABR deepen understanding and connection while enriching the research experience and encouraging creativity and critical thinking. Malafouris (2013; 2018), discussing Material Engagement Theory (MET), emphasises the active roles of materials in

shaping human thought and perception. MET is discussed further in Chapter Three - Crafting a Wellbeing Exploration: The Methodology and the Methods. Embracing a learning-by-doing process enabled participants to engage in the creation, exploration and artistic expression actively. By integrating these methods, participants are encouraged to enhance cognitive and emotional engagement and cultivate a holistic and transformative approach to learning and inquiry. This process leads to a more profound embodied understanding of wellbeing and makes the research process both impactful and transformative.

The ‘getting-to-know-you’ activities and the wellbeing word cloud provided a glimpse into understanding this community. It was the beginning of my work to make wellbeing as a concept more explicit in the school community. The learning from these innovative ideas will be discussed further in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. The next step was to organise the workshop sessions for Phase Two (discussed in Chapter Five). We agreed to meet again (next session) in the following week. Educators were invited to check their diaries and email details of day/time preference for future sessions to prepare a timetable. We then closed the ‘getting to know you’ sessions. The group was allowed to ask questions or bring up any concerns. Members were handed an information and consent form (see Appendix IV - Information and Consent Forms. These were then signed and returned to me before the start of Phase Two.

Chapter Summary

The research is organised in three phases. Phase One is introduced in Chapter One and detailed further in Chapter Four. In this chapter, I introduce myself, the research focus, and the approach. I briefly describe how and why I became involved in this research and discuss the challenges in enhancing wellbeing in primary education. Wellbeing is viewed as a state of

equilibrium and a holistic concept with interconnecting components. Wellbeing is described as a joyous, energetic, and holistic experience, expressed as feeling comfortable, inspired and connected (Gaston, 2017).

The research focuses on the wellbeing of educators and learners in primary education. A qualitative mixed-methods arts-based case-study approach is utilised. When focusing on wellbeing as a holistic concept, the focus is not only on the many possible components of wellbeing, such as physical, intellectual (mental cognitive), social, emotional (psychological), spiritual, moral and aesthetic. We also consider the opportunities and privileges (or lack thereof) afforded individuals within a society. In this research, wellbeing is perceived as having a vital connection with learning. For this reason, Dodge et al.'s definition of wellbeing as: "the balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced" (2012, p. 229) is adopted.

This chapter focuses on the intention to use a qualitative mixed-methods arts-based case study approach within an emergent design to investigate student and educator wellbeing at Saint Benessere's primary school. A learning-by-doing method (Dewey, 1938a; Freire, 1970; Kerr, 1999; Maslow, 1943; Montessori, 1914; Reese, 2011; Rogers, 1969) is adopted. This method helps accommodate my position as an insider researcher and wellbeing advocate. Due to these considerations, a transformative paradigm was chosen to help reduce power imbalances and to make advocacy more ethical (Cotterill, 1992; Brydon-Miller et al., 2021; James et al., 1998). The aim is to achieve this by explicitly addressing social justice causes and inequalities and focusing on ethical decision-making. The next chapter focuses on the wellbeing literature.

Thesis Overview

In Chapter One, I introduce the topic, explain wellbeing dispositions, and discuss the reasons for my engagement and interest in wellbeing. I also introduce the design and methods, providing a comprehensive background and overview of this thesis.

In Chapter Two, the literature on wellbeing and the state of wellbeing in education is investigated. Wellbeing from various fields is explored to understand wellbeing in education. Wellbeing frameworks and approaches used in education are also discussed.

Chapter Three elaborates on how the research design was used to understand the process of cultivating wellbeing dispositions. The chapter focuses on justifying the research designs, methodology and data collection methods that assist in finding answers to the research questions: What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education? How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom?

In Chapter Four, autoethnography expands on the researcher's journey and discusses how the researcher cultivated wellbeing dispositions as a student, parent, counsellor, and educator. These insights formulate an innovative Wellbeing Literacy Framework.

Chapter Five encapsulates the educators' journey, and Chapter Six sets out to understand the students' journey and how participants cultivated wellbeing dispositions. The focus is on understanding educator and student stories. The influencing factors and the challenges encountered in cultivating wellbeing are discussed, and a detailed analysis of the findings from these phases is provided. Chapter Seven is the final chapter of this thesis, in which the perpetuation of this journey, recommendations, and future direction are provided.

Chapter Two - The Literature Review: The State of Wellbeing in Education

Education is healthy when people themselves are in a healthy state, but it becomes corrupt with them, being unable to modify itself... Education, therefore, can be reformed only if society itself is reformed. To do that, the evil from which it suffers must be attacked at its source (Durkheim, 1915/1956, pp. 372-3).

Overview and Structure (Chapter Two)

The concept of wellbeing in education has gained increased attention in recent years due to its profound impact on student's academic performance, social development, and overall quality of life. As discussed in Chapter One, a feature of this study is the continual embedding of relevant literature within each chapter. The embedded literature within the chapters is not to summarise but to contextualise and support my research story within the broader academic discourse. Therefore, this chapter has a different purpose and structure than a standalone literature review. This literature review serves several purposes, aiming to situate my research in a broader context, tying together embedded literature from other chapters, demonstrating my vast content knowledge, identifying gaps in previous research and justifying my research.

Initially, I worked on the overall conceptualisations of wellbeing and various wellbeing measures. I sought knowledge from economics, geography, health, sociology, psychology, and education to understand the overarching concept of wellbeing. This interdisciplinary approach provides a holistic understanding of the interconnected elements contributing to the complex landscape of wellbeing in education. Understanding wellbeing from diverse perspectives provides a more explicit interpretation of the overarching concept of wellbeing.

After exploring this overarching concept of wellbeing, I focus on the context in which my research is situated to grasp the academic landscape, existing knowledge and critical debate related to my topic. I explore understanding the state of wellbeing in education, specifically the state of educators and learners. The focus then shifts to exploring specific areas and factors influencing educational wellbeing. I scrutinise and report on frameworks, policies, programs, curricula, interventions, pedagogies, and strategies offered to learners and educators.

The data for this study was initially collected in 2016. Due to several personal (health) and professional challenges, the writing up of this work has been delayed until now. I acknowledge that the literature review and the subsequent discussion encompass research from before 2016 to now. The literature from before 2016 notably informed the study. Significant global events have occurred since the initial literature review and data collection, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and shifts in economic conditions and technological advancements. These events have further exacerbated the educational wellbeing crisis, making this study even more relevant in 2024. The broader perspective emphasises the urgency of addressing wellbeing concerns in light of the current global challenges without solely dwelling on a single topic (e.g., COVID-19). By examining various timeframes, this chapter sheds light on the dynamic nature of wellbeing in education, considering a comprehensive view of the evolving landscape of wellbeing education.

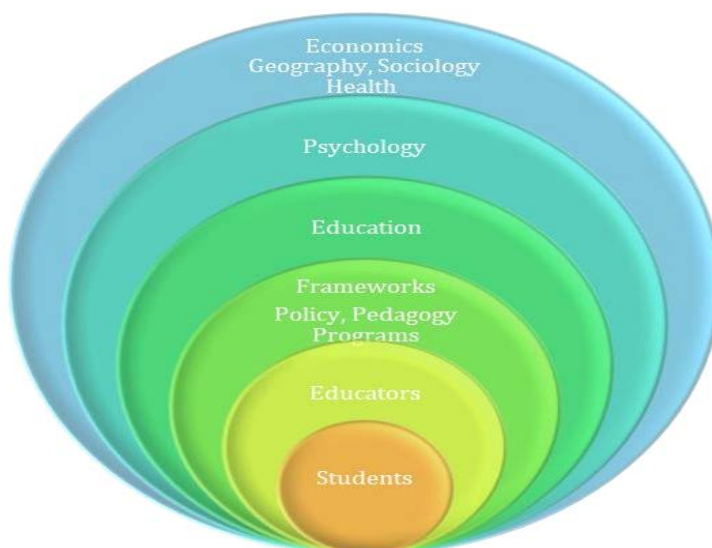
The Conceptualisation of Wellbeing and its Measurements

Through this literature review, I aimed to situate the research and further my knowledge to comprehend the conditions of possibility for wellbeing in primary education. This study takes a comprehensive approach, exploring the concept of wellbeing from various perspectives

(economic, geographical, sociological, health, psychological and educational) to understand the holistic concept. I also employ three lenses to comprehend educational wellbeing: a governance and policy perspective, a pedagogical perspective, and a psychological or Social and Emotional (SEL) perspective. These three perspectives are relevant to this study because they provide the foundation for a deeper exploration of educators' and learners' conditions of possibility in the education setting.

Utilising a governance and policy perspective, I will examine the frameworks, policies and guidelines that shape wellbeing initiatives in education. A pedagogical perspective will focus on how wellbeing approaches influence teaching and learning strategies. Since SEL is a critical component of wellbeing in education, a SEL perspective that encompasses a psychological focus will provide a more profound synthesis of how the programs on offer contribute to learning. The intricate relationship between emotional and cognitive development illustrates how these interconnected processes profoundly impact students' overall wellbeing and academic growth. I approached my search in stages. Figure 4 illustrates the exploration process I followed.

Figure 4



The Overarching Concept of Wellbeing - Focused in Stages

What is Wellbeing?

Wellbeing is a phenomenon with multiple meanings, encompassing the mind and body, the social environment, and diverse aspects of life (Das et al., 2020; Dodge et al., 2012; Fleuret & Atkinson, 2007; Ruggeri et al., 2020; Sabe et al., 2022). Various academic disciplines approach wellbeing differently, resulting in several definitions and conceptualisations. While the scope of this study does not permit me to report in-depth on different fields, I offer an overview of perspectives from various fields of study directly below to provide a more holistic understanding of wellbeing.

Economists consider wellbeing regarding material wealth and economic indicators; however, Layard (2005; 2013), an economist, advocated for happiness as the primary objective, emphasising the need for governments to incorporate measures of happiness and wellbeing to guide economic decisions. The Gross National Happiness (GNH) index developed by the Bhutan Government is an alternative to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The GNH index focuses on insights from health, education, resilience, psychological wellbeing, governance, and cultural and ecological diversity to understand wellbeing (Ura et al., 2012). Overall, the field of economics contributes to education by enhancing our understanding of equitable and effective educational systems that provide resource allocation, policy evaluation, income inequality and human capital (Gurría, 2019; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020; The World Economic Forum, 2022). Wyn (2009a; 2009b) argued that the focus on wellbeing was previously on physical and economic aspects, then shifted to a more personalised and holistic approach.

Geographic, or environmental wellbeing, focuses on an individual's relationship to the environment, attitudes, and behaviour (Delagran, 2018; Gifford, 2014). Geographers view wellbeing as interconnected with the physical and social environment where individuals and communities live. The relationship between place and wellbeing, for example, therapeutic landscapes, are referred to as having healing or restorative qualities for individuals and communities (Ballas, 2013; Bell et al., 2015; Finlay & Rowles, 2021; Fuller, 2016). Geography is an essential determinant of wellbeing and plays a crucial role in shaping the wellbeing of individuals and communities (Gallagher, 2019; McCormick, 2017; Van Dijk-Wesselius et al., 2018; Williams, 2018). Geography is incorporated into economic opportunities and educational outcomes. The relationship between health and geography focuses on how geographical factors influence health outcomes and health disparities, highlighting the benefits to educational wellbeing (Correll, 2023; Gesler, 1992; 2003; Maas et al., 2009; Sullivan W. C., 2014).

Health is usually about the physical aspect; however, the biopsychosocial model (biological, psychological, and social) proposed by Engel (1977) of health suggests that health and wellbeing are determined by the complex interplay of several factors (Borrell-Carrio et al., 2004; Quill et al., 2004; White P. , 2005). This idea has stayed constant, and currently, the health field conceptualises wellbeing as a multidimensional and holistic construct encompassing an individual's physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects of life (Ruggeri et al., 2020). Public health researchers focus on physical and overall wellbeing (Das et al., 2020; Detels et al., 2022; Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). Wellbeing in the context of health goes beyond the absence of illness and disease and focuses on promoting positive health outcomes and optimal functioning.

Health within an educational setting ensures that educators and learners are physically healthy, creating a conducive learning and personal growth environment. The health field utilises

a range of other fields to understand and address complex health issues. Sociology (discussed next) is pivotal in understanding social determinants of health, access, and health inequalities. For example, the social gradient in health refers to people with low socioeconomic status having poorer outcomes than those with higher socioeconomic factors.

Sociologists emphasise social connection and community engagement. The influence of social factors and the fit between individuals and their social worlds (1915/1956) and wellbeing is vital in sociology. Durkheim (1915/1956) stressed the necessary interconnectivity of all elements of society, stating that the critical factor in social life was social integration and the strengths of people's ties to social groups (Berkman et al., 2000; Durkheim, 1858-1917). Veenhoven (2008; 2010) discussed SWB from a sociological perspective, focusing on happiness as an aim for public policy. Konu & Rimpelä (2002) utilised Allardt's (1976) sociological theory of welfare to assess wellbeing as an entity in the school setting. The authors introduced four indicators: school conditions (having), social relationships (loving), means for self-fulfilment (being) and health status (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002). These insights provide a valuable understanding of the importance of the interconnected nature of wellbeing, especially wellbeing in education. Sociology and psychology (discussed next) are social sciences focusing on human behaviour, thoughts, and interactions and are deeply relevant to educational wellbeing.

Psychology is the dominant field in wellbeing because, within psychology, there has been a comprehensive exploration of other areas and aspects of wellbeing, such as social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural. The psychological perspective is deeply relevant to this research and will be explored in more detail. This section will discuss several psychological concepts that are considered appropriate for education.

Researchers such as Fraillon (2004) and Noble et al. (2008) have highlighted the changing perspective of wellbeing, moving from clinical to psychological. The emphasis in psychology shifted from the absence of disorder to the prevalence of positive attitude, from welfare to overall wellbeing, from fixing problems to promoting flourishing. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs (discussed in Chapter Four) represents part of this essential shift in psychology. For decades, researchers have highlighted that the fulfilment of needs is strongly connected with happiness, and self-actualisation and social needs were important, even when many of the most basic needs were met (Buijs et al., 2021; Selva & Nash, 2017). It is crucial to develop healthy individuals rather than focusing on abnormal behaviour and development. Seligman discusses this further, pointing out that having people overcome mental illness is different from helping people live well (2011).

According to Seligman, positive psychology studies "wellbeing and the good life" (2014, p. 9). In his book *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman states, "Just as the good life is something beyond the pleasant life, the meaningful life is beyond the good life" (2014, p. 20). Seligman (2002), discussing a meaningful or good life, states that it is about finding a more profound sense of fulfilment through one's strengths, finding flow, serving and nourishing others, and producing authentic happiness. As presented in Chapter One, the PERMA model and theory focus on flourishing (Seligman, 2018). Flourishing is defined as resting "on five pillars (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement), each of which contributes to the full use of one's strengths to achieve deeper levels of happiness, fulfilment and meaning" (Seligman, 2011, p. 4). Positive psychology embraces philosophical traditions and became prominent as a reaction to the traditional psychological focus on mental health problems.

Positive psychologists promote wellbeing and focus on cultivating human strengths and dispositions such as resilience, happiness, joy and meaning rather than trying to search for and fix what is wrong (Belzak et al., 2017; Das et al., 2020; Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2015; Kashdan et al., 2008; Seligman et al., 2009; Sperber & Davis, 2019). Positive psychology improves negative states (Fredrickson, 2000) and indicates that happiness can be enhanced and affected in various ways. Positive psychology is discussed and elaborated on in the literature by many academics who have stated that it is the scientific study of human functioning and flourishing on many levels, from the biological to the personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; 2018).

Many current psychological theories fall into the hedonic or eudaimonic perspective or encompass both (Fisher, 2019). Hedonic wellbeing encompasses subjective experiences such as desire, fulfilment, and pleasure-seeking. The prioritising of enjoyable experiences, maximising pleasure-oriented activities and short-term gratification can be seen as hedonic wellbeing. Several researchers have explored the pursuit of hedonic happiness to enhance wellbeing (Belzak et al., 2017; Deci & Ryan, 2008; McMahon D. M., 2006; Seligman, 2011). Hedonic wellbeing is about the presence of positive effects and the absence of adverse effects, while eudaimonic wellbeing is more about self-fulfilment, value-orientated living, and long-term flourishing (Belzak et al., 2017; Kashdan et al., 2008).

The eudaemonic psychological views are meaning-oriented and focus on flourishing and finding meaning in life (Huta & Ryan, 2010; McKnight & Kashdan, 2009; Niemiec, 2014; Russell, 2014; Shmotkin & Shrira, 2012). In *The Power of Meaning: Crafting a Life that Matters*, Smith (2017) points out that searching for meaning and understanding connection is far

more fulfilling than pursuing happiness. Like Smith (2017), many researchers have found that individuals who experience a sense of meaning and purpose tend to have higher SWB and overall life satisfaction (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Ruggeri et al., 2020; Ryff & Singer, 2008). Finding and experiencing meaning in life involves comprehending the world, finding purpose and direction for actions, and experiencing a sense of worth in one's life (Lennon & Sanfins, 2022; Steger et al., 2006). Finding meaning, purpose, belonging, and connection are essential concepts in this research.

Resilience is another crucial concept in this research and was introduced in Chapter One. Many researchers have pointed out that resilience is the capacity to overcome and be strengthened by life's challenges (Lee et al., 2018; Mansfield et al., 2016; Masten, 2018; Osório et al., 2017; Reid, 2016). Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2015) investigated hedonic and eudaemonic wellbeing and the relationship between resilience and wellbeing. These authors explore how resilience influences wellbeing beyond individual differences in intelligence and personality traits (2015). Resilience is a critical component of wellbeing and positively influences overall wellbeing; individuals who demonstrate resilience are more likely to cope better with new or stressful environments.

Connection is core for resilience, self-esteem, and physical and mental health (Cozolino, 2014). Cozolino's (2014) research provides insight into human connection. He has written extensively about characteristics of brain development and the impact of connection from the prenatal stage to infancy, adolescence and adulthood, and the end of life. The wellbeing of children is crucial for brain development and learning (Cela-Conde, 2018; Siegel, 2022). The brain's architecture is related to human problems, passions, and aspirations (Cozolino, 2014).

Balancing individual and collective identity and creating connections with others are essential for healthy brain development and overall wellbeing.

It is crucial to note that many international authorities, including the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2024), emphasise the importance of early intervention and prevention of mental health issues in children. This highlights the significance of addressing mental health from a young age, as it can have a profound impact on the future wellbeing of individuals (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2022; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023; National Mental Health Commission [NMHC], 2024; World Health Organisation [WHO], 2023a).

Siegel (2022), a renowned psychiatrist and author who has written extensively on mental health and wellbeing, has used the term *me-we* in his work to describe balancing individual and collective identity. In his book, *The Whole Brainchild: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*, Siegel (2012) discusses how the brain operates as an individual entity (me) and as part of a larger social context (we). He suggests that healthy development of the brain and mind requires a balance between these two modes of functioning and refers to this as me-we integration (2022). The integration of me-we highlights the need to balance individual and collective identity. Siegel's work (2017; 2022) emphasises the importance of social connections and relationships in promoting wellbeing and mental health.

The research on social ties and health and wellbeing points out that people with more social support tend to have better mental health, cognitive performance, cardiovascular health, and immunological functioning (Kemp et al., 2017; Valtorta et al., 2016). Social connections and relationships are crucial in promoting wellbeing and mental health. For human beings to “live in the world as reflective beings” Martela and Steger (2016) state that “they need to be able to

comprehend the world around them (coherence), find direction for their actions (purpose), and they need to find worth in their lives (significance)” (2016, p. 541).

Belzak et al. (2017), exploring the concept of wellbeing beyond the traditional hedonic and eudaemonic perspectives, examined the role of inspiration and its connection to the self-transcendence tradition in fostering wellbeing. Inspiration awakens us to new possibilities, transforms our perceptions of our capabilities, motivates us to act, and facilitates flow and creativeness (Daniel, 2020; Kaufman, 2011; 2018). Inspiration and creativity go hand in hand and can serve as a powerful motivator for wellbeing and happiness. To foster holistic wellbeing, everyday creativity such as drawing, painting, sewing, cooking, writing or any activity done to be creative fosters and enhances wellbeing (Cher-Yi et al., 2021; Walshe et al., 2020). When individuals are creative, they become inspired and motivated to cultivate wellbeing dispositions.

Creativity and the Arts (further discussed in Chapter Three) are essential components of this research and are seen to influence personal factors and promote collective flourishing. This study seeks to foster flourishing and cultivate dispositions for wellbeing by embracing innovative experiences, inspiration, and creativity. The current discourse increasingly emphasises the importance of collective flourishing for self-care and overall wellness (Lemon, 2021). In the pursuit of communal wellbeing, and especially for wellbeing in education, it becomes imperative to establish a satisfactory state of existence within individuals and the community (Dalton et al., 2019; Dalton & Hoyser, 2021; Garvis & Pendergast, 2020).

More recent studies have delved deeper into understanding wellbeing, emphasising life satisfaction, and adopting a multidimensional approach (Martela & Ryan, 2021; Park et al., 2023; Ruggeri et al., 2020). This contemporary understanding of wellbeing emphasises the

significance of personal contentment alongside the broader social context within which wellbeing is cultivated. The evolving comprehension of wellbeing transcends the traditional sense of happiness and aligns with modern societal complexities. By considering various dimensions and psychological aspects, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of wellbeing and work towards promoting flourishing individuals in society. Exploring diverse dimensions and psychological facets provides a more thorough insight into wellbeing, paving the way for promoting flourishing in individual lives and the larger societal structure. Cultivating flourishing is essential to this research and vital to educational wellbeing. To cultivate wellbeing dispositions in education, this research draws on the psychological perspective of helping educators and learners flourish and find fulfilment and happiness in academic settings.

Amidst this evolving landscape of personal and collective growth, the wellbeing perspective has notably transformed in the past two decades. The concept has evolved from emphasising individual happiness to promoting wellbeing for the majority (Brülde & Bykvist, 2010; Seligman, 2014). The heightened focus on collective wellbeing indicates the evolving societal perspective that views wellbeing as a shared responsibility.

In Chapter One, resilience, grit, emotional regulation, social-emotional competence, reflection, mindfulness, mindsight, and flow were discussed as skills and dispositions. In this chapter, I have tried to comprehend the many explanations and conceptualisations of wellbeing proposed by researchers and scholars from various fields (Clark, 2014; Diener et al., 2018; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Dodge et al., 2012; Martela & Ryan, 2021; Tov, 2018). In this section, I focused more deeply on the psychological perspective of wellbeing because it is the overarching perspective influencing all other fields, including education.

In the past, **education** has mainly focused on the cognitive aspect of learning. Within education, objective measures are utilised to understand learning outcomes. The importance of wellbeing in learning and teaching is discussed widely (Carter & Andersen, 2023; Dodge et al., 2012; Garvis & Pendergast, 2020; Lemon, 2021), yet the enactment of wellbeing within the school system is challenging. Researchers and educational theorists for decades have highlighted the impact of students' wellbeing on their learning outcomes, academic performance, behaviour, social integration, satisfaction with life, and overall school experiences (Bücker et al., 2018; Carter & Andersen, 2023; Erickson, 1994; 1993; Maslow, 1943; Piaget, 1970). Therefore, nurturing and supporting students' wellbeing assists students in flourishing, growing, and developing essential skills for life. Wellbeing and education are intertwined, and governments and policymakers are beginning to address this crucial factor in newly formed strategies and policy documents (AIHW, 2022; AITSL, 2022; WHO, 2023). For example, "Australia's first National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy launched in 2021 provides the framework and foundations for lifelong mental health and wellbeing to be built during childhood, with a whole-of-community approach" (NMHC, 2022, p. 3).

Wellbeing is a broad and multifaceted topic, and educational wellbeing is equally complex. My brief overview of wellbeing from various disciplines provides insight into the importance of combining multiple concepts to enhance the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions in education. While the psychological perspective overshadows educational wellbeing, the idea of wellbeing as a multifaceted and dynamic construct was further enhanced when synthesising wellbeing concepts from various fields. The multidimensional nature of wellbeing necessitates a collaborative effort across multiple disciplines to provide a holistic understanding and effective strategies for enhancing wellbeing in diverse contexts. As I have discussed, wellbeing is

intricately connected to education, psychology, health, sociology, geography, and economics.

This exploration assisted me in gaining a holistic understanding of wellbeing. Next, I discuss the various measures of wellbeing.

The Various Measurements of Wellbeing

The concept of wellbeing encompasses the intricate interplay between internal and external factors (Carter, 2016; Carter & Andersen, 2019a; 2023). Internal factors encompass personal and subjective aspects of an individual, including their physical and mental state, coping strategies, and their assessment and perception of their happiness, life satisfaction and overall emotional state. External factors can include cultural and societal factors (norms, values, and attitudes), social support (relationships, community), circumstances and environmental influences (living conditions), and socioeconomic factors (education, employment) that impact an individual's wellbeing. External factors are usually beyond an individual's control. While internal and external factors influence wellbeing, it is also essential to focus on enablers that promote “a feeling of control to create and maintain life balance” and impactors that detract from feelings of control (Carter, 2016; Carter & Andersen, 2019, n. p.). Physical, social, emotional (mental), cognitive, spiritual, and environmental factors shape the quality of individuals' lives and the vibrancy of communities and societies. This research is focused on the conditions of possibility for cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

Next, I focus on understanding wellbeing measures utilised in various fields. Wellbeing conceptualisations are derived from wellbeing measures, and several models are discussed in the literature. I found that while theoretical conceptualisations inform some measures of wellbeing, the relationship between the conceptualisations and measures is not necessarily a direct

formulation. Researchers use various measures to assess and understand overall wellbeing. The choice of specific measures depends on the research objectives and the dimensions of wellbeing under investigation.

The purpose of Table 1 below is an overview (snapshot) of various conceptualisations and measurements. The research literature clarifies that no consensus exists on a single method to measure wellbeing or a single definition. Wellbeing is assessed through objective measures, such as national health statistics and socioeconomic indicators, and subjective measures, such as self-reports, to gain a more comprehensive view of wellbeing (Alatartseva & Barysheva, 2015; Lee et al., 2021; Wallace et al., 2011). Using a blend of subjective and objective measures may enhance understanding of wellbeing.

The different perspectives and cultural influences make understanding wellbeing challenging. Therefore, focusing on wellbeing from various perspectives is imperative.

Currently and more generally, wellbeing is associated with measuring the quality of life (Alatartseva & Barysheva, 2015; Ciziceno, 2022; Costanza et al., 2007; Diener et al., 2010; Ruggeri et al., 2020). As I will discuss in Chapter Three, this synthesis of wellbeing conceptualisations and measures was beneficial to understanding the complexity of wellbeing and that there were no one-size-fits-all, quick measures or fixes to wellbeing. The table below assisted in the creation of the Educator Wellbeing and Resilience Survey (Appendix V).

Table 1

Conceptualisations and Measurements of Wellbeing

Wellbeing	What is it	Measurements (not unique to specific wellbeing areas)
Objective wellbeing	External wellbeing refers to life circumstances that involve tangible and concrete factors that are externally assessable. Physical health, material wellbeing, education, standard of living, safety, security, employment, job satisfaction, and environmental factors can form part of the objective wellbeing conceptualisations.	These are usually seen as measurable and observable aspects of an individual's life that can influence their overall wellbeing and quality of life (Alatartseva & Barysheva, 2015; Lee et al., 2021; Wallace et al., 2011).
Subjective wellbeing (SWB) or Hedonic Wellbeing	It is an individual's self-perceived happiness and life satisfaction. It encompasses positive emotion, a sense of purpose, and overall life contentment.	SWB is often assessed through self-reports, including positive and negative effects and life satisfaction.
Eudaimonic wellbeing	It emphasises personal growth and fulfilment through pursuing meaningful goals and self-realisation. It is often associated with a sense of purpose, personal development, growth, meaning in life, and self-actualisation.	Positive negative/effect- individuals' emotional experiences by capturing positive emotions (joy, happiness) and negative emotions (sadness, anxiety). The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANS) is a commonly used tool (Bhutoria & Hooja, 2018; Laptok et al., 2008; Watson et al., 1988).
Psychological wellbeing (PWB)	An individual's psychological functioning and mental health involve positive psychological traits such as self-acceptance, personal growth, autonomy, positive relationships, and purpose in life.	Life satisfaction - A cognitive evaluation of overall life contentment and fulfilment measures using self-report scales, such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), individuals rate their life on a scale (Diener et al., 1985; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Diener, 2009; Diener et al., 2003; Diener et al., 2018; Renshaw, 2019).
Emotional wellbeing	An individual's ability to manage and express emotions effectively. Recognising and understanding emotions, coping with stress, and fostering emotional resilience.	Subjective Happiness- an individual's subjective sense of happiness and contentment. Subjective Happiness Scale [SHS] (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; Rizzato et al., 2022).

Social Wellbeing	The quality of an individual's relationships and social connections. It encompasses feelings of belonging, support and connection to others and the ability to establish and maintain meaningful relationships.	The quality of individuals' social relationships and social support social connectedness scales assessment of social relationships (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2023; Lee & Robbins, 1998).
Physical wellbeing -	It focuses on physical health and functioning (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992).	Physical fitness levels, health status, and self-reported physical health (McDermott, 2022).
Academic (Educational) wellbeing	Experiences and outcomes in the educational setting pertain to students' experiences and perceptions of their educational environment. They involve school engagement, motivation, and competence in academic tasks.	Academic achievement, engagement, and educational satisfaction (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2022; Huebner et al., 1999).
Economic wellbeing	Economists consider wellbeing focusing on material wealth, economic indicators, and life satisfaction,	Measuring financial aspects of life, income, financial security, and material possessions (Diener et al., 2003; Gurría, 2019)
Environmental (geographical) wellbeing	An individual's relationship to the environment, attitudes, and behaviour (Delagran, 2018; Gifford, 2014).	Mainly objective and subjective measures
Flourishing	A state of optimal functioning and positive mental health. It encompasses high levels of emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing and a sense of fulfilment and thriving (Bharti & Bhatnagar, 2017).	Flourishing - Comprehensive overall wellbeing measures, including emotional, psychological, functioning, social relationships, and Flourishing scale (Diener et al., 2010; McDermott, 2022). Subjective and objective measures
Multi-dimensional wellbeing:	The interconnectedness of various aspects of an individual's life, including physical, emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing. Recognising wellbeing as a holistic and complex phenomenon.	Perceived quality of life- assesses an individual's overall satisfaction and contentment with their life. It considers subjective and objective factors contributing to an individual's sense of wellbeing—psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWBS) (Ryff, 1989; 2017; 2021).

Chapter One notes that Dodge et al. (2012) define wellbeing as a balanced state. The equilibrium between an individual's resources and challenges is essential to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. The idea of balance resonates with my life experiences and educational beliefs. Several theorists' and researchers' (Alagaraja, 2021; Diener, 2009; Ryff, 1989; 2017; Seligman, 2002) views on wellbeing align with those of Dodge et al. (2012). In this research, I have embraced the idea of viewing wellbeing as a positive state with self-regulating processes that can maintain a learned ability to balance opposing forces. Wellbeing also involves cultivating various dispositions to balance one's resource pool with the challenges encountered. This process involves a personal performance, considering collective awareness within a sociocultural community context (Carter & Andersen, 2019a; 2023; McCallum & Price, 2016). My synthesis of the research has highlighted that much of the literature has overlooked the all-important cultural component of wellbeing.

As I have pointed out, defining and trying to understand wellbeing seems challenging because of its complex and multifaceted nature. Consequently, measuring and understanding wellbeing requires considering its nuanced nature and fluctuations (Martela & Ryan, 2021; Tov, 2018). Moreover, wellbeing is not simply a linear continuum with positive and negative extremes; it is a dynamic construct with various perspectives. Therefore, measuring and understanding wellbeing must be an ongoing practice focusing on individual and collective dynamics. In order to understand the state of wellbeing in education, I explored the research.

The State of Wellbeing in Education

Wellbeing is essential to education, influencing learning, academic achievement, and lifelong skills (DECSSA, 2022). Researchers (Carter & Andersen, 2019a; 2023; Marshall J. M.,

2017; Nordin et al., 2021; Zins et al., 2004), governments and national and international organisations (AGDE, 2023; ESA, 2020; NMHC, 2024; WHO, 2023) support the notion that positive wellbeing enhances education, academic success, quality of life, and active citizenship and leadership. Schools can play an important role in nurturing and developing wellbeing. Primary education is the initial stage of formal education and establishes the foundation of a young person's educational journey.

The recent pandemic, along with forces of globalisation, economic conditions, social changes, cultural shifts, technological advancements, family dynamics, and environmental concerns, has significantly transformed people's lives (Bagnall, 2017; Beare, 2007; Jiang et al., 2021; Leach et al., 2021). These transformations have placed new demands and expectations on education, necessitating its adaptation to address the emerging needs of individuals and communities.

This study was initiated at a crucial time, given the alarming research indicating a decline in mental health among young people (Burke et al., 2015; McCallum & Price, 2016; Shaw et al., 2013; Mission Australia, 2013) and educators (McCallum et al., 2017; Roffey, 2012a; 2012b). The situation has not improved since the inception of this study. The COVID-19 Pandemic has further highlighted the importance of wellbeing, with its profound effects on learners (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2023; Jiang et al., 2021; Meyers et al., 2020) and educators (Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care [AGDH], 2021; Bintliff, 2020; Dabrowski, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). Wellbeing is intricately linked with learning, surpassing momentary experiences, and delving into deep learning, including comprehension and introspection. Wellbeing in education encompasses a range of factors, but most importantly, the learners and educators are at the core of all these factors. I will first focus

on students' and educators' state of wellbeing in the literature and then examine the educational tools such as frameworks, policies, programs, and pedagogy.

The State of Student Wellbeing

In the literature, in international and national studies, the age range for the term young people and children can vary depending on the context and the study's organisation. For example, in Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reports on young people and children between 0 and 14, and the AIHW reports on the ages 0 and 12. The terms adolescents (12-19), youth (12-24, 15-24) or young people (0-17, 12-24) are other terms used by the AIHW, UNESCO and WHO. I refer to young people in this research as primary school-age children aged four to 12.

The AIHW defines wellbeing as health, happiness, and contentment (2018) and further states that “childhood is an important time for healthy development, learning, and establishing the foundations for future wellbeing” (AIHW, 2022, p. 5). The reported information on the health and wellbeing of children from birth to 14 states that many young Australians are not performing as well as they should and that children's mental health challenges have increased (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth [ARACY], 2014; AIHW, 2022). There was a substantial deterioration of wellbeing during lockdowns and among those with pre-existing conditions or financial distress. Surveys conducted with parents and caregivers in 2020 and 2021 reported that 35-61% observed negative effects on their children's mental health (Biddle et al., 2021; Renshaw & Seriamlu, 2021; The Royal Children’s Hospital National Child Health Poll [RCHpoll], 2021).

During the inception of this study, the ABS (2015) reported that a staggering 11.3% of Australian children (5-14 years) experienced a mental health disorder in the previous 12 months. This figure grew to one in eight or 12.6% in the past year (ABS, 2022). Australia's latest research on young children's wellbeing covers health, SEL, and SWB. In young people, at least 1 in 10 who participated in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scored in the 'of concern' range. The proportion of children who scored in this range increased with age. For example, those aged between four and six scored 7.3%, those aged between seven and nine scored 11.7%, and those between the age of 10-12 scored in the 12% range (AIHW, 2022b).

The Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2013-14 estimated that 13.9% (one in seven) of four-to-seventeen-year-olds experienced a mental health challenge (Lawrence et al., 2015; 2023; Young Minds, 2016). These are the currently accessible figures for the AIHW (2023) references on their website, stating that there are limited studies on young people and their mental health. More recently, the AGDH (2021) reported on these same figures, and Renshaw and Seriamlu (2021) found substantial deterioration in children's mental health during COVID-19. The Australian Early Developmental Census (AEDC), a government initiative, pointed out that at school entry, almost a quarter (22%) of all children were developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains. Furthermore, 11.4% of children were developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains (2021). The assessable domains are physical health and wellbeing, social competency, emotional maturity, language, communication, and cognitive skills.

The most recent data collections were online during the COVID-19 pandemic and are considered a break-in-time series. According to the AIHW (2022), the data cannot be compared

to previous years and should only be used as a point-in-time analysis. A break in time occurs when the methodology used to collect data or when a significant event, such as a pandemic, impacts data collection. In the 2nd Behind the News Kids' Happiness Survey, among young people, six to 12, at least two out of five indicated that they did not feel happy lots of the time, and at least one in four felt scared or worried at least some of the time (AIHW, 2022).

The escalating impact of wellbeing in education is currently a worldwide priority. According to the WHO (2020), mental health conditions contribute significantly to the global disease burden in children and adolescents. It is indicated that about 20% of children and adolescents worldwide have mental health disorders (WHO, 2020). The available figures for one in seven Australian children aged four to 17 (AIHW, 2022a) are comparable with international statistics (Swist et al., 2015). For example, one in five children in the United States (US) aged three to 17 were diagnosed with mental, emotional, and behavioural disorders, (Snow & McFadden, 2017) and one in six children in the UK aged two to eight is said to have a mental, behavioural, or developmental disorder (Health and Human Services [HHS], 2022). A recent study conducted by the HHS found that there has been a significant rise between 2016 and 2020, with the number of children (three to 17 years) diagnosed with anxiety growing by 29% and those with depression by 27% (HHS, 2022). The findings also suggest concerning changes in child and family wellbeing after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (2022).

The literature presents that, regardless of varying age ranges, many young people globally are experiencing challenges to their wellbeing. The decline in wellbeing among young people has been a priority for decades. This decline in young people's mental health in the past

few decades has also shown that many children seem to begin school and continue through school with less-than-optimal wellbeing.

Wellbeing research is abundant, but the literature on young people's wellbeing needs to be expanded and updated (AIHW, 2022; Swist et al., 2015). The AIHW (2019) states that currently, there is limited data on how children view their experiences at school to support population-level monitoring. The AIHW (2019) conducted a scoping study and discussion about enhancing the measurement of child wellbeing and identifying data gaps and development opportunities. There are many reasons why collecting data with young people is challenging. These may relate to consent, access, data rights, observations, level of comprehension of certain concepts, and language (Facca et al., 2020; Livingstone & O'Neill, 2014; Swist et al., 2015).

According to the WHO (2023a), the UN (2021), and many researchers (Carr-Gregg, 2014; 2023; Radez et al., 2021), approximately 10 - 20 % of young people, children and adolescents experience a mental illness and disorder, yet they do not seek, access, or receive assistance or care. An Australian national study revealed that at least 46% of parents did not know how or where to seek support for their children's mental health (Rhodes & O'Hara, 2018). The research points out that when the early onset of mental health disorders is untreated, they can adversely affect overall health and wellbeing, academic and social outcomes, and increase drug abuse, self-harm, and suicidal behaviour later on. Approximately half of all lifetime mental health challenges begin before or around age 14 or 15 (Colizzi et al., 2020; National Mental Health Commission [NMHC], 2024; World Health Organisation [WHO], 2023a).

While these statistics on access to wellbeing services vary nationally and internationally, they are unacceptably high. There are various contributing factors to why professional care may

not be received, accessed, or utilised. These include a lack of knowledge or understanding about services, accessibility, compatibility, cultural factors, and the stigma of mental illness and cost (NMHC, 2021). These issues affect not only the individual but the wellbeing of the entire group and community.

The wellbeing of young people is a growing global concern, with troubling statistics that have compelled governments nationally and internationally to focus more intensely on wellbeing in education. There are several influences on young people's wellbeing, from temperament, life events, families, schools, and social environments. Mental health challenges can impact students' ability to focus, retain information, engage in classroom activities, and build healthy relationships with peers and educators. Thus, addressing mental health concerns and promoting mental wellbeing is crucial for creating an optimal learning environment that fosters holistic development and successful educational outcomes. Children with positive levels of wellbeing can enjoy life and contribute better to the community and society. Good mental wellbeing enables better learning, negotiating, and coping skills during life challenges.

According to the NMHC (2024) and Australia's leading mental health and wellbeing support organisation, Beyond Blue (2022), early support can enhance mental health conditions and promote wellbeing. When students feel physically and emotionally safe, supported, and engaged in a positive school environment, they are more likely to be motivated to learn, participate actively in classroom activities, and achieve better academic results. Beyond Blue works in partnership with governments, local health services, educational institutions, community organisations, the general community, workplaces, and media to provide community awareness to reduce the associated stigma of mental illness and to support programs to address

issues related to mental illness (Beyond Blue, 2022). When wellbeing intertwines with meaning and learning, it enriches life holistically, moving beyond mere experiences to profound reflection and understanding.

Primary school profoundly shapes young learners' holistic growth and future accomplishments. Schools have the potential to foster wellbeing throughout the entire community. The recognition of wellbeing and its influence on students' academic achievements, social interactions, emotional resilience, and long-term life trajectories has steadily increased. Resilient learners are more likely to be successful and experience optimal wellbeing (Masten, 2018; Reid, 2016; Seligman, 2011; Templeton & Pritchard, 2020). As a result, there is a growing need to explore and understand the concepts of wellbeing in education. Strategies that prioritise mental health support and create a nurturing atmosphere can enhance overall wellbeing and academic success.

It is essential to recognise that educational environments and stakeholders, including learners, educators, and administrators, are influenced by various factors. A positive relationship between wellbeing and education implies that when students are nurtured and supported, they are more likely to engage effectively in learning, exhibit better academic performance, establish positive social interactions, and develop essential life skills. According to Carter and Andersen (2019a), educators play a crucial role in promoting wellbeing among learners. They can work with students to “enable more positive wellbeing and reduce possible negative impacts” (2019a, p. 64). Educators have an important role in promoting positive wellbeing among learners. To model and teach wellbeing practices and positively impact students, teachers must first be well themselves (McCallum & Price, 2010). When educators experience optimal wellbeing, are

interested, enthusiastic, committed, and enjoy what they do, their students are offered the best experiences and chances of success at school. Therefore, if we are to promote a sustainable wellbeing state (Cummins, 2010; 2016; O'Mahony, 2022) in the classroom, at school, and in education, Roffey (2012a; 2012b) asserts that teacher wellbeing should also become a priority.

The State of Educator Wellbeing

In the 21st century, various changes to family dynamics, economic conditions and Information Communication Technology (ICT) have changed the nature of teaching and learning. The evolution and transformation of educator work and how it is managed and regulated have added new challenges to education. The recent pandemic has also intensified the situation. Educator wellbeing in the literature exposes a grim picture. Teaching does not seem attractive in the 21st century, and teachers are exiting the profession prematurely due to stress and dissatisfaction with their careers.

During the inception of this study, Roffey (2012b), discussing research on educator wellbeing, argued that studies conducted worldwide (in Australia, the United States, Britain, and Europe) show comparable results on educator challenges. The educator's mental health challenges and burnout have continued to worsen. Studies have continued to report that teacher burnout rates are high worldwide, and the number of teachers leaving the profession has also increased (Carroll et al., 2022; Hakanen et al., 2006; Jennings, 2015; 2019; Pillay et al., 2005).

The Black Dog Institute (2023), the internationally recognised Australian organisation, is dedicated to advancing mental health in Australia. In a recent press release, the Black Dog Institute (2023) stated that almost half (46.8%) of Australian teachers are considering leaving the

profession within the next 12 months, an increase of 14% since 2021. Teaching is a demanding profession with many challenges. In Australia, 52% of teachers report moderate to extremely severe symptoms of depression compared to 12.1% in the general population, and 59.7% of teachers report anxiety compared to 11.4% in the general population (Black Dog Institute, 2023).

Factors such as burnout, anxiety, stress, workload pressure, and lack of support for educators are contributing factors to educators exiting the profession early (Carroll et al., 2022; Dabrowski, 2020; Hakanen et al., 2006; McCallum et al., 2017; Plunkett & Dyson, 2011; Ziebell et al., 2020). Elevated levels of educator stress can relate to workload expectations and work conditions (McCallum & Price, 2016; Ziebell et al., 2020). Increased focus on performance, standards, testing, the crowded curriculum, and literacy and numeracy agendas have been ongoing challenges for educators. Jones and colleagues (2017) assert that educator wellbeing reflects professional satisfaction, job satisfaction, and individual tasks.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further disrupted education and intensified educator stress and burnout (Dabrowski, 2020; Mawa, 2021; Ziebell et al., 2020). Work-related pressure was further intensified with pressure placed on educators due to school closures, digital teaching, online schooling, staff shortages, physical and mental health concerns (Dabrowski, 2020; Pressley, 2021) and increased educator work challenges (Ziebell et al., 2020).

Educators face far more than teaching and learning challenges. They also face challenges working with students, parents and other educators who present with behavioural (aggression), social (communication), and emotional (anxiety and stress) challenges (De Vos & Kirsten, 2015; Ellis et al., 2015; McMahon et al., 2017; Poling et al., 2019; Sklirou & Papakonstantinou, 2023). Hostile environments add to the stress incurred from work-related pressures.

How teachers cope with challenges and stressors in the profession may impact education systems, specifically students. Roffey (2012a; 2012b) states that the quality of relationships impacts teacher wellbeing. According to the AITSL (2022) and many researchers (Gray et al., 2017; Kuril et al., 2021; McCallum et al., 2017; Turner & Thielking, 2019), poor teacher engagement impacts student engagement. Emotionally exhausted teachers contribute to an adverse classroom climate and poor student-teacher relationships (Jones et al., 2017; McCallum, 2023; McCallum & Price, 2010), impacting overall wellbeing. Continued inattention to work-related pressure and life challenges can mount long-term stress.

When educators are time-poor and stressed, thoughts of wellbeing and self-care may not be a priority (Murray-Harvey & Slee, 2007; Yong & Yue, 2007). Personal wellbeing is considered a professional responsibility for all educators within education and care services (Lemon, 2021; Lennon & Sanfins, 2022). Wellbeing comprises multiple levels, and self-care is a fundamental aspect of life and wellbeing (Lemon, 2021; Lennon & Sanfins, 2022). As discussed previously, it is also important not to misunderstand self-care merely as individual or personal attention; self-care must be managed systematically (Dalton & Hoyser, 2021; Lemon, 2021).

The importance of educator wellbeing is expressed in the literature, yet there needs to be more expertise and assistance offered to educators within the education setting (Beyond Blue, 2015; Cassidy et al., 2017; Dabrowski et al., 2020). The unrealistic expectations placed on teachers are proving to be a challenge to education and the wellbeing of teachers and students. Attention to the collective experiences of wellbeing and self-care are essential factors in education.

Educators have a significant role in students' lives, and Yong and Yue (2007), along with McCallum and Price (2010), believe that there is a flow-on effect with *well teachers promoting well students*. Educators profoundly affect student success and wellbeing at school (McCallum & Price, 2010). Positive Teacher-student relationships are essential in behaviour management, teaching, and learning (Hattie, 2009; 2012). Carter and Andersen (2019a) and Carter (2016) propose that wellbeing should be promoted positively and proactively, while McCallum and Price (2016) point out the importance of a holistic perspective. The literature review shows consistent evidence of the importance of student-teacher relationships and social environments for wellbeing (Jones et al., 2017; McCallum, 2023; McCallum & Price, 2010). McCallum et al. (2017) point out that when teachers who model wellbeing are equipped with life skills and optimal wellbeing, students have positive role models who can nurture their learning.

Schools are places of learning and socialisation; therefore, paying close attention to the environment and relationships may assist in enhancing and sustaining wellbeing. To understand the enormity of the challenges educators and education deal with, we must first understand the state of wellbeing among educators. Many impactors and enablers (Carter, 2016) are internal and external to the individual and the educational setting. These can influence the wellbeing of educators and learners. Practical ongoing support for educators is essential to enhance their wellbeing (Jones et al., 2017; McCallum, 2023; McCallum & Price, 2010). The most crucial factors when considering educator wellbeing should be support and understanding, awareness, self-care, paying attention, and identifying enablers and impactors within the individual and the education community (Carter, 2016; Carter & Andersen, 2019a).

The WHO (2021) indicated a substantial international shortfall of 4.2 million healthcare professionals as another significant contributing factor to the mental health crisis. The WHO (2021) highlighted this shortfall of mental health workers, suggesting linkage to other sectors (such as education and places of employment). Mental health promotional activities in schools became a major international priority. Wellbeing at school is essential, and education policy focuses on preparing children socially and emotionally for the 21st century (WHO, 2021).

Despite the growing emphasis on integrating wellbeing into education by stakeholders, policymakers and researchers, its practical implementation within educational settings has proven to be a complex challenge for educators. The crowded curriculum and literacy and numeracy agendas leave teachers time-poor, stressed, and unable to cope with other demands. Adding more expectations into the curriculum only adds to the stress, and wellbeing enhancement merely becomes educators' responsibility.

During the inception of this study, I was astounded to read an article in the Sydney Morning Herald by Bagshaw titled; *We do not have time for mental health: Teachers* (2015). In this article, Bagshaw discussed an educator survey conducted by Beyond Blue, stating that almost 100% of educators considered mental health to be as important as academic achievement; however, 22% did not believe it was their responsibility to address the mental health of students, and 47% did not have the time to dedicate to achieving positive mental health outcomes (Bagshaw, 2015). Participants in the above study further stated that they did not have the tools available to address mental health concerns, and one-third said that schools did not provide enough training for staff to support student mental health (Beyond Blue, 2015).

Implementing skills for wellbeing in education in the 21st century is challenging, as noted by many researchers and educators (Cassidy et al., 2017; Dabrowski et al., 2020; Waters, 2017). While many SEL programs are available for schools to implement, their effectiveness is debatable. The benefits when integrating new wellbeing programs into the curriculum are evident, but the issue of their long-term sustainability remains a concern (Carter & Andersen, 2019a; 2023; McCallum & Price, 2016).

Macaulay (2008) also states that these programs are conducted over a limited timeframe with limited funding and are well known to have a short lifespan. More evidence is needed regarding how and for how long educators or educational contexts utilise these programs (Macaulay, 2008). There are also further challenges with taking for granted educators' expertise, knowledge, and confidence to implement these programs, policies, and directives. Waters (2017), when offering Visible Wellbeing (VWB) programs to schools, discusses her "evidence-based organised approach to positive teacher practices" and argues "that while teachers are committed to student wellbeing, many are unsure of what is an effective practice" (Waters, 2017, pp. 7-8). The education issue is intensified by teachers' wellbeing in the classroom and their lack of knowledge or capacity to address the needs of young people's health and low wellbeing. Recently, a higher priority has been placed on educator wellbeing (AITSL, 2022). I will discuss strategies, initiatives, and programs highlighting educator wellbeing in the following sections.

Education sectors have acknowledged the need for schools to address mental health issues, and teachers are expected to engage in curriculum activities that promote and support students' wellbeing. The challenge the education context faces is to define wellbeing more clearly and select and develop concept models before implementing wellbeing initiatives and

programs (Carter & Andersen, 2019a; 2023; McCallum & Price, 2016). Next, I focus on frameworks, strategies, policies, curricula, pedagogies, and programs available in education.

Educational Wellbeing Tools (Frameworks, Strategies, Policy, Curriculum, Pedagogy)

Lifelong Learning, confidence and social-emotional skills contribute to wellbeing and life satisfaction (Mcleod, 2023). Wellbeing is accepted as an essential part of learning and appears in school policy documents, as evidenced by initiatives, strategies, and frameworks in the DET (2019). For any organisation, including education, to achieve strategic and specific goals, a set of guidelines, objectives and procedures is essential. Wellbeing and mental health are global concerns, affecting many individuals regardless of age or race. The WHO's Comprehensive Mental Health Plan 2013 - 2030 (updated in 2019 and 2021) recognises the essential role of mental health and wellbeing in achieving health for all people. It provides four primary objectives (2021)

- Strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health
- Provide comprehensive, integrated, responsive mental health and social care services in community-based settings
- Implement strategies for the promotion and prevention of mental health.
- Strengthen information systems, evidence, and research for mental health (WHO, 2021, p. 5).

The WHO (2023b) Framework on Mental Health and Wellbeing in School: A Global Perspective provides a comprehensive overview of mental health and wellbeing among school-

aged children and adolescents worldwide and highlights the importance of promoting mental health and wellbeing in education. The report states that wellbeing and mental health play a crucial role in shaping children's and adolescents' mental health.

Wellbeing in education is a worldwide issue and has been addressed globally and nationally. Frameworks and strategies are action plans designed to achieve specific goals. They are general and flexible structures, guidelines, rules, and best practices that provide a foundation for understanding complex issues. The Australian Wellbeing Framework (Education Services Australia, 2020) and The National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (NMHC, 2022) are used in Australia to guide the development of policies, initiatives, programs, and projects in education. Policy documents are formal guidelines that outline goals and strategies to achieve specific objectives. For example, an educational policy document will determine curriculum standards, assessments, procedures, and codes of conduct. The Department of Education in different states in Australia has used the Wellbeing Framework to enhance and create wellbeing policies. I will focus on the overarching frameworks, strategies, and policies and then explore programs and pedagogies to cultivate dispositions for wellbeing.

Wellbeing Frameworks, Strategies and Policy

The WHO and UNESCO have launched an inspiring initiative, "Making Every School a Health Promoting School," advocating for schools, communities, and educational systems to adopt a health promotion focus (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2021, p. 7; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2022). In response to the wellbeing needs of students and alignment with WHO recommendations, school communities and educational systems have endeavoured to adopt a health promotion focus. Lee et al. (2021),

argue that effective implementation is complex and involves multifactorial and innovative activities in many domains, such as curriculum, environment, and community.

Australia is among the first countries to adopt a “Health Promoting Schools” approach (2021). Australian states and schools utilise wellbeing frameworks and strategies as a guide to improve each of their health and wellbeing policies. An example of health promotion schools in action is Western Australian schools working in partnership with Healthway (2024), a Healthy Community Program (providing funding for sports, arts, health promotion projects, community activities, and research) to help create health and wellbeing for students (Healthway, 2020). Activities such as these align with the health-promoting schools' framework. Many educational wellbeing policies and frameworks are geared toward students; educators are expected to implement these in the classrooms. Education policies and guidelines emphasise the view of the whole child, pointing out that education should focus on wellbeing and cognitive outcomes.

Currently, several strategies specify the importance of wellbeing in early childhood. “Australia's first National Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy provides a framework and foundation for lifelong mental health and wellbeing during childhood, with a whole-of-community approach (NMHC, 2021, p.3). The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority provided the National Quality Framework, which includes two approved learning frameworks that support early childhood educators and promote children's learning. They are the

- Belonging Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (ACECQA, 2018).

- My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia (ACECQA, 2019).

The EYLF is for young children from birth to five years of age and explicitly includes wellbeing in learning outcome three, stating that children have a strong sense of wellbeing, including promoting children to become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2022).

Additionally, EYLF, The Belonging, Being and Becoming Framework, emphasises that sound wellbeing results from satisfying basic needs, including physical, social-emotional, and mental health (ACECQA, 2018). The AITSL (2022) suggests the need for tenderness and affection, security and clarity, social recognition, competence, physical demands and meaning in life. Wellbeing includes “happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning, and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity, and resilience” (DEEWR, 2022, p. 69) and cultivating these dispositions can be valuable in education.

The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework “provides Australian schools with a vision and guiding principles to support school communities in building positive learning environments and consider reviewing their current safety and wellbeing policies and support requirements” (AGDE, 2023, para. 1). The Wellbeing Framework consists of an overarching vision, essential elements, guiding principles, and effective practices to support the whole school community in building and maintaining safety, positive relationships, and wellbeing. The five essential elements of the wellbeing framework are

- **Leadership** - School leaders and principals play an active role in building positive learning environments where the whole school community feels included, connected, safe and respected
- **Inclusion** - All school community members are active participants in building a welcoming school culture that values diversity and fosters positive, respectful relationships
- **Student Voice** - Students are active participants in their learning and wellbeing, feel connected and use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe
- **Partnerships** - Families and communities collaborate as partners with the school to support student learning, safety, and wellbeing
- **Support** - School staff, students, and families share and cultivate an understanding of wellbeing and support for positive behaviour and how this supports effective teaching and learning (AITSL, 2020, p.115; AGDE, 2023, para. 3).

The framework is based on evidence recognising the strong linkages between student safety, wellbeing, and learning outcomes (2023). The framework “provides school communities with best-practices advice on developing and implementing policies and support mechanisms to help all students from the first year of schooling to year 12” (2023, para. 2). The Ministers of Education have endorsed the Wellbeing Framework through the Education Council.

The National Catholic Education Commission [NCEC] (2023a; 2023b) states that “All Catholic education peak bodies, systems and school communities have policies and strategies to create a culture of safety and wellbeing where all students are safe, feel safe, and can flourish in their learning and personal development” (NCEC, 2023a, para. 10). Catholic schools use a range

of related frameworks, policies, programs, resources, and practices to support students' mental health and wellbeing. These include “government-provided initiatives such as the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, The Student Wellbeing Hub and the National Schools Chaplaincy Program” and school-level implemented programs (NCEC, 2023a, para. 8). There are many school-level wellbeing initiatives that are being utilised to support and enhance the wellbeing of students within the Catholic School community. They include and are not limited to student wellbeing and pastoral care policies, the Student Wellbeing Framework, Wellbeing Together, Student Wellbeing and Learning Across the Whole School, Positive Behaviour for Learning, SEL Programs and Youth Mental Health First Aid.

The literature points out several strategies, frameworks, and policies across the primary and early childhood sectors regarding wellbeing in education. The WHO (2015; 2018; 2023a) mentions positive psychology interventions, SEL programs, the Arts and mindfulness practices as effective interventions in publications and reports. Like many other countries worldwide, within Australia, wellbeing frameworks are built into the school policy to support schools in creating a positive learning and teaching environment. These ideas will be discussed further in this chapter and elaborated on in MMETTAS Pedagogy in Chapter Three.

The Australian Curriculum (version 9) is guided by the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. The declaration stipulates that “education plays a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation’s ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion” (Council of Australian Governments, Education Council., 2020, p. 3).

It is important to reiterate that dimensions of wellbeing can vary across different disciplines, frameworks, and contexts. The dimensions discussed below were addressed in both the then-current (during the study's early phase) Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) and the current Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Council of Australian Governments, Education Council., 2020). Both declarations mention that these dimensions contribute to the holistic development of the wellbeing of students. Intellectual or cognitive wellbeing stimulates and develops an individual's mind and intellect (Fuhrmann et al., 2021). Both Declarations acknowledge the role of schools in promoting intellectual development, highlighting the importance of fostering students' cognitive abilities, critical thinking skills, and knowledge acquisition (ACARA, 2023). Intellectual wellbeing also encompasses pursuing knowledge, curiosity, and lifelong learning (Siegel, 2012; 2017; 2022; Yetton et al., 2019). Next, I discuss the wellbeing dimensions mentioned in the Declarations above.

- **Physical** wellbeing refers to an individual's physical health and vitality. It encompasses physical fitness, nutrition, sleep, and overall bodily functioning (Capió et al., 2014). The Declarations recognise schools' significance in facilitating young Australians' physical development (ACARA, 2023a).
- **Spiritual** wellbeing focuses on an individual's inner sense of meaning, purpose, and connection. Spiritual development encompasses exploring personal meaning, values, and beliefs and promoting a sense of purpose and connection to something greater than oneself (Bowlby, 2021; Kreitzer, 2012; Ryff, 2021).

- **Moral** wellbeing refers to an individual's behaviours, values, and ethical principles. It involves acting in alignment with one's moral compass and having a sense of integrity (Suikkanen, 2014). Moral wellbeing encompasses empathy, honesty, fairness, and responsibility toward others and the community (ACARA, n.d.; Suikkanen, 2014). The Declaration recognises the importance of ethical awareness, promoting values, and instilling a sense of responsibility and ethical conduct among students (ACARA, n.d.).
- **Aesthetic** wellbeing relates to appreciating and enjoying beauty, creativity, and sensory experiences. It involves finding pleasure and inspiration in various art forms, nature, music, literature, culture, and other aesthetic expressions (De Abreu, 2020; Mastandrea et al., 2019).
- **Emotional** wellbeing, according to the AIHW (2012; 2016; 2018), refers to an individual's thoughts and feelings about themselves, including their ability to adapt and cope with daily challenges, demonstrating resilience. The Declarations acknowledge the importance of addressing students' emotional wellbeing, promoting emotional intelligence and self-awareness, and developing skills to manage emotions and build resilience (ACARA, n.d.).
- **Social** wellbeing, according to the AIHW (2019; 2020; 2022), relates to how an individual's characteristics contribute to positive interactions with family and community. Schools are vital in promoting social skills and positive relationships and cultivating community and social cohesion among young Australians (ACARA, n.d.).

- **Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEW)** is often considered a single component and is defined as positive emotional functioning rather than the absence of mental health disorders such as anxiety or depression (Dudgeon et al., 2014; Park et al., 2023; Ruggeri et al., 2020). In this study, to sustain a positive state of wellbeing, SEW (psychological or mental) is seen as the driving force for overall wellbeing.

The many dimensions of wellbeing are interconnected and contribute to an individual's overall sense of holistic wellbeing. Engaging in activities stimulating these dimensions can enhance overall wellbeing and bring joy and fulfilment (DET, 2019). The various aspects reflect the multidimensional nature of wellbeing and highlight the importance of addressing multiple dimensions of life to achieve a balanced and fulfilled existence.

Wellbeing in the Australian Curriculum

A curriculum is the content, materials, and resources used to teach and the objectives, goals, and standards students are expected to meet. Programs and initiatives usually encompass the content taught and are seen as the curriculum, while pedagogy and education styles refer to method and strategy (Killian, 2019; Sturt, 2017). There are three main components in the Australian Curriculum. These components include learning areas such as English, mathematics, science, health, and physical education [HPE], humanities and social sciences [HASS], and the Arts, technologies, and languages. The curriculum also emphasises **general capabilities** like Literacy, Numeracy, Digital Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capabilities, Ethical Understanding, and Intercultural Understanding. Furthermore, the **cross-curricular priorities** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia and Sustainability are integral to the curriculum's overall framework (ACARA, 2022; 2023a; 2023b).

Wellbeing as a concept in the Australian Curriculum is addressed through the Personal and Social Capabilities (a general capability). General capabilities are a set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions considered essential for students to succeed in learning and life beyond school. These capabilities are meant to be developed across all learning areas, and the strand of personal and social capabilities encompass skills in four areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social management or relationship (ACARA, 2023b) relevant to wellbeing. The personal and social capabilities icon is depicted within each learning area's content, descriptors, and elaborations. These icons indicate where these skills can be developed and applied (2022; 2023a; 2023b).

While the HPE learning area is the most popular for teaching these skills (depicts icon), personal and social capabilities can support and deepen all learning areas. Students are expected to develop the understanding and skills to make healthy and safe choices to enhance their health and wellbeing (ACARA, 2023a). HPE is usually taught by a specialist teacher who provides mostly physical activity lessons with students for approximately two lessons in the school week or one and a half hours a week. My personal experience is that school curricula have always focused on health and fitness, failing to provide a holistic view of health and wellbeing (Horne, 2021; Milne, 2023; Wyn, 2009b). I will focus on pedagogies, initiatives and programs next.

Wellbeing Pedagogies

Pedagogy is how learners learn and how educators create supportive learning environments. Pedagogy encompasses a wide range of approaches to teaching and learning, including instructional methods, assessment strategies, curriculum design, principles, classroom management systems, theories, and techniques to facilitate teaching/learning and promote

learners' holistic (intellectual, social, emotional) development (Freire, 1970; Killian, 2019).

Pedagogy is a concept of education defined as the art and science of teaching referring to the theory and practice of education that influences the growth and development of learners (Dewey, 1916; 1938a; Freire, 1970; Killian, 2019; Vygotsky, 1978). Effective Pedagogy considers students' diverse needs, backgrounds and learning styles and aims to create engaging, meaningful learning experiences. A pedagogy helps educators understand how best to support the learning and development of their students.

Several initiatives and programs focus on integrating wellbeing principles into educational practice. These initiatives and programs aim to create a positive and supportive learning environment that nurtures students' holistic development, fosters positive relationships, and promotes overall wellbeing. Examples of these wellbeing initiatives, programs and pedagogies are outlined in the table below (see Table 2). While I present these under the banner of 'pedagogies, in the table below, these terms (education techniques, curriculum, initiatives, programs, pedagogies) are used interchangeably in the literature. There are subtle differences, yet they all seem to have a mutual goal.

I have extended arts-based pedagogy (discussed in Chapter Three) to include a range of hands-on experiential learning processors, mindfulness, MET, The Arts and Stories to create innovative learning experiences. I incorporated several ideas and focused on experiential learning within MMETTAS Pedagogy. The insights gained from the literature were utilised to enhance MMETTAS Pedagogy, which was incorporated into this study. Pedagogy becomes arts-based when instructional strategies, particularly those involving learning by doing and experiential learning, occur through various mediums (Ranatunga, 2013; Ranatunga et al., 2014).

Table 2

Wellbeing Pedagogies and Programs

Pedagogy/ Program	References	Focus	Strategies
Place-based education	(Sobel, 2014)	Connects learning to the local environment, fosters a sense of belonging	Environmental awareness and social connection
Outdoor & Experiential Education	(Dillon et al., 2017; Priest & Gass, 2005)	Learning through hands-on experience in natural environments	Physical activity, connection to nature, personal growth
Mindfulness & Wellbeing Practices	(Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; 2003).	Integrated into the curriculum to assist self-awareness, manage stress, and enhance mental and emotional states	Meditation, deep breathing
Hope Pedagogy, Hope & Environmental Education	(Bourn, 2021; Cherry, 2016; Halpin, 2001; Halpin & Halpin, 2002; Jarrett, 2014; Ojala, 2017)	Motivate and create hope to address environmental challenges	Embedding teaching of hope within environmental education
Holistic Education (Curriculum)	(Miller J. P., 2000; Miller et al., 2005)	Development of students' physical, emotional, social, and cognitive aspects	Encourages educators to address students' needs as whole individuals rather than focusing solely on academic achievements
Caring and supportive classroom environment	(Noddings, 1992; 1995a; 1995b; Zins et al., 2004)	Positive relationships, inclusivity, respect	A pedagogical approach
SEL Programs	(Crawley, 2022; Durlak et al., 2011; Schwartz &	skills to manage emotional development, positive relationships, and make responsible decisions	To enhance students' SEL competencies.

Skoog, 2021; Shafer, 2017)

Visible Learning	(Hattie, 2009; 2012)	For real learning to occur, it needs to be seen and not just assumed. When students become competent, they “exhibit self-regulatory attributes” such as “self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-assessment, self-teaching” that are desirable for learning (Hattie, 2009; 2012).	In the classroom, educators teach students how to use learning intentions and success criteria to monitor their learning. Learners are taught to know what they are learning, why they are learning, how they will know they have learned, and what it means to have learned (Hattie, 2009; 2012)
Visible Wellbeing™ (VWB) framework	(Waters, 2017; 2018; 2022; Waters & Loton, 2019)	VWB is built on Seligman’s (2012) positive education and Hattie’s (2009; 2012)) visible learning concepts. A flexible approach that combines the science of wellbeing (the science of positive psychology) with the science of learning (Waters, 2017; 2018; 2022; Waters & Loton, 2019)	Waters (2017; 2018; 2022) asserts that schools should be guided by Curriculum and culture, programs and practice, and students and staff.
Positive Education	(Seligman et al., 2009)	“A positive education pedagogy helps teachers to see & build wellbeing as a resource for individual students & at the classroom level” (Waters, 2022, p. 2). Combine traditional education with principles of positive psychology to enhance students' emotional resilience, character strengths and overall wellbeing. To promote positive mental health states and flourishing within school communities (Linkins et al., 2015; Norrish et al., 2013; Seligman et al., 2009)	Practices, mindfulness, gratitude, and character education in the curriculum. Combination of student-centred learning and relational learning. Offer educators a range of methods that can be used to make wellbeing more visible in the classroom (Suldo et al., 2011).
Arts-based Education	(Eisner, 1981; 2002; Ewing, 2013; Grigg & Lewis, 2018; Nutbrown, 2013)	Incorporating arts education to foster creativity, self-expression, and emotional exploration	Contribute to social and emotional development and wellbeing.

Due to the scope of this study, I have narrowed this exploration to discuss specific areas, namely, positive psychology, SEL, mindfulness, creativity, and arts-based approaches to wellbeing education. This process has made my literature review more manageable and feasible and given me an in-depth understanding of the theories, principles, and practice applications. These areas are recommended by the WHO and discussed in the various action plans and reports available. I have prior experience applying programs that utilise these concepts, and therefore, I can contribute meaningfully to educational wellbeing while maintaining a clear, manageable research scope.

Wellbeing Programs in Schools

There are several programs on wellbeing education offered to schools globally and nationally. Many of these programs, initiatives, and resources focus on enhancing students' wellbeing, not educators'. Educators are expected to implement them in the classroom. Some programs also require educators to receive training to implement them effectively. There are costs involved in the learning and implementation, and these programs are offered as an added extra to classroom learning. It is essential to search for evidence-based programs that align with the values and goals of the educational institution. Most evidence-based mental health and wellbeing programs, initiatives, and school resources are specifically tailored for students of varying ages and provide whole-school approaches. The best programs for a particular school will depend on the needs of students and the school community.

Several online databases and projects offer information for educators to access these programs, providing resources and identifying effective programs. For example, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2022), The National

Institute on Mental Health (NIMH), Classcraft (Crawley, 2022), Edutopia (Schwartz & Skoog, 2021), Harvard Graduate School of Education (Shafer, 2017) provides guidelines for schools when choosing SEL programs. The Resilience Project, Reach Out, the Monash University study (Berger et al., 2020), The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (The Wellbeing Hub), Be You, Headspace, and AITSL provide resources and guidelines for best programs. Many studies argue the value of SEL and the Arts to educational wellbeing (Eisner, 1981; 2002; Ewing, 2013; Grigg & Lewis, 2018; Nutbrown, 2013; Sinclair et al., 2012).

Be You is a program for learning communities and includes educator resources and wellbeing tools (Beyond Blue, 2022). Beyond Blue is a recognised charity organisation in Australia and was appointed by the government to lead the Be You: The National Education Initiative (2022). This program was built on five existing programs: Kids Matter Early Childhood, Kids Matter Primary, Mind Matters, Response Ability and Headspace School Support (Beyond Blue, 2022). The *Be You* program, specifically the Early Childhood Educator Wellbeing Project (ECEWP, 2018) and The Early Years Learning Framework (ACECQA, 2018), provide educational leader resources with guidelines, expectations, and ideas for personal development and reflection for educational leaders. Suitably qualified and experienced educators, coordinators, or other individuals working in the education sector are considered education leaders (ACECQA, 2018) who are expected to source and implement programs. McCallum and Price (2016), Roffey (2012a; 2012b), Jones, Hadley, and Johnstone (2017), and Waters and Loton (2019) are other researchers who have paid attention specifically to the educator and their wellbeing.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Initiatives and Programs. Social and Emotional learning is critical to children's learning, development (CASEL, 2022) and wellbeing. Developing a student's social and emotional competencies, such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, encompasses SEL (Weissberg et al., 2015). They usually assist students in exploring specific skills, and these programs are expected to be implemented by educators. During the inception of my study, many of the initiatives and resources were in an early stage of development. The schools I approached lacked wellbeing and skills-building programs for their students or educators.

According to Berger et al. (2020), these programs can demonstrate long-term student wellbeing outcomes. While evidence indicates that SEL and positive psychology programs can improve young people's functioning and behaviour (Greensburg et al., 2017; Waters & Loton, 2019), there are also several challenges with implementing these programs. As discussed in the literature, educators are currently experiencing challenges with their wellbeing, and expectations of implementing wellbeing programs for students (with minimal support) in the classroom can be unrealistic. Implementing wellbeing programs can be challenging for various reasons, and the need for more expertise and limited support are some pressing issues.

The arts, creativity, positive psychology, and SEL are evolving fields. Insights from these areas offer innovative strategies that can inspire educators to adopt novel methods for cultivating wellbeing. I will elaborate on positive psychology programs and initiatives next. The Arts, SEL and positive education, which incorporate positive psychology, align with broader education goals. Enhancing students' overall development of evidence-based practices that positively

impact educational environments is essential. Incorporating these innovative ideas in my study is timely and relevant to the latest trends in education and wellbeing. They encompass multiple dimensions of wellbeing, providing a more holistic understanding of how various aspects connect.

Positive Psychology Programs and Initiatives. Positive psychology uses empirical social science methods and draws on rich human traditions. Seligman (2018), along with other theorists, have discussed positive psychology techniques such as the science of positive experiences, individual traits, social support, institutions, and character strengths to cultivate wellbeing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990; 2014; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Schwanen & Atkinson, 2014). I have discussed positive psychology in this chapter and elaborated on the PERMA Framework. Seligman (2014; 2018) points out that character strengths are the backbone of the PERMA model and the key to personal growth and flourishing. Peterson and Seligman (2004) assert that acting on and understanding character strengths gives an individual more positive emotion, engagement, better relationships, meaning, achievement and accomplishment. Seligman (2014) contends that having PERMA equals flourishing. Peterson and Seligman (2004), with a team of 50 researchers, built on the classification of character strengths (Barron, 2014; Gordon, 2022). I have elaborated on this in Table 3 below.

*Table 3**Virtues and Character Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)*

Virtues	Character Strengths
Wisdom/Knowledge	creativity, curiosity, judgement, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective, critical thinking
Courage	honesty, bravery, persistence, perseverance, integrity, zest
Humanity	kindness, capacity to love and be loved, social intelligence
Justice	fairness, leadership, teamwork, citizenship
Temperance	forgiveness and mercy, modesty and humility, prudence, self-regulation
Transcendence	Appreciation of beauty, excellence, gratitude, hope, humour, religiousness, spirituality

Developing virtuous characteristics, strengths, pathways, or agency are other ideas discussed in the literature (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011; Fredrickson, 2000). These characteristics are related to positive psychology and focus on happiness and flourishing. These characteristics (wisdom, temperance, honesty, and gratitude) refer to positive traits and are considered morally good. Strengths (hope, optimism, goal setting) are positive qualities that can assist individuals in achieving goals and overcoming challenges. Pathways or agencies (efficacy, pre-existing conditions, energising factors, optimal performance, authenticity) refer to how individuals achieve their goals and fulfil their potential. These ideas can assist in forming frameworks for understanding how individuals can develop positive traits and reach their full potential.

Waters (2017), who trademarked the term Visible Wellbeing™ (VWB), combines the science of wellbeing with the science of learning and offers several positive psychology-based wellbeing programs to schools and other organisations, such as partnerships and whole school programs, online training, and in-house training. Waters (2019) elaborates, stating that students involved in these positive wellbeing programs enhanced their wellbeing, became more engaged in school, and found school more enjoyable. Waters' (2019) wellbeing approach in education follows Seligman's ideas on positive psychology and Hattie's (2009; 2012) visible learning. Waters (2018) points out that the findings from several intervention studies show higher learning outcomes for students who undertake wellbeing intervention programs. This flexible approach integrates student wellbeing into the learning process at any year level within any subject. The VWB approach "integrates three fields of positive education, Visible thinking, and visible learning" (Waters, 2017, p. 8).

According to Seligman et al. (2009) and Waters (2017), a by-product of wellbeing education is that students who feel good do better and boost their learning capacity. Seligman et al. (2009) research on positive education discusses three key reasons why we should teach the science of positive psychology, stating that it can act as an aid to reduce depression, enhance life satisfaction, and boost learning and creativity. Positive education and positive psychology-based interventions focus on cultivating an individual's patterns of thinking and feeling (Seligman et al., 2009). Several of the programs mentioned above are backed by research and positive psychology.

Dabrowski (2020) highlights the significance of acknowledging the cultural intricacies within educational institutions. This highlights the importance of implementing organisational-

level interventions rather than focusing solely on individual wellbeing initiatives that target individual wellbeing. Dabrowski (2020) and (2020) and Naghieh et al. (2015) have discussed the importance of enhancing wellbeing through social capital and examined the importance of understanding the cultural context and creating supportive relationships within the school. Positive psychology utilises several ideas to enhance flourishing.

Mindfulness is combined with positive psychology research discussing positive outcomes (Ackerman, 2019; Allen et al., 2021; Shapiro et al., 2007; 2008). The potential benefits of mindfulness for mental health, managing stress, anxiety, depression and pain are discussed extensively in the research (Be You, 2023; Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; 2003; 2020). I was keen to focus on innovative ideas to enhance the wellbeing of educators and learners. I have addressed mindfulness in Chapter One and will explore mindfulness further in Chapter Three Arts (MMETTAS Pedagogy). Creativity and the Arts are essential components of MMETTAS Pedagogy. Creativity and the Arts are vital to education and a holistic pedagogy and should be utilised more effectively in education (Eisner, 1981; 2002; Robinson, 2012; 2019). The potential of arts-based pedagogy to enhance education is vast and intriguing. I will elaborate on creativity and arts-based initiatives next.

Creativity-Based Initiatives

The Arts Council England (2022), a leading authority in the Arts, has extensively researched and documented the connection between creativity and wellbeing. A growing body of research suggests a link between creativity, culture, health, and wellbeing, contributing to a long history of understanding in this area (Field, 2021; Newpoff et al., 2018; Malchiodi, 2016; Suttie, 2017). Expressing oneself through artistic and creative activities can improve physical health and

wellbeing (relieve stress, anxiety, and depression); however, the full extent of this connection is yet to be understood, and further research is needed to deepen our understanding (Daniel, 2018; 2020; Kaufman, 2011; 2018). The Creativity and Wellbeing Hallmark Research Initiative works across disciplines to learn more about wellbeing and creativity and how creativity can help us live happier and healthier lives (Rocke, 2022). Creative Workspace is an initiative of the Australian Government's National Cultural Policy: REVIVE, a comprehensive policy launched in January 2023 to revitalise and promote cultural activities across the nation (Creative Australia, 2023). These initiatives and frameworks guide organisations, health professionals and local authorities to work together to develop and implement creative and cultural programs (Cleaver, 2023).

There are three major theoretical perspectives on creativity: behavioural, personality, and cognitive theories. Skinner (1976) views creativity as initiated by genetics and the environment. Other views on creativity stipulate that creativity is a thinking (cognitive) state, a mental operation, a conscious choice, and a learned behaviour that can be improved (Sternberg, 2006). Engaging in creative activities can enhance flow and increase mindfulness, relaxation, and a sense of accomplishment. Flow and mindfulness work together to assist in paying attention (Brown et al., 2015), and much of the Arts is entwined in creativity. Therefore, engaging in the Arts, mindfulness, and creative activities can positively impact mental and physical wellbeing.

Robinson (2012; 2019) asserts that creativity is as important in education as literacy, yet he points out that we often stifle our children's creativity in the current system. In the 21st century, education should shift its focus to creativity and imagination, coupled with critical thinking and flexible problem-solving skills. These insights should inspire and motivate

educators and legislators to re-evaluate the role of creativity and the Arts in education and consider the transformative potential of arts-based initiatives and pedagogy.

Arts-Based Initiatives. Several initiatives and frameworks are available globally (Arts Access Aotearoa, 2020; Arts Council England, 2022; Davies et al., 2016; Health Arts, Research Center, 2023; National Centre for Creative Health, 2017; Sonke & Golden, 2020; World Health Organization [WHO], 2023b) and nationally (Flying Arts, n.d.; Health and The Arts Framework, 2017; The Arts Wellbeing Collective, 2023; The Regional Arts Fund [RAF], 2018), highlighting the growing recognition of the Arts' influential role in promoting individual and community wellbeing.

Community activities and the Arts present a variety of avenues to stay connected and engaged. In Australia, several arts-based projects and research have confirmed the abundant potential and value the Arts present to individuals and community wellbeing (Australian Council for the Arts, 2021; Barton, 2015; Barton & Baguley, 2017; Cologon et al., 2019; Isbell & Raines, 2022; Karkou, 2010; McDonald et al., 2019). Art positively impacts wellbeing (Australian Council for the Arts, 2021; NHS Confederation, 2018; Moula et al., 2020; Moula & McDonald, 2021). When individuals experience the Arts, they feel connected to something more significant (Magsamen & Ross, 2023). The multisensory and interactive nature of the Arts provides a diverse range of learning experiences that connect body and mind, enhancing a state of wellbeing.

The Arts can positively impact mental health, emotional wellbeing, and cognitive development (Magsamen & Ross, 2023). Arts positively affect students' engagement, learning, and wellbeing by increasing self-regulation, problem-solving, creativity, and higher-order

thinking skills (Eisner, 1981; 2002; Ewing, 2013; Gibson & Ewing, 2011; Sinclair et al., 2012). Ewing (2013; 2020) further asserts that each art form involves “play, experimentation, exploration, provocation, expression and the artistic or aesthetic shaping of the body or other media to bring together emotions as well as personal, sensory, and intellectual experiences” (2020, p.1), thereby influencing wellbeing. The multisensory and interactive nature of the Arts provides diverse learning experiences that connect body and mind. The social connections created during art making and art experience are vast and deeply relevant to wellbeing.

Arts are becoming popular in therapy, and many educational researchers have accepted the value of the Arts in education, linking them to the benefits of wellbeing (Karkou, 2010; McDonald et al., 2019; McNiff, 1998; 2008; Moula et al., 2020). The Arts were essential to Dewey’s philosophy (1916; 1938a; 1938b). In Maslow’s (1971) humanistic theory, the value of the Arts and two new growth needs (knowing, understanding, exploring) and aesthetic needs (the desire to appreciate beauty, order, and symmetry) were added. Nutbrown (2013; 2021) contends that children’s learning experiences with the Arts and their aesthetic appreciation of the Arts support learning in other areas. Eisner (1981; 2002) argues that education with a foundation in the Arts can transform modern schools' social vision. He asserts that the unique form of thinking needed to create works of art is critical to every aspect of what teachers do, from the environment in which they teach to designing curricula to teaching (Eisner, 1973–1974; 1994).

Arts-based teaching is an instructional approach aligned with brain research because artmaking is a boundless, boundaryless process of reflective inquiry that can be expressed anywhere, anytime (Hardiman, 2019; Mullen, 2002). Mardirosian et al. concur, reiterating that “arts-based teaching furthers the functional understanding and practical application of current

cognitive and affective learning theories” (2009, p. 7). Ewing (2013; 2020) surmises that learning through the Arts can reshape how learning is conceived and organised in schools and the educational context. Ewing (2013) elaborates on this point and states that each art form is a distinct discipline with knowledge, language, and skill.

The Arts can play an essential role in education and learning. In the learning outcomes of the EYLF, art is discussed as an avenue to improve mental health and wellbeing in children by allowing free expression (DEEWR, 2022). Engaging in artistic activities can develop cognitive skills such as creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking, which are aspects of the general capabilities in the Australian curriculum (ACARA, n.d.). While the value of the Arts to education has been extensively explored in the literature, most national and international research studies focus on older children and young adults, indicating a gap in primary school arts (Barton & Baguley, 2017; Cologon et al., 2019; Garvis & Pendergast, 2020; Isbell & Raines, 2022).

The Arts in the Australian Curriculum refers to visual arts, drama, dance, media, and music. In this research, the Arts are seen as a broad practice, including visual arts (painting, drawing, sculpting, modelling), performing arts (theatre, dance, music -including composition), graphic arts and architecture (interior design), exhibiting, decorative arts (mosaic, enamelwork, furniture) literature (poetry, drama, story) forms of creative expression such as storytelling, media, and cultural participation and any characteristics that highlight creativity. The Arts include diverse modes of thinking, doing and being in a broad range of media. Several studies have embedded the Arts into the curriculum or connected the Arts and young children’s social-

emotional wellbeing (Casciano et al., 2019; Holochwost et al., 2021; Karkou, 2010; Nutbrown, 2013; 2021; Morrison, 2021).

Many researchers and educators (Eisner, 1981; 2002; Ewing, 2013; Gibson & Ewing, 2011; Sinclair et al., 2012) have discussed the importance of connecting the Arts to the curriculum and acknowledged the substantial contribution the Arts make to educational wellbeing; however, the Arts are still not utilised to their full extent in educational wellbeing (Daniel, 2019; 1981; 2002). Eisner (2002) as well as Robinson and Aronica (2016) argue that every education system on earth has the same hierarchy of subjects, with mathematics and language at the top, humanities in the middle and the Arts at the bottom. The transformative potential of arts-based pedagogy to enhance and teach wellbeing is immense. This insight should inspire and motivate educators and policymakers to re-evaluate the role of arts in education and consider the transformative potential of arts-based pedagogy.

I conducted *An Action Research Project Using Arts-Based Pedagogy to Enhance Social-Emotional Wellbeing in Young Children* (Ranatunga, 2013). This study provided insight into understanding one classroom group of preparatory year students and their educators. Understanding the various perspectives regarding arts-based pedagogy and wellbeing was insightful, suggesting that wellbeing should not be considered separate from the curriculum. A key finding was that classroom educators in this research project had the power to create a more interconnected learning and wellbeing environment for their students. This action research study concluded that arts-based pedagogy could help students and educators express a greater sense of wellbeing within the learning environment.

I have enhanced this arts-based Pedagogy further to incorporate mindfulness and story and created a new pedagogy I named MMETTAS Pedagogy (elaborated on in Chapter Three). In brief, MMETTAS Pedagogy comprised The Arts (dance, drama, media, music, visual arts) and Story (media, verbal, and books) (Ranatunga, 2013; Ranatunga & Pagliano, 2017; Ranatunga et al., 2014) sensory (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) and mindful experiences developed from a synthesis of Material Engagement Theory (MET). Material Engagement Theory emphasises the role of material engagement in human cognition and social life (Malafouris, 2004; 2012; 2013; 2018). My philosophy and pedagogy are discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Summary

Exploring educational wellbeing, which encompasses the overall health, happiness and success of learners and educators within the educational context, is a complex multidimensional task. This literature review serves as a comprehensive guide, synthesising a wide array of research and drawing insights from various disciplines to illuminate the interconnected elements of wellbeing education. The review investigates the nuanced definitions and measures, laying a solid foundation for understanding wellbeing. It initially focuses on the overarching perspective of wellbeing from various fields, then moves beyond traditional boundaries, recognising the richness of insights in different academic domains. Drawing from geography, economics, sociology, health, psychology, and education, it comprehensively synthesises the interconnected elements shaping the wellbeing landscape. Ideas from positive psychology, exploring the hedonic and eudaimonic components, the meaning of life, and the psychological aspect of flourishing are crucial in understanding educational wellbeing. The literature review highlights

the significance of understanding the multidimensional and holistic wellbeing perspective, providing a wealth of information.

As the Durkheim (1915/1956) quote in the beginning of the chapter emphasises that education is intricately linked to the wellbeing of individuals within it. Durkheim's assertion prompts us to consider the systematic nature of educational wellbeing. He highlights that education must operate within a broader societal framework that fosters individual and collective wellbeing to address inherent challenges effectively. This recognition emphasises the urgent need for true reform in education, which necessitates broader societal transformation to tackle the root causes of the challenges faced (Durkheim, 1915/1956). Understanding the conditions of possibility within the school system is beneficial and necessary to initiate the process of cultivating wellbeing dispositions to enhance wellbeing for all, underlining the need for immediate action.

As I worked through this literature review, I focused on three lenses illuminating educational wellbeing and its complex landscape. The governance and policy lens highlighted the role of overarching structures in shaping wellbeing initiatives. Understanding the frameworks and policies on wellbeing in education provided a deeper exploration of wellbeing. The pedagogical lens enabled me to delve into instructional strategies that enhance learner wellbeing. The review highlighted the importance of wellbeing for academic success, quality of life at and beyond school, active citizenship, and leadership. It also emphasised the proactive need for early interventions to teach skills and dispositions. The SEL lens provided insight into focusing on wellbeing from an emotional intelligence, positive psychological, and resilience perspective.

The objective is to extend the current body of knowledge by addressing limitations and uncovering potential avenues for improving wellbeing within educational environments. The literature highlights limited research presenting a gap in young individuals' wellbeing studies. Given educators' challenges, including time constraints and expert implementation of wellbeing programs, this review underscores the urgent necessity of introducing creative and impactful wellbeing initiatives. Moreover, it recognises the important role of the Arts in primary school education, particularly in fostering creativity, self-expression, emotional intelligence, and the constraints on arts-based teaching methods. The concerning gap in the literature on young children and arts-based studies further highlights the need for this research.

This literature review served as a scaffold, connecting insights from various disciplines to form a cohesive understanding of educational wellbeing. The focus is on the diverse perspectives of wellbeing and the pressing need for a more straightforward understanding of this complex concept. The existing frameworks focus on some essential aspects of wellbeing, yet the nature of wellbeing needs to be understood in a more simplified, straightforward and accessible manner. The review stresses the importance of an overarching framework that enriches dialogue on nurturing educational environments that foster holistic wellbeing. To understand wellbeing in education, a comprehensive approach is crucial. I explore the cultivation of wellbeing through three phases in Chapters Four, Five and Six. I employ a range of data collection strategies within my mixed methods study. As I have done in previous chapters, I continue to embed relevant literature into subsequent chapters. Next, in Chapter Three, I explore the data collection and methodology.

Chapter Three - Crafting a Wellbeing Exploration: The Methodology and the Methods

Figure 5



The Blind Men and the Elephant

“It was six men of Hindustan, to learning much inclined, who went to see the elephant (though all of them were blind), that each, by observation, might satisfy his mind.” (Saxe, 1872, p. 1).

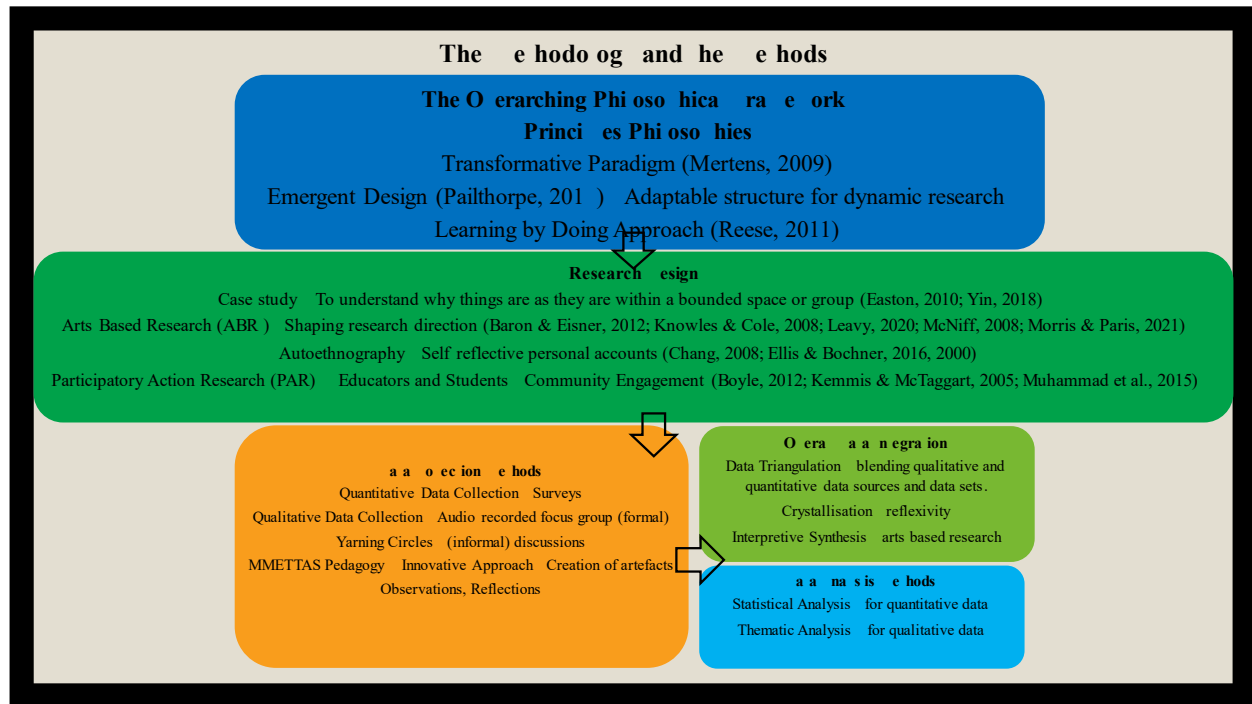
Overview and Structure (Chapter Three)

This qualitative mixed-method arts-based case study is a unique exploration that employs a multifaceted methodological framework. The philosophical and theoretical framework influences the entire research process. Chapter One introduced the study and outlined the research approach. This chapter further elaborates on the design and justifies the methodology and methods. The research is guided by a transformative paradigm expected to bring about substantial change. The emergent design integrates hands-on learning by doing approaches, autoethnography, ABR, and PAR, setting it apart from traditional research.

Various methods were utilised for data collection and analysis, including observations, personal narratives, workshop sessions (focus group discussions, yarning circles, creative art activities and experiential learning tasks, critical reflection) and surveys. This comprehensive approach, different from traditional research methods, thoroughly investigates the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education, offering hope for future education. Chapter Two presented a foundational literature review to provide a basis for integrating literature throughout the rest of the thesis. The continual reflection and embedding of the literature will be a consistent feature of this study.

To illustrate the importance of embracing multiple perspectives and approaches in understanding complex phenomena, an image and caption from a well-known fable, *The Blind Men and the Elephant* (Figure 5) are presented at the beginning of this chapter. This fable serves as an allegory for the nature of wellbeing research, highlighting the importance of perspective, collaboration, and the limitations of individual viewpoints. In the fable, the blind men touch and describe a different part of the elephant based on their limited sensory experience. Each interpretation is accurate based on a different perspective. Similarly, this study explores wellbeing from multiple perspectives, considering the experiences and viewpoints of the researcher, educators, and learners in the primary school classroom.

I will elaborate on the research design and question in the next section. Then, in the section *Crafting a Wellbeing Exploration: The Research Process*, I delve deeper into explaining and justifying the methodology and data collection methods used in this research. Figure 6 offers an overview of the research approach, setting the stage for this inspiring journey.

Figure 6*The Research Approach***The Research Design and the Overarching Question**

This section summarises the research focus and reiterates the research questions. The literature review (in Chapter Two - The Literature Review: The State of Wellbeing in Education) highlights the state of wellbeing among educators and learners (AITSL, 2021) and points out several gaps and limitations in educational wellbeing. The critical gaps in currently available data on young people and their wellbeing (AIHW, 2019) set the stage for this research. The limited research on using and integrating the Arts with younger children (Barton & Baguley, 2017; Cologon et al., 2019; Garvis & Pendergast, 2020; Isbell & Raines, 2022) is also of interest. Furthermore, workload stress on educators, educator shortages, lack of support, and limitations in trained educators to implement wellbeing initiatives and programs (Beyond Blue, 2015; Cassidy et al., 2017; Dabrowski et al., 2020) are other challenges to educational wellbeing that

this study is concerned with.

Wellbeing in education goes beyond academic attainment, encompassing students' overall physical, cognitive (mental), social, emotional (psychological), aesthetic, moral, and spiritual aspects of life. The literature on wellbeing in education further points out the importance of educator wellbeing for personal growth and as a catalyst to enhance student wellbeing (Gray et al., 2017; Kuril et al., 2021; McCallum et al., 2017; Turner & Thielking, 2019). This study undertakes a holistic exploration and investigation, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of wellbeing. By considering a wide range of perspectives and experiences, the study aims to provide a thorough and impactful analysis of the cultivation of wellbeing in primary education.

This study aims to explore challenges and contribute to the existing understanding of the cultivation of wellbeing in education. At the core of this study are the fundamental questions: What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education, and How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom? These questions shape the design and outcome. They guide understanding, unpacking and identifying critical factors (the challenges and the conditions of possibility) for cultivating wellbeing in education. To enhance wellbeing in education, first, understanding and identifying what impedes and what enhances wellbeing is important. Recognising these factors through several perceptions (the researcher, educators, and learners) creates comprehensive knowledge.

The chosen methodology aligns with the study goals and addresses the research question, ensuring a comprehensive investigation. Creswell (2014) states that methodology determines the accuracy and relevance of the findings. The methodology was chosen because it allows for a

thorough investigation that aligns with the study's goals and addresses and answers the research question. The chosen methodology, a careful blend of quantitative and predominantly qualitative methods, is crucial in providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex nature of wellbeing in education. The quantitative surveys assisted with understanding the population, and the descriptive data were used in data triangulation and crystallisation. Multiple methods (observations, focus groups, surveys) and multiple sources (researcher, educators, learners) of data were triangulated (Denzin, 1978). Qualitative methods allow the deep exploration of phenomena (Patton, 2002), and the researcher's reflexivity and crystallisation enhance the process. Due to the complex nature of wellbeing in education, various methods were selected to understand several perspectives. The crystallisation process captures the complexity of human experience and enables a richer, layered understanding (Ellingson, 2009; Richardson, 2000). These methods contribute to collecting insightful data about participant behaviour, experiences, interactions and perceptions and enhance the robustness of the approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017) and a more comprehensive understanding of the research question.

In pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing in education, this study also delves into understanding the available objective data (ABS, AIHW, ICSEA, School Website) about the school and the students. Objective factors are influenced by an individual's income, employment status, living conditions, socioeconomic background, education, or physical health. By understanding the objective data available and exploring the subjective experiences of educators and learners, I hope to shed light on the internal and external factors that contribute to or hinder (enablers and impactors) wellbeing in the primary school environment. The data collection explores the available objective (socioeconomic indicators, national health statistics) and subjective data to understand the overarching questions. This comprehensive approach

ensures that no aspect of wellbeing is left unexplored, providing a thorough understanding for all stakeholders and instilling confidence in the study's findings.

By adopting sustainable (Cummins, 2016; De Abreu, 2020; O'Mahony, 2022) and innovative, arts-based, hands-on approaches (Dewey, 1938a; Freire, 1970; Kerr, 1999; Maslow, 1943; Montessori, 1914; Reese, 2011; Rogers, 1969), the goal is to integrate wellbeing into the classroom pedagogy as a fundamental aspect of the learning process. The MMETTAS Pedagogy, a unique approach discussed later in this chapter, is a key component of this research. It can transform educational settings, inspiring educators and students with its innovative and effective approach to enhancing wellbeing. An improved, innovative pedagogy that enhances wellbeing in the academic setting was vital. Next, I justify the methods and research process.

Crafting a Wellbeing Exploration: The Research Process

This qualitative mixed-method arts-based case study explores the complex factors influencing educators' and learners' wellbeing. Chapter One explains that qualitative mixed methods research primarily involves collecting qualitative data. When employing a case study methodology, the research typically focuses on a specific location or group of individuals (Johnson et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). As discussed in Chapter One, the transformative paradigm guides the study, and I follow an arts-based learning-by-doing principle, autoethnography, and PAR within an emergent design.

Employing an emergent design (as discussed in Chapter One - The Beginning: Seeking to Cultivate Wellbeing Dispositions) was a deliberate choice that allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the research problem and flexibility in describing the research methods as they

developed. This approach ensured that the study could respond to new insights and developments, advancing a dynamic and responsive research environment. Given the complex and dynamic nature of educational settings, the emergent design that precedes ethical considerations was instrumental in adapting to changing circumstances and gaining a deeper understanding of the participants' stories (Pailthorpe, 2017).

The transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2009; 2012) chosen for this study is not just a methodological choice but a reflection of the study's potential to bring about significant change. It offers a pathway to address social concerns, justice, inequalities, human rights (Kara, 2021; Mertens, 2004; 2005; 2007) and wellbeing. This research supports enhancing wellbeing in education by addressing wellbeing as a social justice issue and transforming educational practices. It instils confidence in the reliability and validity of the findings and offers hope for a holistic and effective system, inspiring all stakeholders to work towards transformative change. As I contemplate my role in this research, I recognise myself as a wellbeing advocate and an insider researcher, making the transformative paradigm (discussed in Chapter One) particularly effective. This paradigm positions the researcher as an active participant in the process, acknowledging biases and influences of personal experiences on the research outcomes.

The methodology of this study is unique and intended to establish a strong structure for making decisions about the research design and methods. The design and attention to detail are crucial in complex and dynamic research contexts such as educational wellbeing. Extensive data collection methods ensure a comprehensive understanding of the wellbeing phenomenon. This innovative approach provides a unique multiple perspective to inspire new ways of thinking and creates confidence, reliability and validity of the findings. Table 4 outlines the data collection methods tailored to suit each research phase.

*Table 4**Data Collection Methods Utilised in All Three Phases*

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
The researcher (1)	Educators (32)	Students (126) Educators (6)
Methods of data collection		
Objective		
Historical recounts, websites, databases	Historical recounts (verbal and online sources) websites (AITSL)	Historical recounts, ICSEA, AIHW, My School Website, school database
Objective and Subjective - Quantitative		
	Educator Survey (beginning & end of each phase)	Student Survey (beginning & end of each phase)
Subjective and Qualitative		
Autoethnographic Accounts	Observations & notes	Observations & notes
Stories, poetry, learning experiences	Carried out every week for six weeks by the researcher. Field notes.	Carried out every week for six weeks by researchers and educators. Field notes to understand participants' daily routines, interactions, engagement, and wellbeing-related activities.

Workshops - Focus group and Formal Discussions

Six audio-recorded focus group sessions were used to gather data from educators. The educators were asked wellbeing-related questions (see section The Workshop Sessions)

This data assisted in understanding participant perceptions and attitudes toward wellbeing, experiences of wellbeing, and ways they were cultivating wellbeing dispositions and further comprehending the survey results.

Two audio-recorded focus group discussions (one at the beginning and one at the end of data collection) were conducted with six class groups of learners (126 total) during term two and used to gather data from learners.

The students were asked a series of questions about wellbeing (see The Workshop Sessions)

This data assisted in understanding participant perceptions.

Informal Discussion - Yarning Circles

Casual discussions, notes, and texts from family, friends, and colleagues foster an interactive and participatory research environment.

Casual discussions conducted at each workshop allowed all participants to have a say.

MMETTAS Activities and Artefacts

Photographs of my creations and family photographs artifacts, notes from students' families and three paintings done by my children

MMETTAS-based activities (discussed below) were conducted during term one with groups of 6-9 educators (five overall sessions a week) over six weeks.

Educator creations/artifacts were photographed and reviewed to enhance further understanding and explanation of the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions.

MMETTAS-based activities (discussed below) were conducted over six weeks during term two with class groups of students (six overall sessions a week).

Student creations/artefacts were photographed and reviewed with participants to enhance further understanding and explanation of the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions.

Reflections

Diary notes provide a personal, engaging perspective on the research journey.

Email reflections, reflections at the end of sessions

Reflections at the end of sessions.

In the introduction chapter, I began to share the personal journey that sparked my interest in wellbeing in education. By situating myself in the research and briefly explaining my history and background, I aim to foster a sense of connection and engagement. As the researcher, I bring a unique perspective and set of experiences to this study, which will be further elaborated on in the following chapters. In Chapter Four (Phase One), I explore my personal story and lived experiences, hoping to provide a profound understanding of self and knowledge of the world around me. The data in Phase One (Chapter One - The Beginning: Seeking to Cultivate Wellbeing Dispositions and Chapter Four) primarily focuses on personal experiences. I utilised autoethnography (discussed next) and ABR to explore my journey into wellbeing in education.

My deliberate and systematic self-reflection on my experiences provides rich, detailed, personal accounts and extends sociological understanding. I situate myself and my experiences within the broader social context, critiquing cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences. An individual's evaluation of their life's quality from their perspective is SWB. Subjective wellbeing (SWB) is a critical concept in this study. It refers to an individual's subjective experiences that form the foundation for SWB. These experiences involve emotions, thoughts, and feelings that individuals encounter daily. Investigating SWB highlights that individuals' wellbeing is determined by their inner world and how they react to their experiences. I use the Arts, ABR and autoethnography to tell my story of how I cultivated wellbeing dispositions in Chapter Four - Phase One: Me Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions. I will elaborate on autoethnography next.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography, an approach combining autobiography and ethnography, allows the researcher to critically reflect on their experiences and connect them to broader cultural, social,

and political contexts. According to Adam, Bochner and Ellis (2011), autoethnography is the exploration of personal experience (auto) to understand and explore cultural experiences and other people's experiences (ethno). This exploration leads to describing, systematically analysing and writing (graphy). Hence, the term auto-ethno-graphy was created. In autoethnography, the researcher looks inward towards their vulnerabilities and outward towards those of society (Ellis & Bochner, 2016). Ellis asserts that it is a process of “connect[ing] the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” through “concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection” (2004, p. xix). Chang (2008) states that using autoethnography to understand the relationship between self and others is a valuable and empowering process.

Autoethnography as a methodology provides a theoretical framework that emphasises the researcher's personal experiences and reflections as a critical research component. It guides the data collection and analysis, focusing on self-exploration and narrative inquiry. As a method, it involves specific techniques such as personal narrative writing, poems, reflective journaling, and autobiographical storytelling. These are practical steps taken to collect and analyse data from the researcher's perspective. The autoethnographic empowering process offers a valid research method that can be used in my emergent design to bring my story to the fore in ways that support the development of a transformative paradigm that respects participants.

Sharing my story creates connection and understanding and explores personal experiences that enable understanding of others and their cultural experiences. This process is critical because lived experiences benefit wellbeing research and exploration (Byrne et al., 2015; Frechette et al., 2020; Roennfeldt et al., 2019). According to Ellis (2004), personal stories can

help us imagine a better world. Reflecting on one's own story and then linking it to the stories of others can benefit ethical decision-making processes, reassuring the confidence and integrity of the research. A key feature of autoethnography is the idea that the self is never in isolation. The self is always part of other-selves.

As we explore our stories and intertwine them with the stories of others, we unearth profound connections (Ellis & Bochner, 2016), unveiling the inspiring, enlightening, and transformative ability of storytelling. Pondering our own stories and attempting to understand the stories of others informs us about how we all try to make sense of the world. The data included retelling stories, poems, memories, sharing learning experiences, observations, perceptions, reflections, physical and digital artefacts.

Stories, Poems, and Memories. According to Bruner (1986), stories are not just narratives but also serve as a lens through which to understand and interpret fundamental concepts within reality. Carr asserts that narratives are “our primary way of organising and giving coherence to our experience” (1986, p. 65). Supported by culture and context, Bruner elaborates that narratives are “instruments for producing worlds” (1986, p. 104). Storytelling serves dual cultural functions, making the strange familiar and establishing uniqueness (Bruner, 1986). Narratives and metaphors create meaning for the participants, researcher, and readers.

In her book *The Power of Meaning*, Smith (2017) discusses storytelling as one of the four pillars (belonging, purpose, transcendence, storytelling) in pursuing a meaningful life. She asserts that redemptive storytelling and creating a narrative around the events of one's life brings clarity, gives meaning, and offers a framework for reflection that goes beyond the day-to-day occurrences, helping individuals make sense of a purposeful life (2017). Story within

MMETTAS Pedagogy is used extensively in this research and will be discussed further in this chapter and the following chapters.

Eisner (1981) advocated art and artfulness to explore the human condition. Poetry, as a form of artfulness, is not just a creative expression but a transformative force that originates from the heart and holds the power to inspire oneself and others (Fidler, 2019). Flowers (1973) describes poetry as “music written for the human voice” and emphasises how it goes beyond mere speech, enabling us to “sing, make music and play with language” (1973, p. 90). Poetry permits freedom of expression, allowing writers to introduce new words and meanings (Kousky, 2021). Kousky (2021) discusses Shakespeare’s (1564-1616) creation of approximately 2000 new words during his time and compares a poet’s ability to create new meanings with words to a painter creating new paintings. This potential of poetry can inspire and motivate both the writer and the reader.

As Kousky (2021) points out that poetry is a powerful tool for healing. It has been more than just a medium for me; it has been a lifeline. Poetry has allowed me to express and share various emotions, from anger and sadness to love and joy. It is a medium that helps us find our inner voice and connect with others on a deeper level. Writing poetry has been a therapeutic outlet for processing my emotions, especially during significant and challenging periods. It has been a way for me to achieve balance by exploring my thoughts and understanding of myself and others. In this sense, poetry is not simply a tool for remembering important events, ideas, thoughts, and emotions from the past or present but a profound experience that we can all relate to uniquely.

Learning Experiences, Observations, and Perceptions. Exploring my learning experiences, observations, and perceptions was insightful in understanding the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions. Mary Bateson (2004) explores life as an improvisational art form and argues that “the human species thinks in metaphors and learns through stories” (2004, p. 11). In the next chapter, I will share my learning experiences and journey towards cultivating wellbeing dispositions. I will draw on several theories from my education and counselling studies, which will be embedded in my stories. Throughout this research, I will explore my life story as a child, student, parent, educator, and counsellor, sharing my observations, perceptions, and experiences. This personal journey, with its unique and often challenging moments and triumphs, will help connect with the research more deeply. Bruner (1986) suggests that exploration beyond imagination can lead to valuable insights and discoveries (outcomes). In Phase One, I share my history, culture, experiences and perspectives and actively contribute to this research. The emphasis on my journey will foster a sense of connection and empathy with and among participants in subsequent phases. The stories and creations (physical and digital artifacts) enhance reflections of the self and others.

Reflection is a significant part of my research and ethical decision-making process. I have found that creating memory maps and timelines is not just a part of my process; it is a cornerstone. It is a powerful way to recall and organise the memories I shared in Phase One. I utilised existing documents, letters, and historical records as memory sources and combined my memories with visual data using photographs and artefacts as prompts. This method helps me remember and engages me in a deeper understanding of the research process. Reflections are used throughout the three phases and will be discussed further.

Physical and Digital Artefacts. The photos and the artefacts provide visual records of the people, places, objects, events, and environment. They help provide details and elements that are challenging to describe in words and support reflections. Digital archives and databases provide access to a broader range of sources to understand the context and culture and recall facts, figures, memories, and nuances. Material Engagement Theory (MET) used throughout this exploration is discussed in detail in the MMETTAS Pedagogy Section. The use of physical and digital artefacts and the application of MET play a crucial role in the engagement and deeper understanding of the research process. In the following chapter (continuation of Phase One), I reflect on my decades-long observations, reflections, learning, and understanding of wellbeing.

Arts-based learning-by-doing principles enhance the data collection process and address the research questions. Art was not just a component but the core of this research, permeating every aspect of its work. The transformative influence of art in human understanding drove this research, with the Arts playing a profound role from inception and beyond. Emphasising the transformative potential of the Arts is intriguing and inspiring, showcasing the capacity of arts to transform research.

Arts-Based Research (ABR)

An important aspect of this exploration is the transformative potential of ABR in engaging participants and providing a holistic understanding of wellbeing. It is a powerful tool that brings the research to life, making it more engaging and interesting for both the researcher and the participants. As a methodology, ABR offers a broad framework that values artistic processes and creative forms of inquiry as legitimate ways of understanding and presenting research findings. It shapes the overall research design to include artistic expression. Grounded

in the tradition of qualitative social science, ABR is not a new form of research. Arts-based research recognises using any form of art (visual, performing, literature, narrative) at any point in the research process to generate, interpret or communicate research knowledge (Knowles & Cole, 2008; Parsons & Boydell, 2012; Leavy, 2020). Challenging conventional boundaries of academic research and rooted in the belief that traditional methods may not fully capture the complexity of human experience, ABR values creativity and subjectivity, thus providing richer, more nuanced insights into social issues (Knowles & Cole, 2008). According to Sullivan (2010) and McNiff (1998; 2008), researchers produce scientifically rigorous and artistically compelling work by integrating the Arts, broadening the impact and accessibility of their findings.

As a method, ABR includes specific techniques like drawing, painting, drama, dance, music, and other creative activities to interact, collect and present data. These are tangible ways to engage participants and explore research questions. The Arts are utilised extensively in MMETTAS Pedagogy, a teaching and learning approach that integrates arts-based strategies into research to foster a deeper understanding and engagement. In Phases Two and Three, I elaborate on the Arts-based strategy utilised in the classroom through MMETTAS Pedagogy.

Phase One featured autoethnography and ABR, which focused on personal experiences and artistic expression as research methods. Phases Two and Three marked a shift towards a more collaborative approach with the introduction of PAR and continued use of ABR. This transition was a strategic decision to broaden the research scope and incorporate diverse perspectives. ABR and PAR, with their collaborative nature, are known for their effectiveness in engaging participants and providing a holistic understanding of the research topic. This collaborative aspect of ABR and PAR fosters a sense of connection and engagement among all involved in the research process.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participatory Action Research is a methodology and a research approach focused on the voice and lived experience of participants (Boyle, 2012; Campbell et al., 2004; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Muhammad et al., 2015). These two phases focus on engaging participants in the research process and using their perspectives to inform the study. A transformative paradigm's philosophical and theoretical framework underpins specific research approaches such as PAR. Participatory Action Research provides a practical avenue for individuals and communities to engage in transformative processes. Ethical decision-making involves identifying, addressing, and reducing power imbalances to provide a meaningful foundation for future advocacy, reassuring the integrity and reliability of the research process. The research strongly emphasises the importance of ethical advocacy and addresses power imbalances in decision-making. This includes identifying and reducing power imbalances by increasing opportunities for participatory involvement (Kara, 2021; Mertens, 2004; 2009; 2012).

As a methodology, PAR emphasises collaboration and participation of stakeholders in the research process. Collaborative problem-solving and reflective practice are essential aspects of PAR (Boyle, 2012; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Muhammad et al., 2015). This collaborative nature of the research process can make the audience feel included and valued, promoting a sense of belonging and mutual respect. Collaboration and knowledge production empower participants and cultivate a democratic and inclusive research process. A shared purpose among participants further creates support networks. As an action-oriented process, PAR promotes social change and social and cultural understanding (Brydon-Miller et al., 2021). It frames the research focusing on social change and empowerment, guiding the overall approach to ensure participants are actively involved. This methodology was a good fit for data collection in Phases

Two and Three, as participants were empowered to actively engage in research and advocate for social justice. This can lead to a more authentic understanding of the issues and create meaningful change. Active participation in research can transform individuals and communities by empowering them to become advocates.

Participatory action research provides several benefits when investigating complex issues, such as educational wellbeing, where a holistic perspective and a contextual understanding are essential. PAR can create a more enduring impact on wellbeing studies. Effective and sustainable interventions enhance the wellbeing of individuals and communities. The practicality of participatory action research in addressing complex matters can reassure participants of its effectiveness and build confidence in the research process.

As a method, PAR involves techniques such as collaborative workshops, focus groups, discussions, and analysis sessions (discussed in The Workshop Sessions). These actions involve participants in the research process and collect data collaboratively. Chapter Five (Phase Two) focuses on educators and Chapter Six (Phase Three) aims to understand the students and their cultivation of wellbeing dispositions. Next, I will discuss the sampling strategies for Phases Two and Three and then explore the methods utilised in these phases.

The Sampling Strategies for Phases Two and Three

This research is focused on the phenomenon of wellbeing as it relates to a particular school population, including students and teaching and non-teaching educators. Initially, the focus was on location, size, and participants' socioeconomic status. Saint Benessere's was chosen as the research site due to its average ICSEA, which was considered beneficial for exploring educational wellbeing.

A process of mixed sampling (Collins, 2017; Javed, 2022) inclusive of a typical case sampling strategy was chosen for Phase Two, which was purposive and convenient (Liamputtong, 2009; Marshall M. N., 1996; Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2018). The initial focus was on understanding participants' general characteristics and experiences. Volunteer sampling (Aransiola, 2023; Hassan, 2023), another non-probability sampling strategy, was utilised for Phase Three. This phase was enriched by educators willing and interested in sharing their experiences with their students.

The mixed sampling permitted a balance in selecting a site that offered a comprehensive viewpoint of my research context and a representative sample of empowered participants keen to be involved (Collins, 2017; Javed, 2022). The diverse perspectives and in-depth insights reduced bias and increased validity and flexibility (Collins, 2017; Maher et al., 2018), providing a holistic understanding of wellbeing in education. This comprehensive approach aligned with the research question and methodology, providing deeper insights, rich data, and a more nuanced understanding of the research topic.

The data collection methods in Phases Two and Three encompassed a range of approaches and were carried out as combined workshop sessions for educators and learners. The experiences integrated MMETTAS Pedagogy, which included a focus on Gardner's (1983; 2003; 2006) multiple intelligences, Eisner's (Eisner, 1981; 2002) and Dewey's (1916; 1934) artistically embedded forms of thinking and incorporated mindfulness, MET (Malafouris, 2004; 2012; 2013; 2018), The Arts and Story. Educators have a social and moral imperative to integrate wellbeing skills into learning. Building upon this foundation and my initial introduction to Saint Benessere's, I continue this exploration with educators and students utilising PAR strategies and MMETTAS Pedagogy. These participants' cultural, contextual, individual, and collective values

are investigated. I will explore the workshop sessions next and then discuss the activities and experiences utilised in these sessions.

The Workshop Sessions

As stated, the workshop sessions included a variety of activities and experiences. They were an evolving collaborative effort, incorporating MMETTAS-based activities and creating educator/student artefacts. Sessions were sometimes formal (audio-recorded focus group) and informal (yarning circles) discussions conducted with individuals and in groups. The following (Table 5) is a basic outline of the sessions tailored to educators and individual class groups of students. I will elaborate on the workshop components conducted in Phases Two (educators) and Three (students) separately and together.

Table 5

Sessions	Educators Sessions	Student sessions
Week 1	Dimensions of wellbeing: mandalas and word clouds	The brain, flipping your lid, taming the tiger, Wilma WB - Stroop activity
Week 2	Stress and being busy	Behaviour, feelings, emotions, stress - how to deal with it - bead activity
Week 3	Finding my purpose	goals/vision, compassion, love/ kindness, meditation (deep muscle)
Week 4	vision boards and origami books of ideas	mindfulness, what it is, and how we can include it in our lives, eating, walking.
Week 5	Lesson explorations:	Friendships, bucket-filling, sand play, feathers, and belly breathing.
Week 6	Happiness is...	reflections - what is it, and how can we do it? Worry doll's story and activity.

Educator Workshops. Initially, I presented a workshop at a staff meeting at Saint Benessere's primary school. The principal invited all educators to participate, everyone received the information and informed consent forms. Thirty-two educators signed and returned their informed consent forms. Upon receiving the responses, I promptly began organising the groups.

Educators could choose a group and attend weekly sessions that best fit their work and lifestyle. If a session was missed, they were encouraged to make up for it by joining another session that week. This flexibility was designed to accommodate their commitments and ensure their comfort. It was also a way for educators to take responsibility for their wellbeing. The workshop sessions were meticulously tailored to educators' wellbeing needs and ideas about wellbeing, further enhancing their sense of being accommodated.

Sessions commenced in week three of term one and continued until week nine in term one (March), providing us an extra week for follow-ups, discussions, and addressing any challenges faced. They entailed six 40-minute morning or afternoon sessions for educators once a week. The sessions were spread across three days (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday), with one or two sessions a day (in the morning and afternoon) offered before and after school. Five similar sessions were delivered every week for six weeks. Groups were kept to a maximum of ten educator participants, ensuring each participant's personalised and focused experience.

These sessions were specially tailored for participants to work on cultivating wellbeing dispositions and to learn to advocate for wellbeing in their school, in that place, and at that time. Most of the data collected was qualitative, and a semi-structured approach was chosen. Qualitative research develops concepts that help us understand social phenomena in a natural setting, emphasising meaning, experience, and participant views (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

I will elaborate on the activities conducted in these workshops in MMETTAS Pedagogy section.

Student Workshops. At the end of Phase Two, a voluntary sampling strategy was utilised, and educators and their class groups of students were invited to join Phase Three. The first six educators who expressed interest were provided with informed consent forms. The educators who volunteered to join the third phase were interviewed to understand their perspectives on personal and classroom wellbeing. I discussed my tentative outline for this project and requested ideas and input from educators. The ongoing and informal discussions with educators helped build rapport and work collaboratively. There was a tentative plan for the student sessions I needed to conduct; they were tailored and modified (to suit each group) before, during, and after each session. The emergent design supported the seamless integration of modifications. One workshop session (per class group) a week for each class group of students was offered for six weeks in week two-term two (April, June). These sessions were tailored to suit each class group and their educators. I was readily available to educators and students for discussions and visited classrooms weekly for six weeks.

The six 40-minute interactive workshop experiences with students incorporated a mindful exploration, yarning circle, and wellbeing skill-building activities incorporating MMETTAS Pedagogy, discussed in the MMETTAS Pedagogy Section. Consideration of the developing child (Erikson, 1968; 1993; 1994; Siegel, 2012) and a positive environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1994; 1994) were important factors to focus on during student experiences. Acknowledging that all learners have different strengths (Seligman, 2011) and abilities, MMETTAS pedagogy provides multimodal lesson experiences. Teaching emotional intelligence, more broadly referred to as SEL (discussed in Chapter Two - The Literature Review: The State of Wellbeing in

Education, to children and adults has proven effective and sorely needed. Educators set up daily teaching sessions, wellbeing, and mindfulness reflection times. They focused on incorporating wellbeing skill-building, reflection and mindful practice.

Each of these sessions was carefully tailored, focusing on a multimodal level of learning to suit students. The wellbeing explorations were also tailored to individual classroom needs. For example, the year three and five students requested a specific lesson on mindfulness before the NAPLAN testing week. Students were provided a deeper exploration of feelings and emotions in years one and two. The year four students focused on prayer, meditation, and reflection. These experiences were focused explicitly on classroom wellbeing and topics that impact wellbeing. The student sessions were tailored to each class group. For example, during mindfulness explorations, students in years one to three created glitter jars. In years four and five, students built a model replicating mindfulness using a sharpener, pencil and Post-it notes (Figure 7).

Figure 7



Glitter Jars and Mindful (focus on now) Creation

The experiences were on emotional regulation, stress release, listening and communication and using specific techniques from MMETTAS Pedagogy. The students were introduced to musical instruments, a rain stick, chimes, and a singing bowl, and they explored

the sounds and the feelings evoked. The sessions were conducted in a format similar to that of educator sessions. Beginning with information and discussions and always concluding with mindful art-based experiences. William James states, “The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgement, character, and will... An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence” (1890, p. 424). Thus, mindfulness was used to pay attention to individual tasks. I will continue elaborating on the workshop components conducted in Phases Two (educators) and Three (students).

Audio-Recorded Focus Group Discussions. The research process was thorough and consistent, with six 15 to 20-minute focus group discussions (per group) being audio-recorded and transcribed weekly with educators. Two 10–15-minute focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed per class group with students. These sessions ensured that all participating educators and students could express their views freely, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing in education.

The focus questions for educators and students (see Table 6) were open questions about wellbeing and how they cultivate wellbeing within this community. These questions were used as conversation starters and were a crucial tool for understanding and discussing wellbeing in education. We addressed a few questions at each session. Following is a list of questions presented to the educator and student groups. While not all participants directly answered all questions, their collective responses were relevant to their feelings and understanding of wellbeing.

The focus group questions and opening dialogue provided educators and students with opportunities to discuss wellbeing and reflect on their own and their classroom’s wellbeing. It

was essential to offer educators and students a place to feel safe and comfortable to discuss their thoughts and feelings and cultivate expressions of wellbeing dispositions. Making wellbeing present and focusing on future decisions about wellbeing within the school was important.

Table 6

Focus group questions and reflections	
Educator focus group questions.	Student focus group questions
What does it mean to have optimal wellbeing?	What is wellbeing?
How do you keep socially, mentally, morally, aesthetically, spiritually, physically, and emotionally well?	How do you know if your wellbeing is not so good?
What would you say are challenges for you?	How do you take care of your wellbeing?
How can we build resilience (personal, student)? What do you do to overcome difficulties in your life/work?	How do you care for others' wellbeing (fill someone's bucket)?
What are some skills you can incorporate into your life/ and your classroom?	
How can teachers enhance their wellbeing skills to promote student wellbeing positively?	
How can teachers take responsibility and develop a sense of agency in their resilience and wellbeing?	
Can teacher wellbeing impact student wellbeing?	
Where do the Arts fit in?	
How can the Arts, MET, and wellbeing skills like relationships, kindness, mindfulness, and gratitude... assist with enhancing the wellbeing of teachers and students?	
How do you teach the general capabilities? Components of the HPE curriculum?	
How do you enhance wellbeing in the classroom?	
What has changed in the last five weeks?	

The audio recording allowed for accurate capturing of dialogue and nuances. Audio recording and transcription can assist with the researcher's reflection when looking for themes and patterns in the data (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The ability to replay sessions during analysis

and the transcripts of the focus group discussions was beneficial to pick up on missed non-verbal cues during the live discussion (Creswell J. W., 2014; 2012; Morgan D. L., 1996).

The Informal discussions in the focus groups were called Yarning Circles. These informal discussions resembled classroom circle time or dialogue circles. While the formal discussions helped obtain specific answers to specific wellbeing questions, the informal discussions were valuable for spontaneously sharing thoughts and ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Seidman, 2013).

Yarning Circles. Formal and informal individual and group discussions are popular qualitative data-gathering methods to obtain insights into participant perceptions and experiences (Breen, 2006; Creswell J. W., 2014; 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan D. L., 1996) related to wellbeing. According to the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA), (2022), “yarning circles have been used by Indigenous peoples from around the world to learn from a collective group, build respectful relationships and preserve and pass on cultural knowledge” (2022, para. 1). We use the term yarning circles for these informal group sessions because our goals align with the basic principles of yarning circles. We were focused on building respectful relationships and empathy for one another in these groups while collectively cultivating wellbeing dispositions. The yarning circles were informal and focused on discussions and reflections, and extended educator and student focus on cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

An icebreaker activity and a short information/discussion session on the current research about wellbeing or a topic or point of interest opened the conversation in both educator and student yarning circles. Topics were chosen from previous yarning circle discussions and class

educator ideas. These sessions built rapport with educators and students. They were allowed to discuss their understanding of wellbeing and share their thoughts, ideas and weekly experiences.

The goals of these yarning circles were to provide a safe place, to build rapport with educators and students, and to understand their state of wellbeing and their stories. As the sessions progressed, educators and students became more comfortable having a yarn, and their reflections and discussions became more focused on cultivating wellbeing. The yarning circles empowered educators and students to share their feelings and ideas freely and safely, enriching the data collection. An audio-recorded focus group session (discussed next) was conducted with all six groups at the beginning and end of the sessions. In the yarning circles, educators and students elaborated on focus questions (discussed above, see Table 6), asked questions from the group and shared sentiments about their cultivation of wellbeing. During these sessions, observations and focused reflections were also conducted.

Observations

I observed educators and students and took notes. I wrote reflections on my observations and cross-checked these with the transcriptions and participant reflections, further enhancing my understanding. Observations allow for direct assessment of behaviours and interactions related to wellbeing within the educational context (Creswell J. W., 2014; 2012; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). Observation data can have practical applications, and the findings enhance interventions, program development and decision-making. Observations can provide detailed descriptions and capture contextual factors about the surroundings, social norms, cultural practices, and environmental conditions.

The components of MMETTAS Pedagogy allow the learner to think about and reflect on

and to become aware of and understand one's thought process (Metacognition). Reflection is the key to metacognition and enables educators and learners to self-regulate (Ozturk, 2018; Whitebread et al., 2007). Next, I elaborate on reflections and visuals (photographed artefacts) utilised in the research and data collection.

Reflections

Reflections have been used as a professional tool for learning and development (Moon, 2004; Schön, 1987; 2017). Boud et al. (1985) discuss reflection as a valuable tool to convert experience into learning. Reflection is a large part of the data collection in all three phases of this study. As a researcher, I reflected deeply on my ethical decisions, interactions and understanding of the concept of wellbeing in education. My thoughtful and systematic introspections on my experiences, thoughts and feelings assisted me in understanding this topic deeply. I gained rich self-insight. The researcher's reflectivity, crystallisation, and triangulation through multiple sources and multiple methods assisted in the data integration and interpretation (Morgan H. H., 2024; Richardson, 2000). The process of reflexivity and reflection also enhanced the researcher-participant relationships and methodological development.

The participants (students and educators) were also encouraged to reflect deeply on every session. Teachers and students wrote and shared reflections about their experiences. Student participants used reflective tasks in day-to-day learning experiences. All participants created artefacts, and educator participants sent in email reflections during the week after each session. I emailed information about the conducted session and provided the resources they requested at the end of each week. Educators were also invited to email a reflection about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences during these six weeks. These communications were to encourage and

keep educators focused on wellbeing. My correspondence also served as a reminder for educators to send in their weekly reflections. The reflections provided deep engagement, active participation, student-centred learning, holistic understanding, and metacognition (awareness and knowledge of one's cognitive process). The creation of artefacts enhanced the reflection process, and photographs were our visual reminders and were valuable in the reflection process.

Photographed Artefacts Created by Educators and Students

Students and teachers focused intensely on creating flow, mindfulness and wellbeing and implemented various classroom activities during the school day. Classroom work and artefacts were collected sequentially throughout the study. This data offered insights into participants' expressions of wellbeing and the impact of creative activities. Photographs provided visual documentation of the artefacts and contextual information. Artefacts are valuable tools for reflection and understanding text, written or spoken word (Hodder, 2012; Miller D. M., 2010; Turkle, 2011). The images provided rich descriptions where words could not fully convey messages.

As Miller (2010) and Turkle (2011) both point out that photographed artefacts enhanced data comparisons, similarities, differences, and patterns that were not immediately apparent through text alone. Participants' perspectives and creativity provide unique insights into their experiences. Photographs of artefacts can be engaging, enhance the research data, and make findings more compelling and accessible. Visual effects and reflection (discussed above) form a large part of MMETTAS Pedagogy and can convey the essence of research more effectively. Next I will elaborate on MMETTAS Pedagogy, utilised in the workshops and justify its use in this study.

MMETTAS Pedagogy

MMETTAS Pedagogy (introduced in Chapter One and Chapter Two) is my original concept that combines Mindfulness, MET, The Arts (visual arts, dance, drama, music, media), and Story (Ranatunga, 2013; Ranatunga & Pagliano, 2017; Ranatunga et al., 2014). This pedagogy was developed through a learning-by-doing process over 20 years within my private counselling and teaching practice. The flexibility of the design evolves and adapts based on the learners' needs and experiences. I have utilised primary forms of MMETTAS Pedagogy in my previous research, *An Action Research study on Arts-based pedagogy, to enhance social-emotional wellbeing in young children* (Ranatunga, 2013). The practical experiences from my earlier work, such as implementing arts-based activities and observing their impact on children's social-emotional wellbeing, provided valuable insights into developing and effectively implementing these methods in real-world settings.

In the beginning, Material Engagement Theory (MET), The Arts (TA), and Story (S) were the focus. Initially, MMETTAS Pedagogy was presented as METAS Pedagogy (Ranatunga & Pagliano, 2017) with one 'M' and one 'T'. I later incorporated an extra 'M' and 'T' to highlight Mindfulness and **Metta** (discussed in the following section). I have used mindfulness, The Arts, and Story throughout my life with favourable results. By thoughtfully amalgamating these concepts, the aim is to create a transformative, innovative, and dynamic learning experience that empowers participants and promotes positive change in education and society.

During my professional journey, especially during my teaching, I focused intensely on a pedagogy where wellbeing was the foundation. Combining elements of MMETTAS Pedagogy provides a holistic approach to learning by incorporating rich sensory, kinaesthetic, auditory

visual, and mindful experiences. Within MMETTAS, learners are provided with various ways to process information, ensuring that the diverse needs of all students are catered to. Gardner (1983; 2003; 2006) pointed out that the Arts and creativity play a significant role in young people's learning, and during play and creative exploration, children employ several cognitive concepts.

Gardner's (1983; 2003; 2006) Multiple Intelligence Theory (MIT) significantly impacted the field of education, leading to the recognition of various forms of intelligence beyond traditional measures like Intelligence Quotient (IQ). He (Gardner, 1983; 2003; 2006) proposed that individuals have at least eight kinds of intelligence, which include spatial-visual, linguistic-verbal, logical-mathematical, body-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligence, each representing a different way of processing information and solving problems. Gardner (2020) later proposed existentialism as a possibility of a ninth intelligence. According to Gardner (2011), intelligence is not a single, unitary concept but a diverse set of abilities, insights, or intelligence that individuals possess to varying degrees.

MMETTAS Pedagogy allows learners to engage with content in multiple ways, facilitating meaningful and personalised learning experiences. For instance, in a traditional classroom setting, learners can engage in mindfulness exercises at the beginning of the class to promote focus and attention. In an arts-based workshop, learners can use various art equipment to express their emotions and thoughts, engaging their cognitive and sensory abilities. The flexibility of this pedagogy enables educators to explore, create, innovate and contribute meaningfully to their teaching. Table 7 presents the components of MMETTAS pedagogy

Table 7

Components of MMETTAS Pedagogy (Mindfulness, MET, The Arts, and Story)

Mindfulness	Material Engagement Theory (MET)	The Arts (TA)	Story (S)
Buddhist meditative states loving-kindness (metta), appreciation and joy (mudita), calmness (upekkha) compassion (karuna). Ways to meditate. Breath focus. Deep muscle relaxation Visualisations Manta	Arts equipment (pencils, brushes, crayons, paper, canvas, fabric...), Music instruments, singing bowls, rain sticks, chimes, and bells. Puppets, marionettes, Prosthetic devices (props, pictures, visuals, cards, books, stones, sand, beads, sticks, clay, play dough, toys, and all equipment used in activities)	Visual arts - sketching, painting, drawing, collage Music - sound Drama - social play, acting. Dance-movement. Media -	Books, including picture books, words, pictures, and reading. Audiobooks Virtual books, using media devices. Literature, Poetry, Storytelling (verbal)- history, culture.

MMETTAS Pedagogy allows learners to engage with content in multiple ways, facilitating meaningful and personalised learning experiences incorporating rich sensory, visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and mindful experiences. Incorporating metacognitive strategies into one's daily life, such as journaling, self-reflection, and mindfulness exercises, can be valuable for enhancing overall wellbeing. MMETTAS Pedagogy integrates wellbeing learning experiences within the four mindful conditions (states) of loving-kindness (metta), appreciation and joy (mudita), calmness (upekkha) and compassion (karuna). These conditions are not just theoretical concepts but actively practised and experienced within the pedagogy, fostering a deeper level of engagement and learning. It empowers individuals to actively participate in their mental and emotional health, leading to greater self-fulfilment and resilience.

The holistic learning experience begins with the learner's already rich imagination and assists in various cognitive processes.

MMETTAS Pedagogy is a learning-by-doing experiential process, making implementation seamless. This pedagogy aligns with emergent design and the transformative paradigm, as it promotes equity and empowers learners to reflect, explore, question, and challenge societal expectations. In this section, I will elaborate on each element of MMETTAS Pedagogy and justify its use.

Mindfulness. Mindfulness involves cultivating a non-judgemental awareness of the present moment, incorporating thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations (Kabat-Zinn, 2020). Mindfulness is a proven technique to support mental health and wellbeing and promotes calmness, clarity, creativity and awareness (Be You, 2023). This contemplative practice has gained attention in psychology, health, wellness, and education. Within education, mindfulness has been recognised for its potential to enhance emotional regulation, promote emotional resilience and self-awareness, reduce stress, and improve cognitive skills such as attention and concentration (Creswell et al., 2014; Jennings, 2015; 2019; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Zenner et al., 2014). When integrated into teaching pedagogy and the curriculum, mindfulness-based interventions promote a positive learning environment, fostering students' wellbeing and overall academic success (Creswell et al., 2014; Jennings, 2015; 2019; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Zenner et al., 2014). Mindfulness is a valuable tool for educators and students to navigate life's challenges and the educational journey.

Van der Kolk (2014), who researched the effects of trauma on the human brain, body and mind (emotion), discusses the benefits and challenges of using mindfulness. Van der Kolk (2014) states that trauma freezes the body in chronic pain avoidance, and mindfulness can help trauma survivors reconnect with the body and emotions. He also argues that we can work on

toning the more profound trauma symptoms better with other day-to-day activities such as prayer, singing, humming, chanting, yoga, Tai chi, laughter, exercise, deep breathing, and positive social engagement (Van der Kolk, 2014). These activities were incorporated into the innovative learning experiences within MMETTAS pedagogy, as many were connected with art exploration.

This study incorporates mindfulness, not as a deep meditative state but as a way to cultivate wellbeing dispositions, to learn to pay attention, reflect, focus, and be in the present moment without judgment. The calm and mindful practice within MMETTAS pedagogy incorporates the four states of loving-kindness (Metta), appreciation and joy (Mudita), calmness (Upekkha) and compassion (Karuna) (Nyanaponika Thera, 1999; Salzberg, 1996), enhancing the process of reflection, retrospection and wellbeing.

According to Buddharakkhita (2010), Metta is one of the four [the other three are compassion (karuna), appreciation and joy (mudita) and calmness (upekkha)] virtues of the heart that lead to happiness and harmony. These states are also considered Buddhist meditation conditions or brahma-viharas. Metta in Pali (a language related to Sanskrit) means loving-kindness (friendliness, goodwill, benevolence, fellowship, and peace). It relates to positive energy and feelings, which incorporate the welfare and happiness of self and others (Buddharakkhita, 2013; Don et al., 2022; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; 2020; 2023). The practice of Metta involves cultivating a mindset of loving-kindness and compassion towards oneself and all living beings (Buddharakkhita, 2013; Hanh, 1996).

Karuna involves developing compassion for self and others (Goldstein, 2002; Salzberg, 1996). Mudita involves cultivating joy and happiness in self and others (Kornfield, 2008;

Nyanaponika Thera, 1999). Upekkha involves maintaining emotional balance and impartiality, especially when facing challenges (Kornfield, 2008; Hanh, 1996). The goal is to promote a sense of interconnectedness, empathy and inner peace. MMETTAS Pedagogy integrates wellbeing learning experiences within these four mindful conditions (states) and attempts to integrate and develop a profound sense of inner peace, joy and contentment while nurturing empathy, understanding and harmony in one's relationships.

According to positive psychology research (Seligman, 2011), beginning with mindfulness (being present), calmness, compassion, joy, and lovingkindness can enhance interactive processes such as material engagement and artistic practices to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. I will elaborate on MET next, but first, I will briefly discuss Vygotsky's (1978; 1986; 1994) sociocultural theory of cognitive development as relevant to MMETTAS Pedagogy.

Material Engagement Theory (MET). Vygotsky's (1978; 1986; 1994) theory emphasises the role of social interaction between culture and language in shaping cognitive development and the importance of social interaction in learning. Vygotsky (1978; 1986) discussed acquiring and using psychological tools (signs, symbols, texts, formulae, and language). Some examples of these symbolic cultural artefacts (psychological tools) are maps for spatial reasoning, mnemonic techniques for memorisation, decision-making procedures for problem-solving and language used to communicate and internalise our thoughts (Mcleod, 2018; Robbins, 2001). According to Vygotsky (1978; 1986; 1994), these tools enable us to master psychological, higher-order mental functions, memory, perception and attention in ways appropriate to our cultures (Mcleod, 2018). These tools that impose direction and control on mental activity are acquired through social interaction, which we use to mediate our relationships

with the world (McLeod, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978; 1986; 1994). Malafouris (2018), who developed MET, emphasises the role of the environment and material culture in shaping human cognition. However, MET focuses on the role of material engagement in shaping cognitive life.

Material engagement theory specifies that prosthetic devices extend the brain's reach. This extension of the brain's reach aligns with the Arts and mindfulness, providing opportunities for individuals to engage in the present moment and contribute to their mental wellness. The tools utilised in mindfulness (singing bowl, rain stick, chimes), the Arts (art equipment and aids) and stories (books, puppets, props) were seen as prosthetic devices or psychological tools that incorporated MET guidelines.

MMETTAS pedagogy is an interactive learning process, and the devices, tools, props, objects, artefacts, and techniques used in the explorations were the prosthetic devices that enabled engagement and learning. These tools used in artmaking shape the brain and thoughts and further enhance the learning process. According to MET, the devices, visuals, toys, puppets, props, and art tools are “cognitive prosthetic devices” (Malafouris, 2013, p. 203). These devices act as extensions of the brain, aiding in shaping and reshaping thought processes. (Malafouris, 2004; 2012; 2013; 2018). Malafouris (2013, p. 28) further states that human intelligence “spreads out” beyond the skin into the culture and the material world. While MET has driven a conceptual change in the archaeology of mind, it illuminates the emergence of human thinking through the practical effects of the material world and culture (Iliopoulos, 2018). This new idea of the mind and material culture establishes thinking in action, highlighting that cognition is not just brain-bound but is situated in the interaction between brains, bodies, and material forms (Iliopoulos, 2018). It shifts our focus from being to becoming. This theory is linked to Pragmatism (Dewey,

1938b; Mead G. H., 1938; Peirce, 1878; 1903; 2010) and concepts of Vygorsky's (1978; 1986) sociocultural theory as discussed. In MMETTAS Pedagogy, many cognitive prosthetic devices used to move from a state of being to becoming are part of the tools used in artmaking and storytelling.

The Arts. As discussed in Chapter Two (Creativity-Based Initiatives), the Arts are fundamental to human life, and since the beginning of time, dancing, singing, making music, drawing, and telling stories have been natural and enriching activities for human beings (Dissanayake, 1990; Eisner, 1973–1974; 2002; Mead & Lancia, 2020; Nutbrown, 2013). The Arts are part of the Australian curriculum and a large part of MMETTAS pedagogy. I have discussed the Arts and their value to education in Chapter Two. Many researchers have highlighted the significance of arts-based practices in facilitating holistic learning experiences (Churchill-Dower, 2020; Ewing, 2013; Karkou & Glasman, 2004; Lindsay, 2016; 2020). Nutbrown (2013; 2021) draws extensively from the research to powerfully argue that: “the Arts are central to humanity and play a crucial role in children’s holistic development” (2013, p. 258). Art was an essential part of John Dewey’s (1916; 1934) philosophy, and many researchers and educators (Eisner, 1981; 2002; Ewing, 2013; Gibson & Ewing, 2011; Moula & McDonald, An emerging evidence-base for art therapy in primary schools, 2021; Sinclair et al., 2012) have acknowledged the Arts' substantial contribution to education.

Incorporating the Arts (Brydon-Miller et al., 2021; James et al., 1998) into education allows learners to engage in creative expression, movement, and sensory exploration, enhancing their understanding and connection to the subject matter. The various forms of art, such as dance, drama, media, music, visual arts, and narrative storytelling (audio, books, verbal, visual), have

been shown to promote emotional expression. This emotional connection makes the Arts a powerful tool in education, encouraging identity exploration and social connection, all of which contribute to wellbeing (Cusack, 2020; Fredrickson, 2000; Mead G. H., 1938). These expressions are relevant to the cultivating of wellbeing dispositions. Artefacts associated with the Arts and storytelling were crafted to present holistic approaches designed to enhance wellbeing by assisting with body-mind connections.

Story. Storytelling, a versatile practice that can take many forms, including personal anecdotes, fictional tales, or historical accounts, is a key element in my teaching pedagogy. These stories, whether related (told), read (picture books), or listened to (audiobooks), serve as a powerful tool in various settings, such as education, therapy, and entertainment (Fivush & Marin, 2018; Forsell et al., 2021; Oike, 2021; Phillips & Nguyen, 2021). Storytelling is the most innate form of communication, and the oldest teaching method used to evoke emotion, perspective-taking, and promote cultural understanding (Dissanayake, 1990; Eisner, 1973–1974; 2002). Through stories, we can understand and appreciate different cultures and perspectives.

Narrative storytelling involves sharing stories with a specific purpose or goal using various forms of media, such as audio, books, verbal, or visual means (Brydon-Miller et al., 2021). Narrative storytelling promotes empathy, personal growth, and self-reflection (Craig & Huber, 2007). Storytelling can facilitate processing traumatic events and foster resilience (Atkinson, 2022; Pennebaker, 2018). Overall, narrative storytelling is a powerful tool for communication and personal development. It can convey important messages, connect with others, and promote self-understanding and growth. I shared a story in every session (in phases two and three), and sometimes, we enacted the story or linked it to other lessons in the

classroom. We explored the emotions of the characters and their experiences. The storybooks in Figure 8 below provided rich exploration and interaction for students and educators.

Figure 8



Some of the Many Stories Shared in Sessions

Many stories explored emotions like anger, sadness, and worry; others provided insight into kindness, empathy, perceptions, sharing, strengths, roles, and understanding of the brain and body. A benefit of using stories was the link many books can create with literacy, numeracy, science, religion, and other subjects. For example, the book titled *Have You Filled a Bucket Today* by Carol McCloud was used for the exploration of the letters 'b' and 'f', a vocabulary-building lesson with opposites and word exploration in English, a numeracy lesson on measurement and capacity in Maths, a RE lesson on caring for your neighbour, a HASS lesson on community engagement, an art lesson on making a collage by mixing colours and a wellbeing skill-building lesson on the concept of kindness and empathy. The book introduces the idea of everyone having an invisible bucket and how it can be filled with acts of kindness and emptied by unkindness. As I have discussed, learning through these mediums provides a holistic learning experience, beginning with the learner's already rich imagination and assisting in various cognitive processes.

By incorporating Mindfulness, MET, The Arts and stories, educators can provide opportunities for learners to engage with content in multiple ways, facilitating meaningful and personalised learning experiences. Incorporating MMETTAS Pedagogy into my data collection was significant for several reasons.

Justification and significance. MMETTAS pedagogy aligns with the holistic nature of wellbeing, offering a promising avenue for promoting mental health, wellbeing in education, and personal growth. The combination of mindfulness, material engagement, artistic practices, and story has the potential to enhance wellbeing and create positive learning experiences focusing on cultivating wellbeing dispositions. These mediums and strategies enhance metacognition (Masters, 2020; Ozturk, 2018) and embrace various learning styles (Gardner, 1983; 2003; 2006).

Integrating these mediums can also enhance engagement, learning and flow state. When individuals can learn to be in the present moment with intense engagement, they can build focus and contentment in any activity. Flow state is a mental state of immersing oneself with undivided attention in activity. Flow state enhances creativity and performance and sparks innovation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990; 2014). Csikszentmihalyi introduced the term flow (1975; 1990; 2014). He describes flow state as optimal engagement and immersion in an activity where learners experience a sense of complete absorption and focus. People are happiest in the zone (flow) when absorbed in something in the world. Flow was initially introduced in Chapter One in Section Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions, under wellbeing skills and dispositions.

MMETTAS Pedagogy enhances engagement and fosters deeper connections to the research process by offering a dynamic and participatory learning experience. These mediums elicit rich qualitative data, providing valuable insights into wellbeing exploration. They are

supported by empirical research and practical experiences in counselling and education, motivating me to apply these strategies in my work.

Implementation Process. I will describe MMETTAS-based activities with educators and students in this section. The MMETTAS activities were seen as wellbeing skill-building activities with mindful reflective tasks. The learning explorations were provided for educators and students to partake in before and after group discussions (focus groups and yarning circles). The spaces were also set up to give educators and student participants a glimpse of focused activities for subsequent sessions or classroom ideas.

I incorporated mindfulness practices utilising Metta (loving-kindness), karuna (compassion), mudita (sympathetic Joy), and upekkha (Equanimity) (Nyanaponika Thera, 1999; Salzberg, 1996) through guided meditations and mindful breathing exercises. These helped participants relax, focus, reflect and be more attuned to their thoughts and feelings. All sessions began and ended with mindfulness practice, which helped participants centre themselves and become present when exploring wellbeing skills. The moments of reflection created a holistic data set, where participants contemplated and articulated their experiences and insights and generated multimodal data (visual artwork, narratives) and reflection.

Using arts-based methods like drawing, painting, collage-making, crafting, music, and movement, along with prosthetic devices (such as the art equipment, puppets, books, singing bowl, and cards) encouraged participants to be immersed in the experience and visualise and represent their thoughts and emotions related to the topic of exploration. Participants were encouraged to explore their creativity and express their thoughts and feelings in diverse ways.

It was valuable to use storytelling techniques to prompt participants to share their experiences and reflections. These involved guided storytelling and requesting participants to create visual representations, drawing collages, and artifacts that capture their feelings or thoughts related to the research topic. The storytelling encouraged reflexivity and sharing personal anecdotes, stories, and reflections during sessions.

Educator Sessions. See Figure 9 for photos of the creations and reflective spaces where educators gathered to talk, listen, reflect and be creative in a collaborative environment. Making mandalas, sand tray activities, drawing activities, picture reflections, collages, craft tasks, various forms of story, finding purpose tasks, gratitude and kindness tasks, and wordplay activities were ideas we focused on at the beginning and end of every session. Educators also began to share their ideas as the sessions progressed. An educator in the early years shared how she started using toys (teddy bears) in her mindful spaces for her learners to understand and see the process of belly breathing. This activity was discussed in an early session (by me) and an informative insight about educators building on their practice and incorporating wellbeing into learning. The mini origami books we made (see Figure 9) were an educator participant idea that was shared with others. The scope of this thesis only permits the discussion of some tasks in detail. I will continue to discuss ideas we embraced as relevant to the data collection and analysis. Educators requested these sessions and began incorporating these ideas, modifying and enhancing them to suit their classroom lessons and pedagogy, demonstrating their personal growth and learning.

The spaces created for these sessions were specially tailored to reflect and reminisce, to feel calm and relaxed. In the sessions, educators were encouraged to arrive early, find a comfortable space, sit quietly, reflect, and become mindful and focused. We always began and ended sessions with reflection. In some sessions, we shared prayer and activities; other times, we

carried on with contemplative practice. Many mediums were used to evoke the senses (sight, smell, taste, hearing, and touch); however, I was cautious about each individual and their personal and cultural understandings of these experiences. I regularly sourced feedback from educators and invited them to share their experiences about the activities, space, and place we created.

Figure 9



Educator Wellbeing Sessions - The Reflective Spaces & Yarning Circles

There were essential oils and fragranced hand creams (with labels covered) to use as they wished. These, at times, trigger mindful reflection and contemplation. The idea behind covering the fragrance came to me when I set up a session, used some hand cream, and had to stop to reflect on my sense of smell as I could not read the label because the writing was unclear. Using a learning-by-doing principle, I offered participants a similar experience to reflect, focus, and be mindful. This effortless process of moisturising our hands became a regular mindful experience.

Soft instrumental music constantly played in the background, enhancing the ambiance and engaging the educators. They were also invited to bring their music and headphones during

activities, further personalising their experience. There is growing evidence about the positive effects on neurological functioning when listening and interacting with music (Petersson & Nystrom, 2011; Tennant et al., 2013). Music engages various brain areas involving cognition, motor functioning, socialisation, motivation, and emotion (Chanda & Levitin, 2013; Daniel, 2001; Koelsch, 2010). Like music and sound, colour (Goldhirsh, 2019; Kuehni, 2012; O'Connor, 2015) was also utilised to enhance creativity, reflection, and relaxation. For example, I displayed a variety of colours and used brightly painted smiley faces (emoji) drop sheets for the art and craft table. The tables were decorated with soft blue fabrics. These are presented in Figure 9.

Colours can evoke various meanings and are utilised as an artistic process. For example, green is associated with balance, growth, nature, and sometimes illness, stagnation, and isolation (Van Braam, 2024). Orange can create enthusiasm and depict imagination, motivation, and inspiration, yet sometimes, orange can depict insincerity, self-indulgence, pessimism, unsociability, over-confidence, and aggression. While yellow inspires creativity, warmth, sunshine, positivity, happiness, and imagination, it can also depict impulsiveness, sickness, mental illness, and jealousy (Color Psychology 101, 2024). The colour blue is said to be productive, secure, orderly, trusting, comforting, peaceful, tranquil, calming, serene, and relaxing (Labrecque & Milne, 2012); however, it can sometimes evoke feelings of sadness or aloofness (Elliot, 2015; Elliot & Maier, 2012).

Colours were only used as subtle hints and not to overpower the mood. The personal, cultural, and universal effects of colour (Chebat & Morrin, 2007; Elliot & Maier, 2012) were considered. The spaces were set up using colours, artefacts, objects, soft fragrances, symbols, books, puzzles, sensory and fidget toys, pictures, and materials for participants to explore and to remind them of previous sessions or past discussions.

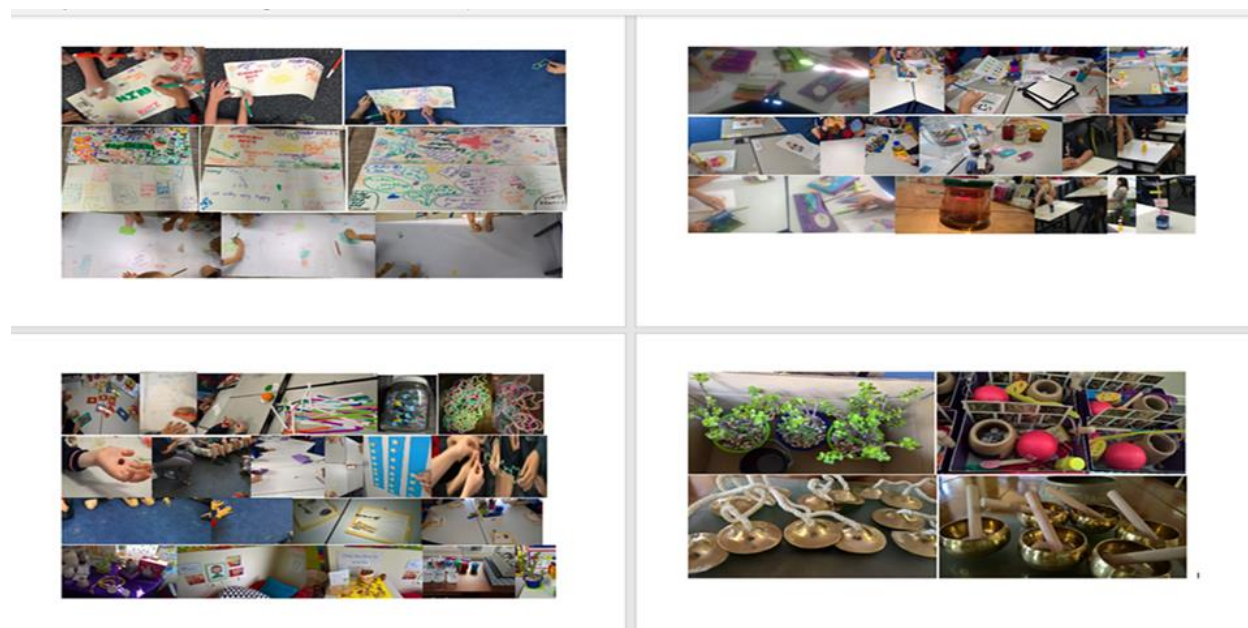
Throughout the data collection phase, I offered educators training materials, resources, and support to implement this pedagogy effectively. I ensured that educators had access to the tools and guidance they needed. They were encouraged to experiment with MMETTAS Pedagogy and incorporate it into their teaching methods. There were positive benefits of combining elements of my pedagogy with their current practices. It aligned with the Arts, Religion, HASS and HPE curriculum, the general capabilities, and the cross-curricular priorities. MMETTAS Pedagogy provided a clear structure that seamlessly aligns with and complements different pedagogical approaches. The structure serves as a guide and reference for educators.

Student sessions were conducted within each class group of students. Educators had set up mindful classroom spaces. I provided each class with a starter kit (see Figure 10, bottom right) that included chimes, a singing bowl, a plant, a bucket, and some sensory and fidget toys to include in their mindful space. All sessions included Mindfulness, MET, The Arts, and Story-based activities. I have found a deeper level of engagement, enthusiasm, and flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990; 2014) present when individuals can use various materials and mediums through their senses to learn and explore. In our sessions, we utilised various materials, such as puppets, sand, pebbles, stones, a singing bowl, media, sound, stimulus material and devices, cards, pictures, toys, figurines, and art-making tools. Figure 10 shows student creations and items provided to each class to set up mindful spaces.

The curriculum is already overcrowded (Australian Primary Principals Association [APPA], 2020) and bringing more content into the curriculum was seen as ineffective. Therefore, the idea was to focus on the art and science of teaching, the how of teaching, and to incorporate wellbeing skills through innovative pedagogy within the existing curriculum. There were no one-size-fits-all programs, just unique ideas and experiences tailored to suit this community and this

school culture. Within MMETTAS pedagogy, wellbeing skills are regarded as a way of life unique to each individual, culture, and community. Furthermore, the strategies to obtain these skills are easily adapted. Learning wellbeing skills is like playing an instrument or learning a new language (Goleman, 2012). Practice helps improve skills. The wellbeing spaces were set up with mindful activities to reflect, focus and practice to cultivate wellbeing skills.

Figure 10



Artefacts, Creations, and Interactions.

Note. The top two images and the one on the left are student artefacts, creations, reflections, and students engaging in activities. The image on the right shows' items presented to each classroom to set up wellbeing spaces.

MMETTAS Pedagogy, with its alignment with common learning objectives and educational outcomes, proves to be a versatile tool. Its flexibility allows for seamless integration into any teaching approach or subject area. This was demonstrated at Saint Benessere, where visible learning was used during the research, and MMETTAS pedagogy was effortlessly incorporated into the learning strategies. It aligns with student-centred learning, a common goal

of many pedagogical approaches, and encourages active participation, critical thinking, and self-reflection. Its support for developing various learning styles and its ease of customisation further emphasise its versatility.

Incorporating PAR alongside ABR and MMETTAS Pedagogy encourages a rich and transformative educational experience. Educators can create a rich and inclusive learning environment that acknowledges and celebrates their students' strengths and intelligence by incorporating Mindfulness, MET, The Arts, and Story. The data collection process was comprehensive, involving formal (audio-recorded) focus group discussions, informal discussions (yarning circles), direct experiences in lessons (MMETTAS Pedagogy), reflections, the creation of artifacts from activities, observations and surveys. The factual and interpretive data mix will be integrated rather than presented separately in the final report.

The multi-method approach to data collection was chosen to provide a comprehensive view of educational wellbeing. It is expected to enhance the credibility, reliability, and richness of the study findings and the research site. This approach offers a balanced view of wellbeing by prioritising participant engagement and active involvement in the research process. Including qualitative and quantitative data, participant and researcher perspectives, and reflections ensures a holistic understanding of wellbeing, essential for educational research. Responses from participants were collated and analysed for themes (see -Thematic Analysis Section). I will discuss the qualitative data analysis next.

Qualitative Data Analysis -Thematic Analysis

I used thematic analysis to analyse all non-numerical data, audio transcripts, reflections, text (email), observation notes, photographs, and artefacts. There are several reasons why I chose

to use thematic analysis for this study. Braun & Clarke (2006; 2013) state that thematic analysis identifies and analyses data-related patterns related to research questions. “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10). By capturing patterns in the data, the thematic analysis provided a means to interpret various aspects of the research topic and identify critical meanings within the data set (Boyatzis, 1998). This method enabled me to analyse text-based feedback from multiple sources and better understand the wellbeing of primary school educators and learners (Guest et al., 2012).

Thematic analysis systematically identifies patterns, themes, and categories within the data through a multistage process. Thematic analysis is particularly useful for research focused on subjective experiences, such as this study, which aims to assess opinions, views, and events related to wellbeing in primary school. This analytic process allowed for a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences regarding wellbeing in the primary school setting. The qualitative data analysis involved the following steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013)

1. Transcription: All interviews and focus-group discussions were transcribed verbatim.
2. Data management: The transcripts and observations were part of the management and analysis.
3. Data coding: Initial data coding was conducted, and categories were developed based on emerging themes.
4. Data analysis: Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes in the data, which was triangulated with the observations and survey data.

5. Interpretation: The data was interpreted and presented to align with the research questions and objectives.
6. Reflexivity: This was integrated throughout the data analysis process to ensure the researcher's biases and assumptions are considered.

Once the data was gathered, I followed the steps for the thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013; 2020), as shown in Table 8 below. All words, ideas, comments, and statements were initially collated, sorting similar words and phrases into groups or codes. This process assisted in highlighting the codes for deeper understanding and grouping. Thematic analysis is not a linear or recursive approach. It is a process of moving back and forth to gain a deeper understanding. I found this approach easily adaptable to my study design because it was like following a coiled hose through a field of long grass (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013; 2020). It was easily adaptable, not a rigid system.

Table 8

My Process of Thematic Analysis Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013; 2020)	
Step 1	First, I reflected on my preconceptions.
Data	I collected and transcribed data and read through the transcripts several times.
Familiarisation	I immersed myself and engaged (getting to know) in data.
	I then searched for patterns from survey results and viewed photos and drawings.
	I reflected and used colours to enhance my understanding.
	I created artefacts of my own (from the data).
	I created tables and charts with meaningful patterns and themes from the data.
	I took personal notes and tried to understand the data to gain an overview of the context.
Step 2	Codes are analytic entities.
Generating Initial	I aimed to build code clusters to build and generate a label that captures something in the data

Codes	(avoid one word). I did a couple of sweeps of the data- latent (underpinning assumptions) and semantic (surface) enmeshed. In the first systematic part, I took my time with themes. I tried to find the essence of the data. I went beyond the obvious. I highlighted and labelled words and phrases that indicated something. I took notes and summarised and condensed the information.
Step 3 Generating Themes Across the Data	I narrowed down the data. I tried to find meaning related to the question. Themes are distinctive but also part of the whole. I looked for shared ideas, concepts, and patterned meanings. Several codes indicated similar expressions. I reviewed it several times. Themes with no purpose were discarded. I highlighted, coloured, and generated key themes from derived codes and ideas.
Step 4 Reviewing Themes	I reviewed and evaluated the themes. I looked for a central organising concept. Then, I compared the themes with the original data. I looked for missing points or irrelevant results and modified them after tracing themes and finalising them.
Step 5 Define Themes	I defined and named themes depending on what they indicated and what I understood from the data. I discussed these with my participants and supervisors to check their views and understanding.
Step 6 Producing the report	I finalised the idea and the order and wrote the results and the conclusion, which were indicative (supported by understanding) of the thematic analysis. I related the analysis to the research questions.

Thematic analysis can be carried out in several ways. By examining its explicit content, I began analysing the data with a semantic approach. During this process, I used a deductive approach (formulating a hypothesis and analysing results). I focused on the data with preconceived themes, expecting to find themes based on theory or existing knowledge. I also

used an inductive (observation, looking for patterns, developing theory) approach where the codes and themes were determined from the data. The reflexive thematic analysis used inductive coding and assisted me in making sense of my thoughts during data gathering. I shared my thoughts with participants and uncovered issues during the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013; Guest et al., 2012).

Coding reliability analysis (Nowell et al., 2017) was used after the data were coded to determine the frequency of the themes. Codebook thematic analysis assisted with definitions of words and related concepts to compare and outline components. I then continued with a latent analysis, looking for underlying meaning and assumptions. I also discussed these themes with participants during group discussions and with advisors during supervision to check mutual understanding of participants' perceptions of wellbeing.

The themes and concepts embedded in the discussions provide further in-depth information and allow deeper insight:

- To develop a deeper understanding of my participants
- To uncover the themes, patterns, or structures of the data, develop a theory around a phenomenon.
- To explore how words were used by my participants to communicate their experiences and to make sense of the world around them.

- To search for underlying meanings and themes not available on the surface of language. From my experience, sensitive topics (mental health) are not always discussed easily and are sometimes avoided or discussed differently.

Several stages were employed to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the data analysis. For example, member-checking, peer briefing, and reflexivity (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013; Ellingson, 2009; Morgan H. H., 2024; Nowell et al., 2017) enhanced the process. Member checking involved verifying the accuracy of the analysis with participants to ensure their perspectives had been represented accurately. Peer debriefing involved seeking feedback from colleagues to enhance the rigour of the analysis. Reflexivity involves the researcher reflecting on their own biases and assumptions, and crystallisation involves looking at research phenomena from multiple perspectives, methods and data sources (Morgan H. H., 2024). The researcher acknowledges and addresses the potential biases that may influence the process and findings.

All participants were involved in two surveys (discussed *next*), one at the beginning and one at the end of data collection. The surveys were the only form of quantitative data collection, and descriptive data was utilised from them.

Surveys (for educators and students)

Surveys are widely used methods of quantitative data collection. In this study, the surveys were expected to provide objective and subjective data on quantifiable aspects of educational wellbeing (Creswell J. W., 2012; Forgeard et al., 2011; Kern et al., 2014). The goal was to understand the participant demographic, population, and overall perceptions of wellbeing. The surveys were also beneficial to triangulate the data. The surveys (standardised) consisted of

structured questions with predefined responses, aiming to improve the study's external validity. The intent was to make the survey more representative of real-world situations, ensuring consistency and relevance to broader populations or settings. When survey questions mirror people's decisions, the study results become more applicable beyond the specific study context. The surveys were conducted with educators and students. In Phase Two, The Educator Wellbeing and Resilience Survey (Appendix V) was conducted at the beginning and again at the end. In Phase Three, the Australian Counsel of Education Research (ACER) SEW Survey was conducted at the beginning and end of data collection. I will discuss each of these next.

Educator Wellbeing and Resilience Survey. This survey was specially designed for this study and this group of people. As a counsellor, I was familiar with and used a range of surveys with my clients to gain their overall perceptions of wellbeing. The Educator Wellbeing and Resilience Survey (Appendix V) aimed to provide an overall understanding of educator wellbeing and to facilitate focus discussions. After researching and reviewing several online surveys, I created the Educator Wellbeing and Resilience Survey (Forgeard et al., 2011; Kern et al., 2014; Living Well, 2012; Tennant et al., 2013). I designed it for this study and this group of individuals. Initially, I tested the functionality of the survey I created with family and friends (18 volunteers), who provided verbal feedback to improve the survey's usability and general understanding. For example, care was taken to ensure the language was consistent. Participants discussed the emoticons to enhance mutual understanding and interpretation. The pen and paper surveys were distributed and collected manually by me from participants. The data was manually transcribed, and I did not rely on software or platforms for administration or transcription.

Thirty-two educators undertook the Educator Wellbeing and Resilience Survey (Appendix V) and answered questions about their wellbeing during the first session. This survey was used with educators again at the end of Phase Two of data collection. The survey questions (see Table 9, right column) were subjective and typical of wellbeing questions used in other surveys (Forgeard et al., 2011; Kern et al., 2014; Living Well, 2012; Tennant et al., 2013). Moreover, they were not intended to solely interpret the wellbeing of this group. The survey was designed to obtain information about educators and their feelings about their wellbeing, state of wellbeing, and resilience.

To avoid being identifiable, educators were instructed to use the unique code they created in their journals and not to write their names on the survey. The surveys were used to interpret an overall understanding of the groups' wellbeing and not for individual interpretation of wellbeing. The survey results were also intended to be used to understand the qualitative data further and explore educator wellbeing.

Table 9

Question 1 - Q1	Question - Q2, Q3 and Q4 Always – A, Usually – U, Sometimes -S, Rarely – R, Never - N			Question - Q5 Yes – Y, No – N, Unsure - UN
Letters and Abbreviations for the Words and Emoticons in the Survey	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
😊 Very Happy - VH	I feel happy	I feel close to other people	Doing well is important to me. I deal with challenges well.	I know my strengths.
🙂 Happy - H	I feel relaxed.	I am interested in other people.	I spend time doing what I love.	I have good (positive) relationships.
😐 Unsure - UN	I feel energised	I talk to people in my family about how I feel.	I make decisions with ease.	I have good friends.
😞 Sad – S	I feel loved	I talk to some people at work about how I feel.	I am interested in new things.	I know my weaknesses.
😓 Very Sad -VS	I feel good about myself.	Other people like to spend time with me.	Home is a happy place to be.	I have people I want to be like
	I think clearly	I know how to behave in different situations.	Work is a happy place to be.	I have goals for the future.
		I have chances to show others what I am good at	I feel positive about the future.	

In the initial section of the survey, participants indicated their gender, age group (21 - 25, 26 - 35, 36 - 45, 46 - 55, 56 - 65, 66+), teaching experience (1 - 3, 4 - 7, 8 - 12, 15 - 20, 21+) and the current year level they taught (early: prep - 2, middle: 3 - 4, upper 5 - 6). Question one comprised three sections about personal feelings on the day, the day before, and the week before. Emoticons were used to gain responses to this question (see Table 8 in the left column). These were discussed aiming for a single level of interpretation and understanding. In questions two, three and four, educators answered the statements indicating if it applied to them, usually, sometimes rarely or never. In Question Five of the Educator wellbeing and Resilience Survey, educators answered the following statements: yes, unsure or no. Many of the survey questions became discussion starters in the Yarning circles.

Student ACER SEW Survey. This survey was designed by Professor Michael E. Bernard (Melbourne Graduate School of Education) as a method for national and international schools to assess current levels of students' SEW. With its report, the survey provides schools with a summary of results outlining the demographics (year-level, gender-specific data), SEW score, overall SEW, and a breakdown of specific areas. A mean score for all schools alongside a mean score of the school was provided for comparison. Data-specific areas were summarised using indicators of SEW in terms of personal factors (emotional, social, and learning skills) and environmental factors (school, home, and community) and these were broken down into three levels (high, moderate, low). The overall SEW of surveyed students is described in six levels (see Table 10). Chapter Six, the data analysis chapter, will discuss the survey results.

Table 10

Six Levels of SEW	
Level 1	The lowest level of SEW
Level 2	Very low level of SEW
Level 3	Low level of SEW
Level 4	High Level of SEW
Level 5	Very High level of SEW
Level 6	The highest level of SEW

The ACER SEW online Survey reports were reviewed to enhance wellbeing and focus group sessions. This survey aimed to gather students' perspectives on their social, emotional, and learning skills. The collective voice of students was necessary, and the quantitative survey enhanced the qualitative data. The survey provided a comprehensive understanding of the current levels of students' SEW in the primary school context, which was crucial for the research on enhancing wellbeing in education.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I expanded on the research design and methodology, emphasising the importance of each step in the process. I explored and justified the methods and discussed the data collection process, underlining the significance of each participant's unique perspectives and experiences. I was guided by the ancient fable of the six blind men and the elephant, highlighting

the diverse perspectives informing the research process. These diverse perspectives, shaped by the participants' unique experiences, are integral to this research.

The study began by exploring the research focus and the questions to set the stage for a comprehensive understanding of the purpose of the study. The central objective of this research study is to explore the conditions, challenges and enabling factors necessary for enhancing wellbeing in the primary school context. The study investigates the dispositions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of the researcher, educators, and learners and how these impact and enhance the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions. The aim is to co-create knowledge and to understand how to cultivate wellbeing dispositions and promote meaningful change in wellbeing education.

The comprehensive methodology was discussed, and the many interconnected approaches that shape this inquiry were unveiled. Embracing the transformative paradigm, I realised the potential for research to reveal and enact positive societal change. This active involvement ensures that participants feel part of the process and can be hopeful for the transformative potential of the research. This paradigm fuels our hope and inspiration for a better future. The commitment to address social justice, inequalities, and human rights within the research process of educational wellbeing is a beacon of hope, inspiring us all to work towards a more equitable and just society.

Emergent design allows research methods to evolve as insights unfold, which is especially beneficial when using hands-on learning-by-doing procedures. Through the learning-by-doing process, experiential learning is integrated, emphasising active engagement and the practical application of knowledge. The learning-by-doing process underpins my novel MMETTAS Pedagogy, incorporating Mindfulness, MET, the Arts, and Story, fostering holistic

and immersive research experiences. This pedagogy infuses the methodology with creativity and introspection, offering a unique lens to explore the complex concept of wellbeing. While my methods have a qualitative core with a layer of quantitative data, this mixed-method approach enriches the inquiry, allowing exploration of the multifaceted dimensions of the research topic and seeking answers to the research question.

The innovative structure adds depth and authenticity to the research. This chapter comprehensively overviews the data collection procedures in all three study phases. Grounded in emergent design and guided by a transformative paradigm, my research methodology is not just a set of procedures but a learning-by-doing process that engages the participants in exploring education wellbeing. Enriched by various methods, it embodies the spirit of exploration, discovery, and meaningful engagement within the education wellbeing landscape. The collaborative approach in Phases Two and Three values the voices and perspectives of all stakeholders (educators and learners), making them feel integral to the research and its outcomes. In the next chapter, I will explore my story and reflections, a personal process and a collective intervention in my academic inquiry.

Chapter Four - Phase One: Me Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions

“Your vision will become clear only when you look into your own heart. Who looks outside dreams, who looks inside awakes” (Jung, 190, p. 564) .

Overview and Structure (Chapter Four)

In this chapter, I offer a personal perspective on cultivating wellbeing dispositions. I approach this understanding (cultivating wellbeing dispositions) in three stages, beginning with trying to understand self and my motivation (Phase One) and extending it to trying to understand how educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions (Phases Two and Three). I explore aspects of my life, wellbeing and culture to seek deeper understanding and explore the research focus. This first phase further clarifies this study's research questions. The purpose of this chapter is to advance Phase One of this research.

In Chapter One, I discussed the learning-by-doing principle and the importance of lived experiences. My lived experiences, research, and learnings have influenced and enabled the development and understanding of the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions. As this chapter progresses, I reflect deeply on my ethical decision-making processes, which help me stay focused. I recap the research literature, embed it, and introduce and define new concepts. As an insider researcher, I move back and forth simultaneously along a continuum. These demands shape how I tell my story. The deep personal reflection justifies using a formal storytelling research method.

I employ autoethnography and ABR to illustrate how I have developed and refined my understanding of wellbeing and to elaborate on my journey of cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

The autoethnographic account uncovers the study of culture through the self (the researcher). Autoethnography assists systematic analysis (graphy) of personal experience (auto) to understand cultural experience (ethno). As Jung quotes at the beginning of this chapter, true understanding, clarity, and purpose comes from looking within. I explore my vulnerabilities by narrating my redemptive wellbeing story within a broader sociocultural community context. My narrative encompasses my roles as a child, student, parent, counsellor, and educator. By revealing these facets of my identity, I aim to establish authenticity, building a genuine connection and a strong foundation for the research topic. Sharing my story in this chapter, ahead of my participants' stories, will shed light on my deep connection with understanding wellbeing and why I perceive it as crucial to learning. Autoethnography (in this chapter) enables me to explore my positionality before I begin to examine the lives of others in the following chapters.

This exploration (Phase One) in this chapter is a valuable foundation for Phases Two and Three in Chapter Five and Chapter Six where I explore the overall state of educator and student wellbeing at Saint Benessere's and their unfolding narrative. Added to autoethnography and ABR, I utilise PAR, and several innovative data collection and analysis methods in Phases Two and Three, examining my participants' wellbeing stories and how they cultivated wellbeing dispositions.

As discussed in the introduction chapter and the literature review, wellbeing is a multilayered phenomenon balanced by a person's resources and challenges (Dodge et al., 2012). Wellbeing is a holistic experience of joy and vitality, where an individual feels energised, comfortable, connected, and inspired (Gaston, 2017). When people experience and reflect on positive feelings, they can learn to experience life optimally. The literature revealed that the overall state of wellbeing among individuals is at an all-time low, and this situation has

continued to worsen due to the recent pandemic. Therefore, to enhance wellbeing in education, we must first comprehend the overarching concepts of wellbeing. This chapter, through autoethnography, investigates personal experiences and culture to find an overarching framework to understand the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions.

Autoethnography and Using Narratives (Story Poetry and Artefacts) in this Research.

As discussed previously, autoethnography can provide a deep, personal understanding of experiences, shedding light on the researcher's perspective and insights (Ellis & Bochner, 2016; Ellis et al., 2011). Dass and Gorman (1999) point out that autoethnography is a valuable tool for understanding the depth of existential issues such as an individual's hopes, dreams, aspirations, challenges, and pain. Carolyn Ellis, states that autoethnography is not “simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, and reflexively” (2013, p. 10). Autoethnography is not something a researcher does; it is more than merely examining one's life; it is about thinking about how we act, feel, and think (metacognition) and understanding the deeper culture. “Autobiographical genre of writing and research which displays multiple levels of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739) is a beneficial narrative approach. Autoethnography, as a method, is both a process and a product (Ellis et al., 2011). I integrate autoethnographic accounts and ABR within this chapter using artifacts, poems, and stories from my life and experiences in this research.

Scientific research focuses on external reality and identifies “broad patterns that capture general truths about the world” (Dahlstrom, 2019, p. 4); however, when it comes to narratives, the evaluation is based “on the lifelikeness of its internal connection” (Dahlstrom, 2019, p. 9).

This chapter presents factual narratives based on actual events, highlighting the people I encountered, the events I experienced, and the meaningful connections they hold. Factual narratives recount true stories or personal experiences, focusing on providing accurate and reliable information (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). This type of storytelling aims to convey real-life occurrences in a compelling and engaging way while maintaining factual accuracy (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). It is essential to recognise that knowledge creation is relative to one's perspective, thus deriving meaning and value in the broader context of reality (Bruner, 1957; 1986; 1977). The artefacts and poems enriched the memories and stories.

I have elaborated on MMETTAS Pedagogy, a learning-by-doing arts-based process, in Chapter Three. Mindfulness, MET, The Arts, Stories, and poetry are a part of my life and continue to keep me grounded. These practices and activities help me maintain stability and presence while supporting my wellbeing. For example, mindfulness helps me stay centred and balanced, reducing stress and increasing awareness. The Arts and MET enhance emotional release and expression, strengthening inner peace and stability. Story provides connection, perspective, empathy, and understanding. Poetry distils complex emotions and thoughts into powerful language, offering comfort, inspiration, and a way to process feelings.

In my work in education and counselling, I draw upon the Arts, Mindfulness, MET, and storytelling (Ranatunga, 2013; Ranatunga & Pagliano, 2017; Ranatunga et al., 2014). I employ various types of stories (fiction, nonfiction, prose, and poetry) and styles (oral, written, media, visual, auditory, artistic, and literature) to deliver my lessons as an educator. I utilised various storytelling techniques to enhance the therapeutic experience in my counselling sessions. I

incorporate redemptive storytelling (McAdams, 1993; Smith, 2017) in my counselling encounters. This chapter presents my autoethnographic narrative reflections using redemptive storytelling and poetry (Furman, 2004; 2005; 2006; Wiebe, 2015).

Poetry affirms the value of subjective experiences and encourages reflexivity, enabling a deeper understanding of the self and the research process (Brew, 2001; Leggo, 2005). Many researchers (Furman, 2004; Hodges, 1993; MacKenzie, 2013; Prendergast et al., 2009) have employed the power of poetry in their autoethnographic research. Typically, I write poetry for personal reflection and rarely share my poems. My focus has always been on my experiences and internal exploration, and this thesis represents a creative project that is gradually evolving. In light of the struggle and challenges I have faced while writing this thesis and to create and share knowledge, I have written several poems that I will share in the following sections. These arts-based ideas and autoethnographic encounters (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) provide me with an avenue to understand my vulnerabilities and establish an intimate and exclusive connection with the reader, allowing me to share insights into the inner workings of my mind.

Me Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions: An Autoethnographic Encounter

I am using autoethnography to better understand my engagement with wellbeing at an individual level and as part of my broader sociocultural community context. I explore aspects of my life story and insights to understand my participants' lives and their insights (in the following chapters). Experiences shape the development of wellbeing (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Roberts, 2010), and according to Smith (2017), creating narratives about the events in our lives provides clarity and enables understanding of self and others. Individuals experience wellbeing and education differently. Next, I will discuss my journey towards cultivating dispositions for

wellbeing through time, countries, cultures, and communities. This exploration is enhanced through epiphanies, discussions and interviews with others, and consultation with text, photographs, and artefacts (Bochner & Ellis, 1992; Denzin, 1989). I will examine how I consciously and subconsciously worked to cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the hope of better understanding what cultivating wellbeing dispositions means to me and the cultures I am part of. To achieve this, I will focus on four different perspectives of wellbeing. They are:

1. As a primary school student
2. As a parent of primary school students
3. As a counsellor of primary school students and educators
4. As a primary school educator

Our life stories and how we perceive our life experiences strongly influence how we interpret and understand the world. The stories our bodies live inform our understanding of the world around us. This applies to all learners and educators and is relevant to how the researcher interprets the research data. Researchers must challenge and critically examine their introspections to understand them better. Doing so is essential for many reasons, as Weger et al., (2019) explain:

... scholars have extensively used first-person (or introspective) enquiry: it is applied during theory development and hypothesis formulation; it permeates the data-collection stage and impacts the data interpretation and theory development process. In all these cases, the scientists' expertise, understanding, perspective, or expectations inform their

scholarly practice (Weger et al., Editorial: The Challenges and Opportunities of Introspection in Psychology: Theory and Method, 2019, p. 1).

In the following sections, I will use autoethnography to explore my process of cultivating wellbeing dispositions within my sociocultural community context. I will move in and out of my stories, exploring the feelings and cultures I have experienced and continue to experience. This will then provide the launch pad for my framework and data collection and analysis with my educator and student participants.

As a Primary School Student,

In Chapter One, I briefly discussed my school experiences in Sri Lanka and expressed my belief that my education felt constrained. I explore my childhood experiences further, sharing stories about my family and primary school education. These experiences significantly shaped who I am today and are highly relevant to the research.

Despite excelling at academic tasks in primary school and being perceived as a leader among my peers, my overall wellbeing was not optimal. I possessed a folder filled with awards and certificates for almost every subject I undertook (refer to photograph 1 Figure 11), but deep down, I felt a sense of emptiness. While these achievements should have brought me happiness, they were tangible reminders of my past accomplishments. I still have some certificates and awards that took up space in my suitcase when I migrated to Australia forty years ago; however, they fail to capture the emotional desolation I experienced during my school years, as those feelings cannot be encapsulated in a photograph.

Reflecting on these awards now, I question their significance. Were they merely symbolic gestures? Mere smoke and mirrors? Did they deceive me into believing that academic success equated to a successful life or wellbeing? The most impactful memories of my school years revolve around my struggles to fit in and be included. The gloss and glamour of these awards have long faded, replaced by a deeper understanding of what genuinely matters.

Even though I belonged to a different ethnic group, I yearned to fit in, to be accepted and treated as an equal among my peers. Unfortunately, no matter what efforts I made, I remained an outsider. It is important to note that I was not the only one facing discrimination and persecution during the Sri Lankan civil war. According to the United Nations (UN), the war claimed the lives of at least 100,000 people (Australian Broadcasting Corporation [ABC], 2009), leaving many with invisible scars. While the war was between the Sinhalese and Tamil extremists, its impact was far-reaching.

My perspective on the need for inclusion has evolved significantly since then. I now understand Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and recognise that social belonging must be met before esteem and self-actualisation needs come into focus. I have come to celebrate differences and appreciate standing out and fitting in because of my unique qualities; however, as a young student, this need for acceptance consumed my every waking moment.

Reflecting on my primary school life, I realise that I lived in a perpetuated state of stress and anxiety. There was a stark contrast between how I was treated at school, as a second-class citizen, and the high expectations placed on me at home. It often felt like the Sinhalese educators preferred that I remain invisible and unheard at school. The pressure to excel academically came from my paternal grandmother, who closely supervised my learning and homework.

I remember spending evenings with my grandmother from 6 p.m. until bedtime, studying, reading, and engaging in discussions about various topics from my textbooks. While this extra effort improved my academic performance, it did little to make my school life enjoyable. My grandmother believed high academic achievement was paramount, as reflected in her life experiences. She saw it as the key to my future success. Some might describe my grandmother as a *tiger mum* (Chua, 2011); however, when discussing her book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, Chua explains that her parenting approach was rooted in love and a deep belief in her children's capabilities. Similarly, I had a loving and nurturing relationship with my grandmother and cherished her influence and impact on my life (Ranatunga, 2022).

As a single parent and a woman working (outside the home) in a male-dominated world (refer to photograph 2 In Figure 11) during the mid-1950s, my grandmother had similarly high expectations of my father; however, as the oldest grandchild and female growing up in 1970s Sri Lanka, the expectations placed on me were even more demanding. I was expected to be an exemplary role model for younger family and community members. This pressure intensified following my father's passing during my secondary school years.

No doubt, my experiences at school greatly influenced my perspective. The Sri Lankan school system appeared to prioritise performance, competition, and test scores. Each student was assigned a rating or position in every class and year level. Despite consistently ranking at the top, these external measures of success brought me little happiness. Deep down, I felt a sense of unfairness that permeated the entire system, including my inclusion as a valued member of the school community. I found a discrepancy between conformity and "high expectations for all"

(Noddings, 1995b, p. 192). The external awards I received did little to address my internal longing for personal growth and genuine acceptance.

I vividly recall our class of 40 to 50 students; our rankings were publicly disclosed regularly. While I secretly resented being on the top because it created a divide between my peers and me, I can only imagine the feelings of those consistently positioned at the bottom. Unfortunately, these public humiliations rarely, if ever, changed. The system was rigid, and so the students were locked in.

There were numerous instances when I attempted to rebel against the system, only to face even more significant difficulties in my school life. At home, I was encouraged to speak up and fight against injustice, yet my voice was silenced at school. I was forced to be invisible. One incident stands out in my memory. As a classroom monitor (supervisor), I took charge during a social studies exam when our teacher was absent. With my power, I decided to discuss the answers with my classmates. This was because we had yet to have a lesson on this topic but were merely expected to know it by reading the textbook. I had the upper hand in discussing this subject with my grandmother and father and had prior learning on the topic. At the age of eight, I was already a warrior for social justice, and I hoped this act would serve as a powerful social experiment. I intended to foster shared experiences and equal treatment for all; however, my actions had unintended consequences.

While we all achieved high marks, we were required to retake the exam, and to my great embarrassment, we were subjected to corporal punishment. Reflecting on this experience, I ponder the implications of my actions. Though my determination to fight for social justice never wavered, I realised there must be better ways to cultivate wellbeing for myself and my peers. I

reject the style of education that prioritises standard tests (Briggs, 2013; Kohn, 2004; 2006; 2011; Meier, 2018) and corporal punishment (Gershoff et al., 2019; Kohn, 2011; United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2003) as it does not contribute to positive student wellbeing. Kohn's (2015) extensive publications challenge the reduction of learning to numerical data and standardised tests, advocating for a more holistic approach to education.

Growing up in Sri Lanka, I did not encounter the concept of wellbeing, especially in the school culture. No psychologists or counsellors existed in my school or the entire country. Open discussions about wellbeing were rare. In the Sri Lankan English, Sinhala, and Tamil dictionary, wellbeing is defined as “with health and being comfortable” (2010, p. 929). In my recollection, I can affirm that I maintained good health and experienced a comfortable lifestyle, particularly in comparison to numerous individuals within our community. Nonetheless, my childhood was overshadowed by persistent physically impacting headaches, which I attribute to the burdens of life, the unrelenting pursuit of acceptance and visibility and the relentless pursuit of academic excellence.

Despite the challenges, I found pockets of respite. These instances helped me cultivate essential wellbeing dispositions such as social and emotional competencies, emotional regulation, empathy, self-care, reflection, mindfulness, gratitude, and resilience. These oases played a crucial role in mitigating the negative impact of my school life. For instance, I was raised at home to be conscious of the wider community and extend a helping hand to the less fortunate. My family consistently assisted people who faced mental and physical struggles and lacked necessities like food, water, clothing, and shelter. From a young age, I learned the value of sharing and witnessed compassion and empathy.

We would give food to the village people daily. Then, every year before Christmas, we sorted our belongings (in my case, toys, books, and clothes) to give to people experiencing poverty. I grew up seeing people struggle, trying to understand their situations, and living in an environment where I was taught compassion and empathy. Compassion is the empathic understanding of a person's feelings and the desire to act altruistically on that person's behalf (Psychology Today, 2021). Empathy is a feeling that goes beyond merely experiencing a sympathetic concern for another person. It comes from the ability to identify and share another person's emotions with them (Abramson, 2021; Davis, 1983; Decety & Ickes, 2011; Klimecki et al., 2016).

Another source of respite stemmed from my love of knowledge, which I embraced from an early age. At home, I was surrounded by individuals who cherished learning, especially my grandmother and father. I recall precious conversations with my father about life, our bodies, our minds, and the world around us. Often, these discussions were sparked by storybooks and spontaneous oral storytelling sessions. We even brought the stories to life through props, movement, song, music, and drama. The bedtime stories we shared continued through the walls until I drifted asleep. I have treasured these memories deeply in my heart and mind.

I vividly remember my father picking up a scrap of newspaper during a walk and remarking, 'Knowledge is certainly everywhere; you just never know where you can find it'. We discussed the articles he had briefly read, such as an earthquake in Iran, a peace agreement in the Middle East, and the first broadcast of colour television in Australia. My father was an avid reader with diverse interests. Working at the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (formally known as Radio Ceylon), the oldest radio station in Southeast Asia (see photograph 4 in Figure 11). He was constantly immersed in learning, setting an excellent example for me. It was through

these deep and meaningful conversations and the books I was given that my love for learning blossomed. I even believe that my reading habits served as a form of bibliotherapy (Catalano, 2008; Prater et al., 2006), contributing to cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

Figure 11

A Collage of my early life and significant others



Note. Photograph 1 - One of the many school award ceremonies.

Photograph 2 - My grandmother was recognised for 25 years of service in her workplace.

Photograph 3 - A family photo in our garden: My mother holding me, my father holding my sister. Photograph 4 - My father working at The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (Radio Ceylon).

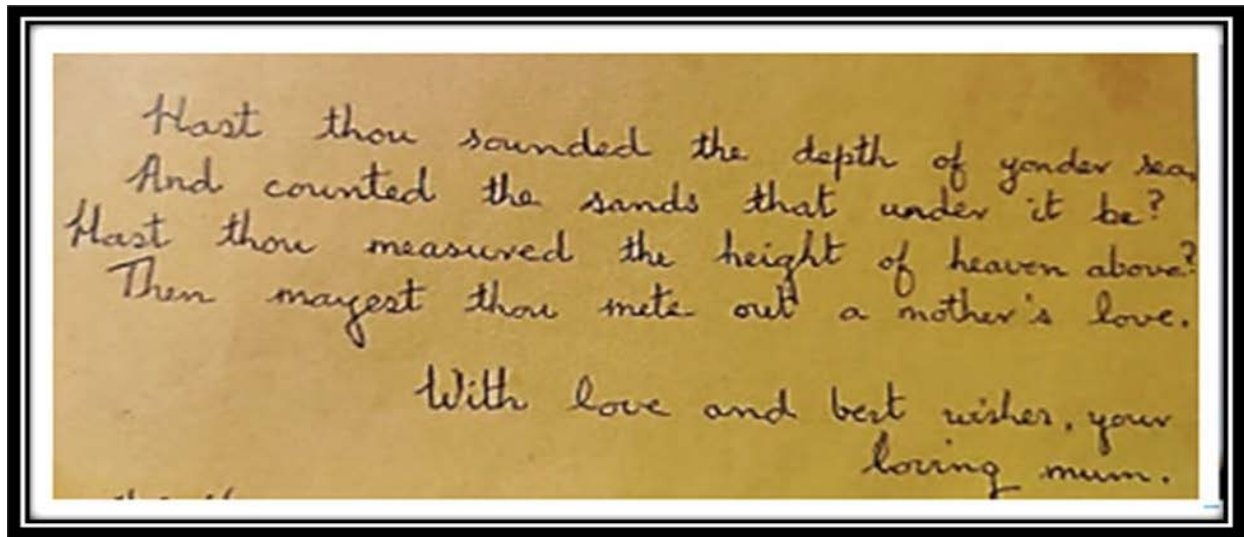
While losing my father was the most disheartening event in my life, I found solace in the insights gained from the books we read and the experiences we shared. Even after his passing, I continued to immerse myself in a wide range of literature, expressing my feelings through poetry and embracing the Arts, mindfulness, and yoga. Through these activities, I felt my father's presence around me and had to learn to cope and function. No one questioned wellbeing or discussed its presence or absence. This was my first realisation that the nature of wellbeing was

elusive (Pankhania et al., 2018; Van Agteren et al., 2021) and in flux (Rogers, 1951; 1961; 1969). I was beginning to see various perspectives of wellbeing among family and friends.

After a brief mourning period (only a week or two), I was expected to resume my everyday life. Such was the way grief and bereavement were processed during those times; however, as the oldest child, I felt an added weight of responsibility, almost like being a substitute father figure. It was an incredibly challenging period for both my family and me. Fortunately, the gifts my father had shared with me made me more resilient.

The American Psychology Association [APA] (2012, p. 4) Resilience is “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress.” As I reflect on the literature and contemplate the various challenges I have experienced, I am reminded of my ability to manage stress and overcome challenges. In doing so, my developing skills and support network, particularly my parents and grandparents, come to mind.

My mother’s unconditional love became critical to my wellbeing after my father’s passing. She became my steadfast support. I have always cherished the safe and welcoming environment she provides in her home, the delicious food she prepares, and the rich stories she shares. I remember a note she wrote (see Figure 12) in a book of mine, reflecting on the depth of a mother’s love, which was adapted from the original publication, *The Sabbath School Hymnal* (1897, p. 123).

Figure 12*The Depth of a Mother's Love*

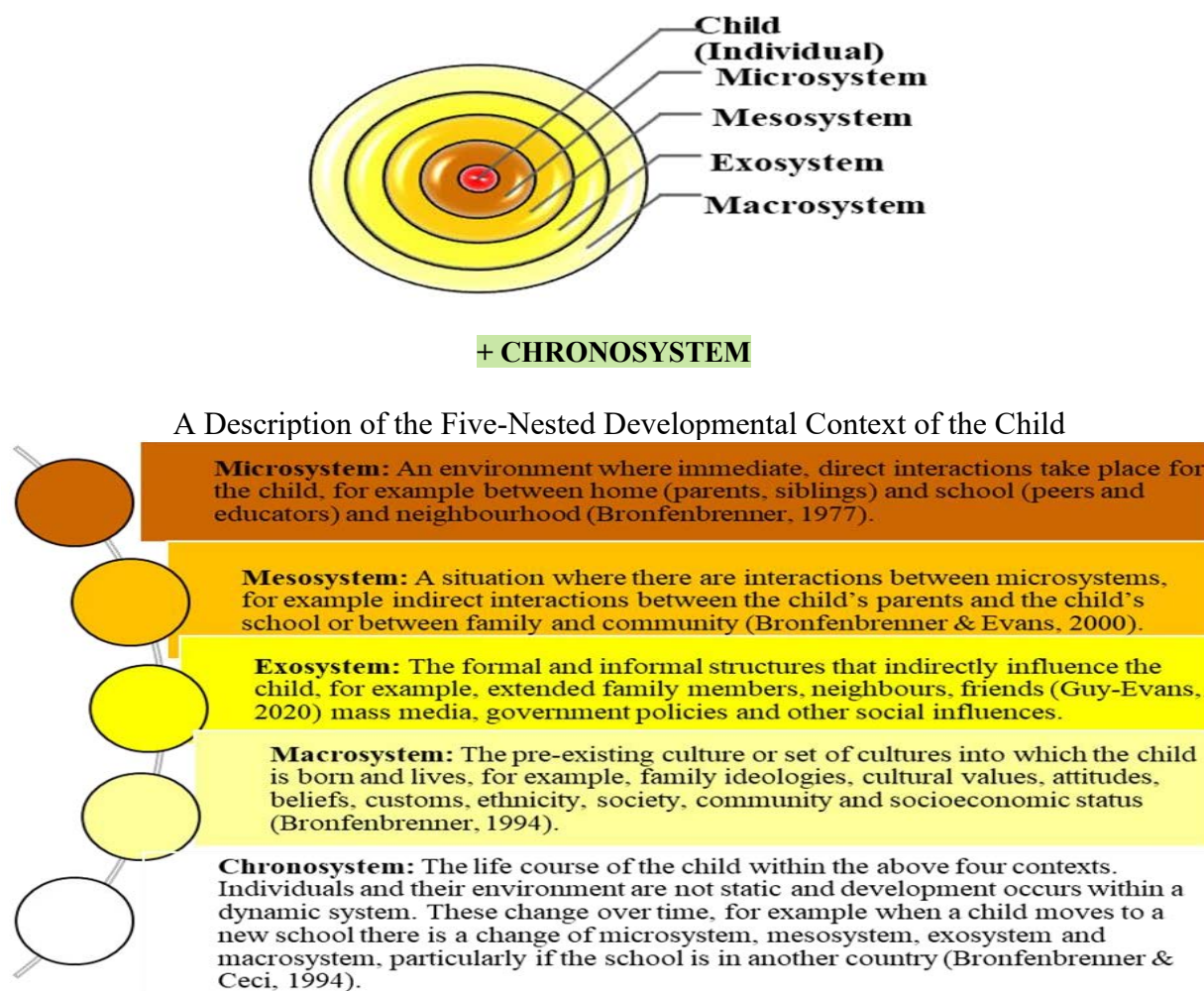
The WHO (2013; 2023a) recognises the educational context as central to supporting wellbeing in school. As I have shared in my story, my school years were marked by significant challenges that threatened my wellbeing, such as high expectations from my grandmother and difficulty fitting into a predominately Sinhalese school community; however, despite limited support at my school, I was fortunate to have a loving family and developed close friendships that endure even decades later and across different countries. McCallum and Price (2016) highlight hope, happiness, and belonging as three key factors that enable wellbeing. While my interactions in the classroom and schoolyard were not always positive, I managed to maintain a strong sense of hope, belonging, and happiness throughout, primarily due to the support of my family, who shielded me from the negative impacts of school.

As a Parent of Primary School Students

In this section, I will discuss my experiences of motherhood and how I continued to cultivate dispositions of wellbeing in myself and my children. I will also share my children's

reflections on their primary school experience in Australia during the 1990s and 2000s. These stories will be told in tandem with Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1979) Ecological Systems Theory and his later revised version of the Bioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), as depicted in Figure 13.

Figure 13



Bronfenbrenner's revised Bioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994)

Bronfenbrenner's theory challenged previous research that assumed child development was unidirectional, focusing solely on the influence of parents or teachers on the child without

acknowledging the child's influence on the mother or the teacher. He proposed a framework to help researchers recognise how human development is shaped in multidirectional (direct and indirect) ways. Bronfenbrenner's theory proposed that individuals interact with and between their environments, considering various perspectives such as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1994) and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000), as illustrated in Figure 13 above.

During the 1990s, Australia experienced a significant shift in its demographic makeup, with approximately one in four Australians born overseas. The wave of migration from the 1980s transformed the country's social fabric as many newcomers arrived from Asia and the Middle East (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2017; 2023; Lopez, 2000; Ramakrishna, 2013). My husband and I, originally from Sri Lanka, immersed ourselves in this wave of change.

We had successfully established ourselves in Australia, securing jobs, purchasing our first home, and embarking on starting a family. In the following poem, I capture the essence of our newfound place, which we affectionately called our Home Among the Gum Trees, adapted from John Williamson (1990).

Our Home Among the Gum Trees by J. B. Ranatunga

*A humble house on a quarter acre of land,
with a backyard adorned by a barbecue and a clothesline stand.*

*It was a tranquil bush retreat, not opulent or grand,
where koalas nested in gum trees and kangaroos roamed firsthand.*

Kookaburras joined the chorus of cockatoos, magpies, and galahs in a harmonious band.

As the weeks went by, busy with work from morning to night.

Weekend mornings we spent with our dog, sipping tea and enjoying toast and vegemite.

*We enjoyed the sunshine and rain in our bushland delight,
Weekends brimming with food, friends, and family whom we'd invite.
Cubby houses and swings, childhood dreams took flight,
And soon, our first child's footprints marked the sandy site.*

With the unwavering support of my husband, I decided to leave my career as a bookkeeper and embrace the role of a stay-at-home mum. This choice remained steadfast until our youngest child reached the age to start primary school. Drawing inspiration from my mother, who had also dedicated herself to being a stay-at-home mum during my childhood, I aspired to provide the same nurturing environment for our children. To me, motherhood was not just a temporary phase but a lifelong career, and I was determined to be present for every precious moment during their formative years. Our three children were born close in age, with our daughters being five and three when our son came into the world. Motherhood brought immense joy and fulfilment to my life, and the following poem touches upon my experiences during this critical phase of personal growth, identity formation and overall wellbeing.

Motherhood by J. B. Ranatunga

*Motherhood is about understanding and responsibility,
Learning and growing and a whole lot of nurturing and lovability.
Challenging it can be with no training or capability.
Motherhood is a state of being with significant possibility.
I quit the accounts and the balance sheets
and let go of the dreaded spreadsheets.
I created playhouses out of bed sheets
and found delight in making family treats.
Perfectionism was out the door.
Balancing tasks was definitely the go.*

*Sleep was always on the low;
Raising well-rounded children was at the core.
Motherhood certainly changed me,
Life became less about me and more about we.
Support groups (village) and community are priorities I see.
Cultivating wellbeing dispositions as a way to be.*

As a child growing up in Sri Lanka, I was fortunate to be part of a close-knit community where the concept of an extended family was embraced, and it felt like I was raised by a village (Clinton, 1996; Cowen-Fletcher, 1993). However, for my children, life took a different shape. With my mother now working full-time and our Australian relatives and friends living at a distance, I found myself navigating this journey of motherhood on my own. Although I lacked the immediate support of a traditional village, I sought solace and connection through various mothers' groups, creating a more abstract sense of community or village.

Embracing the role of a stay-at-home mum meant that I played an active role in each child's microsystem. This was similar to my mother's and grandmother's approach to parenting. At times, I might have even exhibited characteristics resembling those of a *Tiger Mum* (Chua, 2011). However, like Chua and my grandmother, I always intended to do what I believed was best for my family.

My focus remained on enhancing enablers and minimising impactors (Carter & Andersen, 2019a; 2023; McCallum & Price, 2016). Within the realm of wellbeing, it is vital to acknowledge the presence of various internal and external factors that can enable or impede our sense of balance and control. Enablers play a crucial role in fostering a sense of control, allowing us to "create and maintain life balance" (Carter, 2016, p. 151). On the other hand, impactors can

detract from feelings of control and hinder our overall wellbeing (Carter, 2016). By recognising and actively working on enhancing enablers while minimising the impactors, I strived to cultivate a sense of agency and equilibrium in my life.

The shift in my perception of educators and education began from the first day my oldest daughter started preschool. I vividly recall when she comforted me, wiping away my tears as I crouched down to kiss her goodbye. She assured me she would have a wonderful time and even promised to create something special for me. Her words reassured me, and I thought, “Yes, everything will be okay!” This poignant moment marked the beginning of my journey towards understanding educators' crucial role in shaping young children's lives.

True to her word, my daughter returned home that afternoon with countless creations and stories about her incredible day. Those joyous experiences continued throughout the years, and when my other two children joined the same preschool with the same teacher, we felt incredibly fortunate to have such a positive introduction to schooling. I am compelled to share the transformative nature of my children's preschool experiences, led by an excellent teacher I have chosen to call Mrs. Future. Mrs. Future was pivotal in shaping a brighter future for all her students. She was indeed an inspiration for us all.

Mrs. Future's classroom exuded warmth and welcomed students and parents with open arms. Her educational values aligned perfectly with what I believe education should encompass. It starkly contrasted my schooling experiences, but it resonated deeply with the Montessori (1935; 1914) education I had received two years before starting formal school. I frequently volunteered in Mrs. Future's classroom, captivated by her inclusive teaching style, kindness, and unwavering passion. She brought immense joy into our lives. Her classroom was a haven of

exploration, curiosity, and play, always brimming with artistic expression through music, dance, drama, and visual arts. Mrs. Future nurtured my children and ignited a love for teaching within me. This was an incredible accomplishment, considering my own challenging experiences as a student. Reflecting upon Mrs. Future's classroom, I identified three overarching philosophies of learning, which I attempt to describe in the following poem.

Mrs. Future's Classroom by J. B. Ranatunga

*Through the open doors' echoes resound,
The hundred languages of children are profound.
Fostering relationships and communication as their guide,
They explore the world, curiosity in their stride.
With wonder and expression, they embark,
Thoughts, emotions, and creativity spark.
The Arts, painting, sculpting, and drama embrace.
The expression of creativity, collaboration, and engagement, find space,
Reggio Emilia's philosophy (Malaguzzi, 1998) shines.
Holistic perspective, well-rounded minds,
Imaginative play and empathy's grace,
Critical thinking and learning's lifelong chase.
The environment nurtures social and emotional,
Human relations are an essential devotion,
Art, music, and physical education unite,
Awakening interest and a yearning for insight.
Heart, body, mind, and spirit combine
The Waldorf Philosophy (Steiner, 1988) is freedom to shine.
Taking notes, learning stories unfold,
Mrs. Future observer, co-learner bold.
Child-centred teacher with curiosity, she rules,
Nurturing each child's desire and dreams she fuels.*

*Self-motivated learning, the world they embrace,
Maria Montessori's (1935; 1914) *Philosophy is a guiding embrace.**

The days spent in Mrs. Future's class were always bustling and seemed to pass by in the blink of an eye, but the memories forged by my children and me are unforgettable. These experiences were a strong foundation in my children's educational journey, shaping their lives well into adulthood. The epiphanies significantly affected the trajectories of our lives.

Overall, my children were fortunate to have encountered more positive experiences than negative ones; however, it is essential to acknowledge that this perspective is based on my observations and interpretation of their experiences. I do recall instances where they faced racist comments and bullying from their peers, but I am grateful that their school took swift and decisive action to address and rectify such incidents. The open communication channels between us as parents and them as students, along with the supportive educators, fostered positive relationships and a sense of community between home and school. We regularly discussed these challenges at home, ensuring that the lines of communication remained strong and that our relationship with the school continued to flourish.

To ensure that my viewpoint is not the sole perspective represented, I invited my children to reflect on their experiences during their school years. They graciously provided me with their stories, relevant artifacts, and written informed consent (Appendix X – Consent for Artifacts and Stories) to include them in my thesis. These stories shared by my children shed light on their development and the cultivation of their wellbeing. I will begin this section by sharing a photo of the four of us, symbolising our bond (see Figure 14), and then present each of my children's stories.

Figure 14*My Children and Me*

Note. My Children and Me—This is a photo of me and my children at primary school. It was taken on school photo day at the primary school they attended, where I used to work.

Story from my oldest daughter: *I started primary school with a caring year one teacher; I remember her telling my parents I was good at creative writing and encouraging my imagination and writing skills. I also remember struggling to colour between the lines and being envious of peers who were more neat! My mum used to come and help with reading and various other activities in my class, so school, learning and home life all felt in harmony. My year two teacher was known as a strict, more “old-school” teacher. Once, she startled me by throwing a duster at my desk when I was daydreaming, but apart from that, I think she actually favoured my best friend and me, and I continued to enjoy school. We moved to a new house with a long driveway for riding bikes and a back chain-wire fence overlooking the school playground, which we jumped over to get to school. My year two classroom and many of the school buildings were visible from our new garden, almost a metaphor for the way education was present in my everyday life.*

In my early primary school years, I remember my parents reading my report cards and regularly getting feedback that I was too chatty and distracted by my friends. In year 3, I

started to build more friendships, and my love of reading was sparked by a teacher like Miss Honey from Roald Dahl's Matilda. One of my best friends from year three later told me that she was never able to tell her dad she was friends with me because I was not of white ethnicity. That was a surprise to me because, at the time, I had never felt or experienced any awareness of being different to my peers. In year four, I really became an avid reader, encouraged by my teacher - who loved to tell interesting stories about the olden days as he taught us. I remember enjoying maths and regularly beating the boys in my class in speed tests of our rote-learned times tables.

In years 5, 6 and 7, I have various memories of how my teachers inspired me and how I enjoyed learning new things – from the gold rush in Australia, poetry, grammar, and punctuation in English to erosion, which sparked my interest in science. Each of my teachers had a different style, and I learnt differently from each one; however, I do not know if many of my peers would also say they enjoyed school as much as I did; I felt like I was one of the very few students who was naturally suited to the default teaching styles, and that sometimes felt unfair. My “chatting” turned into me helping and teaching my friends after the teachers had explained things in class, and although I enjoyed being able to do this (likely inspired by my mother, who enjoyed teaching and supporting others), I do hope that teachers have found even better methods to inspire a wider range of learners since my time in primary school.

Overall, I was a determined student who loved to please, and I felt as though I was liked and supported by my teachers, parents, and peers. Coming from an encouraging and learning-focused home environment with a learning style that was a good fit for school meant that I was well-positioned to succeed and enjoy my primary school years; I think I was very lucky to have that experience.

Story from my second daughter: *When I reflect on my primary school years, I realise that they played a large part in forming my identity. Being a Catholic school, I remember a large focus on religious teachings as well as undergoing religious sacraments. Although I questioned this part of my identity in my late high school/ teenage years, the religious basis that both primary school and my parents provided has led to this still being a part of my own family's identity today.*

When I thought about my primary school years, two significant memories first popped into my

mind. Overall, I feel like I had a lot of good friendships throughout primary school; however, the first memory that came to mind was a time I experienced racism. A boy I went to primary school with would call me “Curry dot” because of a birthmark I had on my forehead. I remember feeling bullied, self-conscious, and wanting to cover it up!

The other memory I thought of was a time that myself and a friend were asked by one of the teachers to keep other children away from some baby plover birds during our lunch break. We felt a great sense of responsibility and took our role so seriously that we continued to watch the baby birds even after the bell had gone to go back to class! The teacher then yelled at us from the balcony to come back to class, and we got into trouble!

In my final year of primary school, I was elected as the school captain, and despite the small racial challenges I faced, I think this milestone helped me to feel confident within myself going into high school. I think these two particular events have stuck with me to this day as this was one of my first personal encounters with racism and being given independence and trust. This shows that, for me, my primary school years formed a strong part of finding my identity.

Story from my son: *Most of my happy school memories are about games I used to play in the playground. I remember digging racetracks around tree roots in the school grounds and making garages to store my cars. My friends and I used to love throwing rocks at the seedpods in a large tree in the schoolyard. We would collect the fallen pods and crack them open to count the seeds. From memory, this game stopped when one of my friends got hurt.*

In earlier years, I enjoyed free play when I could make cars out of Mobilo blocks. I liked them so much that all I wanted from Santa that Christmas was Mobilo. Making towers with MBA blocks (10x1, 10x10, and 10x10x10) was another of my favourite tasks.

I remember crying once at school because I got the three words (quit, quite, quiet) mixed up in a test. I remember doing the NAPLAN (The National Assessment Program) Tests, Watching BTN news and taking notes. I loved reading Captain Underpants books and still have memories of the shelf in the library they sat on. The Zack Power book series was another of my favourites as a child. In class, I was chatty and used to get in trouble because I talked to my friends too much.

Once, I saw two boys fighting in the playground, and I got into trouble because I was watching and did not report it to the teacher. I remember feeling distressed over this incident because

the teacher yelled at me, and I did not understand why. I used to do classroom jobs for the teachers, and one of the classroom jobs I remember was cleaning the blackboard dusters with rulers and watching the dust settle on the port racks. I loved seeing the duster restored to its original look. I also remember the Mother's Day stall at school and being eager to choose a gift. I do not remember either loving or hating school, but I just did it because it was something I had to do.

By incorporating reflections from my children, valuable insight can be gained into the intricate web of relationships and influences that shape individuals' lives. These personal narratives provide a unique lens through which we can connect and contextualise experiences within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Just as Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) emphasises the importance of understanding the various systems that interact and impact individuals' development. The stories shared by family members offer glimpses into the dynamics of these systems and how they shape personal wellbeing. Furthermore, within autoethnography, inviting others' opinions, interviewing others and including artefacts provide grounds for a deeper analytical exploration.

Figure 15 below are three paintings that my children created during their time in school. These paintings hold a special place in my heart as they now adorn my bedroom wall. I often find myself profoundly contemplating the imagery depicted in these paintings. I utilise my skills and knowledge from Interactive Drawing Therapy (IDT) to examine the various shapes, colours, patterns, and images that seem to appear and disappear as my children and I reflect on the artwork. In IDT, the artwork (page) is used as a mirror function to articulate and transform insights and understandings (Withers, 2013).

Figure 15

Three Paintings: The Nature of Wellbeing (The elusive, flux, multiple perspectives of wellbeing)

Note. From left to right: My son's creation (Hamster), my oldest daughter's creation (Sun Speckled) and my second daughter's creation (Kaleidoscope).

Viewing art has long been recognised for its positive effects on wellbeing, stress reduction, and brain function. Extensive research spanning from the past with figures like Dewey (1916; 1934), Belke et al. (2010), to more recent studies by Cela-Conde (2018), Martin (2020), and Magsamen and Ross (2023) highlights the value and benefits of art appreciation. Paintings can be constant reminders of the significance of visual art in our lives and its potential to enhance our overall wellbeing.

Moreover, while I experience various emotions viewing these paintings and seeing different illustrations within them, I still remember the joy my children experienced creating them. These paintings remained unnamed until I asked my children what these paintings meant to them. I have provided their responses and given the paintings' titles. I will also use these paintings as metaphors (Bateson G. B., 1979; Bateson M. C., 2004) to reflect on my understanding of wellbeing and the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions. I continue to use these paintings to elaborate on and explain aspects of wellbeing in this chapter.

The abstract painting on the left, entitled *Hamster*, was painted by my son. He said the hamster emerged through a camouflage splatter creation. The hamster becomes visible when you look with intent. The hamster in the painting symbolises the elusive nature of wellbeing, which can be challenging to perceive (Pankhania et al., 2018; Van Agteren et al., 2021). Wellbeing can sometimes be invisible or hard to see, similar to an emerging hamster or a hamster spinning in a wheel. Wellbeing is more about the search or discovery (well-finding). As McGirr (2021) points out that we must search for the well in our village.

The painting in the middle, entitled *Sun-Speckled*, was painted by my eldest daughter. It comprises clouds in a dark sky with two trees balancing a grassy foreground. She reported that her painting did not turn out as initially imagined. Stating that “It was darker than I wanted it to be”. She, therefore, added a “flickering technique to represent the sun’s rays and take away the gloominess”. She commented, “Even on gloomy days, the sun is always around us”. My daughter had the wherewithal to make her painting more emotionally positive. To me, this painting demonstrates wellbeing dispositions in action. Where wellbeing can be a process of change and growth. Rogers (1951; 1961; 1969), who developed non-directive client-centred-therapy (discussed in the next section), believed that people were always in the process of change and growth, stating that “People are just as wonderful as sunsets” if we “could only let them be and not control...,” merely “watch with awe” (Rogers, 1980, p. 22).

The painting on the right, entitled *Kaleidoscope*, is by my second daughter. She stated that the specks of colour reminded her of looking through a kaleidoscope. A kaleidoscope provides reflections and changing patterns when viewed from different angles. Bowlby, discussing her ten steps to spiritual wisdom and lasting happiness, points out that “reality is not

fixed like a kaleidoscope; it morphs depending on which lens we use” (2021, p. 12). Exploring wellbeing from multiple perspectives provides a more holistic understanding (Pankhania et al., 2018). This painting highlights the value of viewing wellbeing from different perspectives. These paintings offer ways to understand and explain the nature aspect of wellbeing and became part of my early explorations into the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions.

Overall, my children had mixed experiences at school, but they were primarily positive and nurturing. Their educators made a marvellous difference in their lives and made a significant difference in mine. When my children started school, I began volunteering my services. Then, the year my youngest started school, I secured a paying job as a School Officer at the same school.

This position involved me working with students who were finding school difficult. While I found that the challenges many of these young people faced differed from those I experienced as a child, their challenges negatively impacted their learning, holding them back academically. Working as a school officer made me ponder how unhappy some students were to attend school. There needed to be a disarming mismatch between their needs and school experience.

As I became more involved in the school community, my experiences working with students who faced difficulties in their learning led me to a profound realisation. I was beginning to recognise the interconnectedness of emotions (Siegel, 2012; 2017; 2022; Tyng et al., 2017), agency and identity (Bandura, 2006; Erikson, 1968; Wenger, 1998) in the learning process. I felt compelled to take concrete action to support students more comprehensively and holistically. This realisation led me to embark on a journey of studying to become a counsellor. By pursuing

this path, I aimed to equip myself with the necessary knowledge and skills to address the emotional needs of students and empower them to transform their learning journeys with confidence and resilience. My decision to become a counsellor stemmed from a deep commitment to promoting students' emotional wellbeing and adopting an environment where their agency and identity could flourish alongside their academic growth.

As a Counsellor of Adults and Young People in Private Practice,

I trained and worked as a school officer when my three children were at primary school. During this time, I enrolled in further study to become a counsellor. At the school, I assisted young people with behavioural and learning challenges within the education system. Therefore, my move into counselling was a natural progression for me. I share my journey during this period of my life here because I was subconsciously beginning to sow the seeds for my future research work, specifically this project.

My counselling study was both practical and theory-based, a process of learning by doing. To extend my learning experiences, I actively practised my listening and communication skills and various therapy styles (I discuss as this section progresses) with my family and friends. I began interacting and focusing on behaviour and relationships with profound insight. I was mainly focused on wellbeing as a state of being beyond a neutral state and more than merely the absence of mental illness. I regularly practised what I preached (advocated).

Ericsson et al. (1993) researched the role of deliberate practice in acquiring expert performance. According to Gladwell (2008), in his book *Outliers: The Story of Success*, approximately 10,000 hours of practice are needed to attain expertise in a particular field. This

concept often called the ‘10000-hour rule’, suggests that to become proficient in a complex skill, one must dedicate significant time to deliberate practice. Siegel (2012; 2017; 2022) and Goleman and Davidson (2012) further expand on building emotional hygiene, comparing it to dental hygiene. Additionally, the intentional focus on learning with a growth mindset (Blackwell et al., 2007) and Siegel’s (2012; 2017; 2022) notion of mindsight are crucial components of learning and development. These skills improve with practice (Goleman & Davidson, 2012). Furthermore, ongoing practice enhances wellbeing dispositions, encompassing the abilities and attitudes that support individuals in maintaining and enhancing their physical, emotional, and mental health. Regular practice ensures that these skills are actively present in any individual's daily life.

In addition to my counselling course, I continued cultivating mindful behaviours, thoughts, and feelings. I focused intensely on my relationships with others and their behaviours, empowering myself to embrace a holistic wellbeing approach. This empowered me, and I began to realise the importance of ongoing cultivation of wellbeing dispositions within oneself and with others. Added to the core counselling course and working with individuals and groups, I majored in child development and effective parenting and relationship counselling, which helped me personally and professionally.

Upon graduation, I vividly recall feeling empowered and experiencing a profound desire to assist individuals in living more fulfilling lives. My counselling study proved to be an enlightening and insightful learning experience, solidifying my conviction that I had discovered my life’s calling. I set up my private practice. I also volunteered as a counsellor in the local

community centre and continued to work part-time at the school. I found my counselling skills helpful beyond my counselling practice, daily life, and working with young people at school.

As I write this section on cultivating wellbeing dispositions as a counsellor, many thoughts (epiphanies) flood my mind. Reflecting on the challenges my clients brought to therapy, I am reminded of the invaluable lessons I learned from them, which radically transformed my perception of the world. Their stories were always unique yet enmeshed with others' stories – similar yet different. They were always about struggles but with glimpses of hope, dreams, and beliefs. I recall the many enlightening discussions with my clients about their unique situations, hopes and dreams. Like many people, my clients were striving to rise above their struggles and challenges, searching for ways to live flourishing lives.

Understanding and being aware of enablers and impactors in people's lives and within therapy were essential to appreciating my clients' unique situations. McCallum and Price (2016) consider belonging, hope, and happiness critical enablers for a positive school ecology. Similarly, clients in counselling must feel they belong and build on their hope and happiness.

As a counsellor, my goal in therapy was to listen deeply, understand and empower my clients to seek out their solutions. Being a proficient counsellor entails listening actively and honing practical communication skills (Cochran & Cochran, 2015). Establishing genuine trust and rapport with clients is crucial, empowering them to take charge of their journey. Clients need to be heard and understood, and they need to be offered tools or coping skills (self-talk, journaling, support groups, ways to de-stress, relax, focus, and create joy) to solve challenges so that these skills can be learned and utilised to overcome future difficulties (Nelson-Jones, 2014).

Tan et al. (2015) emphasise listening and attending in therapy. They highlight those skills such as attending, building rapport, observing, focusing, responding, silence, questions for clarification, noting and reflecting meaning, paraphrasing, confronting, influencing, immediacy, and summarising as micro or core skills in counselling (Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors [AIPC], 2021; Cochran & Cochran, 2015; Corey, 2001; Feltham & Dryden, 1993). These core skills form the foundation of successful therapeutic relationships. A skilled counsellor processes a deep understanding of the timing and appropriate use of these skills, exercising caution when employing specific skills. For instance, confronting and influencing should only be utilised after successfully establishing rapport. I have applied these at various client relationship levels and found them valuable in my teaching and research. I have created an illustration to visually represent the range of skills discussed in the literature (refer to Figure 16).

Hill et al. (1997) assert that one must develop a range of qualities (dispositions) to become an effective counsellor. According to Hill and colleagues (Hill et al., 2003), empathy, advocacy, flexibility, and patience are required traits for counsellors. I cultivated these dispositions to enhance my working (educator, counsellor, student, researcher) and personal (daughter, granddaughter, sister, wife, mother, aunt) relationships.

Among the many essential attributes I learned, the ability to recognise and understand the feelings and emotions of others was valuable. Empathy is a teachable skill we develop when imagining life for someone else (Siegel, 2012; 2017; 2022). According to Siegel (2012), when we pay attention to another's inner world (their feelings, experiences, and insights), this (*mindsight*) helps to create compassion and empathy. Mindsight allows counsellors to be attuned to their client's needs and experiences, leading to a deeper understanding and more effective

therapeutic intervention (Siegel, 2012; 2017; 2022). Through empathy, we can better understand one another in a way that fosters connection (Scott, 2010; 2019). Instead of solely seeing things as we are, we also start seeing things as others experience them.

Figure 16

	Attending behaviours*
	Observing
	Responding
	Immediacy†
	Confrontation
	Focusing
	Silence
	Noting and reflecting meaning
	Paraphrasing
	Questions for clarification
	Influencing
	Building rapport
	Summarising

*eye contact, body language, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, matching of nonverbal behaviour

†focusing attention on here and now

Core Skills of Counselling (AIPC, 2021; Hill et al., 2003; Tan et al., 2015).

I recall a particular encounter with a client struggling with a traumatic experience. As we engaged in therapy sessions, I consciously tried empathising with her emotions and understanding her perspective. I listened attentively, validated her feelings, and tried to imagine what walking in her shoes would be like. Demonstrating empathy created a safe and supportive environment where the client felt understood and heard.

This empathic approach had a profound impact on our therapeutic relationship. The client began to open up more freely, sharing deeper aspects of her experience and emotions. She felt a sense of connection and trust, knowing I genuinely cared and sought to understand her struggles. Through empathy, I was able to foster a deep level of understanding, allowing us to explore challenges and work towards healing and growth collaboratively. Moreover, the power of empathy extended beyond the therapy room. By practising empathy in my relationships, I noticed a positive shift in my interactions with family, friends, and colleagues. People felt seen, validated, and supported, which created stronger bonds and increased mutual understanding.

This example demonstrates how empathy enhances the therapeutic process and contributes to developing connection and understanding in various contexts. It is a powerful tool that allows us to bridge the gap between our own experiences and those of others, promoting empathy as a critical aspect of effective counselling and meaningful relationships.

Advocacy is a fundamental value of counselling and promotes social justice and the wellbeing of individuals and groups (Ratts et al., 2010; 2016). Social justice encompasses the fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within a society (Hasan, 2023). In counselling, social justice involves recognising and addressing the systemic barriers, oppression, and discrimination that individuals and groups face based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and disability (2023). It emphasises the importance of creating a just and inclusive society with equal access to opportunities, resources, and support (2023). Social justice in counselling focuses on advocating for the wellbeing and rights of a marginalised population, challenging discriminatory practices, and working towards social change (Ratts et al., 2016).

Advocacy goes beyond providing support and guidance to clients individually and extends to addressing systemic issues that impact their lives. Advocacy in counselling acknowledges the presence of barriers, oppression, privilege, and discrimination that can negatively affect mental health and wellbeing. Advocacy enables the removal of barriers and obstacles that inhibit individuals' access, growth, and development. Therefore, counsellors need to recognise the impact of oppression, privilege, and discrimination on an individual's mental health (Hays et al., 2007; Hays & Erford, 2018). As a counsellor, I recognised the importance of advocacy in empowering individuals and creating meaningful change. In my interactions with clients, I encountered several instances where they faced significant barriers and discrimination that affected their mental health.

One case involved a client experiencing workplace discrimination based on their gender identity. They shared their struggles with me, expressing isolation, low self-esteem, and anxiety. Recognising the impact of discrimination on their mental health, I took on the role of an advocate. First, I provided a safe space for them to express their emotions and validate their experiences. We explored coping strategies to manage the immediate effects of discrimination, such as stress reduction techniques and self-care practices; however, I also recognised the need to address the issue's root causes.

I collaborated with the client to develop an action plan that involved advocating for their rights and wellbeing in their workplace. We discussed strategies for effectively communicating their needs, navigating organisational policies, and seeking support from relevant resources, such as human resource departments or legal assistance. Additionally, I provided psychoeducation on

their rights and available community support networks that could provide guidance and empowerment.

Through the advocacy, the client gained a sense of agency and empowerment. They realised their voice mattered and had the right to be treated with dignity and respect. As we worked together to challenge the discriminatory practices they faced, the client experienced an improvement in their mental wellbeing. They reported feeling more confident, resilient, and hopeful about their future.

This example illustrates the importance of advocacy in counselling. By addressing barriers and discrimination, counsellors can support clients in overcoming systemic challenges that affect their mental health. Advocacy fosters a sense of empowerment, validation, and social support, leading to positive outcomes in clients' wellbeing. It also contributes to broader social change by challenging oppressive structures and promoting inclusivity and equality.

In this research, I see myself as an insider researcher and an advocate for wellbeing. The transformative paradigm I have embraced provides a framework for understanding wellbeing in the primary classroom as a social justice concern (Mertens, 2007). I use my counselling skills to provide a desirable foundation for advocacy and the ethical decision-making process in this research. The dispositions I cultivated, and the core skills I utilised in my counselling will and have been beneficial in many of the decisions I will continue to make.

The counselling process enabled me to understand that my clients needed to feel heard and understood, and they needed to know that their stories were worthy. The development of practical counselling skills is beneficial in day-to-day relationships. It can also benefit

individuals in various careers, such as human resources, management or leadership roles, healthcare, teaching, etc. These skills helped me in my counselling sessions and assisted me in my other personal and work roles. I constantly worked to create empathic interactions with family, friends, colleagues, and clients. Through studying and practising as a counsellor and utilising these skills, my understanding of others and their values and rights has developed, enhancing my ethical decision-making processes. These skills are valuable, and I will utilise them in my interactions with participants in this research.

I find it essential to change and adapt to the client's needs in counselling, and flexibility enhances the therapeutic relationship. The ability to be patient and calm and experience moments of silence enriches the process and reflects on the client and therapist. Like counselling, the researcher must maintain a calm, relaxed and focused atmosphere when interviewing participants. Black and Yeschke (2014) point out that it is essential for the interviewer (researcher) to remain neutral, to be fair and impartial and to treat each interviewee (participant) with respect. Researchers should be aware of their preconceived perceptions and opinions and acknowledge their history and experiences to avoid being influenced by their prejudice and bias (Black & Yeschke, 2014).

I employ a range of therapies in my counselling practice; however, sessions are tailored to suit individual client preferences and their challenges. I have found the ability to draw on various ideas beneficial because every individual, every challenge and how the situation or challenge is viewed and managed is unique. In this section, I have illuminated my counselling journey, discussed the skills I utilise and linked theory to my narrative. Next, I will briefly discuss some therapies and theories in counselling. It would be impossible to provide details of

all available therapies. I have mentioned a few that I regularly utilise to assist me in cultivating wellbeing dispositions in my own life and with my clients. I will continue to detail any other therapies and skills as they come up in the research.

Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) is a term coined by humanist psychologist Rogers (1951; 1961; 1969), who established client-centred (person-centred) and non-directive therapy. These therapies encourage self-exploration and self-expression in a non-judgemental environment. UPR involves valuing and fully supporting the client without criticism or judgement, fostering empathy and acceptance. This concept strongly resonates with me because when individuals experience acceptance and openness, it enables their path towards self-realisation, flourishing and overall wellbeing.

Reality Therapy (RT), based on choice theory developed by Glasser (1965; 1999), is a present-focused approach that emphasises an individual's strength to foster more realistic behaviour and achieve success (Corey, 2001). It views behaviour as a choice, with psychological symptoms arising from behaviours people select to fulfil their needs (Glasser, 1965; Glasser, 1999). While focusing on the present is not unique to RT, other theories, including person-centred therapy, gestalt therapy, and mindfulness-based therapy, also emphasise the importance of the present moment.

Gestalt therapy was founded by Perls and Hefferline (1951) and is an existential therapy that emphasises the integration of body and mind, promoting awareness and understanding of the human condition as a whole (Corey, 2001). Mindfulness-based therapy focuses on the present moment with “non-judgemental awareness of one's sensations, thoughts, bodily state, consciousness, and the environment while encouraging openness, curiosity and acceptance”

(Hofmann et al., 2010, p. 169). In this study, the present and the past are essential for a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), developed and advanced by Ellis (1987) and Beck (2011), highlights the thinking patterns, belief systems, and missed opportunities, as the underlying factors in personal problems. CBT explores how thoughts and behaviours influence emotions (Hofmann et al., 2010). In CBT, adaptive learning experiences in the present are used to replace past maladaptive behaviour (Butler et al., 2006).

While my counselling study equipped me to work with various therapies, I began to train and developed a desire for Narrative Therapy (Linnell, 2010; White & Epston, 1990). I found the idea of the problem to be viewed as separated from the person insightful and beneficial in therapy and life experiences. In narrative therapy, it is believed that individuals derive meaning from the stories they tell. These stories shape and influence how they perceive and respond to the world around them. Morgan (1996) A narrative therapist collaborates with the client to create alternative stories and works to empower them to become experts in their own lives.

Creative therapies involve different art mediums and can be combined with other therapies (Chambala, 2008; Chandraiah et al., 2012). Focusing on mood and expressions of wellbeing can promote healing and positive feelings and reduce stress (Curl, 2008). I eventually trained in Art Therapy (De Botton & Armstrong, 2013; Hogan & Coulter, 2014; McNiff, 1998; 2008), PlayTherapy (Green, 2014; Schaefer, 2011), Sandplay Therapy (Dale & Lyddon, 2000; De Botton & Armstrong, 2013; Friedman & Mitchell, 1994), and IDT, (Elbrecht, 2006; Stone & Everts, 2006; Withers, 2013).

I developed a holistic style of working with my clients to help them in many areas. I wanted them to feel comfortable and cared for, so I adopted a nurturing, peaceful, relaxing atmosphere. I found benefits in creative processors and found they help people explore feelings that may be hard to put into words. As a therapist, I endeavoured to assist my clients in finding new pathways to healing.

During this time, I learned the numerous benefits of using tools to gain and regulate one's mental activities. Vygotsky (1978; 1986; 1994) refers to these mental tools (discussed in the previous chapter) as psychological tools. The theory of Material Engagement emphasises the role of artefacts and objects in shaping the brain and thought processes (Malafouris, 2004; 2013; 2018; Renfrew, 2001). Within IDT, the art "page becomes the primary transferential object: the means observably to access, articulate and transform unconscious material" (Withers, 2013, pp. 73-74). Psychological tools, objects, or artefacts (prosthetic devices) that stimulate human activity can enhance human capabilities to articulate, formulate and extend brain function.

As a counsellor, I utilise various mental tools, artifacts, props, puppets, sand, stones, singing bowls, rain sticks, and art-based methods. These tools have proven beneficial to my clients' overall wellbeing. I have extended these ideas into my teaching pedagogy, and they have shown improvement. Through my experiences, I gained insight into the challenges faced by young people and grew increasingly concerned about how these difficulties might manifest in adulthood. The realisation coincided with my growing awareness of the magnitude of the mental health crisis among young people in Australia (AIHW, 2018, 2022; ABS, 2018, 2021) and worldwide (Orygen, 2020) and WHO (2018). While my counselling work brought attention to

the challenges faced by young people, I became convinced that more could be done to cultivate wellbeing dispositions earlier in their school lives, hence the motivation behind this thesis.

The struggles I observed within the school system were not limited to students alone. I recall counselling several educators grappling with personal issues and beginning to recognise the reciprocal relationship between their wellbeing and their work. Educators' wellbeing appeared to be adversely affected by stressful work situations and the numerous demands imposed upon them by the education system. Research has highlighted educators' challenges concerning stress, anxiety, workload, work-life balance, and performance (Acton & Glasgow, 2015; Carter & Andersen, 2019a; 2019b; Sen & Phillips, 2011). As a counsellor and educator, I witnessed students and educators confronting daily challenges. I learned that wellbeing and learning are intricately intertwined and that enhancing wellbeing can improve learning outcomes.

As an Educator of Primary School Students

In this section, I reflect on my journey as an educator and emphasise the importance of teacher wellbeing. Research has shown that teacher wellbeing is linked to the quality of their work and positively impacts student achievement (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation [CESE], 2014; McCallum et al., 2017). Additionally, McCallum and Price (2016) emphasise the connection between teacher and student wellbeing, suggesting that educators who model positive attitudes can influence their students' wellbeing. Various researchers have studied the wellbeing crisis among educators (Cumming, 2017; Grantham & Paterson, 2016; Yin et al., 2019), emphasising the need for strategies to support teacher wellbeing and enhance student wellbeing.

While it is said that it takes a village to raise a child (Clinton, 1996; Cowen-Fletcher, 1993), schools and, specifically, educators play a crucial role in cultivating wellbeing dispositions in young people's lives. This was clear in my autoethnographical reflections above. This research accepts that the more support available, including from the school, classroom, peers, educators, and parents, the greater the chances of success for young individuals. Furthermore, wellbeing is a lifelong process of becoming. The conscious focus on becoming and specifically becoming well or making wellbeing present and expressive in one's own life and that of one's community helps us maintain and sustain wellbeing (McGirr, 2021). Discussing the purpose of life and philosophy, McGirr uses the metaphor of "finding the well in your village" (McGirr, 2021, pp. 8-9). He asserts that the language of wellbeing needs to shift to well-finding (McGirr, 2021). Cultivating and crafting (Finding) resources (a well) to make wellbeing present and expressive within a community (village) can create possibilities to enhance opportunities.

When I graduated as a teacher, I was already practising as a counsellor, and the importance of wellbeing for learning was ingrained in me. As an educator, I understood the need for literacy and numeracy agendas, learning the three R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic), and specifically the new 3R's (Relationships, Reflection, Resilience). Siegel (2016) outlines his framework in his book *Mind: A Journey to the Heart of Being Human*. According to Siegel (2012), developing these three essential skills is critical for students to thrive in the modern world.

Relationships are about forming positive connections, empathising with others' perspectives, and working collaboratively towards shared goals. According to Siegel

(2012; 2017; 2022), cultivating positive relationships is essential for promoting social-emotional wellbeing and crucial for school success and beyond.

Reflection involves stepping back and reflecting on one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. This skill is essential for developing self-awareness, self-regulation, and metacognition (thinking about one's thinking). Reflection also helps to create a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Siegel (2012; 2017; 2022) states that reflection is an opportunity to realise that relationships are our life's blood and that good relationships enhance our resilience.

Resilience is the capacity to overcome and be strengthened by life's challenges (Osório et al., 2017). Resilient learners are more likely to be successful and experience optimal wellbeing (Davidson, 2016; Lee et al., 2018; Masten, 2018; Reid, 2016; Seligman, 2011). Resilience is the capacity to bounce back from adversity and effectively manage stress and challenges. According to Siegel (2012; 2017; 2022), resilience is essential for individual wellbeing and a crucial skill for success in school and life.

Siegel's (2009) 3R's of wellbeing and learning seamlessly fit into my focus on wellbeing. Building on reflection, relationships, and resilience can assist with managing challenges and utilising resources to attain optimal wellbeing. Siegel's (2009) framework also emphasises the importance of cultivating SEL skills alongside academic learning to promote overall wellbeing and success.

As I reflect on my journey, I realise that although I have been a qualified teacher for ten years, my role as an educator began much earlier. Parents are the first educators of their children. My experiences as an educator within the education system span more than 25 years, starting as a volunteer at my children's school, which gradually evolved into more formal roles.

My focus has always been on wellbeing first. Empathy plays a vital role in enriching my approach to teaching. I have observed that when these aspects are prioritised, learning naturally falls into place. Subconsciously, I have instilled in my children and the students I have worked with the importance of personal wellbeing and the presence of a supportive community or at least one caring individual to help cultivate wellbeing dispositions.

In my interactions with students, whether in teaching, learning, counselling or creative endeavours, I consistently begin and end with reflection and gratitude. Expressing my gratitude to students for all they have taught me is a cornerstone of my teaching pedagogy. As I share my passion for learning and wellbeing with the students I encounter, they, in turn, teach me so much more. When educators and caregivers genuinely consider the inner world of young people rather than merely reacting to their behaviours, both teaching and learning experiences are enhanced as a mutual sense of understanding and acceptance is established (Siegel, 2012; 2017; 2022).

While every day of teaching may not be filled with endless fun and joy, I make it a point to recall the best days and find moments of joy on other days. Infusing enjoyment and a sense of playfulness into one's work can transform work into a fulfilling experience. Cantor (2019) points out that enabling young people to accelerate their learning and development is essential to creating interconnected pathways in the developing brain. She further argues that prioritising

personal wellbeing and self-care within learning and development will emphasise integrating social, emotional, and cognitive learning (2019).

During my teaching experiences and before the commencement of this research study, I had the opportunity to witness the welcoming and nurturing atmosphere at Saint Benessere's school. The educators and students created an inviting environment that made me feel connected and valued. I reflect on my first day as a classroom teacher, several years before this research project began. On that day, I was warmly greeted by many educators who visited my class to introduce themselves, extend a warm welcome, and offer assistance throughout the day. One of my earliest visitors was the specialist science teacher who brought me freshly picked flowers from her garden and a glass jar to keep them in my classroom. This act of kindness became a classroom ritual for learners, where changing the water and tending to the flowers intertwined with the care and attention given to the classroom fish. Over time, I developed a profound sense of belonging and support from educators and students. I did not need to change myself to fit in; I experienced a culture of acceptance and care in our interactions.

Continuing my story, I reflect on my efforts to cultivate wellbeing, particularly in my teaching encounters. I share another epiphany because, within the autoethnographic analysis, these remembered moments have significantly impacted the trajectory of my life. I recall reaching for a vibrantly coloured box on a high shelf in my study, filled with precious artefacts I had misplaced during my last move. This box represents hope, wonder, love, joy, and positive feelings. I am overwhelmed with joy and peace as I open the box and read each note. These notes, some written, some drawn, and some created with various mediums, were all made with love and joy by young people who were my students, children, godchildren, nieces, and

nephews. These artefacts were not products of classroom lessons or instructions but heartfelt reflections. They were created out of love, joy, gratitude, and free exploration simply because they wanted to, not because they were asked to.

While most visual representations convey a thousand words, some include little messages. I see a small card adorned with two blue birds sitting on a brown branch with blue flowers and green leaves (see Figure 17). It reads, “Dear Mrs R, I like how you smile at me. Love from O...” I have discovered that paying close attention to simple messages like this can positively affect my daily interactions and experiences. Reading or remembering simple statements like this daily, especially during teaching, would remind me to smile more often. I specifically share this experience to highlight that every experience matters, even the little ones.

Figure 17



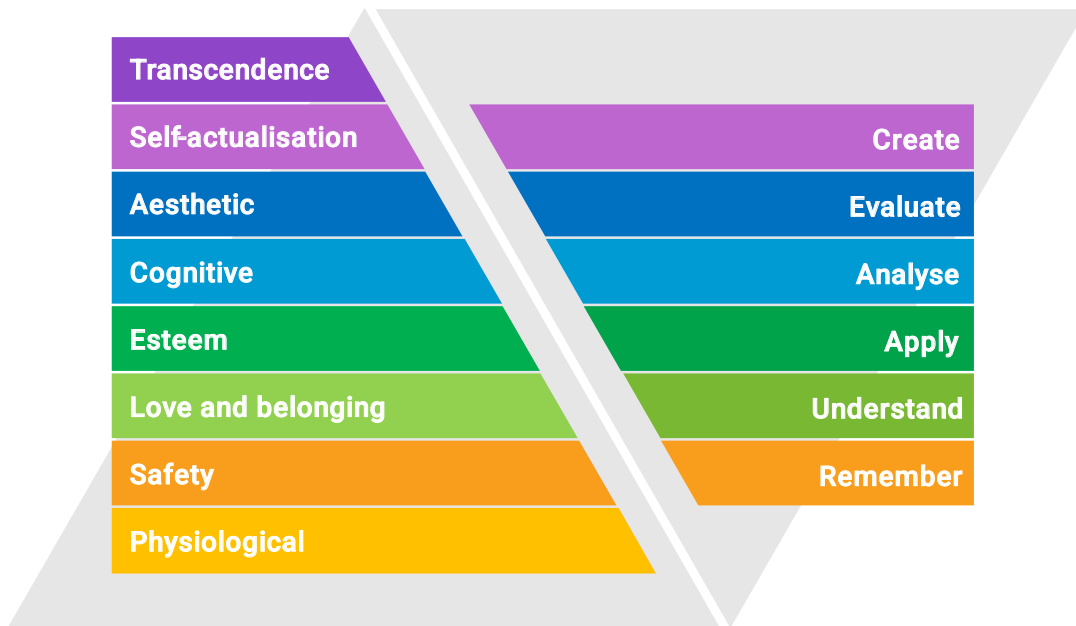
Reflections from My Memory Box

As educators, we receive heartfelt notes, cards, or pictures because we have made a small yet meaningful impact on the lives of young people. These tokens symbolise the mark we have

left or the positive change we have initiated. I know many educators receive similar artifacts and do not consider myself unique. Often, these mementoes sit on a shelf, collecting dust and eventually being discarded; however, I have kept some of them, but I am still determining why. It may be because I understand that the sentiments behind these expressions hold significance for someone.

While my memories, and not all my artefacts, remain deeply embedded within me, I appreciate the concept of material engagement, which adds a different dimension to the experience of reminiscing and reflecting. As a counsellor and educator, I have developed various tools and strategies that enhance my interactions, teaching, and learning experiences with young people. One such approach is MMETTAS Pedagogy (discussed throughout this thesis), which integrates innovative Mindfulness, MET, The Arts and Story to foster creative and engaging ways of delivering lessons (Ranatunga, 2013; Ranatunga & Pagliano, 2017; Ranatunga et al., 2014). By incorporating sound, visuals, props, puppets, tools, media devices, artefacts, and various mediums, MMETTAS Pedagogy enhances material engagement and cultivates reflection and dispositions for wellbeing.

As an educator, I hold steadfast to the belief that Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all (Aristotle, 384–322 BC; Wass & Southgate, 2017). Guided by this principle, my educational philosophy prioritises Maslow (1943; 1962; 1970) before Bloom (1956; 1980). These influential theorists offer valuable insights into the introspection of psychology and education, particularly regarding wellbeing and learning (see Figure 18).

Figure 18

Adapted from Maslow (1943; 1962; 1970) and Bloom (1956; 1980) for Wellbeing and Learning

Maslow's (1943; 1962; 1970) motivational model, in its revised form (on the left in Figure 18), emphasises that students cannot fully achieve their highest potential and growth needs (such as cognitive development, aesthetic appreciation, self-actualisation, and transcendence) unless their lower-level deficiency needs (including physiological, safety, love, belonging and esteem) are adequately met. Although individuals progress through these needs at different stages, their basic needs must be fulfilled before engaging in advanced cognitive functions.

On the other hand, Bloom's (1956; 1980) taxonomy, on the right of Figure 18, provides a hierarchical framework for learning objectives, ranging from basic remembering and understanding (knowledge and basic comprehension) to the more advanced abilities to apply, analyse, evaluate, and create. Optimal cognitive functioning occurs when individuals'

fundamental physiological and emotional needs are satisfactorily addressed (at their optimum cognitive levels) and when their most basic physiological and emotional needs are met.

As discussed in Chapter One Dodge et al. define wellbeing as: “the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced” (2012, p. 230). This definition resonates with me as it aligns with my life experiences and educational beliefs. Dodge et al. (2012) further, emphasise the importance of maintaining balance by acknowledging the learners’ resources and challenges inside and outside the classroom. The WHO highlights that.

Wellbeing is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Like health, it is a daily life resource determined by social, economic, and environmental conditions.

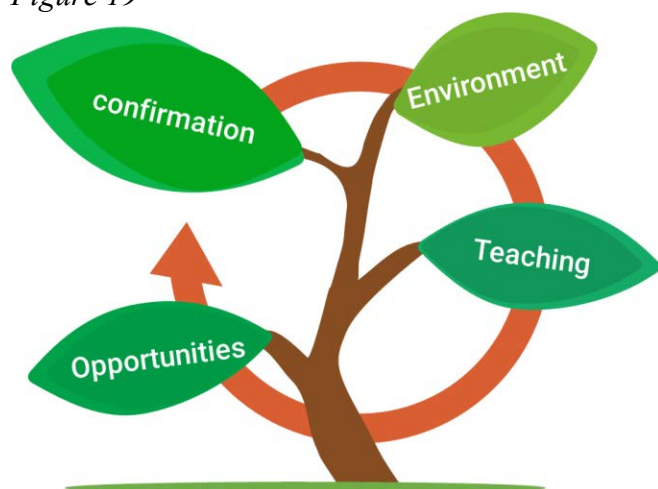
Wellbeing encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose. Focusing on wellbeing supports tracking the equitable distribution of resources, overall thriving, and sustainability (2021, pp. 10 - 24).

In my autoethnographic reflections, I have discussed aspects of the *Nature* of wellbeing. I found that wellbeing is elusive, in flux and can present through various perspectives. Wellbeing, to me, has been a lifelong journey that occurs in tandem with education. Cultivating wellbeing dispositions involves ongoing engagement in practices of body and mind, where individuals develop skills and strengths. When individuals maintain the ongoing cultivation of wellbeing dispositions (strengths and skills), it can be argued that they can draw on these skills to sustain wellbeing throughout their lives (McCallum & Price, 2016), particularly during challenging times (Carter, 2016). From my experiences, learning, and knowledge, I identify four actions

(*Nurture*) needed to successfully enable learners (primary school) to cultivate wellbeing dispositions in their lives (See Figure 19).

1. Students are placed in environments where they see wellbeing dispositions modelled (Ahn et al., 2020; Vygotsky, 1978; 1986; 1994).
2. Students are explicitly taught about their strengths, skills, and how to cultivate wellbeing dispositions as part of their learning (Ledford et al., 2019).
3. Students are given ample opportunities to practise these skills to cultivate wellbeing dispositions within their classrooms and apply them within their extended school environments (Davidson, 2016; Meadows & Cashdan, 1988; Seligman, 2011).
4. Students have these strengths and skills (dispositions) accurately confirmed by their teachers and significant others (Noddings, 1992; 1995a; 1995b)

Figure 19



The Nurture of Wellbeing - Four Actions to Successfully Cultivate wellbeing Dispositions

The above understandings were considered to be the *Nurturing* aspect of wellbeing. Insight into the *Nature* of wellbeing (elusive, flux, various perspectives) and how to *Nurture* wellbeing was highlighted in my autoethnographic reflections and experiences. Creswell (2014) discusses the larger cultural meaning, group behaviour and how knowledge about society can be elicited from examining personal stories, behaviour, beliefs, ideas, and culture. Before we consider cultivating wellbeing dispositions within education, we must understand wellbeing from a personal cultural perspective. This holistic approach to understanding wellbeing enlightens us about its various dimensions and interpretations. Understanding wellbeing needs to move beyond the mere visibility of wellbeing.

Beyond the visibility of wellbeing

Many programs and ideas build on the science of positive psychology to explore wellbeing by making it present and visible in different teaching and learning concepts. I will briefly discuss Hattie's (2009; 2012) visible learning, Seligman's (2011) positive education, and Waters' (2018) Visible Wellbeing™ (VWB) framework to support my exploration of going beyond the visibility of wellbeing.

Visible Learning is a concept coined by Hattie (2009; 2012). Hattie (2012) argues that for real learning to occur, it needs to be seen and not just assumed. In the classroom, educators teach students how to use learning intentions and success criteria to monitor their learning. Learners are taught to know what they are learning, why they are learning, how they will know they have learned, and what it means to have learned (Hattie, 2009; 2012). When students become competent, they "exhibit self-regulatory attributes" such as "self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-assessment, self-teaching" that are desirable for learning (Hattie, 2009, p. 25).

Positive education, according to Linkins et al. (2015), Norrish et al. (2013), and Seligman et al. (2009), combines the science of positive psychology and wellbeing within traditional education principles to promote positive mental health and flourishing within school communities. Findings from positive education and the combination of student-centred learning and relational learning offer educators a range of methods that can be used to make wellbeing more visible in the classroom (Suldo et al., 2011). Waters, who trademarked the term Visible Wellbeing™ (VWB), elaborates on positive education, stating that “a positive education pedagogy helps teachers to see and build wellbeing as a resource for individual students and at the classroom level” (Waters, 2022, p. 2).

Visible Wellbeing is a flexible approach that combines the science of wellbeing (the science of positive psychology) with the science of learning (Waters, 2017; 2018; 2022). Waters’ (2022) VWB is built on Seligman’s (2012) positive education and Hattie’s (2009; 2012) visible learning concepts. Waters (2017) states that “there are some basic, easy-to-learn techniques that help us get better at reading” our own and “another person’s state of wellbeing” (2022, p. 2). Elaborating on VWB with schools, Waters (2022, p. 3) asserts that schools should be guided by three principles: Curriculum and culture, programs and practice, and students and staff.

- Principle 1: Wellbeing is as much about cultural change as it is about curriculum change
- Principle 2: Promoting wellbeing with staff is as essential as promoting student wellbeing
- Principle 3: The widespread impact of wellbeing comes from wellbeing programs and practices (Waters, 2022, p. 3)

During the data collection for this study at Saint Benessere, the school adopted Hattie's (2009; 2012) visible learning approach, implemented in all classrooms. Each lesson incorporated learning intentions and success criteria. Although no specific wellbeing program existed, the school had a part-time guidance counsellor. On the school's website, under the wellbeing tab, various policies are mentioned, including procedures for physical illness, health, medication administration, and accident and illness policies. Additionally, the school had established policies for bullying and behaviour management.

Wellbeing has many interconnecting components. Therefore, making it noticeable, visible, and expressive in the school community can be challenging. This is because wellbeing can be present and visible or invisible; wellbeing can also be absent and visible or invisible. Individuals, cultures, and communities view and express wellbeing differently; therefore, one-size-fits-all programs may not capture the reality of wellbeing. The Nature of wellbeing (elusive, flux, and different perspectives) is important to understand before focusing on the nurture of wellbeing. If individuals can find the freedom to discuss and express wellbeing and mental health without judgment or stigma, perhaps finding workable solutions to enhance individual and collective wellbeing within communities and cultures may become more accessible.

Culture has been referred to throughout this thesis and plays an important role in wellbeing. Culture is a comprehensive concept that encompasses various aspects of human life. In this research, wellbeing culture goes beyond explicit expectations and documented policies; it involves continuously prioritising the holistic wellbeing of educators and learners. Culture is something people learn to develop through shared experiences. Wellbeing culture is deeply rooted in the life lessons we learn, the difficult times we endure, the challenges we face and how

we overcome adversity. Culture is established and implemented from the top down, from leaders to the learners, and should be mirrored by everyone.

For educators to effectively model wellbeing, they must cultivate wellbeing dispositions in their own lives (McCallum & Price, 2016). This is not just a professional requirement but a personal journey valued and integral to nurturing wellbeing in the classroom. Educators who cultivate wellbeing dispositions authentically exhibit these behaviours in their daily practices. This allows them to become more familiar with identified strengths (Greensburg et al., 2017) and dispositions. Consequently, they are better equipped to teach and demonstrate these skills explicitly in the classroom. Educators can then provide numerous opportunities for students to practice, recognise skills and dispositions in others, and accurately confirm them when students demonstrate them, as discussed in the nurture aspect above.

The stigma of mental illness can be challenged when the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions becomes more meaningful. This research, which explores the multifaceted nature of wellbeing and the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education, is of significant importance. It provides practical insights and strategies readily applicable to educators, researchers, and individuals interested in cultivating wellbeing dispositions in primary education. To focus on wellbeing, I was now profoundly aware that one needs to explore beyond the mere visibility of wellbeing. This research aims to go beyond the visibility of wellbeing and to focus on wellbeing as a present state, a Culture and Discourse of a community.

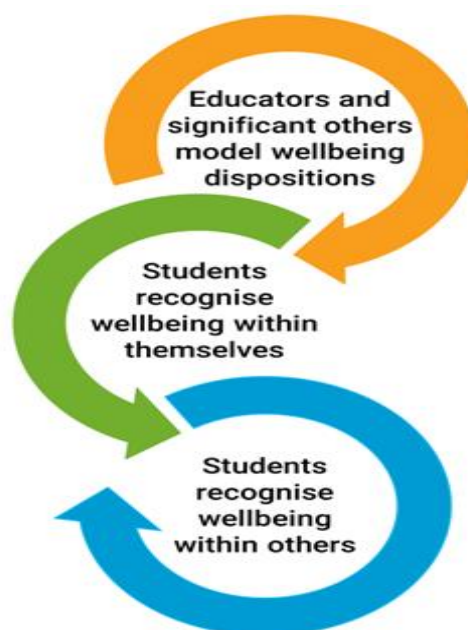
We certainly make a difference by cultivating wellbeing dispositions with educators and learners and enabling wellbeing conversations in the primary school community. The term Discourse in this research goes beyond the everyday use of language in communication.

Discourse in this research is the conversations, interactions, actions, beliefs, values and social practices (the broader social and cultural contexts) that merge to form identities and social roles within specific groups and communities (Gee, n.d.; Gee, 2016). Culture and Discourse are social constructs that help define and understand human behaviour and social interactions. They are interconnected concepts that influence and shape each other.

As stated above, my research is focused on going beyond the visibility of wellbeing into the core of wellbeing and across the many layers of understanding wellbeing. The elusive nature of wellbeing makes wellbeing hard to see, and wellbeing can be present and invisible or visible and vice versa. Individuals, communities, and cultures also differ in how they view wellbeing. Making wellbeing meaningful and expressive and providing opportunities to discuss wellbeing more freely allows educators, significant others and learners to pay attention and reflect on individual and collective wellbeing. Considering the research and my experiences, my change and growth of wellbeing, I focus on at least three key ways (see Figure 20) that educators and students can work towards going beyond making wellbeing present, visible and expressive. Reflecting further, I was beginning to realise that this is the Culture and Discourse of wellbeing:

1. Educators and significant others model wellbeing skills and dispositions.
2. Students model and recognise wellbeing within themselves.
3. Students recognise wellbeing within others and discuss it freely.

Figure 20



The Culture and Discourse of Wellbeing (Moving Beyond Visibility)

By modelling wellbeing skills and dispositions, educators can make wellbeing more present, recognisable, and expressive in school settings, enabling students to recognise wellbeing within themselves and others. In this chapter, I have discussed my understanding of the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions. My learning journey and knowledge acquisition have enabled me to relate my learning to the broader topic of wellbeing. My autoethnographic explorations, reflections, and introspections in Phase One were important in understanding the wellbeing phenomenon as I experienced it through various cultures and situations. Focusing on the *Nature* of wellbeing and incorporating the *Nurture* of wellbeing creates a *Culture* and *Discourse* of wellbeing.

The Wellbeing Literacy Framework

My learning and introspections have highlighted the need to approach wellbeing as a holistic concept within the school setting. Understanding and enhancing wellbeing in the classroom can be challenging due to its multifaceted nature, which I plan to explore further in the following two chapters. From my learnings from this phase, I have identified three overarching concepts essential to understanding the complexity of wellbeing.

I used the splatter art paintings (see Figure 15) discussed in the As a Parent of Primary School Students section as metaphors to remind us to maintain a profound insight. This idea encourages us to look beyond the surface and uncover hidden elements, such as the emerging *Hamsters* (elusive nature of wellbeing) or the interplay of “enablers and impactors” (Carter & Andersen, 2019a, p. 16). By comprehending the flux nature of wellbeing, understanding the multiple perspectives, delving more deeply, and asking meaningful questions, we can grasp and accept the picture as it is (*Sun Sparkled*). These concepts illuminated early insights (framework) that encompass the elusive nature of wellbeing, the flux nature of wellbeing (the importance of change and growth) and focusing on multiple perspectives (*kaleidoscope*) of wellbeing. I refer to these three overarching concepts of wellbeing as the *Nature* of wellbeing. Wellbeing becomes tangible and expressive when we purposefully observe and question to gain a profound understanding of wellbeing.

As an educator, I deeply reflected on ways to facilitate the successful cultivation of wellbeing in students. I discussed my philosophy and pedagogy as a researcher, counsellor, and educator. I explored my pedagogy and discussed Maslow (1943) and Bloom (1956). My teaching philosophy intensely focused on understanding if my students’ physiological, security,

belonging, and esteem needs are met (Maslow, 1943) before they can learn (know), comprehend, apply, analyse, synthesise, evaluate, and create (Bloom, 1956; 1980).

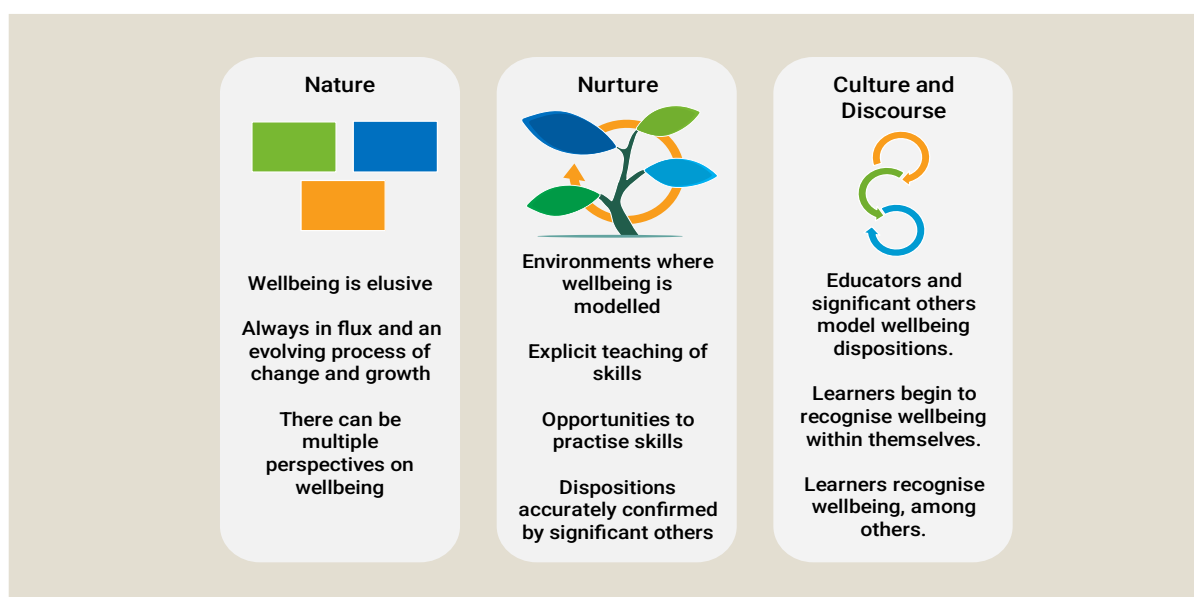
As discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, I utilise a range of ideas from positive psychology in my counselling and teaching experiences. The significance of a supportive environment and caring and responsive relationships are crucial factors to consider. As an educator, I firmly believe that the driver for learning is the social connection and activating a learner's cognitive skills begins with activating their social connectedness. This underscores the importance of supportive environments and caring relationships in learning, providing reassurance and confidence in education. I presented the four actions (Figure 19) backed by research and theory that can be utilised to cultivate wellbeing dispositions in education. These provide a favourable and conducive environment, explicit teaching, opportunities to learn and practice and accurate confirmation and reinforcement. I refer to these as the aspects of *Nurture*.

Building on understanding *Nature* and *Nurture*, I introduced three key ways (see Figure 20) for educators and students to actively experience classroom wellbeing. This approach aimed to go beyond the mere visibility of wellbeing to incorporate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom. These were encapsulated in the *Culture* and *Discourse* of wellbeing, where educators and significant others model wellbeing skills and dispositions, and students recognise and discuss wellbeing. I have synthesised the three overarching concepts of *Nature*, *Nurture*, *Culture*, and *Discourse* into The Wellbeing Literacy Framework, presented in Figure 21 below.

The framework suggests that wellbeing can be a state of practice deconstructed and influenced by contextual and personal factors. Wellbeing is not a fixed or static state, but rather something that can be actively shaped, broken down, and influenced by various factors, such as

physical and mental health, social support, economic stability, and personal fulfilment, which play a crucial role in shaping an individual's wellbeing. The factors can include specific context (environment, social condition, cultural setting) and personal elements (experiences, beliefs, emotions). Wellbeing is not a one-size-fits-all concept and varies greatly depending on personal experiences, circumstances, and environmental and cultural influences. By understanding and addressing these varied elements, we can develop more tailored and effective approaches to enhance wellbeing at both personal and community levels. Wellbeing is dynamic and shaped by ongoing interactions between various factors.

Figure 21



The Wellbeing Literacy Framework (Ranatunga)

As I have discussed, several existing wellbeing frameworks are utilised in education, and my purpose was not to reinvent the wheel but to consider why wellbeing is still challenging in education. With its unique focus on intentional communication about wellbeing, this Wellbeing Literacy Framework was not created to fill the gaps or replace existing wellbeing frameworks.

The term *wellbeing literacy* is discussed in the literature as focusing explicitly on the ability to communicate intentionally about wellbeing, involving knowledge, receptive and expressive language, vocabulary, and the ability to purposefully use wellbeing literacy for the wellbeing of self and others (Baker et al., 2021; Hou et al., 2021). It is expected that learners and educators can develop wellbeing literacy when immersed in flourishing environments. This framework provides a trajectory for deep understanding and exploration of wellbeing before trying to enhance wellbeing or find answers to questions and challenges about wellbeing.

The overarching questions that guide this study are: What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education? How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom? This first phase suggested that we must first understand the self and the varying concepts of wellbeing to enhance wellbeing. Wellbeing is different for every individual and every community. Creating a mutual understanding of wellbeing is essential to cultivating wellbeing dispositions. Phase One provided a glimpse of one educator cultivating wellbeing dispositions. Phases Two and Three will extend this learning to many educators and learners, cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

In this research, I understood the concept of cultivating wellbeing dispositions as an individual's inclination or tendency towards maintaining a positive wellbeing state. Dispositions are skills specific to individuals and their communities and can be cultivated throughout life. Primary school education can be seen as a critical foundational stage where wellbeing dispositions can be cultivated (McCallum & Price, 2016; [OECD], 2015; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2021; WHO, 2013); however, we should

be cautious and sensitive towards one-size-fits-all programs as they do not necessarily cater towards every individual, culture, or community's needs.

The concepts of the Wellbeing Literacy Framework were instrumental in guiding my choices for activities and experiences in Phases Two and Three. This framework equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to understand and lead a healthy, balanced, and fulfilling life. When educators cultivate wellbeing dispositions within themselves, they also impart these skills to others, thereby playing a crucial role in the holistic approach to wellbeing. Their role extends beyond physical health to encompass emotional, mental, social, cognitive, spiritual, aesthetic, and moral wellbeing, making them integral to the process.

My research is an ongoing journey where I continually incorporate my experiences and learning to find innovative ways to conduct my classroom lessons. I consistently deliver my lessons with a focus on the conditions of possibility to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. These conditions, including the learning environment and educator approach, are crucial for cultivating wellbeing dispositions. The research further investigates the conditions of possibility and if cultivating wellbeing dispositions can be understood through a comprehensive adaptable wellbeing framework encompassing *Nature*, *Nurture*, *Culture* and *Discourse*. This process can assist in advancing the ability to recognise wellbeing within self and others and work towards cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I embark on a personal journey of self-reflection and exploration, guided by the words of Jung: “Your vision will become clear only when you look into your own heart.

Who looks outside dreams, who looks inside awakes” (Jung, 1970, p. 564). Through the Arts, personal narratives (stories and poems) and the use of autoethnography, I focus on my own life experiences as a student, parent, counsellor, and educator, connecting them to the broader cultures and societies I have been part of. Wellbeing manifestations can differ across individuals, cultures, groups, and communities. Many factors profoundly influence wellbeing, including historical context, physical and biological, social and cultural surroundings, and the environment.

During my exploration, several profound revelations have emerged from Phase One of this journey. At its core, wellbeing is enigmatic and elusive. It constantly changes and fluctuates and can be perceived from various perspectives. Thus, understanding wellbeing begins with an understanding of the nature of wellbeing. It was evident that wellbeing is not a fixed or static state but a continuous and dynamic process of becoming. This insight challenges conventional notions of wellbeing and invites us to perceive it as an ongoing journey rather than a destination. As I have explored, wellbeing is not a one-time achievement but a lifetime endeavour. Wellbeing extends beyond the surface and should be investigated as a sustainable state of equilibrium focusing on inner balance and harmony to shape the quality of life. This realisation emphasises the importance of holistic, proactive measures to sustain and enhance wellbeing.

Wellbeing represents a delicate balance between available resources and the challenges individuals face. Wellbeing is not the absence of distress or the heightened presence of positive qualities. The multifaceted aspect highlights the complexities of wellbeing and calls for deep exploration and understanding to live a holistic and flourishing life. The revelations from my journey guided me to explore the multifaceted nature of wellbeing, its evolving manifestations, and the intricate interplay of factors that shape aspects of human existence.

Wellbeing needs constant nurturing and attention throughout one's lifespan. Nurturing wellbeing calls for cultivating specific dispositions (empathy, kindness, mindfulness), which are the habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that contribute to one's overall wellbeing. Cultivating these wellbeing dispositions is a vital aspect of mental hygiene, where practice and intentional focus play crucial roles. By understanding ourselves and seeking to know others and their stories, we gain valuable insights into wellbeing. These insights will provide helpful perspectives on cultivating wellbeing dispositions within the school community. Developing these dispositions creates a *Culture* and *Discourse* enacted by *Nature* and *Nurture*.

In this research, I delve deeper into how teaching to cultivate wellbeing dispositions can positively impact the wellbeing and learning of students. The exploration is ongoing and will continue in the following chapters. I will discuss literature, methodology, and methods and introduce and share the experiences of educators and students I worked with during the data collection. These insights will provide valuable perspectives on cultivating wellbeing dispositions within education. Uncovering how educators and students embraced the constant learning process of cultivating wellbeing dispositions facilitates the search for the 'well' (McGirr, 2021) within educational communities.

Overall, this chapter has been a valuable opportunity for self-reflection, setting the stage for phases two and three. It has laid the groundwork for further investigation, emphasising the need to view wellbeing as a holistic and ongoing process. By acknowledging the complexity and interconnectedness of wellbeing, we can better understand how to nurture and sustain wellbeing within ourselves and our educational environments. This approach opens us to new perspectives and enlightens us on the multifaceted nature of wellbeing.

Chapter Five - Phase Two: Educators Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions

“An understanding heart is everything in a teacher...One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings.” (Jung, 1954, p. 248)

Overview and Structure (Chapter Five)

The study was conducted in three phases. The previous chapter elaborated on Phase One, my life journey of wellbeing cultivation, and the learnings from that phase. Jung's (1954) quote at the beginning of this chapter emphasises the importance of empathy and insight in the context of teaching and education. I find the heart of my inquiry within this realm of wisdom, compassion, and emotional resonance. This chapter seeks to understand the educators who nurture the minds, hearts, and wellbeing of those they educate.

Chapter five (this) marks the initiation of the study's second phase, which occurred during term one (February to March). This phase centres around the wellbeing journey of 32 educator participants, delving into their lives and narratives about how they cultivated and nurtured wellbeing dispositions. Working within a transformative paradigm utilising PAR, I built trust and rapport with educators, and together, we focused on cultivating wellbeing dispositions. The Wellbeing Literacy Framework, concentrating on *Nature, Nurture, Culture and Discourse*, was utilised with educators to understand wellbeing and implement MMETTAS Pedagogy to cultivate wellbeing dispositions.

This chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the data collected in this phase. As discussed in Chapter Three, the methods encompass a range of approaches, including

surveys, observations, and workshops conducted individually and in groups comprising formal (audio-recorded focus groups) and informal (yarning circles) discussions, reflective tasks, and the creation of artefacts. Furthermore, this chapter will present and analyse the findings from this study phase, offering valuable insights into how educators cultivated wellbeing dispositions. The choice of methods was instrumental in answering the questions; What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education? How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom? This chapter not only emphasises the crucial role of the environment and its people (educators and learners) as catalysts for developing wellbeing dispositions, it also focuses on the specific challenges (time constraints), and enabling factors, such as supportive leadership, that make this process both complex and rewarding.

The Setting and Participants (Educators)

As previously indicated, finding a school with willing participants to conduct studies on wellbeing was arduous. Discovering Saint Benessere's and the willingness of the school leaders and educators to accept and support this project was a gratifying experience. The educators' narratives, experiences, and desire to share them are of immense value to this study and integral to the research process. I will switch between detailed descriptions, reflections, images, and several writing styles to accurately describe the events in this setting. To enhance the retelling of the educators' stories, I move in and out of my reflections and educator reflections.

Educators and learners form the main body of classroom education. The environment directly results from the people within and surrounding it. Environments (social and geographical) are essential factors in wellbeing. Studies from a range of fields, including health (Correll, 2023; 2003; Maas et al., 2009), economic research (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006;

MacKerron, 2011), geography research (Finlay & Rowles, 2021; Fleuret & Atkinson, 2007), sociology research (Allardt, 1976; Konu & Rimpelä, 2002) and child development research (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1979; Evans, 2021; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969), point out that various elements of the environment, including the green spaces, can enhance wellbeing. In the Wellbeing Literacy Framework discussed in Chapter Four (Phase One), the environment, including its people (*Nature, Nurture*), is considered a vital component of wellbeing. This insight informs the crucial role of the environment and its people in cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

The Setting

Saint Benessere's, a Catholic, co-educational primary school in an outer suburb of a major Australian city, was the perfect setting for this research. In The Wellbeing Literacy Framework, within the four Nurture aspects of wellbeing (Figure 19) the environment is an important factor. The school's spacious and airy classrooms and welcoming atmosphere provided an ideal environment for cultivating wellbeing dispositions among educators and students.

During Phase Two, the Banksia blooms were beginning to replace the Bottlebrush blooms, a subtle reminder that summer was over and autumn was coming. The tree-studded, leafy green environment and its surrounding native flora and fauna enhanced our experiences and reflections within this space. A vast array of Australian native shrubs surrounded the classroom buildings, and giant eucalyptus trees encircled the open green spaces. The school groundsperson, who had been there since the school's inception, nurtured these green spaces with pride and joy, creating a secure and cared-for environment. The magical sounds of children's chatter and laughter and the constant melodies from native birds, who feasted on the mass of

Bottlebrush, Banksia, and Wattle blooms, echoed within these spaces. The setting enhanced and influenced the *Nurture* aspect of wellbeing (see The Wellbeing Literacy Framework).

During my teaching encounters and before the commencement of this research study, I found Saint Benessere's to be an inviting place with many caring and friendly educators and students. This research study aimed to explore and understand the conditions of possibility for cultivating wellbeing dispositions among primary school educators and learners. I was comfortable in this school because I had experience working there and felt valued, accepted, and welcomed. I shared history and culture with these people and this place, adopting a deep sense of belonging. This familiarity made my task of understanding the background and the setting much more straightforward. I have discussed my earliest encounters with educators and students in Chapter Four, and I will continue to elaborate on my experiences and insights with educators in this chapter.

Saint Benessere's provided an ideal setting for this research, with its flourishing natural environment and a strong sense of community. The educators and students were a close-knit group who took pride and joy in the school. Many educators reminisced about the supportive parents, friends, and broader community members, creating a reassuring and encouraging atmosphere. The environment and its people play a crucial role in developing dispositions.

The home culture and the culture of the school and its community profoundly influence individuals. An individual's dispositions are shaped by their relationships, culture, and community. This understanding enlightens us about the complex interplay of factors contributing to an individual's wellbeing and success. Wellbeing encompasses diverse opportunities, privileges and challenges afforded to individuals (Bodur, 2012; Carter & Andersen, 2019a). It is

also essential to consider how an individual's dispositions and culture co-exist and thrive within the primary school community. This phase focused on understanding the educators and how they were cultivating wellbeing dispositions. I have elaborated on the environment, and next, I will introduce the educator participants.

A Snapshot of Educator Participants (Phase Two)

In this study, the term educator is used for teachers, school officers, teacher aids, school administration staff, and all school personnel who work with young people. The inclusion criteria for educators were teaching and non-teaching staff (including administration and support staff) working in the selected school (Saint Benessere's) during the data collection period. At the beginning of the term (February), a whole school group of educators (53) were invited to participate, and 32 (26 teachers and six school officers) returned signed consent forms (Appendix IV). During Phase One, Saint Benessere's had 36 teaching staff and 1 non-teaching staff. While there were 53 educators on the enrolled staff list at the school, 21 educators were on leave (maternity, long service, sick, family leave, etc.), visiting educators, or part-time or casual educators during this study phase. All educators who were regularly at the school participated in this study. Of the 26 teachers who participated in the study, two were specialist teachers (HPE Teacher, Library Teacher), three were on the administration team, and 21 were classroom teachers. Six school officers were part of this educator exploration group. See Table 10 for a snapshot of educator participants.

As discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Three, mixed sampling strategies were chosen. The typical sampling strategy was purposive and convenient (Liamputtong, 2009; Marshall M. N., 1996; Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2018), and the volunteer sampling (Aransiola, 2023; Hasan, 2023) strategies were seen as adequate for this research. While these sampling strategies can be seen as non-probability sampling strategies, which are said to be prone to bias, all educators at the school during this time were offered an opportunity to participate in the research. The process of mixed sampling (Collins, 2017; Javed, 2022; Maher et al., 2018) aligned with my research questions as it provided rich data and increased validity and flexibility.

Table 10

A Snapshot of Educator Participants

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Teaching Year Level</i>	<i>Experience</i>
Male (3)	35 or under (5)	Prep to 2 [lower] (9)	1-3 (8)
Female (29)	[21-25 (2) 26-35 (3)]	Year 3-4 [middle] (6)	5-7 (4)
Total Participants(32)		Year 5-6 [upper] (6)	8-14 (4)
	36-45 (16)	Administration (3)	15-20 (8)
Classroom Teachers(21)		Across all year levels (8)	21+ (5)
Specialist Teachers(2)	46 and over (11)		Did not
Administration Team(3)			respond (3)
School Officers(6)			
Total enrolled (53)			

Online databases were initially scrutinised to gather demographic data. These provided whole school-level demographic data; however, they were mainly on the students and not the educators. The Educator Wellbeing and Resilience Survey (Appendix V - Educator Wellbeing & Resilience Survey) was initially helpful in understanding participants' objective data (gender, age,

year level they taught, and teaching experience in years). The survey results were also used to realise quantifiable subjective data about educator' feelings and their resilience and wellbeing. The survey was conducted during the first and last educator workshop sessions. This survey was discussed in Chapter Three, and the data will be further explored in this chapter. Thirty-two educators participated in the beginning survey and thirty-one in the end survey.

As is the case in many primary schools, female educators dominated the participant sample. There was a good spread across ages, class levels and experience. In the 35 and under group, there were two participants in the 21-25 age group and three in the 26-35 age group. Half the educators were between 36 and 45 years old, and approximately 41% had over 15 years of experience teaching. Eight educators taught across all year levels. Workshop attendance and participation were seen as favourable at approximately 94%. Two staff members (from the administration team) did not participate in all six sessions, and one did not complete the final wellbeing survey.

The wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise among educators contributed to diverse research perspectives. The educators brought their unique perspectives and experiences to the research, enriching the discussions and providing valuable insights into the complexities of wellbeing education. These educators, each with a unique journey and experience, were passionate about teaching and committed to providing their students with the best possible learning experiences. Throughout the research, the educator participants shared their insights and experiences related to wellbeing. The quantitative data on educators' subjective experiences and the qualitative data will be reported concurrently. As the chapter progresses, I will share educators' stories and experiences cultivating wellbeing dispositions. All personally identifiable

details have been kept anonymous to protect participants' identity and privacy. Individual educator responses will be presented without identifying participants. Individual educator responses and their stories will be woven together to create a single wellbeing story. Educator participants played a critical role in creating a supportive environment for the research. The focus will be on the collective group responses and participants who influenced and enhanced these spaces. As an insider participant moving on a continuum throughout this research process, I will discuss and clarify my role in this phase next.

My Role in Phase Two

I have discussed my story about my life experiences in previous chapters. I saw myself as an insider researcher (discussed in the Insider Researcher section) and was aware that my position was not static. During this research phase, I was deeply aware of my many roles as a participant, researcher, educator, counsellor, wellbeing expert and advocate. I moved back and forth on a continuum, and the process of reflection enabled me to switch roles.

I reflected deeply on my task as I was aware of hierarchical and manipulative relationships in research and education. I was an insider researcher and switched between being a facilitator, educator and participant in this research. I approached these many roles, focusing on understanding the educators' wellbeing stories. The wellbeing literacy framework based on Nature, Nurture, Culture, and Discourse kept me focused and grounded. Based on existing theories, this framework, which I developed in Phase One, guided my understanding of wellbeing in the context of primary school education.

When I returned to Saint Benessere's as a researcher, the school had a newly appointed principal and many new staff. The school's new principal was a work colleague (from a previous school) and one of my children's primary school educators. This change in leadership brought a fresh perspective to my research. I felt welcome at Saint Benessere's school for the second time, yet there were subtle differences in the initial interactions. The educators did not immediately accept me as an insider or part of their inner circle. I was greeted with friendly curiosity, yet I was made to feel like an outsider, an expert, or a researcher.

My approach to the educators was of utmost respect and recognition of their expertise in their field and community. I saw myself as a facilitator, aiming to understand and improve their wellbeing stories. In this phase, I was committed to working towards an equal partnership with my participants, advancing collaboration and trust (Boyle, 2012; Patton, 2002). I was on a mission to build rapport with these educators and become part of the group. I wanted to work with these participants to understand and improve their wellbeing. I wanted to work with these participants to understand and improve their wellbeing.

In Chapter Four, I discussed skills I would utilise in my research, such as my counselling interview skills (Corey, 2001; De Bono, 1994; 2015; 2017; Tan et al., 2015); communication and reasoning tools; code-switching strategies (Corey, 2001; Jennings, 2015; 2019; Martin & Nakayama, 2014) and skills of mindfulness practice (Briggs, 2013; Cochran & Cochran, 2015; Hailes, 2020). Added to my counselling and teaching skills, I drew on listening, interacting, and understanding skills to stay present, curious, and grounded (Davis et al., 2013; Martin & Nakayama, 2014). I drew on my counselling, educator training and experience to keep myself balanced and grounded.

Bateson (2007; 2018) reminds us that participant observers must be present and curious, learning and observing with deep self-awareness. Collective, self-reflective inquiry is essential to understanding and improving practice. Therefore, the adopted PAR approach, which emphasises collaboration and equitable power dynamics, was crucial in ensuring that the voices of the educators were central to the research process. This collaborative approach, where everyone's voice is heard and valued, is a testament to the power of collective, self-reflective inquiry in understanding and improving practice. I honour and recognise the power inequalities, culturally-centred change, and robust and equitable collaboration needed between participants and researchers (Boyle, 2012; Campbell et al., 2004; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Muhammad et al., 2015). This approach ensures that all stakeholders are part of this journey towards understanding and improving wellbeing in education.

I wanted to shift the power balance from researcher to researched (Campbell et al., 2004). We were all educators, and the goal was to promote active participation and enhance a sense of responsibility and participant advocacy. Participatory Action Research is grounded in collaboration and is focused on creating systemic social change (Boyle, 2012; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Muhammad et al., 2015). This approach ensures that all stakeholders are part of this journey towards understanding and improving wellbeing in education. I was searching for ways to make wellbeing more present in educators' and learners' lives. I wanted to reduce the stigma associated with wellbeing and mental health and enable open, non-judgemental discussions about wellbeing in education. I tried to understand other educators' perceptions and perspectives on wellbeing. Every community and culture is unique, and being authentic, embracing wellbeing, and normalising the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions in this school was important.

As discussed, the data was predominantly qualitative and collected using various strategies. The quantitative data was descriptive. The workshop sessions were MMETTAS-based and incorporated the focus group sessions (formal - audio recorded and transcribed), yarning circles (informal), reflections, surveys and the creation of artefacts. I took notes and kept a diary and journal accounts of my observations. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013; 2020) was employed to analyse the qualitative data collected. Next, I will discuss the analysis and findings from this phase.

From the very beginning of this study, certain themes began to emerge and persisted throughout the stages. The icebreaker games and the initial survey revealed some early themes, one of which was the intriguing **fear factor** theme. This theme, elaborated in the next section, highlights the prevalent fear or apprehension among educators when discussing and promoting wellbeing. It highlights the reasons behind this fear and how it impacts the educators' ability to promote wellbeing. I explored the data to discern the prevalence or absence of this theme across the data collection.

The themes and concepts identified within the data provided deeper insight. They allowed me to discover patterns and themes related to the research question and the complexities of the phenomenon. By examining both previously discussed and new themes in the data, this analysis helped to uncover meaningful insights into the challenges and opportunities related to cultivating positive wellbeing dispositions among primary school educators and learners. I will discuss the findings and elaborate on the themes next.

The Findings and Discussion: Educators Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions

Wellbeing within the primary setting is a complex and evolving research context. The transformative paradigm challenged existing power structures and promoted social justice for participants. Emergent designs enable flexibility and openness to new ideas, adaptability to changing circumstances, and embracing new perspectives. The transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2009) challenges traditional research paradigms and promotes social justice and change. Engaging participants in a participatory, collaborative manner gives them a voice in the research process and focuses on issues of social significance. This mixed-method case study utilised quantitative (descriptive) and qualitative data. The comprehensive and rich research approach and the thematic analysis used to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes in this research helped to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perspectives and attitudes related to the research topic (wellbeing). Maslow's (1943; 1962) theory has been widely influential in understanding human motivation, personal development and factors that drive human behaviour. Humanistic psychology and the idea that people have an inborn desire to be self-actualised, to be all they can be, was at the core of this research (Maslow, 1943; 1962; 1970).

To explore how these participants cultivated wellbeing dispositions and to understand the conditions of possibility for cultivating wellbeing dispositions, I focused intensely on participants' reflections, artefacts, stories, points of view and various perspectives of wellbeing. The process of reflection forms an integral part of understanding the data. First, I focused on participants' reflections and discussions and then on my reflections, notes and observations. I created artefacts and used colours to create a range of illustrations.

At the beginning of the study, all educators were provided with a journal. These journals were for engaging in self-reflection activities and recording personal thoughts. Importantly, the journals were the property of the participants, and they were encouraged to share their reflections and ideas from their journals if they felt comfortable doing so. Each educator was instructed to create a unique three-letter and number code for future activities to ensure participant anonymity. This code, used on surveys and artefacts, was unique to each individual, enabling the educators to remain unidentifiable. While most educators adhered to this practice, at least two did not always use the code; however, this did not compromise the integrity of the findings.

The six workshop sessions (per group), inclusive of two surveys (one at the beginning and one at the end of data collection), yarning circles, focus group discussions, reflections and the creation of artefacts, provided insight into educators' views of wellbeing and how they cultivate wellbeing dispositions. I will briefly recap each data collection process (discussed in Chapter Three) and then discuss the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions through the themes discovered in the data. I will begin this process with the introduction games we played.

The Introduction Games

The games and activities, while sometimes challenging, increased light-hearted fun and playfulness for most participants. These activities presented early insights regarding ideas to consider, explore and extend our understanding of wellbeing. Using games and play in education, learning, and development is not new (DeKoven, 2013; Piaget, 1962; Sun & Gao, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). Games and fun activities in this research were used as pedagogical tools and engaging and compelling learning experiences. As mentioned In Chapter One, The Getting to Know You (Participants) Session The initial activities entailed two games: weaving a web of

connection and post-it wellbeing circles. The web of connection game, designed to foster a sense of community and interconnectedness, entailed saying (aloud) a word that resonates with wellbeing while holding on to a section of the wool and throwing the ball of yarn to someone in the circle.

The Post-it wellbeing circle was about writing about what wellbeing was and thinking about what wellbeing was not. Educators wrote (on a Post-it note) a word that came to mind when they thought of wellbeing and placed their Post-it notes on the table. They then gathered around the table in a circle, picked up a post-it note, read it aloud to the group, and passed the post-it notes around the circle, and the last person placed them back on the table.

After this activity, I created a word cloud from educators' responses and shared this in the first yarning circle. I presented this word cloud (artefact) in Chapter One (Figure 2). We repeated the post-it notes activity at the end of this data collection phase and created another word cloud from the responses. The two created word clouds are presented together below (see Figure 22). This creation became an insightful artefact to understand educator participants' awareness and understanding of wellbeing. It is important to note that the word cloud highlights the number of responses by the size of words. The term 'wellbeing' was placed as the title and for artistic appeal. Happiness was the highest response to wellbeing. These Wellbeing Word Clouds visually represented the key concepts and ideas about wellbeing. They stimulated discussions and provided a starting point for discussion in educator workshop sessions.

Figure 22



The Wellbeing Word Clouds

Note. The image on the left was from the beginning session, and the image on the right was from the final session.

The early yarnning circle discussions were dominated by the thoughts and feelings evoked from the games played in the initial introduction session. Many discussions centred around the post-it notes and what wellbeing was and what wellbeing was not. We began to reframe these terms as enablers and impactors. While the getting-to-know-you games were used as icebreakers and introductions, the anticipated discussions were insightful. These early ideas and themes were fundamental in understanding participants' feelings and how they positioned themselves in this space. These were early insights (themes) about how educators saw wellbeing, and I will further elaborate on the generated themes from the workshop sessions. Next, I discuss survey insights.

The Educator Wellbeing and Resilience Survey

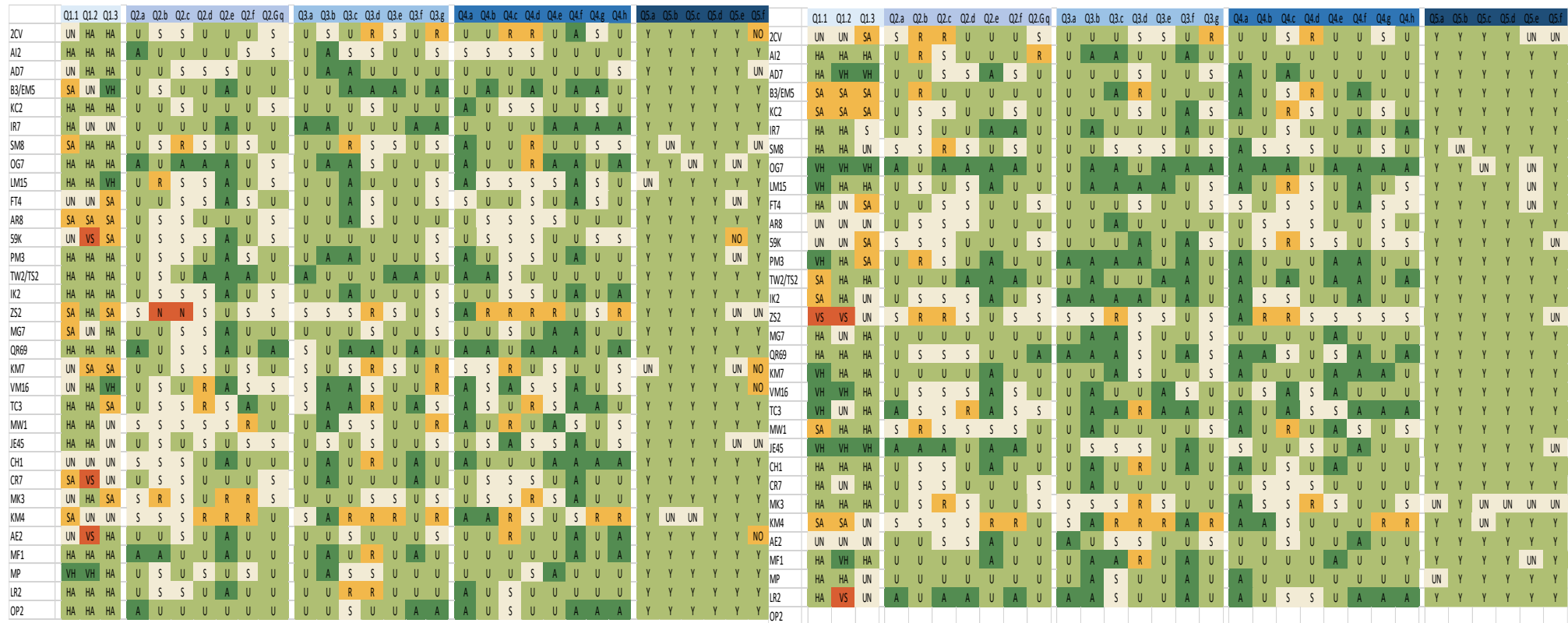
The Educator Wellbeing and Resilience Survey (Appendix V) discussed in Chapter Three was implemented at the beginning of term one (first session) and the end of the data collection for this phase. Participants used their unique code (they created) rather than their names on the survey to avoid being identifiable. The initial section of the survey was beneficial for

understanding information about participants' age group, gender, teaching experience, and the current year level they taught.

The subsequent sections were used to gauge an understanding of personal feelings and perceptions. The emoticons and terms used in the survey were discussed with participants first to ensure a collective level of interpretation and understanding, encouraging a sense of inclusivity. These are presented in Table 8. This survey was a collaborative effort to understand educator wellbeing and resilience, enhancing and facilitating focus discussions. The survey questions discussed in Chapter Three were typical of wellbeing questions used in other surveys (Forgeard et al., 2011; Kern et al., 2014; Living Well, 2012; Tennant et al., 2013) and were not intended to be used as a single guide for interpreting wellbeing among this group. Each of the five survey questions had three to eight sub-questions relevant to the main question. These questions from the survey were used as a guide to set up ideas and activities for future yarning circles.

During the first session, 32 educators completed the survey and answered questions about their wellbeing and resilience. The same survey was administered again at the end of the second phase. All data gathered from the survey was sorted into two tables. These are presented as a quick snapshot of what participants (individual and whole group) indicated as their feelings, thoughts, and ideas about the various wellbeing-related areas in their lives. The data revealed a dynamic process of change and growth in the participants' wellbeing, as evidenced by the differences between the beginning and end of the survey. This positive shift in wellbeing is a testament to the potential for improvement in educator resilience and wellbeing. Figure 23 below presents educators' responses and overall results from the beginning and end of the survey.

Figure 23



Beginning (32) and Ending(31) Survey Responses

very sad	never	 no  unsure  yes
sad	rarely	
unsure	sometimes	
happy	usually	
very happy	always	

The responses were colour-coordinated for visibility and to distinguish patterns, with the colours used purely for clarity and not to convey specific meanings. For example, in question one (two components), the happy and very happy responses were highlighted in two shades of green. Sad and very sad were given tones of orange, and unsure was highlighted in cream. This enabled the overall responses to be distinguished quickly and clearly and provided a snapshot of the participant's responses. The data revealed that while the overall number of participants feeling happy improved in the final survey, these feelings were constantly in flux, demonstrating the dynamic nature of wellbeing.

Understanding individuals' interpretations, feelings, and circumstances is essential to understanding wellbeing and cultivating wellbeing dispositions. Educators discussed the ongoing stress and workload pressures during focus group discussions and yarning circles. The final survey week was highly stressful, with term report card deadlines and end-of-term commitments taking up educators' time and energy; however, the qualitative data pointed out that many participants had utilised their learning and were taking conscious steps to cultivate their wellbeing dispositions, offering a hopeful outlook. They focused on self-care and personal and collective wellbeing, showing significant progress.

As discussed, the qualitative data from the discussion groups was instrumental in enhancing the understanding of the survey results. The timing of the pre-and post-surveys significantly influenced educator wellbeing, mental state, and responses, a revelation that emerged during the group discussions. The Wellbeing Literacy Framework, a critical tool introduced in Phase One, played a key role in interpreting and making sense of the data. The overarching concept of the *Nature* of wellbeing: elusive, in flux (changes and grows), and the

different perspectives of wellbeing were evident. Several enablers and impactors were at play and influenced the survey results, and understanding these from the participant's perspective was a vital component in understanding the wellbeing state and cultivating wellbeing dispositions among educators. I will discuss the survey results and the qualitative findings addressing the generated themes. I reflect on why enhancing wellbeing in the classroom is challenging and continue to discuss the possible conditions for wellbeing in primary education.

During my data analysis, I used colour text to highlight the codes and generated themes; however, due to accessibility issues and various interpretations of colour, I have chosen to leave the text in this thesis all black. For ease of distinguishing themes, they will be presented in bold black.

The Workshops - Focus Group and Yarning Circles (Educators)

The workshop sessions (26 in all - six per group and two makeup sessions) comprised formal (focus-group) and informal (yarning circles) discussions, and MMETTAS-based reflective activities. During the focus group time, educators were prompted with wellbeing questions (discussed in The Workshop Sessions in Chapter Three); however, they were free to discuss wellbeing and the relevant challenges. My facilitator role was crucial in maintaining the focus of the discussions and ensuring a safe space for all participants. I sometimes intervened and steered the group in the focus direction to keep discussions on track. Redirecting is a strategy used in classroom management and counselling. When discussions were veering away from the focus question, I intervened and restated the focus question to gently steer the conversation back to the topic. I gave all participants who wished to discuss wellbeing topics an equal opportunity to share. I worked on empowering participants and provided opportunities for them to have their

say. My counselling and facilitator group therapy training and skills were valuable in these interactions.

The workshop sessions and group discussions were meant to be a safe place to yarn, share, and support one another; however, it took educators a few weeks to feel comfortable doing so. There were sessions where participants were more reluctant or uncomfortable sharing or discussing freely. **The fear factor** theme was evident early on and is discussed in the section The Educators' Journey Through Themes (below). As sessions progressed, I noted this observation was heightened, usually in the sessions where administration staff were present. These situations hindered true freedom of speech and highlighted power imbalances; however, these sessions were limited to about three sessions as administration staff attendance was inconsistent for various reasons. They did not attend regularly and usually were late or left before sessions finished or did not attend all required sessions. This was seen as an advantage to the rest of the educators, especially those who did not feel safe or comfortable sharing around certain people. While focused work on these challenges would have been beneficial to address the stigma and the discomfort, time did not permit this endeavour. I made it a point to ask the same focus questions in multiple sessions, allowing participants to discuss the same question in different circumstances.

Educators bravely expressed their feelings in discussions and reflections; for example, a participant commented,

I am finding this process a little difficult because there are people in my group who, from conversations I have had with them or things I have heard from them in the past, I consider to be very disingenuous. This makes it hard to participate in a group discussion where I can't take the

things they are saying seriously. Therefore, I don't need to engage in conversation or share my feelings on topics with them....something maybe I need to try and let go of as this process goes on.

Educators were empowered to choose their sessions, and as the sessions progressed, three educators (including the participant who reflected above) changed groups to feel more comfortable and enhance their experience. Some early conversations pointed out the difficulties in discussing and addressing wellbeing, which educators made clear in their discussions; however, individuals built rapport with me as the sessions progressed and became more comfortable talking about wellbeing. As time progressed, we created a sense of trust, community, and understanding for each other. I interacted with educators and employed multiple reasoning and reflection in conducting and interpreting the research. I understood their social world and shared some history with them. Educators began to discuss their feelings and ideas and share their stories, reflections and poems as the sessions progressed.

The information sessions were on making wellbeing more present in our lives. We focused on research about attention, reflection, stress, time management (Roffey, 2012a; 2012b; Soini et al., 2010), multitasking (McCallum & Price, 2016; 2010; Siegel & Bryson, 2012), and flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990; 2014; Walker, 2010a). Sessions always began with a reflection and then a short information session on what the research says about critical elements of a flourishing life and the many components of wellbeing. The MMETTAS-based tasks encouraged creativity, flow state, and deep reflection. Sessions always began and concluded with a mindful activity or reflective task.

The Reflections and Activities

The reflections always included material engagement to enhance mindful attending. At the first session, participants were offered a multicoloured strand of wool from our web of connection activity (see Figure 24) as a token and symbol of our connection and past. These strands of wool were also used to decorate the reflective spaces (discussed in Chapter Three). As we gathered around a table, the first yarning circle activity was to reflect on ‘The Knot Prayer’ (see Figure 24). This activity was vital because it was traditional, in keeping with the Catholic ethos and culture of this school, to begin any activity with prayer. Prayer and reflection, a vital part of the sessions, allowed the group to become focused, calm, and reflective.

Figure 24



A multicoloured strand of wool and the Knot prayer

One of the early activities was creating a wellbeing mandala collage (see Figure 25). A mandala is a circle creation (drawing, painting, coloured sand or rice art, collage) that depicts a story or an idea. Creating mandalas can be traced back to Hindu and Buddhist traditions. I create and use mandalas in therapy and for classroom mindful art-based experiences. This activity in

this research was linked to our discussions about the many components (physical, cognitive, spiritual, social, emotional, and aesthetic) of wellbeing. Participants needed more time to complete this task and were given a choice to work on it as a reflective task in their own time.

Figure 25



Wellbeing Mandala Collage

These mandalas served as vision boards and were created on the first page of educator journals. We explored vision boards in a subsequent yarning circle. Vision boards are collages of images, words, and quotes representing an individual's aspirations, dreams, goals, reminders, and ideas of a positive focus (Burton & Lent, 2016; Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2019; Mosley, 2010). While vision boards are standard tools in therapy, the research on successful use is limited; however, This was a triumphant task for this group of educators. Vision board mandalas were used here to focus on individual understanding of wellbeing and self-care and to reflect on ideas to enhance their self-awareness.

It is worth noting that some educators continued to work on their wellbeing mandalas and sent me reflections and photos. Their active participation is evident in the following comment, which indicates that participants began focusing on cultivating wellbeing regularly. *“I enjoyed completing the wellbeing circle (mandala). “I was surprised at how you can find inspirational words/quotes/pictures in the most unlikely places”.*

As the sessions progressed, educators were also beginning to integrate these ideas into classroom work... *“Incorporating the Arts and general capabilities, I initially thought of adapting the mandala idea – children would draw and use collages to represent their uniqueness. (Just as we did in Session 1)”.* Like the mandalas in this activity, we conducted many other activities inspired by educators. These will be discussed throughout this chapter.

We also created a homework task named the email (reflection) task. The reflection task was similar each week. Participants were expected to send an email about an experience, a few words, a poem, or a picture reflection. Participants were requested to share anything they felt was important that week. Email reflections were very popular; I received them throughout the data collection. These represented participants' learning and their changes as they cultivated wellbeing dispositions. By week four, participant comments and reflections were starting to show signs of advocacy. Educators actively focused on removing the barriers and obstacles (stigma) inhibiting individuals' access, growth, and wellbeing development. These were recurring themes (**fear factor, blame game**) in discussions and reflections. It was enlightening to see participants focusing on various aspects of their wellbeing and sending relevant reflections and ideas.

The reflections emailed by participants over these weeks were insightful and focused on various ideas: being peaceful and calm, flow state, spirituality, wellness, patience, difficulties, coping with challenges and managing time. Many of these early themes were also in the Word Clouds. Others were personal reflections about challenges and achievements, and many merely sent in a photo or picture that resonated with them. See Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections I-VIII. By the end of the six weeks, it was clear that participants appreciated the time spent learning, the yarning circle discussions, and MMETTAS-based activities. Only one participant out of the 32 mentioned that their wellbeing did not improve, yet the sessions were helpful and provided many ideas and a safe place to talk. The verbal and written feedback was positive and focused on the educator and learner's wellbeing. My observations, participant interactions, and comments indicated that most educators enjoyed the activities. Participants began freely expressing their feelings and enjoyment of the activities in the focus group sessions. An educator commented -

I enjoyed the part where I was able to just think for myself and complete the activity. I don't want you to think I am disengaged or not taking this seriously.

Another popular but challenging activity we conducted during workshop time was the 'Finding My Passion' activity. This activity was designed to help educators identify and understand their passions or purposes, a key aspect of cultivating wellbeing dispositions. The reflections in Appendix VIII - Collated Educator Reflections I) focused on this activity. We conducted this as a game with three tables displaying word cards. We mindfully walked around the tables, reflecting on words to develop our passion script. The rules were to choose three verb

cards from desk one, one or two core values cards from desk two, and one group card from desk three. These were then combined to create a mission statement. Figure 9 displays a photograph of the activity tables with cards and words. Kindness, love, peace, relaxation, motivation, and nurture were popular words used by more than one educator in their reflections. Educators were deeply engaged, reflected, and made choices about their mission and passion. They shared or emailed their mission statements (see Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections I). Each participant's response and reflection were set out in a new row in the chart. The educators found this activity challenging, so we spent time reflecting deeply on our passion or mission in life. Some educators commented...

I found writing about my passion very difficult. I used to have lots of passions (and time) before having my kids, and now, at this point in my life, I find I don't have any passions. I just go from one term to the other, looking forward to my holidays...Being a single mum bringing up two high school kids on my own is very difficult, and finding time for myself is a challenge. I know this will not always be the way, and I look forward to finding more time for myself as they get older...

I found it sad that I had no idea what I was passionate about. When did that get lost in the system? Although very much a work in progress, I created the following mission statement: My mission is to enthuse, encourage and love myself and others to further develop personal relationships.

The following section will discuss the survey results and the qualitative data (focus groups, yarning circles, reflections, observations, artefacts, and creations) concurrently.

The Educators' Journey Through Themes

I will discuss the educators' journey and their cultivation of wellbeing dispositions through the themes present in the data. First, I reflect on my earliest experiences searching for a school and my initial discussions with school personnel. I found that opening a conversation about educational wellbeing was challenging for many. Usually, I was given short answers, such as *"I am not sure"*, *"The guidance counsellor manages wellbeing"*, or *"I can ask someone to get back to you,"* and not much progressed from then on. Occasionally, I was questioned about my interest in the topic. I also felt that because I could freely discuss the subject, I was perceived as more of an investigator or expert rather than a like-minded educator. The conversations about wellbeing were often diverted to other learning priorities (literacy, numeracy, science).

At times, the uneasiness and sometimes long silences in these conversations were overwhelming. As a counsellor, I trained to sit with silence and value silence as pauses in dialogue can be insightful (Knol et al., 2020; Schultz & Lancia, 2021). Silence, in these instances, had several meanings. Initially, the conversations about wellbeing were uncomfortable or one-sided, with me doing most of the talking. I was becoming disheartened with finding a school to conduct my research, so I changed my tactic. I believed there needed to be trust, understanding, and connection with the school personnel first. This was challenging because I needed to focus on rapport building before the opportunity to explore wellbeing. Eventually, I approached former work colleagues and was pleased to find a school where the principal

accepted the opportunity. My journey into understanding the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions with Saint Benessere's began.

As I pondered those initial pauses or uncertainties in conversations, I labelled these early encounters and experienced the **blame game** and the **fear factor**. In the early days, there was always a focus on heightened and deep emotion, energy, and intensity during wellbeing discussions. The **blame game** emerged in interactions and conversations about wellbeing, accountability, and responsibility. Overall, wellbeing always seemed to be someone else's responsibility; this was my experience from our interactions. Other research on wellbeing discusses this idea of stigma around wellbeing (Beyond Blue, 2022). Wellbeing was presented as the responsibility of parents, guidance counsellors, the wellbeing committees, and others. It is important to recognise that wellbeing is the responsibility of everyone, especially educators.

Wellbeing was usually seen as an individual commitment and responsibility. For example, during the getting-to-know-you games, several educators remarked on wellbeing as if it were some distant concept irrelevant to them. Most educators acknowledged that wellbeing skills in their classrooms were taught incidentally and that other learning skills were the priority. While some educators were keen to be involved in enhancing wellbeing education, they usually felt that they needed to be adequately equipped and supported. The lack of confidence (**fear**) to teach or discuss wellbeing skills, personal issues, **time factors** (discussed later), lack of support and other priorities from school administration and hierarchy (Jones et al., 2017; Roffey, 2012a; 2012b; Soini et al., 2010) were some underlying factors that played a part in **the blame game** theme.

The **fear factor** was present in the preliminary stages of all encounters whenever there were open discussions on wellbeing and mental health. It was the **fear** of the unknown, the **fear**

of stigma or being judged, the **fear** of the past, the **fear** of the present, and the **fear** of the future. I still encounter this **fear factor** and stigma when discussing wellbeing in many circles I interact in, and it was certainly present in the earlier phases of my data collection. Despite these conflicts, we must continue to push for safe, open discussions and a positive culture around mental health.

The prevailing culture around mental illness is often negative. In the early stages, educators were not always forthcoming or enthusiastic about discussing or participating in mental health and wellbeing initiatives. These experiences were particularly pronounced during group discussions, especially among educators and the school hierarchy. Even the initial encounters with the games instigated a sense of fear. The **fear** of competition, performance, judgment, and being the first to share, catch, and throw. For many, it was about the anticipation, the waiting for a turn and the **fear** of being the last or not being able to catch the ball of wool. **The fear factor** and stigma of wellbeing were repeatedly discussed and evident in these interactions.

The primary school agendas were focused on data-driven tasks, literacy, numeracy, and visible learning. Educators rarely question subject-related agendas or assessments, and they place themselves and students under undue stress and pressure to perform and keep up with new developments. In the early data collection phase, educators were reluctant to discuss (**the fear factor**) topics on mental illness, wellbeing or mental health. **The blame game**, where responsibility for wellbeing is shifted to others, and **the fear factor**, which hinders open discussions about mental health, may have worked together to mystify the wellbeing discussion. These themes were seen as impactors of wellbeing in this research. As discussed previously, Carter and Andersen (2019a) and McCallum and Price (2016) assert that impactors hinder the

progression of understanding or exploring wellbeing. Thus, focusing on impactors was seen as important from the onset. I will provide insight into this exploration from the emerging themes in the early games and continue discussing all generated themes in this phase.

Thirty-two educators responded to the initial Post-it word cloud activity (see Figure 22). Every educator's response was considered in this research. The term **happiness** received the highest number of responses (8). Other popular words resonating with more than one educator were **inner peace, peace, mindfulness, calm, balance, and potential**. Educators (between one - and three responses) said wellbeing was **peace of mind, sanity, relaxation, being healthy, emotionally healthy, healthy mind, healthy heart, healthy body, content, contentment, happy thoughts, important, nice, and good**. I grouped similar words in similar colours in my notes and exploration, making it clear and in an artistic style to distinguish codes and formulate themes. Due to accessibility issues and various interpretations of colour, I present these words in bold black in this thesis.

Seligman (2011) asserts that wellbeing is more than happiness and encompasses a range of factors that collectively contribute to a more holistic sense of life satisfaction and fulfilment. From early on in the data collection, **happiness** was a prevalent term (highest responses) that came to mind when these educators thought of wellbeing. Twenty-five per cent of participants stated that wellbeing was happiness, and 75 per cent said wellbeing was many different feelings and states of being. Many of the above mentioned words and ideas were explored as emerging themes and elaborated on further in the data. **Happiness** can have a refreshing and invigorating effect on an individual's wellbeing by rejuvenating one's spirit and bringing a sense of vitality. The term **happiness (happy thoughts, potential)** remained a critical term to discover along with

other codes in the data such as **mindfulness (mindful, calm, relaxed)**, **peace (inner peace, peace of mind, sanity)**, **balance, content, contentment** and **holistic health (being healthy, emotionally healthy, healthy mind, healthy heart, healthy body)**.

At the end of the six weeks, the same instruction (think about what wellbeing is not and write a word or two about what wellbeing is) as in the initial word cloud activity was presented, and responses were received on post-it notes. These responses were converted to a word cloud, and another artefact was created with both word clouds (see Figure 22). The later responses provided a similar yet more profound level of sophistication, reflection, and understanding to the initial responses. The **happiness** theme remained; however, it was less frequent, and the acknowledgement that **wellbeing** was seen as different for everyone was prevalent. For example, twenty-five participants (80%) were focused on **wellbeing beyond happiness**.

At least one participant indicated that wellbeing was **acceptance, completeness, wholeness, self-care, health, good mental health, healthy mind, harmony, clarity of mind, and balance (emotional balance, physiological balance, physical balance)**. **Happiness** received six responses (19%), and **calmness** received four (12%), with **peace (4), inner peace (1), peace of mind (1) and contentment (1)** generating new themes. The benefits of **calmness and mindfulness** to wellbeing are also discussed in the research (Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Shapiro et al., 2007; Shapiro et al., 2008) and was important to these participants.

As the data were analysed for themes, **happiness** and **wellbeing** seemed enmeshed. For example, it was unclear if happiness was interchangeable with wellbeing, an emotional condition, a state of mind, satisfaction, or finding meaning in life. Happiness and what it meant to this group of educators needed to be understood. This idea was explored further with

educators. Within our interactions, we strived to explore **wellbeing** beyond the **happiness** phenomena. The terms **happiness** and **wellbeing** were used interchangeably in the early stages. Many researchers (Diener et al., 2018; Huppert & So, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2017) have pointed out the confusion between happiness and wellbeing. Happiness can be hedonic (pursuit of pleasure) or eudaimonic (pursuit of flourishing) and depends on how it is experienced or viewed. The onset of positive psychology popularised **happiness** as a human condition. In this study, the term **happiness** appeared to be a more straightforward term to use and sometimes masked and weakened **the fear factor** theme when discussing wellbeing. We used **happiness** and **wellbeing** interchangeably, as moving to **wellbeing beyond happiness** continued to pose some challenges to educators. See Reflections II in Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections.

Question one in the Survey Figure 23 was about how participants felt (on the day, a day ago, and a week ago). They answered these questions using emoji responses (very happy, happy, unsure, sad, and very sad). Half, or 50% of the participants, were happy (15) or very happy (1) on the day, 28% (9) were unsure of their feelings, and seven were sad on the day. Six (34%) were unsure how they felt, two were sad, and three were very sad the day before.

Twenty-one (66%) participants stated that they were happy. Thirteen (41%) were unsure or sad in the previous week, and 19 (59%) were happy (16) or very happy (3). Seven participants were sad in the past week, and six were unsure of their feelings. These first questions showed that about 50% or more participants felt happy in the moment and the week leading up to the survey. By the end of this phase, **wellbeing beyond happiness** was seen as an enabler and a valuable theme for educators to cultivate wellbeing dispositions.

Participants began to explore their feelings more deeply in sessions. As sessions progressed, educators freely discussed their struggles and challenges. The period during the final survey was a more stressful time for educators, having to finalise report cards and term deadlines. The survey data indicated that the number of participants feeling less relaxed and energised had slightly increased towards the end of the study; however, during the term's end, the qualitative data indicated that participants were more in touch with their feelings, had a deeper awareness of self, and understood ways to manage time and cope with stressful circumstances. They were also more willing to discuss negative feelings and explore coping methods. Many were working on managing their wellbeing, especially during stressful times. Some discussions and reflections shared by participants are presented in Reflections III in Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections, which provides a comprehensive overview of the participants' experiences and learnings.

In the initial stages of the term, most educators were under less workload stress and pressure; however, as the term progressed, the workload stress and pressure increased, reflecting the dynamic nature of wellbeing in the school environment. The focus on cultivating dispositions of wellbeing in these early weeks assisted in managing and enhancing wellbeing in the latter weeks of term one.

At the end of the data collection in this phase (two), 31 participants took the same survey, and 20 (65%) indicated they were happy or very happy on the day. Four were unsure, six were sad, and one was very sad on the last day of the survey. Eighteen (58%) were happy or very happy, 13 were unsure (8) very sad (2) or sad (3) a day ago, and 16 (52%) were happy (13) or very happy (3) a week ago and 15 were sad (7) or unsure (8). The results for the first question

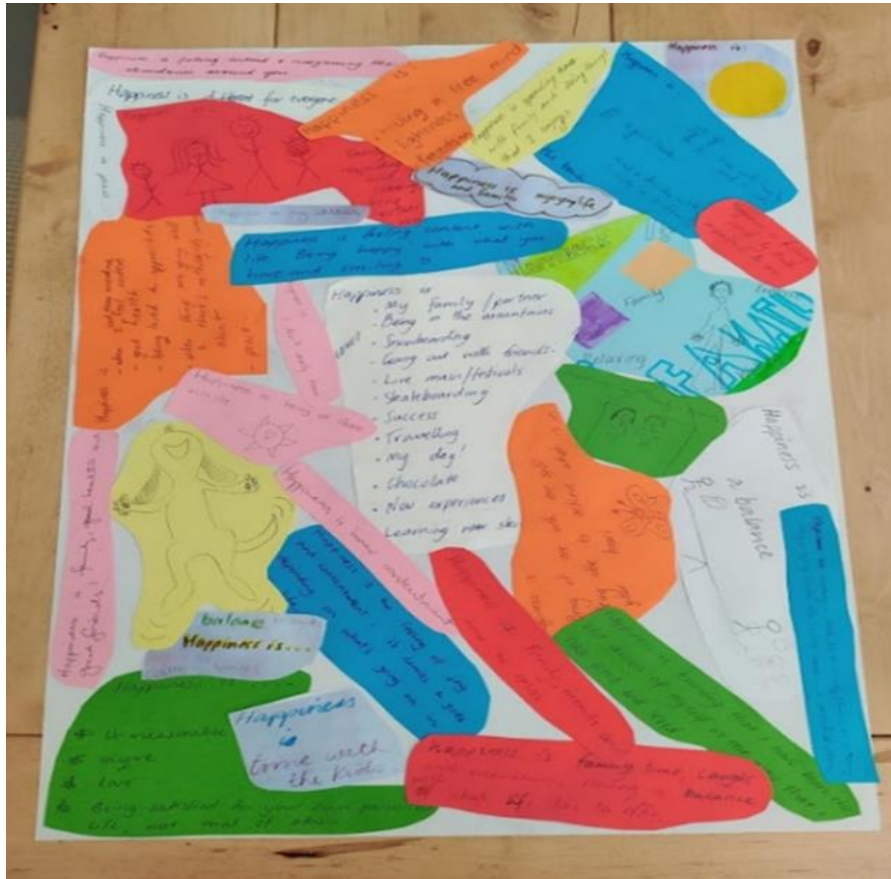
indicated that a similar number (to the initial survey) of participants were happy or very happy at the end of the study. The number of participants who indicated they were very happy had increased by 16 per cent.

After the survey, participants were instructed to draw a picture or write about happiness at the beginning and end of the survey. Happiness was chosen rather than wellbeing as it received the highest responses on the word cloud in Phase One activities. As discussed, participants seemed more comfortable using the term happiness, which was used interchangeably. The majority chose to write sentences rather than draw pictures. Thirteen participants in this group wrote that **happiness** was family and children (kids), and six wrote that happiness was friends and fun **times**. Five participants expressed **contentment** and **peace**, and four expressed that **balance** was important. Some wrote or drew that happiness was sunshine, different for everyone, and **happiness** was about **self-understanding** and **a free mind**. At the same time, one participant stated that they did not know what happiness was. I collated these responses and created a collage (artefact) presented in Figure 26.

During focus groups, educators bravely shared their work pressures, stress, and time-related challenges. We discussed these concepts, ideas, and challenges (themes) in our yarning circles to continue exploring wellbeing. The discussions and exploration of the generated themes enabled us to work towards mutual understanding. My goal was to understand participants' perspectives through the words they expressed, the artefacts they created and the stories they shared.

Participants were always given the time to express their feelings safely, and support and assurance were offered if needed. As stated on the information form, employer-provided

Figure 26



At the end of this data collection phase, the group created a collage book titled *Happiness is...* (see Figure 27). This book, inspired by Charles M. Schulz's book 'Happiness is a Warm Puppy ', was a resource created by educators to reflect on what happiness means to them in the context of their work and personal lives. It was placed in the staffroom for all members to read and reflect. Educators indicated that happiness was **time** with nature, spirituality, self-

contentment, quiet **times**, dreams and hopes, family and friends, **times** together, work-life **balance**, and **wellbeing**. The **time factor** (discussed further) influenced all aspects of wellbeing.

Figure 27

Happiness is....book pages. 	
Watching something that you've planted start to grow	Mountain ranges
A quiet place with birds singing, finding peace with my past music, animals, joy, love	The sun, a flower, a butterfly, mountain ranges
A smile, my children, walks on the beach	Two smiley faces
Smiling	Smiling from the inside.

Reading a great book, church - God will listen	Feeling free, content, faith
Seeing a rainbow, smiling from the heart	Being connected
Relaxing, wishing, being mindful, Playing, dreams, enjoying, hoping, BEING YOU.	Being yourself, following your passion, doing what you love, following your dreams, Surrounding yourself with positive people
Being content with oneself	Accepting myself
Being content with your life that includes the people around you and the peace that you experience	Achievement, time with others, family Relaxing with family and friends
A big warm cuddle	the four f's family, friends, food, and fun
Spending quiet time with people you love	Enjoying life
Family friends, special times together	Family
Doing what you enjoy, family time, supportive friendships, work-life balance	Comes and goes
== balance	Work ---- quiet time ---- family (reading, yoga. Creative, cooking /craft, nature, outdoors)
Wellbeing Wellbeing is giving yourself time	Wellbeing is looking after both your physical and mental health. Wellbeing is looking after all of you.

Balance and **wellness** were becoming important conversation topics as evident in the reflections (see Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections IV). Many educators sent pictures and quotes on **balance**, **peace**, and **spirituality**. An educator commented:

*I have been thinking about the tension between personal wellbeing and all the external pressures that exist in life, and I found this quote – ‘**Wellness is contentment and balance**’. it made me realise that if everything is in **balance**, we can plan ways to work through all the pressures. If*

not, everything is connected, so the impact of external pressures can throw our lives off-balance for a little while until we get back on track...

Balance is essential for overall health and happiness. It involves finding a harmonious equilibrium between different areas of life, such as work, personal life, social connections, physical activity, and self-care. When these aspects are **balanced**, individuals can better manage stress, maintain their energy levels, and experience a sense of fulfilment. These findings were beginning to align with Dodge et al.'s (2012) definition of wellbeing, emphasising that wellbeing encompasses balancing various dimensions. Carter and Andersen (2019a) and McCallum and Price (2016) also discuss wellbeing as a balancing process. As discussed, wellbeing is a **holistic** phenomenon achieved through **balancing** resources and challenges.

Understanding enablers and impactors, welfare and self-care, flourishing and thriving, advantages and disadvantages, relationships and friendships are all critical for wellbeing. Through reflections and discussions, educators indicated the importance of **contentment and work-life balance** (emotional, physical, psychological) to attain wellbeing. We began to focus on the purpose and meaning of life and how to instil **contentment and work-life balance** to enhance wellbeing.

The second question in the survey was about personal feelings of happiness, relaxation, energy, confidence, love, feeling positive (good) about self, and the ability to think clearly. Participants indicated one response (always, usually, sometimes rarely, and never) to each question. While seventy-five per cent of participants always and usually experienced positive feelings. Eight (25%) participants rarely or never felt relaxed (3), energised (2), confident (4), loved (2), or good about themselves (3). By the end of the term, 68% of participants were

regularly experiencing positive feelings, and 32% or 10 participants stated that they were not feeling relaxed (6), energised (4) confident (1) loved (1), good about self (1), or could not think clearly (1) on the day.

In the context of wellbeing, **wholeness and holistic health** reflect all dimensions (spiritual, cognitive, psychological, moral, aesthetic) of wellbeing. Integrating these different aspects into a unified whole recognises that wellbeing encompasses more than the absence of illness or the presence of physical health in the pursuit of wellbeing. Incorporating holistic wellbeing into our lives reminds us to prioritise self-care and embrace a sense of inner joy, valuing self and others.

Question three in the survey was about relationships, and 21 (66 %) educators said they had positive relationships. Eleven (34%) rarely talked to others about their feelings. Three rarely spoke about their feelings at work (8%), and five felt they rarely had opportunities to show others their skills. By the end of the data collection, 23 (74 %) were experiencing more positive relationships; eight stated that they rarely had opportunities to talk to someone about their feelings, and only two participants did not feel they had enough opportunities to share their skills with others. Focus groups provided deep insight, and participants began to discuss aspects of their relationships and their approaches to cultivating wellbeing dispositions. They also discussed strategies and ideas they found helpful and not helpful in enhancing their wellbeing (see Reflections IX in Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections).

Participants regularly discussed **gratitude** and kindness in the yarning circles. Three important positive psychology constructs are optimism, hope, and **gratitude**, which help build on positive thought and behaviour (Iodice et al., 2021; Seligman, 2018). **Gratitude** is an emotion

similar to appreciation and thankfulness. Littlefield (2020), in his article, ‘Use Gratitude to Counter Stress and Uncertainty’, states that **gratitude** helps **balance** us during times of uncertainty and makes us feel happier on the inside. Individuals who regularly practice **gratitude** are healthier, happier and have better relationships. **Gratitude** is a positive emotion that involves being thankful and appreciative and is associated with several mental and physical health benefits; when gratitude is experienced, individuals respond with feelings of kindness, warmth and generosity (Cregg & Cheavens, 2021; Froh et al., 2009; Portocarrero et al., 2020; Vicens, 2022; Wood et al., 2010). Due to the popularity of the term, gratitude participants were interested in conducting an activity called ‘The Great Kindness Challenge’. This was incorporated in sessions on **gratitude** and kindness, providing activities and a list of **gratitude** questions (used in my counselling sessions) to reflect on daily and focus on kindness. **Gratitude** is important because it enhances expression, introspection, communication, self-reflection, mindfulness and wellness of thoughts and feelings. These ideas align with **gratitude** and its positive effects on wellbeing. See Reflections VII in Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections. Some reflections on **gratitude** and gratefulness were discussed and sent in by participants after the “The Great Kindness Challenge” session.

*A reflection on **gratefulness**:*

*At the beginning of last year, I would write three things I was **grateful** for at the end of every day. It was always simple stuff: a working car, my mum, a roof over my head. As the year went*

*by, those musings happened a couple of times a week, then once a week, then once a month. By July, I had given up. Being **grateful** and positive all the time sometimes requires more energy than I have to give.*

*I have so much to be **grateful** for... a comfortable home, being able to afford any item of food, a car, being able to pay the bills... generally, all those things that perhaps we take for granted and now see as necessities in our society.*

Question four was about lifestyle, activities, and experiences. Twenty-two (69%) participants said they were able to make decisions about their work and home life and felt more content with their lives, and 10 (31%) said they rarely spent time doing what they love (6) or were able to make decisions with ease (6). This number had grown to 71% being content and making positive decisions about the future, and nine (29%) experienced challenges doing what they loved (5) and making decisions (3) with ease.

The **time factor** was another recurring theme in the data (See Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections VIII) and discussions and reflections. Initially seen as an impactor, closer analysis morphed the **time factor** into what this group saw as a facilitator. This transformation occurred when educators considered time more as a manageable component. The **time factor** focused on exploring time management and finding the time for things that matter. A popular phrase educators focused on and used was “*Let's not glorify being busy*”. Other key areas discussed were **time** management to reduce stress and manage challenges. Participants began to discuss their needs in detail in the focus group discussion, providing insights into group dynamics. One participant commented, “*I will need to prioritise, let some things go and make time for me*”. The poems *What is Wellbeing and Ageing* in Figure 28 were other reflections (see

Reflection V in Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections) shared by participants. **Time** was a significant theme for cultivating wellbeing dispositions. **Time** initially presented as an impactor, and participants decided to focus on it as a facilitator as the study progressed.

Figure 28

 What is wellbeing? Wellbeing is all about time. Time at work Time at home Time in the kitchen cooking meals for my family or cleaning up Time at kids' after school sports and activities Time doing work at home or just spent wasting it on Facebook Time to myself Time to rest. Too much Too little Finding it Wasting it Enjoying it	AGEING The older we get, we sometimes forget, However, we should not be forgotten. Through love and good care, we should not despair that we still have good stories to share. If only people would stop to listen.

As discussed previously, flow is a mental state of immersing oneself with undivided attention in activity. It is described as being in the zone. People are happiest in the zone (flow) when absorbed in something creative. Flow enhances creativity and performance and sparks innovation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990; 2014). To increase flow, we must reduce distractions. One of the significant skills utilised in the creative activities was the importance of mindfulness and the many ways to reflect and meditate (breaths, mantra, visualisations, muscle relaxation). **Mindfulness** and flow were a large part of activities that assisted in cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

In this research, **mindfulness** took on an overarching presence. Similar terms (codes) were discussed: contentment, sanity, relaxed, peace and calm. These codes were grouped to

formulate one theme. **Mindfulness** allows us to witness our thoughts and emotions with openness and acceptance, creating space for clarity and peace.

Peace is often associated with tranquillity, calmness, and freedom from conflict. The UNESCO authors Bin Mahfooz and Norrmén-Smith (2022) emphasise the importance of “resilient health-promoting educational systems that integrate school health and wellbeing as a fundamental part of their daily mission” (2022, p. 6). This approach prepares learners “to thrive, learn and build healthy, peaceful, and sustainable futures for all” (2022, p. 6). Self-actualisation realises one’s full potential (Templeton & Pritchard, 2020). Furthermore, Templeton and Pritchard (2020) state that individuals must develop, learn, and grow to their full potential to enhance resilience and wellbeing.

Recognition of the transient nature of **time** and the importance of embracing each moment with **mindfulness** is part of cultivating wellbeing dispositions. **Mindfulness** was a vital part of the activities discussed in previous chapters and part of the MMETTAS Pedagogy workshop sessions. Educator participants at Saint Benessere’s had previously received training on meditation and **mindfulness** within their religious education learning area. Therefore, **mindfulness** was not new to them and was part of the school culture. Several participants requested **mindfulness** sessions as part of the workshop activities. There was a period before this data collection when the whole school used to take a meditation break (to reflect and practice being quiet and mindful).

As sessions progressed, educators began finding solutions to their challenges. They began embracing craft creations, art ideas, and mindfulness daily. Thích Nhất Hạnh, discussing art and mindfulness, states that something he has learned from practice is that “Art is the essence of

life...The substance of art is mindfulness. When you are mindful, you are more artful" (2017, p. 114). To manage their time and stress, participants took on new innovative activities and began to reflect deeply on cultivating dispositions of wellbeing through the Arts.

Many educators discussed the benefits they found in mindfulness. These are set out in Reflections VI in Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections. Some educators commented on mindfulness and yoga...*After hearing the success of other teachers using meditation techniques in the classrooms, I have decided to try setting an alarm every hour so that we can pause and focus on **being mindful** for a brief moment several times a day. I am going to join in with the children when we do it so that I can get to 'breathe', too.*

...Yoga ticks all the boxes for me. I love the sense of being part of a friendly community. It provides a connection to God and gets the blood/chakras in my body all flowing. My mind becomes calmer after a Yoga session. I love it :)

Question five was about participant strengths, weaknesses, goals, relationships, friends, and mentors. The responses to these questions were yes, unsure, and no. Eighteen (56%) answered yes to these questions, and 14 (44%) were unsure or answered no. Eight (25%) did not have goals, seven (21%) did not have people they wanted to be like, three were unsure about their relationships and friends, and two were uncertain about their strengths. These numbers had increased to 61%. Nineteen answered yes to the same questions at the end of the survey, and 39% (12) answered no to one or more questions in this section. Five were unsure of their goals, six did not know anyone they wanted to be like, and two responded each for other strengths (2), positive relationships (1), and good friends (3). The answers to these survey questions provided insights into activities and discussions conducted in workshop sessions.

The theme of **belonging** was an early emerging theme associated with community, grounding, and reliability, and **belonging** reminds us of our interconnectedness and the importance of community in our journey towards wellbeing. **Belonging** grounds us, anchors, and nourishes us, allowing us to flourish and thrive like plants and draw sustenance from the soil. Like plants that grow strong roots in good soil, people flourish when they **belong** to caring communities.

Bene Brown (2010; 2012; 2022) has extensively researched **belonging** and discussed its significance in human vulnerability, connection, and overall wellbeing. **Belonging** is an essential factor in wellbeing, and this theme (generated from the data) was further enhanced and explored in the educator sessions. For educators to flourish, they must feel they **belong** in the school and community; this was another significant theme in wellbeing. I experienced the theme of belonging in my early encounters with the school and educators. I have many fond memories of being part of this community. I reminisce over my encounters with the magpies and curlews, nurturing their young during nesting season. These encounters were insightful metaphors of **belonging** seen among the educators and students. As time passed, I remember experiencing a profound feeling of **belonging** and support from educators and learners. A deep sense of care, concern, and acceptance for each other was present in these interactions.

According to the research, the meaning of life is created when an individual can develop the best within themselves, feel they belong, and serve something beyond the self (McGirr, 2021; Seligman, 2014; Smith, 2017). The need for **belonging** was apparent early in educators' interactions, especially in warm-up games. Some participants who initially did not feel part of the overall group and were uncomfortable with the administration staff (being there) expressed

feeling nervous and stressed at some sessions. They shared that even catching the ball of wool in the games caused them to be anxious. Several participants discussed this, and one educator sent in a reflection expressing that...*it is because we think we're going to be judged in our performance and status in the school, especially by other staff and especially administration staff.*

In the early workshops and games educators discussed subtle acts of being disregarded, left out, not being in the inner circle, friendship, and relationship challenges. **Belonging** and fitting in were explored, and belonging was expressed as a high priority in the workshop discussions. Fitting-in and **belonging** were discussed extensively during subsequent yarning circles. Brené Brown (2010; 2012; 2017) points out that fitting in is the opposite of belonging and more about becoming who you think you need to be or become to be accepted. Brown (2010; 2012; 2017) asserts that **belonging** is being your authentic self and knowing that no matter what happens, you belong. Wellbeing and **belonging** were presented as two sides of the same coin. “To experience **belonging**, one needs a strong sense of wellbeing, and to experience a strong sense of wellbeing, educators need to be supported mentally and physically and feel they belong (EYLF, 2017, p. 33; DESA, 2021; Early Childhood Australia [ECA], 2021).

Belonging gained prominence in discussions and interactions as the workshops progressed. **Belonging** is a vital wellbeing concept discussed in the literature by Baumeister et al. (1995) and Brown (2010; 2012; 2017). The discussions also focused on teaching and classroom interactions with students and students’ feelings. There was a deep sense of advocacy and the theme of **being, belonging and becoming** present in these discussions. For example, an educator focusing on classroom interactions with students expressed that...*it does make you think when*

you put kids in those situations because often you just say, it's a game, it's fun, why shouldn't we, and they might not even be able to verbalise that. These discussions were important and meaningful because participants were deeply engaged in their teaching and their students' learning. They were actively seeking innovative ways to work in the classroom and beginning to reflect on their teaching, demonstrating a high level of interest and commitment. The term **being, belonging and becoming**, was strengthened as another theme.

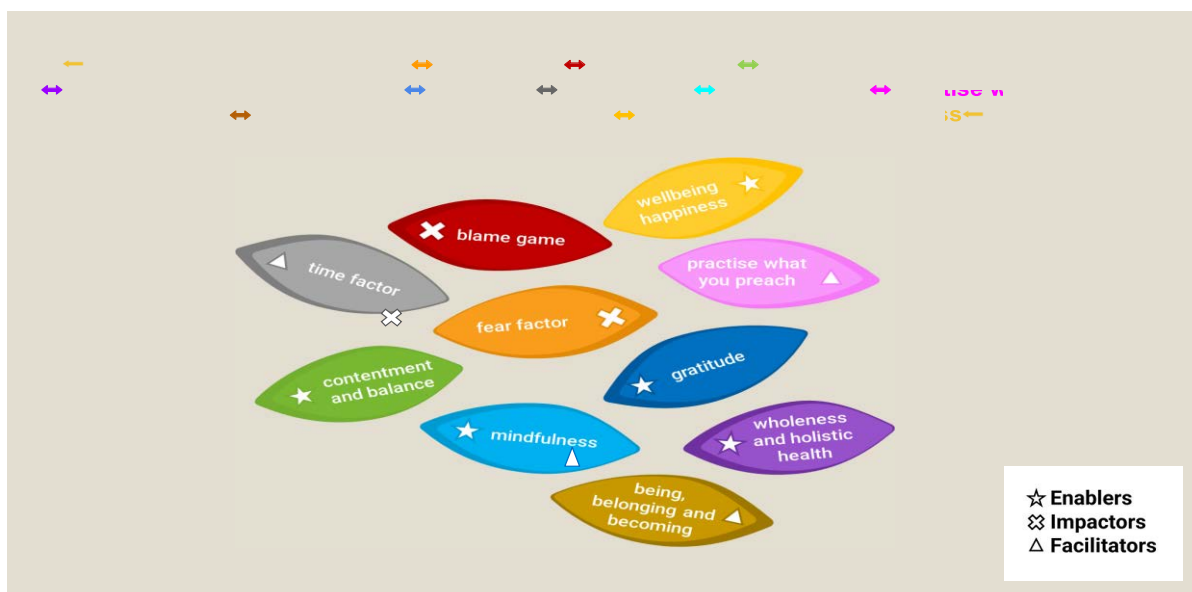
Practising what you preach was another generated theme. Educators were beginning to discuss the importance of making wellbeing part of their own lives to incorporate it into their teaching and instilling it into their students' lives. They were aligning their actions with their words and beliefs. Similarly, **practising what you preach** involves actively demonstrating the behaviours, attitudes, and values an individual promotes or advocates. Living by example and constantly acting in a way that reflects your stated beliefs and principles can create a sense of authenticity and credibility and enhance the trust and confidence of others. Showing genuine care and concern for others and actively engaging in behaviours that promote the wellbeing and happiness of others, rather than just professing those actions, is vital in wellbeing.

Educators were beginning to realise the significance of contemplating their wellbeing and embracing the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions. These habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving contribute to overall wellbeing. They were gradually beginning to understand the importance of wellbeing and the implementation of wellbeing practices. Educators play a significant role in their student's lives (ACECQA, 2019; ECA, 2018, 2021; McCallum & Price, 2016; Yong & Yue, 2007). They focused on how they practised and cultivated these wellbeing dispositions among themselves and how that might influence their students and community.

The research questions are: What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education? How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom? And from an educator's perspective, the themes discovered were the challenging and enhancing factors. **Mindfulness, gratitude, wellbeing beyond happiness, contentment and work-life balance, wholeness and holistic health** were vital components of cultivating wellbeing dispositions and were considered all-important enablers. Awareness of the impactors, such as **the fear factor** and **the blame game**, managing the **time factor**, and learning to **practise what you preach to be, belong and become** were essential themes that upheld the cultivation of wellbeing through this phase. Educators were beginning to find ways to cultivate wellbeing dispositions through their innovative learning experiences and lessons.

During our conversations, the term facilitators emerged, and we focused on several of these impactors and enablers as facilitators. Educators were persistent in changing impactors, enhancing enablers and thinking about them as facilitators. These themes explored in the workshop sessions assisted in further understanding the cultivating of wellbeing dispositions among educators. Wellbeing was discussed in Chapter One as a balancing act enacted by enablers and impactors. It is important to note that Carter and Andersen (2019a; 2023) identified **time** as a negative impactor, and McCallum and Price (2016) identified **belonging** as an enabler; however, this study focused on managing **time factors, being, belonging, and becoming**, as facilitators. Other enablers that morphed into facilitators were **practising what you preach** and **mindfulness**. The goal for the next phase with students was to search and eliminate impactors, nurture enablers, and facilitate and create an environment where we could learn to **manage time, be mindful, practise what we preached, be, belong, and become**.

Figure 29



Themes generated from educator interactions- Ways to cultivate wellbeing dispositions

The End of Phase Two

Sessions Five and Six were about utilising all we had learnt and exploring and crafting lesson ideas and experiences for classroom teaching and learning. Many educators embraced this process and shared several ideas and plans for the term. These experiences intensely focused on cultivating wellbeing dispositions and incorporating MMETTAS Pedagogy, a teaching approach emphasising mindfulness, movement, expression, thoughtfulness, and social interaction. These are presented in Reflections and Discussions IX - Lessons with our students in Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections. For example, educators commented on the importance of wellbeing and the Arts, stating that - *It is essential to try and incorporate wellbeing into*

everyday lessons; use the general capabilities or the Arts to do this. It's disappointing that the health curriculum does not focus more on wellbeing.

...The ordinary arts we practise every day at home are of more importance to the soul than their simplicity might suggest.” Thomas Moore, Poet 1779-1852. This quote from Thomas Moore brings me comfort for two reasons: Firstly, for me, it is saying that the enormous effort I put into running my household and the time I spend with my husband and children is important. It counts - not just for them, but for me and, ultimately, my wellbeing. Secondly, I find it fascinating that a quote from the 18th/19th century is still relevant hundreds of years later. I don't imagine that social health would have been quite the industry back then as it is now, and relaxation techniques, resilience, and self-talk were probably not widely practised either. But I like that quote; it proves that the art of mindfulness did indeed exist and that people thought and felt the same way back then that we do now...

...The wellbeing of students is instrumental in producing happy, productive children. It's imperative to provide wellbeing breaks within the day to recharge and refocus. I'm finding the 10-minute meditation I offer to students after the first break is working well. Students are more settled afterwards and are ready to work. They enjoy being offered a variety of activities to choose from rather than being forced to do the same activity together. I'm looking forward to continuing this into term two. I would like to try some guided meditations with the class and then perhaps offer them to the students via the use of their laptops with earphones during our 10-minute downtime.

I share my final reflection for this Phase - Educators have made substantial steps in promoting and facilitating wellbeing practices. They have begun to see wellbeing as an integral part of all learning in the classroom, marking a shift in mindset. The once prevalent mental health stigma, characterised by fear and blame, is slowly dissipating, and wellbeing discussions are becoming a shared responsibility. **Mindfulness** and meditation have become essential components of the daily classroom routine. Educators are successfully implementing wellbeing ideas, stories, and books, linking them to regular classroom learning. Most importantly, the language of wellbeing and mindfulness is used more freely in educator-student interactions, marking a significant shift in educator attitudes towards these crucial aspects of education.

By the end of the six weeks, it was apparent that the **fear factor** and the **blame game** were slowly diminishing. Many of the impactors and enablers were transforming into facilitators. The impactor, for example, the **time factor**, was becoming more about managing time. The enablers, such as **mindfulness** and **practising what we preach, be, belonging and becoming**, were seen as facilitators. Educators were having wellbeing conversations that were as normal as talking about the daily weather. These conversations were not forced and seemed genuine and caring. They were expressing **gratitude** and kindness toward each other. Rather than seeking someone to manage their wellbeing, educators looked out for each other, and the feeling of belonging and the role of advocacy became prominent. They were not looking to fit in; instead, they focused on **being, belonging and becoming**. Educators joined community drives and fundraising (walking, jogging, coastreks) for mental health and wellbeing (Beyond Blue, Red Cross, Black Dog). At least three educators' have continued to promote wellbeing (on social media) openly and in their schools. This sense of belonging and advocacy created a strong sense

of community and shared responsibility among the educators, nurturing a connection that transcends the boundaries of individual schools.

The educators' daily routines showed their enthusiasm for practising what they preached. It was clear that educators had taken on the task of cultivating wellbeing dispositions. They were not just focused on happiness but on overall wellbeing. They looked out for each other and ensured everyone was part of the group, working on being, belonging, and becoming. Educators were not just focused on the practical aspects of wellbeing but were deeply engaged in understanding what wholeness and holistic health meant to them. They were working on the **time factor, contentment, and work-life balance**, and understanding the enablers and impactors. Mindfulness and gratitude assisted with reflection and wellbeing. They were conducting these processors as facilitators for wellbeing. Educators were undoubtedly focused on their wellbeing and had already embraced the task of converting their classrooms into wellbeing spaces. The conversations about wellbeing were not forced and took priority. As educators, we focused on seven crucial factors to enhance wellbeing within the school. Educators were cultivating wellbeing dispositions by deeply understanding the concept of wellbeing and its implications, stimulating intellectual curiosity and engagement.

- Discuss and normalise (**fear factor** and **blame game**) **wellbeing and happiness**. Access counselling services and embrace formal leave practices to cover mental health days.
- Working together (**practising what they preach**) - Enable break times for each other and encourage colleagues through demanding and stressful situations (**contentment and work-life balance** and **being, belonging, becoming**).
- Managing **time factors** and acknowledging stressful work and home situations.

- Understanding enablers and impactors—advantages and disadvantages, welfare and self-care, relationships and friendships, and flourishing and thriving.
- Reflecting, becoming **mindful**, and focusing on **gratitude and kindness**.
- Explore meaning in their lives and understand their passion and mission (**wholeness and holistic health**).
- Focusing on the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions with their students.

The data collection from this phase provided deep insights into understanding this group of educators and their wellbeing. The analysis unearthed patterns and trends, delivering insightful results that were investigated with qualitative analysis. Complementing the quantitative analysis, the qualitative exploration enabled me to delve into the subtle differences and meanings, subjective experiences, and contextual dynamics (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Kimmons & Johnstun, 2019) surrounding educator participants and their understanding of the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions. These findings offer empirical support to existing theories, highlighting novel aspects contributing to a deeper understanding of wellbeing in education. The qualitative data provided depth, meaning and context, uncovering themes and sub-themes, generating concepts that enhanced understanding and offering new avenues of exploration. The Wellbeing Literacy Framework, a theoretical model that guides the understanding and practice of wellbeing in education, was enacted through *Culture and Discourse*. Understanding the *Nature* of wellbeing and the importance of *Nurturing* wellbeing was the core of cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I focus on the findings from Phase Two of this arts-based case study on wellbeing in education. This phase centred on educators' experiences and how they were cultivating wellbeing dispositions. The focus was on answering the question: What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education? How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom? The place, the participants, the methods, the analysis, data collection, the research outcomes, and the findings were discussed. This mixed-method approach, which combined quantitative and qualitative data, was chosen to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the research phenomenon, providing a robust foundation for the findings.

Seeking to understand educators and how they cultivated wellbeing dispositions was an essential second layer for this research endeavour (wellbeing in education). The culmination of exhaustive data collection, rigorous analysis and detailed interpretations assisted in unpacking layers of the educational wellbeing phenomenon. Through surveys, workshops (yarning circles, focus group discussions, reflections, creation of artefacts), and observation methods, I captured diverse perspectives, unique insights and rich narratives that consume the complexities of human experience. By triangulating the data, I achieved a holistic understanding that surpassed the limitations of an individual approach. Embedded within the results were compelling emerging themes and patterns that transcend the limits of individual data sets. The educators expanded on Carter and Andersens' (2019a) ideas of enablers and impactors, focusing on these impactors and enablers as facilitators to cultivate wellbeing dispositions.

The themes uncovered from this research phase provide insights into the interaction between the underlying mechanisms. The study's broader implications laid the groundwork for further exploration and development. Through data analysis and interpretation, new emerging ideas were established, redefining the boundaries of understanding. This research has creatively unlocked novel avenues for exploration and cultivating wellbeing dispositions with educators, offering hope for the future of primary education. The themes initially focused on impactors and enablers and evolved into facilitators. Educators learned to stifle the impactors, such as the fear factor and the blame game. They began building on skills to enhance their wellbeing through enablers like **wholeness, holistic health, gratitude, contentment and work-life balance**, focusing on **the time factor, being mindful**, and moving from **wellbeing beyond happiness**.

Educators whose unwavering commitment to their students is the driving force behind their work. This aspect was important to this research. The importance of understanding the challenges (impactors) and enhancing factors (enablers, facilitators) for this group of educators to cultivate wellbeing dispositions was further highlighted. The generated themes (infographic in -Figure 29) answered the questions. They furthered their understanding and began to facilitate their cultivation of wellbeing dispositions by **practising what they preached**; rather than trying to fit in, they worked on **being, belonging and becoming**. Previous research has pointed out that educators have a significant role in students' lives. Educators must experience optimal wellbeing before attempting to teach wellbeing skills to students. Building on the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions, innovative pedagogy and working with educators on their wellbeing set the stage for the final data collection phase with six class groups of 126 students and their educators. Phase Three is a crucial step in understanding how learners can cultivate wellbeing dispositions and implement a pedagogy focused on enhancing wellbeing in the classroom.

Chapter Six - Phase Three: Students Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions

The Hundred Languages of Children

The child is made of one hundred.

The child has a hundred languages, a hundred hands, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of thinking of, playing, of speaking.

A hundred always a hundred ways of listening of marvelling of loving, a hundred joys, for singing and understanding, a hundred worlds, to discover, a hundred worlds, to invent, a hundred worlds, to dream.

The child has a hundred languages (and a hundred, hundred, hundred more),
but they steal ninety-nine.

The school and the culture separate the head from the body... (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 3).

Overview and Structure (Chapter Six)

In the first phase (Chapter One and Chapter Four) of this study, I shared my journey towards cultivating wellbeing dispositions and concentrated on the researcher and the historical perspective, place, and culture. The Wellbeing Literacy Framework (Introduced in Chapter Four - Phase One: Me Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions), developed through a comprehensive review of existing literature and my own experiences, further provides a structured approach to learning and promoting wellbeing in educational settings. Chapter Two investigated previous research on wellbeing in education and in Chapter Three, I discussed the methodology and data collection methods.

The previous chapter (Phase Two) focused on educators at Saint Benessere's and their journey of cultivating wellbeing dispositions. This phase aimed to understand the learners' journey of cultivating wellbeing dispositions and responses to the research questions. The overarching questions remained: What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing

wellbeing in primary education? How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom? This chapter elaborated on the third and final layer and data collection phase (three) conducted with six educators and 126 learners at Saint Benessere's School.

The focus of this chapter is to provide an overview of the data collected and to discuss the findings gathered in Phase Three of the study. The methods in this phase, similar to the previous phase, entailed a range of approaches. These included surveys, observations, workshops comprising informal discussions (yarning circles), formal focus group discussions (two audio-recorded), reflections, and the creation of artefacts conducted with class groups of students. Similar to the educator phase, the creative and innovative arts-based process of MMETTAS Pedagogy is utilised. In this chapter, I focus on students' strengths and challenges and offer valuable insights into cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

This chapter began with the acknowledgement of the many ways children learn and the process of enabling their learning creatively. The excerpt from the poem *The Hundred Languages of Children* by Malaguzzi (Reggio Emilia approach) at the beginning of this chapter serves as a poignant reminder of the significance of embracing diverse perspectives concerning children's needs, interests, and abilities when considering learning and development. The evocative use of the word "Hundred, hundred hundred more" in Malaguzzi's (2012, p. 3) poem reminds us that the vast array of children's capabilities and potential is limitless. Malaguzzi's (1998) approach focuses mainly on early childhood and recognises the diversity of children's abilities and potential and the richness of children's experiences. Utilising these concepts and ideas is relevant to all levels of learning and education. These ideas expressed in the poem are not limited to the theoretical foundations of Reggio Emilia's (Malaguzzi, 2012) educational

approach. The diverse opportunities, the richness of children's experiences and hands-on learning also align with the pioneering works of early theorists, for example, Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979; 1994), Bruner (1957; 1977; 1986), Dewey (1916; 1934; 1938a), Gardner (1983; 2003; 2006) Piaget (1962; 1970) and Vygotsky (1978; 1986; 1994). I have discussed these theories and theorists in previous chapters and will continue to extend these explanations further.

Experiential learning and active participation within a holistic learning environment provide the foundation to celebrate each child's unique journey of discovery and growth. Educators and significant others play a vital role in meaningfully contributing to children's development, providing them countless ways of communicating and nurturing their freedom of expression. Throughout this thesis, I have highlighted the critical role of the environment and its people as catalysts for cultivating wellbeing dispositions. Before elaborating on the setting, I will discuss two specific theorists (Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner) and their theories as relevant to this phase.

Vygotsky (1978; 1986; 1994) emphasised the social character of learning (Sociocultural theory) and believed that significant others should help children develop their skills through scaffolding. He also proposed that words are signals and thoughts and that adults communicating with children use words as objects and ideas (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986; 1994). Vygotsky (1978; 1986; 1994) highlighted the constructivist principles, child-centred learning, role play and imagination, social interaction and collaboration, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is a concept that refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a more knowledgeable person, such as a teacher or a peer.

Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1994; 1994) ecological systems theory, a cornerstone of my research, is a comprehensive model of human development that addresses various life stages and contexts. It underscores the influence of the environment, interaction and context, holistic development, and individualised learning. Bronfenbrenner (1979) identifies multiple layers of influence ranging from immediate (family, school) to broader macrosystems (culture and society). This theory, which forms the basis of my belief that students should be given every opportunity to flourish in the learning environment, has been instrumental in shaping the research. It highlights the critical role of positive learning environments in learning and development. The cultivation of wellbeing dispositions is deeply rooted in the environment and the people within it. A welcoming atmosphere, a caring community where children can engage, collaborate, create, and express their feelings, was essential to this study and specifically for cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

The Setting and the Participants (Learners)

To explore wellbeing in the primary classroom, it is essential to have a shared understanding of 'wellbeing' and 'the primary classroom'. In this research, wellbeing is an overarching term viewed as a balancing process enhanced by various factors (enablers, impactors and facilitators). Understanding wellbeing from a *Nature, Nurture, Culture and Discourse* (The Wellbeing Literacy Framework) perspective was important for each phase of this research. Considering the holistic concept of wellbeing before attempting to enhance wellbeing among any group or community provides a deeper understanding of participants and their perceptions.

Primary classrooms are situated in educational institutions or primary schools. They are spaces where young learners and adult educators interact and come together to learn and teach. A

classroom, the space set out for learning, can be diverse, with spaces catering to various learning needs and activities (group space, individual space, floor spaces, and desk spaces). Usually, each class group has one or two educators who teach most subjects to one class. At Saint Benessere's HPE, Science and the Arts (music and drama) and LOTE were taught by specialist educators who were not classroom educators. The classroom educators taught all other subjects, including Religious Education (RE), English, Mathematics, HASS, Visual Arts, and Technologies. Saint Bemessere's, with its unique blend of traditional and innovative teaching methods, provides a rich environment for learning and growth.

At the end of Phase Two, a volunteer sampling strategy was utilised to recruit participants for Phase Three. All classroom educators (21) and their class groups were offered the opportunity to join the six-week classroom wellbeing intervention program. Since this phase focused mainly on the students, working with at most six class groups (approximately 150) was determined as manageable. This was seen as a practical number for the project and ethics approval was granted for a maximum of 150 students. Working with a cross-section of class groups from prep to six was also favourable to spreading knowledge across the school. I explained this criterion to the educators as part of the collaboration process. I asked them to volunteer and decide on the most effective and resourceful handling of the student workshops. The preparatory year and the year sixes (six classes) reluctantly chose to opt out due to workload pressures. This term, a buddy program (support building) was pre-planned for these groups as an extra activity. This further demonstrates how wellbeing in education competes with other activities. The first six educators who volunteered their class groups to be part of the study were chosen. There was a representation of at least one group from years one to five. This process

advanced the study, and information and permission forms were distributed to these educators and their class group of students' parents (148).

The Setting

Saint Benessere's, nestled among breathtaking gardens, was home to students from prep to year six in 2016. The data collection for this phase was conducted within the unique primary classrooms, each reflecting the educators' and their students' needs. These classrooms had various resources, furniture, and artefacts, creating a comfortable and engaging learning environment. Most of the school day was spent inside these classrooms, with occasional sessions on the grounds offering a unique and diverse learning experience.

The classrooms were comfortable learning spaces, offering students the choice of various seating arrangements. Inside the classrooms, several prominent posters were displayed on the walls. One of these, the Feeling Unsafe poster, influenced by the societal focus on child safety and protection, lists the names of people students could contact (go and tell) if they felt unsafe. This poster significantly promoted a safe and supportive learning environment, reassuring students and instilling confidence. As I will discuss (within themes), this poster and other **safety** measures significantly contributed to the student's sense of security and wellbeing. Another poster, The Learning Dispositions, highlighted the importance of focus, engagement, challenge, collaboration, and communication concerning learning.

To encourage positive behaviour the school implemented a proactive system of Key Guidelines, displayed as an image of various keys, to promote positive behaviours. Prominently displayed in the classrooms, these guidelines underscore the importance of safety, active

learning, responsibility, and respect. Students who demonstrated these positive behaviours were rewarded with a key card, which they placed in a classroom box. Five cards were randomly drawn weekly, and the selected students were acknowledged and rewarded during the school assembly. This system was proven effective in promoting positive behaviour and instilling a sense of responsibility among the students, offering hope for the future of the school community.

The workshop sessions with educators in Phase Two further enhanced my appreciation and understanding of this space. Similarly, our time together cultivating wellbeing dispositions influenced and enhanced the teaching and learning spaces. Understanding the *Nature* aspect of wellbeing creates a deep understanding of wellbeing. The *Nurture* aspect was in full swing, and educators **practised what they preached** in this phase. Identifying if the *Culture and Discourse* were being enacted in the process of wellbeing education was important to this research.

Nature, connectedness and the relationship with eudaimonic wellbeing have been discussed extensively in the research (Frazier, 2018; Hailes, 2020; Louv, 2012; Pritchard et al., 2020; Searle et al., 2021). The constant interaction process between the individual and the environment is essential to enhance wellbeing. Winter was gradually approaching during Phase Three, and autumn was still in full swing. The school grounds were adorned with autumn colours from the Banksia blooms and a kaleidoscope of green foliage from the Bottlebrush, Wattle, and Eucalyptus trees. In the southern hemisphere, Lent (means springtime - Lenten) is in Autumn. Like Autumn (for many flora and fauna), the period of Lent in the Catholic church is a time for humans, their body and soul (nurture), a time for change, fulfilment, letting go, and reflection. Classroom RE lessons had just completed their focus on Lent, change and reflection. The

wellbeing explorations seamlessly aligned with classroom learning because wellbeing was relevant to the other learning areas.

The first chapter highlights the distinctive approach of Saint Benessere's educational program, which is built on an outcomes-based curriculum that caters to the holistic developmental needs of the child. This comprehensive curriculum addresses the child's spiritual, social, emotional, physical, academic, creative, and cultural needs. The school's website further emphasises its dedication to nurturing each child's spirituality and faith development, promoting positive partnerships, and encouraging parental participation in school programs. Community involvement is a key feature of the school, with an active School Board responsible for strategic planning and policy development, including implementing wellbeing initiatives. The Parents and Friends Association organised various school events and fundraising activities, some of which may have focused on promoting student wellbeing.

A Snapshot of Educator Participants (Phase Three)

Out of the 21 classroom educators, approximately 29%, or six educators, promptly indicated their willingness to participate in Phase Three. As discussed, six educators (and their class groups) were considered a manageable group for this study phase. The participating educators' class groups ranged from year one to year five, with two groups from year three. Due to another commitment (buddy sessions), students from the preparatory level or year six were absent from this study phase.

Many educators expressed interest in the project; however, they also noted the need for more time or energy to take on additional activity in their already busy days. Several educators

intended to take on advocacy and continue the wellbeing workshops in the future. Having at least one class from each level made this feasible to share learnings and collaborate. While it could have been favourable if more educators participated in the third phase, it was also important to acknowledge the manageability of the resources (one researcher, time) to implement the process.

Six educators, deeply committed to promoting classroom wellbeing, willingly participated in Phase Three. Their unwavering dedication is evident in their interviews (see Table 11), where they shared their views on personal and classroom wellbeing and their interest in the research, which is genuinely inspiring. During the interviews, two of the six educators stated that the principal initially prompted them to join. Exploring this was important as I knew that power relations could be debilitating. I discussed this further with the educators as this phase needed to be conducted with educators willing to consciously focus on wellbeing in their pedagogy. These educators assured me they initially succumbed to **the fear factor** theme and the stigma of wellbeing until they were prompted to reflect (on the benefits of wellbeing). They then realised they wanted to **practice what they preached** and be part of the group. It was important to realise that **the fear factor** (stigma) still existed around wellbeing-related experiences. It was also even more important to be reminded that researcher assumptions must always be clarified. The educators confirmed that a power imbalance did not influence them. They felt inspired by the principal, who believed their classes (students) would benefit from the insights and activities and that he advocated for classroom wellbeing. One stated that she felt empowered and heard (by the principal) because she did have a challenging class. Reflection and exploring uncertainties further highlighted the ethical decision-making in this research. All six educators in this phase expressed their commitment to advocate for classroom wellbeing, and all participants in this research were enthusiastic and willing contributors.

Table 11

Educator Reflections and Discussions (I)

Group	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Teacher Experience in years	ten years	18 years	three years	nine years	22 years	six years
Philosophy	<i>No two children are the same; they do not learn the same or think the same.</i>	<i>Build relationships and understanding with my students</i>	<i>In an inclusive classroom, the class needs to be a fun and positive learning environment.</i>	<i>Learning must be fun and hands-on.</i>	<i>Making mistakes is encouraged. Children have a voice and a safe, rich learning environment.</i>	<i>In building relationships with students, everyone needs to be set up in a safe space and happy space; I do really care about my students.</i>
Teacher attributes strengths and challenges:	<i>Try to be positive and friendly, work hard, and be accommodating. Challenges are time management and organisation.</i>	<i>I am happy, flexible, understanding, And positive, and I am a good communicator; time is a challenge.</i>	<i>I am caring and passionate about the role. A fun-loving, positive person. The learning environment is challenging.</i>	<i>I am a Perfectionist, a competitive people pleaser, honest, inclusive, and understanding</i>	<i>I am goal-driven, set goals, kind to myself, and a problem solver, but sometimes life gets in the way.</i>	<i>Compassionate, truthful, caring, loyal, creative, and hard-working. I believe I can do anything; I try to be a positive person, and I struggle with exclusion and organisation.</i>

A Snapshot of Learner Participants

In this research, the terms students, learners, children and young people are used interchangeably to refer to the young participants in this phase. Children attend primary school in Australia for seven years, from preparatory year to year six. In primary school, learners range in age from five to 12 years.

At the beginning of this study, the total enrolment at Saint Benessere's was 505 students, with 264 girls and 241 boys. One percent of students were identified as Indigenous, and 10% had a Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE). Once informed consent was received from the six educators, parents' permission (148) for their children to participate in the study was requested. The school distributed a letter with information and consent forms to parents (Appendix VI - School Letter to Parent. Signed informed consent was received from 126 parents on behalf of their children. Eighty-five per cent of parents were willing for their children to participate in the research. Creswell (2014; 2012) states that the sample size in qualitative research is on flexibility and depth. While 132 participants (six educators, 126 students) seem like a large sample for qualitative research, the focus was on the collective voice of students.

The six class groups of students (see Table 12) were from year one to year five. There was one group each from year one, year two, year four and year five, with two class groups from year three. These students ranged from 6 - 11 years. Twenty-two students from these six class groups did not participate in the focus group discussions for various reasons. These students either did not return their signed informed consent forms or were not given signed permission by their parents. At least five students changed schools (had left the school) during the data collection process. During the sessions, students, without signed consent, carried on with other

classroom activities. All students who had permission were free to participate in the activities and were not pressured to participate in activities or discussions.

Table 12

A Snapshot of Student Participants (Beginning to End)

Class	Age	The ACER SEW survey		Focus Group Discussions		
		Beginning	End	Gave consent	Denied consent	Did not return form
Year 1	6-7	24	23	18	5	1
Year 2	7-8	28	28	25	1	2
Year 3 (2)	8-9	48	44	40	5	2
Year 4	9-10	25	25	24	1	0
Year 5	10-11	23	23	19	5	0
Total		148	143	126	17	5

The AIHW states that “Childhood is an important time for healthy development and learning, and for establishing the foundation of future wellbeing, but it is also a time of vulnerability” (2020, para. 2). The report further states that “most Australian children are healthy, safe and doing well” also stating that “there is scope for further gains in some areas” (2020, para 2-4). As discussed in the literature review, around one in seven Australian young people experience mental health issues, and about half of all serious mental health issues in adulthood begin before age 14 (Beyond Blue, 2022). This phase focused on finding answers to

the research questions from students. We were also intensely focused on the wellbeing of these students and on creating innovative ways to cultivate wellbeing dispositions with them.

My Role in Phase Three

The combination of experience, knowledge, and positive reputation assisted me in building connections with educators at the school where I conducted this research. My belief that schools are places where students can flourish and grow kept me motivated, and I continued building connections with the students in this phase. I appreciated the dynamics and mechanisms at play. I saw wellbeing as a harmonising process of balancing challenges with enabling factors. I had a substantial personal investment in the project and saw it as my opportunity to contribute to students' learning, educators' support and overall wellbeing. This was not just a research project for me but a personal mission to make a difference in the lives of these participants.

I aimed to position myself as an insider to understand everyday practice in these classrooms. I was no stranger to the educators or students; I had previously worked with many of them and was liked and trusted by them. My role in Phase Three was to continue enhancing relationships with educator participants and build trust and rapport with student participants. I deeply identified with the educators and students, understanding their challenges and needs. While I saw myself as an insider, I was sometimes perceived as an expert in this phase and less as an outsider (by now). Research studies vary in participation and representation; Outsiders are often perceived as experts who impose views, and insiders can be subordinated to their local context (Muhammad et al., 2015; Pratt, 2021).

As an insider researcher in a facilitator and participatory role, I regularly reflected on my and the participants' interactions. I worked towards maintaining equality and trusting

connections. While I was seen as a researcher and educator, and most of these participants were students, my intention in this phase was to continue to work towards a trusting partnership with my participants (Boyle, 2012; Patton, 2002). The aim was to shift the balance of power from the researcher to the researched (Campbell et al., 2004) a crucial aspect of my research philosophy and practice. In this phase, it was critical to pay close attention to the power relations, especially among educators and students, demonstrating my awareness and sensitivity to these issues.

I aimed to create a safe place to teach, learn, and cultivate dispositions for wellbeing. I wanted these students to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, feelings and understanding about wellbeing. I listened intently, focused intensely, and tried to understand and report on the classroom and students' collective voice. A PAR approach was chosen in Phases Two and Three because collective, self-reflective inquiry was essential to understanding and improving practice (Boyle, 2012; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). I continued to incorporate a PAR model during this phase of data collection because I wanted to produce "non-hierarchical, non-manipulative research relationships that have the potential to overcome the separation between the researcher and the researched" (Cotterill, 1992, p. 594). PAR and ABR are collaborative and empowering research methods that seek to create meaningful change and actively engage participants in the research process. I facilitated a welcoming and enjoyable environment, ensuring active participation and engagement and enhancing a sense of responsibility and participant advocacy.

During this phase, I engaged extensively with educators and students, conducting thirty-six wellbeing sessions (one per class per week). The weekly workshops, including focus group discussions, yarning circles, and MMETTAS-based activities with these students, were

insightful, enjoyable, and a testament to their active participation in the research process. In the following section, I recap and discuss activities conducted in this phase (Phase Three).

The Findings and the Discussions: Students Cultivating Wellbeing Dispositions

Chapters One and Three detailed the study's comprehensive approach, data collection, and analysis process. The data collection mirrored the educator phase (two). In this phase, a conscious decision was made to amplify the students' voices with a collective focus, ensuring that all participants feel included and valued in the research process. No reference will be made to individual students. Phase Three was dedicated to understanding students' state of wellbeing and the challenges in cultivating wellbeing dispositions. The questions remained the same: What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education? How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom? An overall understanding of students' backgrounds and wellbeing was gleaned from the literature review, policy documents, and educational websites.

As discussed in Chapter One, The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a scale that indicates students' socio-educational backgrounds. The ICSEA is calculated considering subjective measures (parental occupation, parental education, geographic location, and proportion of Indigenous students in a school) and is considered the level of the school's educational advantage. Sain Benessere's scored 1046 (69%) in 2016 and 1065 (76%) in 2017 on the ICSEA. This was favourable to this research because the school had an ICSEA value closer to the average value (From 1300 to 500 - benchmark 1000), meaning that the educational advantage of students at this school was closer to the average. Saint Benessere's, with an ICSEA value ranging from 1046 -1065, presented with ten to eleven per cent of students placed in the

bottom quarter, 25-39% in the middle two quartiles, and 25 – 31% in the top quarter. This information provides a context for the educational advantage of the students at this school.

The research was designed to be dynamic and responsive to the participants' evolving needs and experiences. Emergent design is a research approach that allows the details and outcomes of a project to unfold dynamically rather than being predetermined. It was instrumental in creating social change and empowering educators in the previous phase, and it was expected to continue aligning social change and empowerment goals in this phase. The transformative paradigm is a philosophical framework that emphasises the potential for significant change and growth. Ultimately, the focus was on lasting outcomes for the students. From the beginning, the aim was to empower individuals and communities and create a more equitable and socially just society (Mertens, 2009). The emergent design, transformative paradigm, and learning-by-doing principle emphasise active engagement, empowerment, and integrating theory and practice.

As a methodology, ABR and PAR strongly emphasise collaboration, active participation, promoting social change, empowering participants, and involving them as core researchers in the research process. The workshop sessions were tailored to student needs and students' cultivation of wellbeing dispositions, ensuring all participants were actively engaged in the process and felt involved. This empowerment of the participants is not just a feature of the research but a guiding principle that inspires and motivates the entire process. This research focuses on creating a wellbeing environment that empowers students to become critical thinkers, change-makers, and lifelong learners. While this phase was run similarly to the previous one, there were subtle differences. These sessions were catered for learners and were tailored to classroom learning.

As a method, PAR and ABR are collaborative and empowering, seeking to create meaningful change and engaging participants actively in the research process. The various data collection techniques in this phase actively involved participants. These methods promoted a student-centred experiential approach to learning and research, encouraging learners to take ownership of their education and become active agents in shaping their learning and wellbeing experiences. The flexible methodology fostered a dynamic and transformative learning environment where students were engaging in meaningfully relevant and socially impactful learning experiences, inspiring hope for the potential impact of the research and the transformation of education.

The ABR focus in this phase was to encourage students to actively participate in practical activities, reflections, discussions and creations that would provide authentic learning experiences and foster deeper understanding and skill development. The methods utilised in the previous, and this phase emphasise the importance of hands-on learning, problem-solving and real-life applications of knowledge. The learning-by-doing principle (Montessori, 1935; 1914; Reese, 2011) or experiential learning (Dewey, 1916; 1934; Piaget, 1962; Rogers, 1969) asserts that individuals learn best through direct experiences, active engagement, and reflection. Dewey (1916; 1934) highlights the importance of reflection in learning, and Rogers (1983) contributed to the development of experiential learning through his work on person-centred education. Rogers (1951; 1961; 1969) believed that a learner's experiences and feelings are vital to learning.

The quantitative and qualitative analyses are woven together and will be discussed, highlighting the vibrant and dynamic nature of the research process. Revelations and outcomes emerged gradually during the previous phase's data collection and analysis; however, this

process moved much faster in this phase. As I will discuss I attributed this to the educators' influence on their students. Therefore, reviewing the findings from the previous phase was necessary for a deeper insight into this phase.

The educators in Phase Two initially used wellbeing and happiness interchangeably and focused on various ways to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. A similar mindset was present among students. Educators gradually shifted their perceptions to focus on **wellbeing beyond happiness**, and students did the same. The awareness of impactors (**the fear factor** and **the blame game**) empowered educators to focus on the facilitators, such as managing **the time factor, mindfulness, being, belonging and becoming**, and the ability to **practise what they preached**. The focus on enablers, for example, **gratitude, wholeness, holistic health, contentment, and work-life balance**, provided sustainability in cultivating wellbeing dispositions. Understanding the challenges of embracing enablers and transforming enablers and impactors into facilitators was essential for educators to enhance their wellbeing. These dispositions were even more evident among the educators who volunteered to join this phase, making the process for learners seamless.

At the beginning of Phase Three, educators rated their class wellbeing on a scale of one to ten, with one being low and ten being the highest (see Table 13). These ratings were between three and six at the beginning and were clear indicators of how educators saw wellbeing in their classrooms. These scores were rated between seven and nine at the end of the six weeks, indicating that educators were beginning to see improvements in overall classroom wellbeing. Table 13 below presents educators' perceptions and expectations of wellbeing, class strengths and time devoted to the Arts and wellbeing learning.

Table 13

Educator reflections and interviews before sessions (II)

Group	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
The age group of students	5-6 years	6-7 years	7-8 years	7-8 years	8-9 years	9-10 years
Teacher perception: Wellbeing on a scale of 1 (low) and -10 (high)	6 → 9 <i>Very eager to please. All very different in personalities, abilities, and independence</i>	4-5 → 8-9 <i>Some resilient students have a couple of very high emotional needs</i>	5 → 8 <i>Students find it hard to concentrate (short attention span) and have negative attitudes toward learning</i>	3 → 7 <i>Need to improve negative attitudes and behaviour management</i>	5 → 9 <i>An active class need positive reinforcement</i>	6 → 9 <i>An active group, polar opposites. Some are headstrong and opinionated and need to learn respect toward each other.</i>
Class strengths and challenges	<i>Respect each other, and be adaptable. A few challenges with behaviour and learning</i>	<i>Get along well together now, accepting of each other. Need to work on respect, social skills,</i>	<i>Creative, enjoy group work, Challenging behaviour, short attention span, Negative attitudes. Hard to concentrate,</i>	<i>Need to learn self-control, respect, and behaviour management</i>	<i>A very active group of boys They need to work together to be resilient. Teaching them to be problem solvers</i>	<i>Accepting, nurturing, and intrinsically motivated to succeed. We need to learn respect. There are some students with high needs and behavioural challenges.</i>
How do you teach the Arts?	<i>Integrating into other areas two times a week</i>	<i>With religion, whenever it fits</i>	<i>Incorporated into other learning areas</i>	<i>No set time or day</i>	<i>Arts integrated with history, once a week on a Friday</i>	<i>Specific time in timetable once a week.</i>

The qualitative data provided an in-depth understanding of how participants articulated their perception of wellbeing and cultivated wellbeing dispositions in this phase. The workshops, which included yarning circles, two audio-recorded focus groups (per class), surveys, reflections and the creation of artefacts, were valuable ways to build wellbeing skills and explore and understand the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions in their classrooms (for learners). Classroom educators utilised various strategies to cultivate wellbeing dispositions with their students through an arts focus and with MMETTAS Pedagogy.

The online ACER SEW Survey reports and results (see Figure 30) were used alongside other measures such as the online ICSEA scores, educators' perceptions of their classroom wellbeing scale and qualitative data. The reflection, crystallisation and triangulation of the data (methods) assisted in formulating an understanding of the conditions of possibility and the cultivation of the wellbeing dispositions of this group of students. I will briefly recap each data collection method and then elaborate on the generated themes and the findings for this phase.

The ACER SEW Student Survey

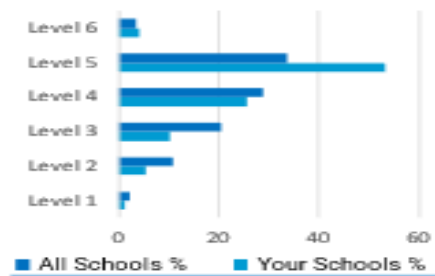
The school conducted the ACER SEW survey, and all classes in this study undertook the survey, which was administered online. Administering the survey was arduous, and I put in significant effort to assist educators in administering it, especially by helping students, particularly those in the lower grades and other students who needed one-on-one assistance, in reading the questions. Doing the survey online was an unfamiliar and challenging task for these students. This was the first online survey students had undertaken, which they found rather challenging.

Figure 30

Overall Social Emotional Wellbeing of Students at the Beginning and End of Six Weeks

Beginning

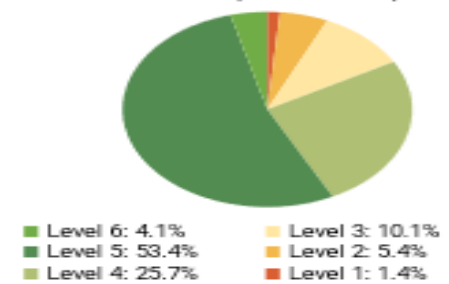
Overall Summary of Social - Emotional Wellbeing



Data of Social -Emotional Wellbeing

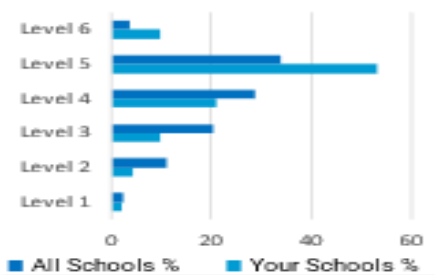
Level on Student Survey Scale	Your School		All Schools	
	No. of Students	%	No. of Students	%
Level 6	6	4.1	484	3.6
Level 5	79	53.4	4492	33.8
Level 4	38	25.7	3833	28.8
Level 3	15	10.1	2711	20.4
Level 2	8	5.4	1462	11
Level 1	2	1.4	310	2.3
Total	148	100	13292	100

Overall Student Social -Emotional Wellbeing (Your School)



Ending

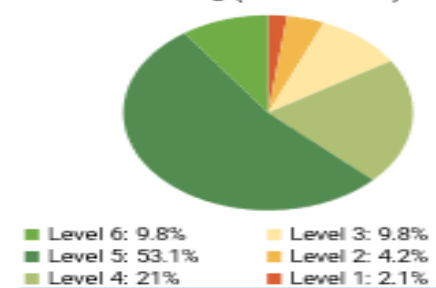
Overall Summary of Social - Emotional Wellbeing



Data of Social -Emotional Wellbeing

Level on Student Survey Scale	Your School		All Schools	
	No. of Students	%	No. of Students	%
Level 6	14	9.8	484	3.6
Level 5	76	53.1	4492	33.8
Level 4	30	21	3833	28.8
Level 3	14	9.8	2711	20.4
Level 2	6	4.2	1462	11
Level 1	3	2.1	310	2.3
Total	143	100	13292	100

Overall Student Social -Emotional Wellbeing (Your School)



I was given access to the data reports during this phase. I used these reports to understand the overall state of wellbeing; however, I was cautious in refraining from forming any definitive conclusions due to the challenges the students experienced in answering the survey questions. I combined these results with the qualitative data from observations, discussions, reflections and artefacts. Five students who took the initial survey had left the school by the end of term two.

The quantitative data from the ACER SEW Survey, a tool designed to measure students' social and emotional wellbeing, and the ICSES Scale, which assesses students' background and educational advantage, were considered together. These tools and educators' perceptions (of their students' wellbeing in their classes) assisted in understanding that most students at this school had their basic biological (physical) needs met. Maslow (1971) pointed out that the order in which these needs are fulfilled can sometimes follow a different standard of progression. Once lower-level needs are met to a certain degree, individuals crave psychological and social needs (belonging, love, affection, friendship, and self-esteem). When scrutinising the data from the ACER Survey and considering the overall ICSEA Scale and educator perceptions, it was clear that approximately a quarter of students in this study were experiencing low levels of wellbeing and could be seen as educationally disadvantaged.

The data reports from the ACER survey indicated that approximately 83 - 84% of students at this school presented with high to very high levels of SEW at the beginning and end of the data collection period. The report did not indicate significant change and was used alongside the qualitative data to understand students' wellbeing. The survey was not beneficial for individual classroom reports as a minimum number of students (10) in each gender was required to generate a report. At least two classes did not have a minimum of ten boys. The

overall school report helped me understand students' SEW. The report guided my exploration of the qualitative data, especially regarding students' perceptions of wellbeing and the formulating of the discussion questions.

The Workshops – Focus Groups and Yarning Circles (Student)

The data was collected for six weeks. The sessions were conducted for 40 minutes weekly per class in term two. I visited all six classes once a week and conducted thirty-six wellbeing workshop sessions. Each session was tailored to individual classroom needs and explicitly focused on classroom wellbeing and topics that impact wellbeing. The sessions were conducted in the same format as educator sessions in Phase Two.

The sessions began weekly with mindful reflections, followed by yarning circle time (informal discussions) stories and creative MMETTAS-based wellbeing skill-building activities. Two audio-recorded focus groups (informal) per class were conducted, one at the beginning and one at the end of the data collection. Students were asked questions about wellbeing (presented previously in Table 6) and were all allowed to respond. The yarning circles were conducted for each class group, and all participating students were allowed to express their views. We discussed topics of interest for wellbeing, topics that impact wellbeing and the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions in the yarning circles. For example, exploring words related to wellbeing (word building from the word 'wellbeing'), vocabulary for feeling words (beyond good, happy and sad), understanding body clues (when stressed, anxious, angry, excited, worried, or happy), and strategies to meditate, be mindful focus and pay attention.

All sessions included a form of story retelling (books, media, verbal) and concluded with mindful art experiences. I shared a story at each session that linked with the topic of discussion and an activity. For example, during the sessions where we focused on mindfulness, we discussed *Charlotte's Quiet Place* by Deborah Sosin. When discussing feelings, we explored the books *The Mad Magpie* by Gregg Dreise and *Silly Billy* by Anthony Brown. Educators then linked the week's topic to classroom lessons, stories, and activities. Material engagement was an essential aspect of these experiences. Students created a range of artefacts and discussed these in yarnning circles. During sessions, I used my singing bowl, chimes and a rainstick to focus, stop, call for attention, and become mindful.

We explored different meditations and ways to spend quiet, focused time and reflection—various ABR and MMETTAS-based strategies to explore wellbeing, utilising music, drama, media, and visual arts. The MMETTAS-based activities seemed fun, accessible, and interactive. Participants enjoyed these sessions, noted that these sessions were fun and were always eager to participate in the activities. Several students commented on how much they loved these experiences. For example, some students commented on what they learned and the activities they enjoyed

Thank you for teaching me about belly breathing and all the thoughts you can have

Thank you for teaching me about the brain.

I enjoyed the time when we coloured the brain.

Thank you for teaching me to love everyone.

Thank you for teaching me about the flow zone, because I try to go to a peaceful place.

Using MMETTAS-based strategies gave me the self-reflection skills and insight I needed as a researcher to understand my participants. These self-reflections, along with triangulation and crystallisation, provided a springboard to deeply understand participants' stories and the analysis of the data collection. The experiences enabled finding answers to the research questions.

I have presented an outline (see Appendix IX - An Example of the Activities and Workshops in Phase Three) of the six sessions conducted (enhanced and modified) with students. These sessions were not conducted with rigid lesson plans and were explicitly catered to individual classes. For example, one class specifically requested a session before their NAPLAN tests and focused on strategies to assist them with taking the test and being calm and relaxed. Other groups requested mindfulness and art skill-building sessions. Teachers and students reflected on their experiences. Educators crafted their pedagogy, working with students on wellbeing and enhancing outcomes. They linked the activities to classroom lessons and the curriculum.

I made myself available during the week for informal discussions with educators. The expectation was that educators would extend the focus on similar ideas and add and enhance a wellbeing focus to their regular classroom lessons. Focusing on cultivating wellbeing dispositions was seen as a seamless way to enhance learning and engagement in the classroom. Over the six weeks, learners and educators focused on mindfulness and wellbeing, and they implemented various activities (stories, discussion sessions, reflective writing tasks) during their everyday lesson experiences. Educators (see comments in Table 14) and students reported a deep sense of wellbeing in the classrooms and school grounds.

Table 14

Educator comments and reflections during and after the data collection phase

<i>Every day, we have quiet time after snack. We choose different things to do each time.</i>
<i>They are getting better at responding to me. I call for three deep belly breaths to get them refocused.</i>
<i>I feel the children are better equipped to deal with stressful things. They meditate for longer. They enjoy quiet time and relaxation with belly breathing—feather breathing—and blowing bubbles using meditation bottles, gratitude journals, and guided meditations.</i>
<i>We talk about happiness and making friends. I have found that making a folder with the resources that you gave me to be useful.</i>
<i>I have found other art activities that help with being mindful and have put these into a folder.</i>
<i>I try to make each activity centre on something. “I am mindful when””I am kind when”” I am grateful for.... I put these words in a bubble in the middle of the page and drew lines from the bubble to create a gap for the children to write their answers, which they colour in.</i>

Every experience and encounter with these class groups was insightful and joyful. The students were curious, accepting, and eager to learn and play. Building rapport and trust seemed much more straightforward with these participants. This may have been because I had taught most of these students at some point over the years, and they were comfortable with me and my teaching style. They certainly enjoyed the hands-on arts-based approach.

Educators extended these activities further and set up areas in the classroom for mindful tasks. I shared resources (Figure 10) with educators. Students were curious about the wellbeing tools (singing bowl, chimes, plant, fidget toys) I provided to enhance and recreate mindful spaces. The workshop sessions and discussions were insightful and reflected students' cultivation

of wellbeing dispositions and their state of enhanced wellbeing. Students' wellbeing vocabulary, articulation and understanding of wellbeing had improved. This was evident when comparing the data, two focus group discussions and their creations and artefacts (see Figure 31 below).

Students were communicating ways of looking after themselves and others. They were focusing on more than just their physical selves. They were beginning to explore ways of helping themselves and looking out for their peers. For example, some students commented,

I filled my friend L's bucket today.

I can teach others to be kind.

I enjoyed making the meditation bottle - the glitter bottles.

I feel better and smarter because I like that I am in the flow zone.

It was relaxing.

The older students were beginning to look out for all students. They monitored other students and checked if their peers had someone to play with during lunchtime or if they were sitting alone. *Friendship Benches* were placed near the playground for students who felt lonely or needed to find someone to talk to or play with. The discussions and experiences around the school ground and the classrooms were focused on belonging and caring for others. Wellbeing was everyone's business. The advocacy of wellbeing was present in interactions. They looked after each other and advocated for wellbeing in and around the school grounds.

Figure 31
Student Reflections and Creation of Artefacts



The initial focus group answers indicated that most students discussed wellbeing as a physical attribute by discussing the importance of exercise and healthy eating more than they discussed SEW aspects. This was relevant to their early learning. When students began discussing wellbeing and creating artefacts, codes and themes similar to Phase Two were evident. Student responses from the focus groups were colour-coded and set out in a table, and thematic analysis was used to analyse and generate the data. See Appendix VIII - Student Statements from Focus Groups. Each new line presents a new response. All students were allowed to answer questions and actively participate in all tasks. The themes generated from this data collection phase were remarkably similar to those from the previous phase. I will discuss the student journey through themes next.

The Student Journey Through Themes

The data analysis techniques assisted in identifying themes, which were evident much earlier than the previous phase. The thematic analysis provided deep insights into participants' experiences cultivating wellbeing dispositions. Many of the themes evident in the student data collection phase mirrored the educator phase. This provided a clear understanding of the importance of educators embracing the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions in their own lives and how quickly it was imparted to their students. I will discuss themes from Phase Two and their relevance to this phase. I will also discuss the new theme (**safety**) that was generated.

The blame game was not evident among educators or students in this phase. The educators (6) had embraced the idea of cultivating wellbeing dispositions and focused on the possibility of enhancing wellbeing in their classrooms. These six educators saw themselves as

advocates for wellbeing and took on the cultivation of wellbeing as an individual and collective responsibility. Wellbeing improvement no longer challenged these educators; Students were eager to learn and enjoyed the innovative activities. They began to advocate for wellbeing and saw it as an individual and a collective responsibility.

The theme of **the fear factor**, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, was still evident in at least two educators' interactions. This theme was evident in the initial focus group sessions, with students hesitant to answer questions and repeating each other's answers. The **fear factor** theme was apparent in about 15 per cent of parents who did not agree or return their consent forms. The culture around mental illness is usually negative, and some parents' reluctance to have their children participate in the study indicated scepticism and lack of understanding around wellbeing education.

Safety was a new theme that was presented in the data. **Safety** was discussed by at least two educators and all the student groups in this phase. Students were learning about **safety**, and posters (discussed previously) were displayed around the school and in every classroom. When students feel **safe** and connected, they can learn and engage positively with their peers. Young people must be **safe** and supported to understand mental and physical health and experience a positive wellbeing state. **Safety** was generated as an essential theme for students to cultivate wellbeing dispositions (See Appendix VIII - Student Statements from Focus Groups).

The time factor was not explicitly discussed in student explorations. Students were keen to make the **time** to participate in these explorations. Students were seen learning to manage their time. They worked harder and saw these explorations as a reward. Educators focused on the **time factor** theme as more of a facilitator rather than an impactor. They saw **time** management as

vital. Educators in this phase managed their **time** and concentrated on bringing **contentment and balance** to their lives.

Contentment and balance were other themes that students did not explicitly discuss in their explorations; however, **contentment and balance** were present in students' lesson explorations and reflections, especially the ones set up by their educators. Students **balanced** their classroom activities and managed their behaviour by utilising the meditation spaces in their classrooms. Educators' influence on their students became increasingly evident in this phase. *A student commented, we are all loved - we are all stars inside.*

Mindfulness was an idea accepted by educators and students alike. They began using **mindfulness** concepts to learn to focus, be still, and reflect. The skills they learned about being in the present assisted them in all learning areas. By this phase, **mindfulness** had morphed into a facilitator and was used to enhance impactors and enablers. At times, students would take themselves away to the classroom **mindfulness** space to reflect and rejuvenate. When educators nurture and model **mindfulness** in the classroom, students follow, and their classrooms become a calmer and welcoming learning space. Students commented - *Thank you for teaching me about meditation because it calms me down every time when I am sad.*

I feel happy now that I have learned how to be mindful.

I love being mindful.

Mindfulness makes me feel happy

Practise what you preach. The educators in this phase were **practising** what they found themselves **preaching**. They began to recreate their classrooms as wellbeing spaces and had set up ways to incorporate wellbeing into their teaching and learning experiences. In every

educational setting, policy and curriculum document, there is an overt reference to wellbeing; however, in practice, wellbeing competes with education. At times, the added value of wellbeing in improving these educational conditions is overlooked or forgotten. In this study's early phases, the attention to wellbeing skills was sidelined and often forgotten over other educational goals and agendas. The focus on wellbeing from the inception of this study brought about more awareness and attention to wellbeing. The educators felt supported and were now advocating for wellbeing. When educators **practised what they preached**, they nurtured and created a culture and discourse for their students to pursue. Students were looking out for their peers and their educator's wellbeing by practising what they had learned. Students commented that - *I can fill a bucket by being peaceful, by being helpful.*

Peace makes friends

I can fill your bucket by saying good things.

I can fill a bucket by making someone happy.

Wellbeing beyond happiness. **Happiness** was a popular term used rather than **wellbeing**. For example, students in years one and two answering the question -What is wellbeing said it was *feeling good, well or happy*. They did not have the vocabulary or had not heard the term wellbeing used very much. In years three, four and five, students had just completed a unit on healthy eating and exercise for HPE. Their answers focused on healthy eating and exercise; mental health was forgotten. **Happiness** was an overused term and was used interchangeably for **wellbeing**. When students explored **wellbeing** as a term and understood its overarching meaning, they embraced the term and used it more freely and openly. As discussed initially, **wellbeing** was more than physical and expanded into spiritual, moral, aesthetic, social and emotional elements. When young people are offered resources and taught skills to cope with

emotions (including happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and frustration), they can better manage and support each other with school and life challenges. Students commented, *My favourite lesson was when we learnt about feelings.*

I think I know that wellbeing means being healthy and mindful.

I think wellbeing means being mindful.

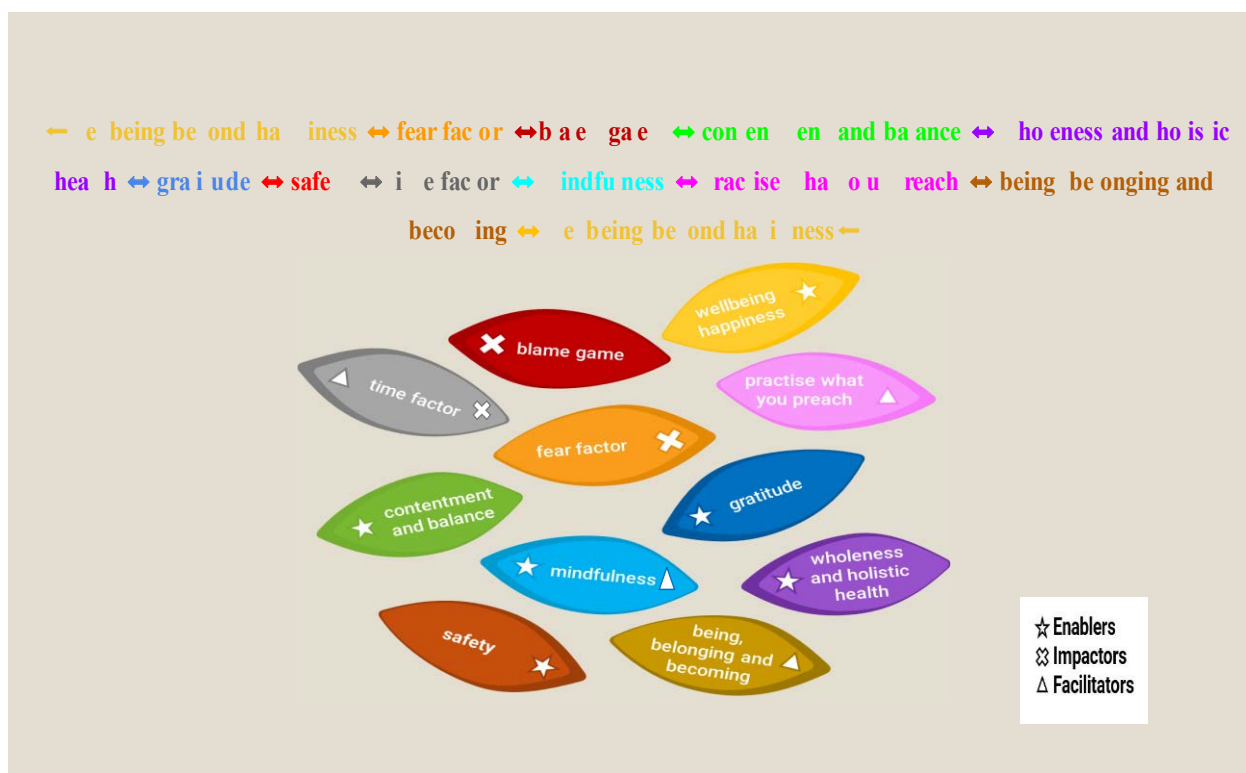
Wholeness and Holistic Health. When young people have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness, and personal identity, they feel empowered to manage emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical wellbeing (MCEETYA), 2008; Mparntwe, (2020). Once they grasped the idea of wellbeing, they linked their physical **health** learnings and perspective to the **wholeness and holistic health** perspective. The HPE learning instilled the value of exercise and healthy eating, and educators were able to link mental health into their teaching.

Gratitude was an overarching theme discussed when students explored **kindness** and compassion towards each other. The idea of **gratitude** was a large part of their RE curriculum, a concept they worked on and began practising with each other. Many students took the initiative to use **gratitude** journals and discussed this concept in depth. Students participated in **kindness** challenges, discussed **kindness** and linked **kindness** to **gratitude**. A student commented - *I can fill a bucket by being kind to people, being generous, and saying kind words.*

Being, Belonging and Becoming. This theme was seen more as a facilitator. Educators and students focused on more than fitting in; they created a safe place to **be, belong and become** in their classrooms. The need for **belonging** was established in Phase Two, and this theme is equally critical for learners. Brown (2010; 2012; 2017), Seligman (2014; 2018), Smith (2017), and McGirr (2021) discuss the importance of meaning and **belonging** for overall wellbeing.

These students explored the need to feel they **belonged** and began to utilise their friendship skills to enhance this theme. Figure 32 depicts the themes with the new **safety** theme was added. The most significant revelations in this phase were educators' flow-on effect and influence on their students. "Well, teachers promote well students" (McCallum & Price, 2010, p. 20). Students commented - *I know I belong when I am calm and happy - I belong by being nice.*

Figure 32



Themes generated from student interactions.

The End of Phase Three

This phase marked An important milestone in this journey. It concluded the phase on cultivating student wellbeing dispositions and exploring the research questions from a student perspective. First, I examined policy documents, meeting agendas, minutes, and reports. The

qualitative data from transcripts from the two focus group discussions and my observation notes, personal reflections, diary entries, written responses, classroom work samples and artefacts were collected sequentially throughout the study and used to understand this research endeavour. Quantitative descriptive data from the beginning and end survey was used to supplement other data and understand the overall state of wellbeing among students. The qualitative data offered additional information to supplement quantitative findings and assisted in a clearer understanding of the phenomena and answers to the research questions. Without the in-depth information from qualitative data, understanding the context and making sense of only the quantitative data would have been challenging. The mixing of the data was effective in clarifying the themes and understanding the participant's perceptions.

Thematic analysis assisted in the data interpretation, and I also extended the analysis with questioning techniques, concept mapping, analysing, contextualising the literature, and focusing on theory. I connected the findings with personal experiences, background, and consequences, utilising reflexivity, crystallisation, and triangulation. In addition, I sought advice from critical friends and educators, who provided understanding from their experiences and perspectives.

The multilevel approach, which brings together various perspectives within the classroom system, allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research question and enhanced possibilities for cultivating wellbeing dispositions with this group of learners. The challenges and enabling factors were similar to the educators (themes), and learners cultivated wellbeing dispositions through hands-on MMETTAS-based activities and experiences. It was clear that for learners to cultivate wellbeing dispositions, educators must first understand wellbeing and cultivate wellbeing dispositions. This approach facilitated the identification of similarities and

differences among diverse groups, thereby enriching the understanding of the research phenomenon. Data saturation was achieved in this phase. Learners focused on several crucial factors to enhance wellbeing within the school. Learners were cultivating wellbeing dispositions by deeply understanding the concept of wellbeing and its implications, stimulating intellectual curiosity and engagement.

- They discussed and normalised wellbeing, shifting language and understanding of **happiness and wellbeing**.
- Focused on **feeling safe** and working together (**practising what they preach**).
- They looked out for each other and encouraged peers through stressful situations (**being, belonging, becoming**).
- They reflected, becoming **mindful** and focused on **gratitude and kindness**.
- They understood their passion (mission) and learned through MMETTAS Pedagogy.
- Focused on ways to cultivate wellbeing dispositions together.
- They understood enablers and impactors, advantages and disadvantages, welfare and self-care, relationships and friendships, flourishing and thriving (**wholeness and holistic health**).

Chapter Summary

This was the third and final data collection phase in this mixed-method arts-based case study on wellbeing in primary education. This phase focused on the challenges students face in cultivating wellbeing dispositions in the classroom. In this chapter, I introduced the participants, recapped the methods and data collection, and discussed the research outcomes and findings. The thoroughness of the data collection process instilled confidence in the robustness of the findings.

Like Phase Two, I combined quantitative and qualitative data to comprehensively explore the research phenomenon (wellbeing in education). This process aimed to understand students' challenges and how they cultivated wellbeing dispositions. Experiencing the *Culture and Discourse* of wellbeing among educators and learners was an essential layer for this third and final data collection phase. Students first needed to understand the *Nature and Nurture* of wellbeing to enact the *Culture and Discourse* of wellbeing.

By employing a wide array of research methodologies and methods, I was able to conduct a comprehensive analysis and provide detailed interpretations of the phenomenon at hand. The surveys, observations, and workshops, which included yarning circles, focus group discussions, reflections, and the creation of artefacts, served as diverse sources of rich data, offering insightful information. This approach allowed me to gain a profound understanding and capture diverse perspectives, unique insights, and rich narratives encapsulating human experience and wellbeing complexities. The crystallisation, triangulation and thematic analysis were instrumental in understanding and identifying the factors influencing student wellbeing, providing valuable insights.

This research equips educators and learners with practical insights by presenting a holistic perspective on students and understanding various strategies to address the challenges encountered in cultivating wellbeing dispositions in the classroom. Many of the same themes were identified, emphasising the influence of educators on their students. A new **safety** theme emerged from student experiences, offering a fresh perspective on classroom management. Some existing themes were less relevant to the learners (**the time factor, contentment and balance, fear factor, and the blame game**). However, more relevant themes were reinforced (**happiness**

to wellbeing, mindfulness, gratitude, practising what they preach, wholeness and holistic health, being, belonging, and becoming). Many themes were identified as facilitators, providing avenues for innovative and practical approaches to wellbeing.

Data saturation was achieved towards the end of this phase, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing. Educators and learners need to understand the *Nature* of wellbeing first. They then need to create a *Nurturing* environment needed to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. The enablers and impactors become useful facilitators to *Nurture* wellbeing skills, and the *Culture and Discourse* of wellbeing are enacted through this process. We found answers to how educators and learners can cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom by first understanding the impactors and enablers. In conclusion, these results advance the understanding of wellbeing in education and inspire further research directions in this area of wellbeing, equipping educators with practical knowledge for promoting and advocating for wellbeing, teaching students' wellbeing skills and empowering them.

Chapter Seven - The Perpetuation of this Journey: Promoting Wellbeing in Education

...Philosophy is, metaphorically speaking, about finding the well in your village, the place from which your mind draws the water it needs to flourish. We should really shift the language of well-being to that of well-finding. If well-being is about oneself, then it is likely to soon become a dry stream in a wilderness. Becoming the best me I can possibly be, to take one of the cliches of the well-being industry, is too narrow a horizon within which to explore life's possibilities. Well-finding, on the other hand, means locating a source, a gathering point, access to the depths, a guarantee of life for both oneself and one's village, it suggests a connection with the natural world. It honours our status as creatures, not as egos (McGirr, 2021, Intro).

Overview and Structure (Chapter Seven)

This mixed-method arts-based case study aimed to comprehensively explore the multifaceted aspects of wellbeing in an educational context. The study focused on cultivating wellbeing dispositions in education among learners and educators. Wellbeing was defined as “the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced” (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230). The investigation in this research deconstructed wellbeing as a state and a practice dependent on contextual and personal circumstances. The challenges (impactors) and enhancing factors (enablers) emerge when the perspective is on understanding wellbeing from a *Nature, Nurture, Culture, and Discourse* (Wellbeing Literacy Framework) perspective. This understanding supports and facilitates innovative ways to cultivate wellbeing dispositions.

The chapter began with an excerpt from McGirr's (2021) introduction chapter in *Ideas to Save Your Life*, where he discusses the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence. McGirr (2021) asserts that finding the source of life and vitality and the sustenance and metamorphosis for individuals and communities is essential to discover wellbeing. In this study, the search for the conditions of possibility for wellbeing resonates with McGirr's (2021) ideas of well-finding. The exploration is focused on understanding the factors that influence wellbeing in primary education. Within this exploration, enablers and impactors (Carter & Andersen, 2019a; 2023) that contribute to or hinder wellbeing development for this group of educators and learners were identified—the generated themes assisted in answering the questions and understanding this complex phenomenon of wellbeing in education. Further developments reframed impactors and enablers as facilitators that were used to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. This empowered an inspiring, transformative and sustainable change to wellbeing in education.

In Chapter One, I introduced the study and provided details of my background and the research aim. I defined new terms and discussed the study design and the initial steps. A distinct feature of this study was embedding relevant research within all chapters of this thesis. The study discussed a novel approach focusing on various ways (ABR, autoethnography, PAR) to understand the wellbeing phenomenon.

Chapter Two, reported on the available and relevant research, and expanded educational wellbeing literature. I scrutinised the literature from various fields to understand wellbeing and uncovered the limitations in the field. Focusing on these gaps assisted me in going deeper to discover ways to enhance wellbeing in education and contribute knowledge to the field.

The overarching questions: What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education? How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom? Influenced the methodology. These questions were formulated based on the need to understand the dynamics of wellbeing in education to enhance wellbeing.

Chapter Three, elaborated on the novel hands-on methodology introduced in Chapter One. This comprehensive approach was seen as necessary to answer the research questions. The innovative MMETTAS pedagogy utilised to cultivate wellbeing dispositions in Phases Two and Three enhanced the study. In this research, the search for wellbeing in education was approached through three phases using multiple methods. The three phases, the methods and the findings will be summarised in this chapter.

In Chapter Four, Phase One, I focused on the introspection of my life professionally and personally through autoethnography. These introspections enhanced my understanding of wellbeing in education, and through my learnings and introspections, I also began formulating the Wellbeing Literacy Framework. Exploring wellbeing from a *Nature, Nurture, Culture and Discourse* (Wellbeing Literacy Framework) standpoint highlighted the challenges and conditions that enhance and impact wellbeing.

Chapter Five focused on cultivating wellbeing dispositions among educators, and Chapter Six concentrated on cultivating wellbeing dispositions among learners. The data collected highlighted the everyday challenges educators and learners face in their classrooms. The themes generated in these phases (**the fear factor, the blame game and the time factor, safety, moving to wellbeing beyond happiness, mindfulness, gratitude, wholeness and holistic health, being, belonging and becoming, contentment and balance, practise what you preach**) provided

insight into understanding and cultivating wellbeing dispositions among educators and learners. Implementing an innovative wellbeing pedagogy such as MMETTAS Pedagogy that included the enablers and facilitators was effective in **practising what we preached**.

This final chapter aims to provide an overview of the entire process and bring this narrative to a close. It summarises the literature and the research process and recaps the findings and answers to the research questions. This chapter concludes by focusing on the limitations and the contributions to the broader field of educational wellbeing.

Summarising the Literature

Currently, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic dominates the news about wellbeing. The overall research on wellbeing was abundant, but there were, and continue to be, gaps in the research, with limited data on young children and their wellbeing (AIHW, 2023) and limited studies on young children and ABR (Barton & Baguley, 2017; Cologon et al., 2019; Isbell & Raines, 2022). I analysed the literature from various fields to gain a holistic understanding of wellbeing. The limited data on education and wellbeing mainly focused on the student, not the educator. Overall, the literature pointed out the state of wellbeing among educators and learners as challenging the education system (Carter, 2016).

Wellbeing and education are interconnected and influence each other (AIHW, 2022; AITSL, 2022; WHO, 2023). Schools play a crucial role in promoting the wellbeing of students. Education can positively impact young people's wellbeing (CESE, 2014; McCallum et al., 2017). Students' wellbeing can affect their ability to learn and succeed. Providing a supportive environment where students can develop social, emotional, physical, spiritual, moral, aesthetic,

and cognitive (mental) skills is essential (MCEETYA, 2008; Mparntwe, 2020). We must also consider the educators' wellbeing to improve educational wellbeing (McCallum et al., 2017). Many programs, policies, and frameworks are discussed in the literature, yet the challenges of implementing and enhancing wellbeing in education persist (AIHW, 2023; AITSL, 2022).

Roffey's (2012b) article, *Pupil Wellbeing and Teacher Wellbeing: Two Sides of the Same Coin*, asserts the importance of educator-student relationships for learning and wellbeing. From Roffey's (2012a; 2012b) research to more recent studies, many scholars (Carroll et al., 2022; Dabrowski, 2020; McCallum et al., 2017; Ziebell et al., 2020) have continued this exploration, trying to understand the link between the educator-student relationship; however, the challenges faced within wellbeing education among educators and learners persist with no improvement. Educators need more support and assistance to expertly implement available programs (Waters & Loton, 2019). While there have been s to educator-friendly programs, more attention must be paid to this area. This study focused on an emergent design within a transformative paradigm to understand educator and learner challenges. Autoethnography, ABR and PAR were utilised to enhance collective hands-on learning approaches to cultivate wellbeing dispositions among this group. The research process from Chapter Three - Crafting a Wellbeing Exploration: The Methodology and the Methods is summarised next.

Summarising the Research Process and Chosen Methodology

The qualitative mixed methods arts-based case study provided a multifaceted understanding of wellbeing in primary education. Phase One utilised an autoethnographic exploration of my life. By openly sharing my experiences and reflections, I aimed to increase the credibility of this study. Autoethnography enhances self-reflection, depth, and authenticity,

adding a personal touch to the research and exploring the subjective aspects of wellbeing (Adams et al., 2011). It enriched the exploration of wellbeing in education and contributed to a more holistic understanding of the topic. By integrating my own experiences into the study, I hoped to provide a rich and nuanced context to the broader topic of wellbeing. The reflexive process offers insight into how personal experiences influence one's understanding. Telling my relatable and impactful narrative enables the reader to understand better the complexities and challenges individuals, including educators and students, face in real-life situations. By telling my factual and redemptive story, I also wanted to empower others to consider, normalise and prioritise wellbeing in their own lives. Through these explorations, I focused on the many dimensions (physical, spiritual, cognitive, social and emotional [psychological], and personal) of wellbeing.

Phases Two and Three provided real-life explorations utilising PAR to understand educators' and students' stories and the conditions of possibility to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. The PAR strategies enhanced the ability to involve stakeholders (educators, learners, and administrators) as active participants in the research process. This direct involvement enhanced advocacy and the study's relevance and impact. I wanted to connect deeply with the subject because wellbeing is a personal experience. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the broader topic of wellbeing is particularly important to the holistic concept.

This study provides deep knowledge about individuals, groups (educators, learners), contexts (school, classroom), and specific phenomena (wellbeing in education) by examining them in real life. Immersing myself in real-life experiences gave me a comprehensive understanding of various factors (enablers, impactors), including power dynamics, relationships and how they interact and influence wellbeing in education. I gained real-time insights, which

were particularly beneficial to understanding the ever-changing nature of wellbeing in education. These experiences and recollections of my life journey and educators' and students' lives provided insights impossible to obtain through traditional single-method studies.

This study captured the richness of participants' experiences and quantified certain aspects of the data to gain a comprehensive analysis. A holistic understanding of the factors influencing wellbeing among educators and learners surfaced by combining descriptive quantitative data measurements with qualitative data insights. The combination of data through reflexivity (Archer, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2020), crystallisation (Ellingson, 2009; Richardson, 2000) and triangulation (Campbell et al., 2020) provided a holistic view of wellbeing in education and enhanced the validity and reliability of the data. The quantitative data findings highlighted student and educator populations. They provided information on wellbeing indicators, such as levels of wellbeing and the overall social and emotional state of students and educators. The quantitative data also enhanced and further informed the qualitative data—the understanding gained from the quantitative data assisted in implementing evidence-based and engaging experiences for educators and students. The qualitative data assisted in cultivating educational wellbeing dispositions and enriched deeper understanding by delving into participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and narratives.

The transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2012) provided a robust framework that enabled me to explore the complexities of wellbeing in education and contributed to positive change within the educational context. The ability to critically analyse the power structures and the ethical decision-making process enhanced the participants' (students' and educators') autonomy and respect (Mertens, 2009). I reflected deeply on my biases, values, and perspectives

(reflexivity), my participants' perspectives, and the data from various methods (Crystallisation). The validity and credibility of this research were of the utmost importance, and the ethical decision-making process assisted in staying grounded.

The ability to approach wellbeing in education holistically, focusing on various dimensions and interconnectedness and interdependence, was beneficial. Understanding this phenomenon within the broader social, cultural, and historical context was crucial for this wellbeing research. The transformative paradigm was imperative when focusing on wellbeing, encompassing subjective experiences and societal influences (Mertens, 2012). Promoting wellbeing for all in education enabled social change and advocacy. Wellbeing research within a transformative paradigm is ultimately concerned with personal and collective transformation (Mertens, 2007). The transformative paradigm enabled personal growth, lasting outcomes and transformative experiences for my participants and me.

The transformative paradigm also assisted me in shaping the interventions and strategies to enhance participants' sense of empowerment and ownership (Mertens, 2010). It encouraged innovation and creativity, and my novel MMETTAS Pedagogy approach assisted in nurturing, problem-solving, and exploring educational wellbeing (Ranatunga, 2013). The ABR introduced innovative avenues for expression and exploration, allowing participants to engage with the research process creatively (Cologon et al., 2019; Isbell & Raines, 2022). MMETTAS Pedagogy is an arts-based learning-by-doing process. These methods and processes demonstrated the applicability of research outcomes in real-world situations. The combination of data assisted in further developing and improving the innovative pedagogy (MMETTAS) to promote educator and student wellbeing.

The learning-by-doing principle (Reese, 2011), a cornerstone of this study, emphasised active engagement and experiential learning. Participants' engagement and practical involvement were key in validating and enriching the findings. Engaging in the context and with the participants provided a deeper understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and dynamics of wellbeing in this educational setting. The learning-by-doing principle enriched participants' engagement and deepened my (researcher's) understanding of complexities inherent in wellbeing. Participants highly valued the practical strategies for enhancing wellbeing. The idea of knowledge acquisition through hands-on experiences, experimentation and reflections on experiences was beneficial. Wellbeing is context-dependent, and the learning-by-doing approach enabled me to appreciate the specific context and nuances and tailor the research to address differences. This holistic approach has contributed to exploring the factors influencing and enhancing wellbeing in primary education.

It is clear that various contextual factors influence wellbeing in education and the emergent design (Pailthorpe, 2017) enabled me to respond to the specific context and nuances of the educational setting, ensuring the study's relevance. Allowing participants to contribute meaningfully enhanced their ownership, engagement, and involvement in shaping the research as it unfolded. The continuous nature of the emergent design facilitated novel strategies to improve wellbeing. I experimented with data collection methods, analytic approaches and interventions as the study progressed. This creativity enabled innovative solutions for enhancing wellbeing in education. The findings were rigorous and highly applicable in real-life educational settings, helping us address immediate challenges. Wellbeing in education is a dynamic and evolving area, and utilising an emergent design brought several beneficial aspects to the research process.

Combining multiple methodologies and principles further facilitated a dynamic and flexible approach, enabling the exploration of wellbeing from various angles and adapting to the evolving nature of the research journey. The flexibility and adaptability to the ongoing data collection and analysis were beneficial, mainly when unexpected insights and day-to-day challenges arose during the study. The continuous data collection cycle, analysis and refinement of strategies and focus-group questions enhanced the depth and quality of the findings. The holistic evaluation enabled multiple dimensions and interactions over time. Wellbeing in education is a multifaceted and intricate topic. Exploring this phenomenon and its diverse perspectives and dimensions enabled a robust and deep understanding. The next sections summarise the findings from each of the three phases.

Summary of Key Findings - Phase One

In Chapters One and Four (Phase One), I focused on my life experiences to understand the cultivation of my wellbeing dispositions. I utilised autoethnography and ABR to explore my life story. I began Chapter Four with the following sentiment. “Your vision will become clear only when you look into your own heart. Who looks outside dreams, who looks inside awakes” (Jung, 1970, p. 564). An individual's previous experiences shape their perception. My ethnicity, culture, values, experiences, and environment have shaped my understanding of wellbeing and how I perceive the world around me. Similarly, every individual's perception of the world will depend on their culture and how they see their relationships (with others and themselves), interpret situations, and regulate feelings and behaviour. These perceptions, in turn, influence the wellbeing of a community.

I shared the deep introspection of my life in Chapter Four, and the professional journey that assisted me in understanding my perspectives and how I learned to understand others' perspectives. I continued this journey, reflecting on the idea that we do not always see things as they are; we see things as we are. The exploration of wellbeing through my life journey (personal and professional), my experiences, and my learning and research explorations provided me with the insight to formulate a framework to explore wellbeing and to assist in cultivating wellbeing dispositions in the primary classroom. I embraced the idea of contemplating the wellbeing phenomenon by focusing on wellbeing through *Nature, Nurture, Culture and Discourse*. This framework can be enacted through ABR and MMETTAS Pedagogy. Next, I will summarise each component of the Wellbeing Literacy Framework (*Nature, Nurture, Culture and Discourse*).

The Wellbeing Literacy Framework (Nature)

Throughout my life encounters, I felt compelled to understand and reflect on my and others' wellbeing. My own life story and my educational and career opportunities enabled these situations. I learned to contemplate my wellbeing and that of others around me. When I began to reflect deeply on myself and my life, I began to understand the subtle nuances of wellbeing. This process enabled me to accept and put into perspective others' views and life experiences. I was interested in understanding and improving the conditions of possibility by searching and “finding the well in the village” (McGirr, 2021, Intro). To understand wellbeing, we must begin by understanding the nature of wellbeing first.

In Phase One, I discussed and elaborated on the nature of wellbeing (as I saw it) through visual metaphor, using three paintings my children created to explain my learning about the Nature of wellbeing. My training in IDT enabled me to interpret the paintings as metaphors for

wellbeing, the broader human experience, and personal and societal struggles. I see art as a source of metaphorical expression and find visual art a unique and powerful medium to express complex ideas beyond the limitation of language.

The painting *Hamster* symbolises the elusive nature of wellbeing, which can be challenging to perceive (Van Agteren et al., 2021; Pankhania et al., 2018). The elusive nature of wellbeing refers to the fact that wellbeing is a complex and multifaceted concept that can be invisible or hard to see, define and measure. As McGirr (2021) stated wellbeing is about well finding and more about searching and discovering the well within each village. Understanding the elusive nature of wellbeing can assist us in developing a more nuanced and holistic approach to cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

The painting *Sun-Speckled*, with its dark and cloudy sky and two trees balancing the grassy foreground, helps us to understand that cultivating wellbeing dispositions can be seen as a process of change and growth. As Rogers (1951; 1961; 1969) pointed out, humans are always in the process of change and growth, and embracing metamorphosis to grow and flourish is essential. Focusing on wellbeing as a process of transformation and growth or development is critical to understanding the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions.

The painting *Kaleidoscope*, with specks of colour, reminds us that viewing wellbeing from multiple perspectives provides a more holistic understanding (Pankhania et al., 2018). Bowlby's idea that "reality is not fixed, and like a kaleidoscope, it morphs depending on which lens we use" (Bowlby, 2021, p. 12) was essential to strengthen this idea. To understand wellbeing, it is important to view it from multiple perspectives. Being open to different viewpoints and considering the experiences and perspectives of others can help individuals

develop empathy, compassion, and a deeper understanding of our world. This understanding can also help individuals build stronger relationships, foster social connections, and enhance their overall sense of wellbeing. Focusing on the nature of wellbeing and reflecting on my role as a parent, counsellor, and educator assisted me in pondering the aspect nurture plays in wellbeing.

The Wellbeing Literacy Framework (Nurture)

The Nurture aspect of wellbeing can be seen as having four critical areas of development. As I discussed, to nurture wellbeing, we must first create an environment that can foster the growth of wellbeing. Individuals need to have the opportunities to be in environments where wellbeing dispositions are modelled (Ahn et al., 2020). Skills to cultivate wellbeing dispositions must be explicitly taught (Ledford et al., 2019). Ample opportunities to practise the skills and the opportunities to be able to apply them within the extended environment is important (Meadows & Cashdan, 1988). It is also essential for these strengths and skills (dispositions) to be accurately confirmed by significant others (Noddings, 1992; 1995a; 1995b). When these four aspects, the environment, explicit teaching, practising and confirmation, are part of learning, a culture and a Discourse of wellbeing are enabled.

The Wellbeing Literacy Framework (Culture and Discourse).

The classroom's Culture and Discourse of wellbeing are present when the following features are enacted. Educators and significant others seamlessly model wellbeing skills and dispositions as part of the day-to-day enactment of the classroom. Students begin to recognise wellbeing within themselves and then recognise wellbeing within others. Wellbeing is discussed freely, and dispositions and skills are actioned effortlessly. I continued to deepen my

understanding of the multifaceted nature of wellbeing and the intricate process of cultivating wellbeing dispositions, utilising this early framework in my counselling, teaching and learning encounters. I found that MMETTAS Pedagogy was seamlessly amalgamated within this framework. Exploring the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions through *Nature, Nurture, Culture, and Discourse* provided a comprehensive and holistic approach to progressing my understanding.

The wellbeing Literacy Framework of *Nature, Nurture, Culture and Discourse* is an overarching set of concepts that can provide a holistic and culturally sensitive understanding of wellbeing. This framework does not necessarily need to be used in comparison to existing frameworks but is a process that can oversee existing frameworks or policies to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. Its depth yet simplicity and adaptability enable a culturally sensitive exploration of understanding and exploring wellbeing. The Wellbeing Literacy Framework is an overarching principle that guides the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions.

Summary of Key Findings - Phase Two

Chapter Five began with the idea, “An understanding heart is everything in a teacher...One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings” (Jung, 1954, p. 248). This quote provides a poignant perspective that resonates with this phase of my study, focusing on educator wellbeing. Just as Jung (1954) emphasises the profound impact of teachers who connect on a human level, my research delves into the intricate web of factors that influence wellbeing in primary education. The Wellbeing Literacy Framework, by guiding the exploration of *Nature, Nurture, Culture and Discourse*, provides a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing.

In Phase Two, 32 educators expressed interest and provided written informed consent to partake in the study. We began this phase focusing on the idea that educator wellbeing was essential to understanding and enhancing classroom wellbeing. Educators initially focused on cultivating wellbeing dispositions and then began examining their philosophy and pedagogy to reflect deeply on their educational purpose. These educators on this journey were committed to exploring and understanding their wellbeing to enhance their classroom wellbeing.

This phase began with a survey and ended with a survey on educators' perceptions of their overall wellbeing. The quantitative data was beneficial in gaining a holistic understanding of the educator's objective (age group, experience as educator), subjective experiences (overall wellbeing and experiences), and demographics. Educators' perceptions of wellbeing and their experiences and methods of cultivating wellbeing dispositions were explored in this phase. Using PAR and ABR strategies enhanced the active participation and hands-on learning process. These insights were gathered from weekly workshop sessions, including a short mindfulness reflection, yarning circles, audio-recorded focus-group discussions, and MMETTAS Pedagogy-based activities. The innovative sessions engaged educators and enhanced their overall state of wellbeing and understanding of wellbeing by utilising the Wellbeing Literacy Framework.

The data collected was rich and insightful and was analysed for themes that played a crucial role in answering the research questions. Extensive data was collected from yarning circles, reflections, and observations. The thematic process helped me to make sense of the data and extract meaningful insights related to the research questions. I managed and narrowed my analysis and summarised the data. I focused on the bigger picture and then drew comprehensive conclusions, answering the research question through the patterns, connections, and trends. The

themes helped me to interpret the meaning behind the data. I tried to understand participants' underlying meanings, motivations, and experiences. The challenges (impactors) in enhancing wellbeing in the classroom became evident through the themes of **the fear factor, the time factor, the blame game**, and the inability to focus on **practising what you preach**. Many generated themes were also seen as enablers and facilitators (**contentment and work-life balance, wholeness, holistic health, expressing gratitude, being mindful, belonging and becoming**, and moving to **wellbeing beyond happiness**). Along with the personal and relationship factors, the themes assisted in understanding the conditions of possibility for enhancing wellbeing in this group of educators during this time and in this place. Several impactors and enablers morphed into a third category called facilitators (**managing the time factor, practising what you preach, mindfulness, being, belonging and becoming**), working together to enhance wellbeing dispositions further.

By exploring the conditions necessary for cultivating wellbeing and the challenges that hinder its implementation, the goal was to shed light on the critical role of educators in cultivating a nurturing and understanding environment. Just as educators who touch human feelings are cherished for their lasting influence, I sought to uncover how educators can contribute to young learners' holistic development and wellbeing. Through an innovative blend of methods, an overarching framework and MMETTAS-based pedagogy, my study echoes Jung's words to understand and enhance the heart-centred connection between educators, students, and the realm of wellbeing in education.

The data further informed the development of pedagogical approaches to wellbeing as critical factors, and MMETTAS Pedagogy assisted in exploring pedagogy, culture, personal and

relationship aspects. It was essential to consider not only the individual and relationship factors but also the systemic and environmental elements that contribute to the overall wellbeing of these stakeholders (educators and learners). These findings emphasise the need for a comprehensive pedagogy and an approach rather than disjointed programs and curricula add-ons to wellbeing in education. The next phase, Phase Three, was conducted with six class groups of students (126) and their educators.

Summary of Key Findings - Phase Three

This phase focused on PAR and ABR, collecting data from 126 learners and their six educators. The Reggio Emilia poem *The Hundred Languages of Children* (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 3) introduced this phase. This poem reminds us of young people's capabilities and the diverse ways they can learn and enhance their wellbeing. Just as the poem celebrates the myriad ways children express themselves, this study focuses on the multifaceted dimensions of wellbeing that influence a child's holistic growth. Similar to how the poem recognises that children communicate in various ways, this research has acknowledged that wellbeing speaks through several physical, emotional, social, spiritual, moral, cognitive, and aesthetic aspects. The poem's essence resonates with this phase of my study as it captured the richness of young people's concepts (languages) of wellbeing. The children in this phase expressed their thoughts and emotions through their countless expressions, actions, emotions, feelings, words, and artefacts. This phase honoured the unique voices of children and their pathways to enhancing wellbeing.

The findings in this phase echoed the educators' phase, with many of the same themes present. The themes of **the time factor, the blame game, contentment, and work-life balance** were not evident in the data with young people. A new theme of **feeling safe** was generated in

this data. The most relevant other themes for this phase of the data collection were the personal and relationship factor themes of moving to **wellbeing beyond happiness**, focusing on **wholeness and holistic health, expressing gratitude**, and **being mindful** along with the idea of **being, belonging and becoming**, the **fear factor**, and **practising what you preach** were other themes (impactors) that were relevant early on. The **wholeness and holistic health, being, belonging and becoming** are discussed in early childhood literature (Baumeister et al., 1995; Maslow, 1943; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969); however, the other concepts are not necessarily unique to education. Expressing **gratitude** (Iodice et al., 2021; Seligman, 2018) and being **mindful** (Davidson, 2016; Siegel, 2017) are discussed in existing psychology literature. The end of Phase Three marked the end of the data collection. By the end of this phase, it was clear that educators and students were motivated to work on their wellbeing but also began to advocate for others' wellbeing. They were focused on mindful, arts-based activities to enhance their wellbeing.

The challenges that arise in education are when the holistic wellbeing of students and educators is not prioritised. To bridge the gap between cognitive and social/emotional aspects of wellbeing within the primary education system, I focus on the potential disconnect between academic pursuits and the holistic wellbeing of students and educators. It highlights the importance of nurturing cognitive growth and fostering emotional and social development. I explored how educational practices can be enhanced by understanding the *Nature, Nurture Culture and Discourse* of wellbeing (The Wellbeing Literacy Framework) and then employing MMETTAS Pedagogy, a creative and innovative arts-based approach. The amalgamation of these aspects seamlessly aligns with keeping the connection between learning and wellbeing.

When educators can understand the unique challenges within their school context, creating the right conditions for wellbeing in the classroom becomes seamless. Educators can assist students in developing the skills and dispositions they need to thrive academically and personally. Understanding wellbeing from a *Nature, Nurture, Culture and Discourse* standpoint provides a holistic understanding of wellbeing in education. Educators in this study were better able to know how to create and facilitate positive learning environments that support the development of wellbeing dispositions in education.

In essence, the urgency of this research process emphasises the need to create educational environments that promote intellectual growth and the overall wellbeing of young learners. By embracing the transformative paradigm, emergent design, autoethnography, PAR, ABR and learning by doing principle, along with MMETTAS Pedagogy, my study offers insights into how the amalgamation of wellbeing and education can be addressed, nurturing a more holistic and enriching educational experience. This potential for transformation should inspire hope and motivation in all stakeholders.

My close involvement with the school during the planning and implementation of the educator and learner research project allowed me to have greater insight than would have been possible for an unattached researcher. Being intensely involved in the research context and my involvement in the school assisted me in recognising important nuances and processes. This deep knowledge of the school context helped me gain insight that may not be available to a researcher who was an outsider (Collier, 1994; Eastwood et al., 2016; Fleming, 2019a; 2019b; Mercer, 2007; Pedersen & Nikulina, 2021). As I shared history with these participants, I could immediately understand the issues raised and grasped the historical references. Flexibility and

the ability to share cultural norms with participants helped me understand their comments within that norm without bringing new interpretations.

Answering the Research Questions

The overarching research questions: What are the challenges and enabling factors for enhancing wellbeing in primary education? How can educators and learners cultivate wellbeing dispositions in the classroom? A shared understanding of the enablers and impactors that progress and hinder wellbeing is crucial to answer these questions. This shared understanding unites all stakeholders, makes them feel integral to promoting wellbeing in education and creates a common goal. Understanding wellbeing is about trying to comprehend the *Nature* of wellbeing. Individuals and communities must learn to recognise the elusive nature of wellbeing, focus on the different perspectives, and welcome change and growth (flux). It is optional in which order these three concepts are explored; nonetheless, they assist in understanding wellbeing and, in this case, wellbeing in education. When the *Nature* of wellbeing is understood and accepted, this becomes a beneficial starting point for exploring enablers and impactors of wellbeing. When we know what hinders and what enables us to enhance wellbeing, it becomes easier to engage in acts (*Nurture*) that cultivate wellbeing dispositions.

While perceptions may vary between communities, educational institutions, families, and individuals (educators, learners), focusing on creating the conditions of possibility is essential. It was discovered that deep explorations, open conversations, and supportive environments are the cornerstones of creating a shared understanding of wellbeing. This understanding is further enriched when we grasp the *Nurture* of wellbeing. A supportive environment, crucial for nurturing wellbeing, begins at the leadership level in education. As highlighted by AITSL

(2011; 2017; 2022), principals and school leaders play a pivotal role in building a positive learning environment. The school community feels respected, included, connected, and safe in such an environment (2011; 2017; 2022). A leadership-driven approach not only fosters wellbeing but also inspires and motivates all stakeholders, including educators, students, and administrators, to contribute to the wellbeing of the school community.

When *Nature* and *Nurture* are in harmony, the shared *Culture* and *Discourse* of wellbeing are created. This harmony is crucial to enhancing the wellbeing of educators and learners. The Wellbeing Literacy Framework, a structured approach to understanding and promoting wellbeing, guided this journey of understanding the enablers and impactors and how to cultivate wellbeing dispositions. This framework provides a common language and background for discussing and addressing wellbeing, thereby adopting a shared *Culture* and *Discourse* that is a byproduct and a crucial element in cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

Educators and learners need to feel included (**be**) and valued (**belong**) to thrive and grow (**become**). The many possibilities discussed in Phases Two and Three can enhance this growth process. For example, personal and relationship factors of shifting language to expressing kindness and **gratitude**, being **mindful**, focusing on **wellbeing beyond happiness, feeling safe, wholeness and holistic health, contentment and work-life balance**, managing the **time factor**, and being aware of the **fear factor** and **blame game** enhance wellbeing. 'Shifting language' here refers to using positive and empowering words and phrases that can influence one's mindset and promote a *Culture* of wellbeing. Identifying enablers and impactors (challenges) creates environments for enhancing wellbeing where educators and learners can cultivate wellbeing

dispositions. Converting perspectives to focus on impactors and enablers as facilitators also shifts wellbeing understanding.

All school staff, students, families, and the broader community must develop a 'shared understanding' of the importance of wellbeing (*Nature*) and maintain a 'constant focus' on cultivating wellbeing dispositions. The shared understanding of wellbeing creates a connection and builds a welcoming, inclusive *Culture*. Educators should support effective (*Nurture*) teaching and learning and create a positive *Culture* and *Discourse* of wellbeing in education. Learners and educators need a supportive environment for wellbeing conditions to thrive. Students should be active participants in their learning to cultivate a wellbeing journey. They should be *Nurtured* socially and emotionally to be respectful, resilient, and safe members (AITSL, 2022) of their community. Schools must prioritise these elements and create positive learning environments for all educators and learners. This means regularly discussing and addressing wellbeing issues, implementing strategies to promote wellbeing, and evaluating the effectiveness of these efforts. It is an ongoing process that requires sustained attention, understanding (*Nature*) and effort to *Nurture* and create the *Culture and Discourse* of wellbeing in Education.

Limitations and Weaknesses of the Study

While this research study provided deep insights into the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The research process may be reproduced to some extent; however, the findings are context-specific and may or may not be directly transferable to other educational settings. I have tried to reduce bias; however, the self-reported nature of some data collection methods could have introduced bias.

My role as an educator at the school may have influenced the data collection and analysis. I was also aware that due to the relationship I shared with these participants, they may have expected me to understand their references more than any other researcher. For example, at times, I may have needed to pursue them more, or when I did, participants may not have explained to me more fully as they would have to outsiders. Being aware of this situation alone made me work harder to gain a fuller explanation to reveal undercurrents I may have missed. Attaining complete neutrality is nearly impossible in situations involving human interaction. As Acton (2022), Beare (2007), and Gawronski and Payne (2010) assert, one must understand the less and greater levels of awareness of one's biases. Through triangulation (Campbell et al., 2020), reflexivity (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) and crystallisation (Ellingson, 2009) I endeavoured to keep this understanding at the forefront during the process. I aimed to give participants every opportunity to fully contribute to the research process, and I knew to avoid bringing new interpretations to their stories.

In this research, I focused closely on the researcher (myself), the educator and the learner. Families and communities can partner with the school to support student learning, safety and wellbeing (AITSL, 2011; DECSSA, 2022; ECA, 2021). Wellbeing is the shared responsibility of educators, students, families, and communities, and the opportunity to work with communities and families may have benefited further understanding. Involving the community, the parents and families would have been valuable for this research; however, due to time restraints and the logistics of this study, this was not possible and could be seen as a limitation of the study. The involvement of family members and the wider community would have enhanced the data and provided sustainability for the research and the field of wellbeing.

The time factor and inability to conduct a follow-up study with these same educators and students is also a limitation of this study. The pandemic and other professional and personal (family, health) challenges significantly influenced this work's immediate release and publication. However, these findings are urgent and timely, given the continuously declining state of wellbeing among the population nationally and internationally and the limited studies on the wellbeing of young people (children) in Australia (AIHW, 2023). This study provides crucial knowledge to understand wellbeing and implement ways to cultivate wellbeing dispositions in this post-pandemic period. The potential of future research to address some of the limitations discussed, such as including families, follow-up studies, conducting longitudinal studies across diverse educational contexts and employing mixed-methods approaches, offers hope and optimism for significantly enhancing the understanding and practice of wellbeing in education.

Contributions to the Broader Field of Study and Recommendations for the Future

This qualitative mixed-method arts-based case study has unveiled compelling findings, offering a multifaceted view of the research phenomena of wellbeing in education. Investigating the factors contributing to classroom wellbeing and exploring educator work to enhance wellbeing in learning was of utmost importance to this study. The research has contributed to the existing and growing body of knowledge on wellbeing and education by comprehensively understanding the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions and their nuances and complexities. The underpinning notion that schools are where children can learn, grow and flourish is crucial to understanding wellbeing in education. Thus, I began this thesis with the sentiment that at the heart of primary education resides a pivotal opportunity to cultivate a future where every educator and every child flourishes.

This research endeavour has uncovered convincing findings that possess the potential to redefine and add to existing knowledge and challenge conventional wisdom. Delving deep into the data revealed hidden patterns and connections. This analysis revealed fascinating points of convergence and divergence between data sets, allowing a comprehensive exploration of this research phenomenon. The integration validated the findings and uncovered novel perspectives, highlighting the immense power of collaboration in qualitative mixed-methods research. Through integrating descriptive qualitative and rich quantitative data, I have gone beyond the limitations of traditional single-method studies, capturing the complexity, richness, and diversity inherent in this subject of inquiry wellbeing in education.

Through my novel approach and innovative methodologies, I have revealed intricate links and relationships, highlighting connections that have gone unnoticed in previous research. The autoethnographic inquiry from Phase One and generated themes from Phases Two and Three encompass numerous factors that can enhance the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions. While cultivating wellbeing dispositions, the educators and students discovered the activities that nourish and sustain overall wellbeing. Educators, learners (participants), and I together searched for the well in this village (McGirr, 2021).

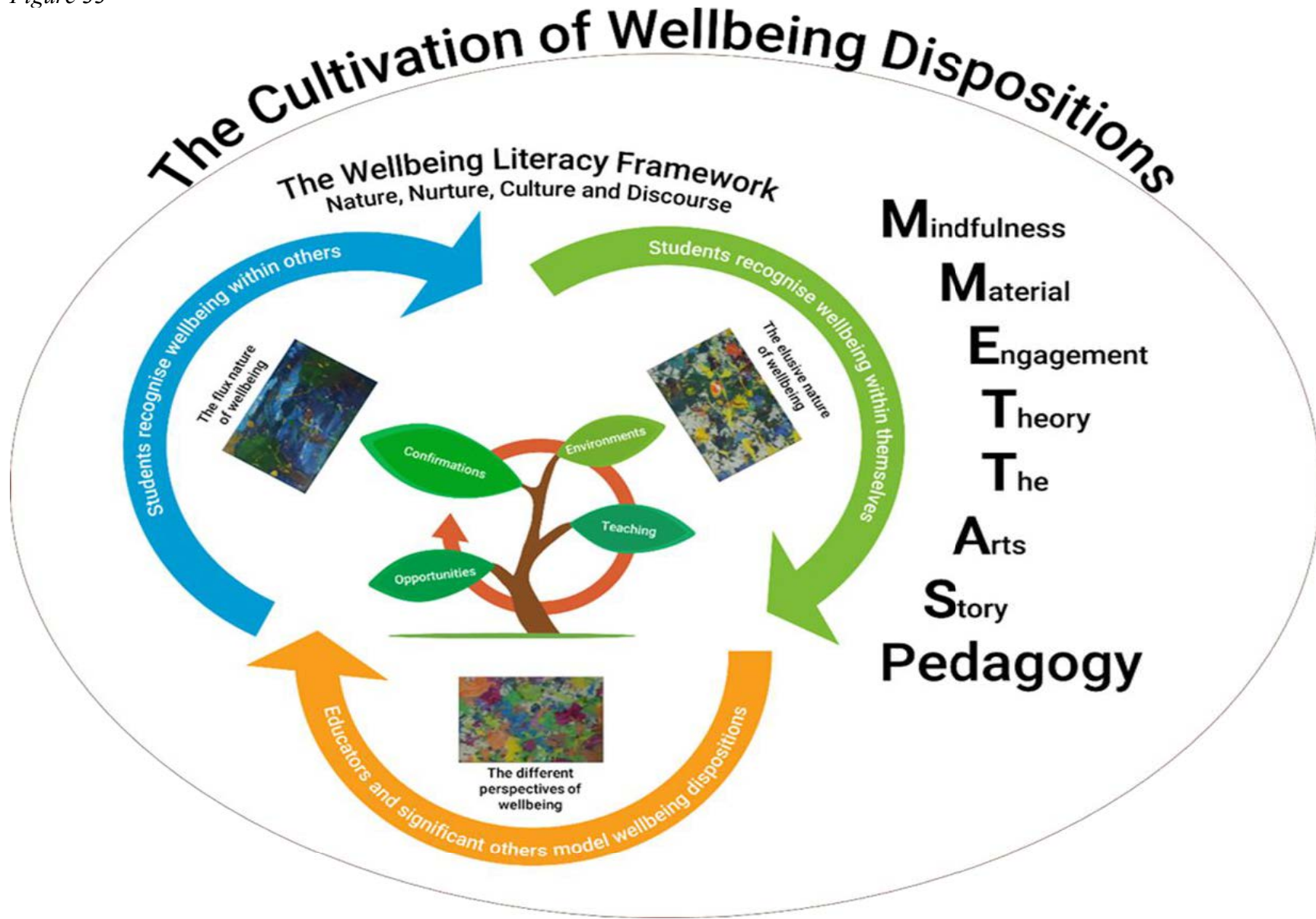
We discovered the wellspring, a continuous source of factors that influence wellbeing. The wellspring in wellbeing symbolises a source or origin from which positive wellbeing emanates. The wellspring of wellbeing resides in the joyous and holistic experience of vitality where individuals thrive and experience fulfilment. Essentially, the wellspring signifies the various elements and practices contributing to an individual and a group's holistic sense of wellbeing. Participants engaged in meaningful activities, **practising what they preached** while

creating a positive mindset (**gratitude, mindfulness**), managing their **time**, working on finding their sense of purpose, enhancing their emotional resilience (**wholeness and holistic health**), forming positive relationships (**being, belonging and becoming**, feeling **safe, content and balanced**), moving from **happiness to wellbeing**. These insights empower and foster an environment that promotes wellbeing, ultimately enhancing the educational experiences of students and educators.

Several significant developments from the three phases of this study warrant special attention. I have introduced a novel perspective on wellbeing education through the Wellbeing Literacy Framework, which focuses on enhancing wellbeing by understanding enablers and impactors. This unique approach gives educators and policymakers the tools to make informed decisions, concentrating on *Nature, Nurture, Culture, and Discourse* to optimise outcomes and drive positive change. The transformative potential of this study is significant, as it sheds light on unfamiliar insights and offers new perspectives on wellbeing education.

I explored the possibilities of cultivating wellbeing dispositions using an arts-based teaching pedagogy (MMETTAS). A pedagogy was chosen because it was more favourable than adding more content to the overcrowded curriculum. This research aimed to determine strategies and resources that effectively promote teacher wellbeing to promote student wellbeing. Promising avenues to support the wellbeing of students and educators were identified, including incorporating the Arts, mindfulness, and creative avenues to promote social-emotional learning and implementing flexible, hands-on learning and teaching methods. Figure 33 is an infographic highlighting the framework and the process of cultivating wellbeing dispositions.

Figure 33



The implications of this work resonate within education and across disciplines, offering an ongoing roadmap for innovation in progress. Laying the foundation for transformative advancements and nurturing a deeper appreciation for the intricacies of this research domain, these results beckon researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders (educators, students, and administrators) to embark on a new era of discovery, collaboration, and change. Beyond theoretical advancements, this study has real-world (practical) implications that can directly impact educators and learners. By bridging the gap between education and wellbeing, I have identified actionable recommendations and strategies to address pressing challenges in wellbeing education, thereby demonstrating the practical impact of this research. It generates real-world results by uncovering hidden patterns, providing actionable insights, and shedding light on a paradigm shift, a new way to understand the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions.

These findings offer valuable insight into the intricate dynamics governing wellbeing in education, opening up possibilities for further investigation. Based on this work, these recommendations have opened avenues for deep understanding and further exploration in this field and for expanding the sustainability of wellbeing in education. The practical implications of this research extend beyond the confines of this study. The findings of this research carry significant practical implications and actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, stakeholders, administrators, educators, and students. The contributions to the broader field of study are substantial, as this research has advanced knowledge and provided new perspectives on wellbeing in education. These findings establish a solid foundation for future exploration and set the stage for future investigation into wellbeing and wellbeing education. This study brings about the potential for interventions and policy changes to enhance wellbeing within education.

Deconstructing wellbeing to a state and a practice dependent on contextual and personal circumstances enables understanding wellbeing from a *Nature, Nurture, Culture, and Discourse* (Wellbeing Literacy Framework) perspective. Focusing on the elusive nature of wellbeing, growth and change (flux) and the multiple perspectives enhanced this exploration. Appreciating the *Nature* and *Nurturing* wellbeing creates the *Culture and Discourse* of wellbeing. These insights were illuminated within the creative explorations. The creative process has three stages: preparation, incubation, and illumination (Goleman & Kaufman, 1992). “When the creative spirit stirs, it animates a style of being a lifetime filled with the desire to innovate, to explore new ways of doing things, to bring dreams to reality” (Goleman & Kaufman, 1992, para 2). I conclude this discussion on wellbeing and the cultivation of wellbeing dispositions with a poem that holds personal significance; this poem employs a seesaw action to symbolise balance, an essential element of wellbeing. I share this as it succinctly encapsulates the understanding of classroom wellbeing. This poem evokes meaning, in this case, meaning for myself and meaning to share.

Classroom wellbeing by J. Ranatunga

Wellbeing is to me

more about the ‘We’, not just the ‘Me’.

more about the well community, not just the well individual,

more about the well-finding, not just the wellbeing.

more about becoming, not just what is.

more about balancing resources, not just facing challenges.

Student wellbeing is to me.

more about the student being, not just about the learning.

more about the heart, not just the mind.

more about belonging and becoming, not just the being.

more about the experience, not just the feeling.

more about resources and balance, not just the challenges

Teacher wellbeing is to me.

more about the teacher being, not just teaching.

more about wellbeing, not just well feelings.

more about understanding, not just the process.

more about mood and experience, not just teaching

more about resources and balance, not just the challenges.

A classroom is to me.

more about the place, not just the space.

more about the community, not just the location.

more about learners and educators, not just the learning.

more about the discovery, not just the teaching.

more about resources and balance, not just the challenges.

A wellbeing school is, to me

more about the people, not just the policy.

more about the Wellspring, not just the classrooms.

more about the belonging, not just the existence.

more about the pedagogy, not just the curriculum.

more about resources and balance, not just the challenges.

Wellbeing is to me, more about the We.

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Appendices

Appendix I - Ethics Approval

This administrative form
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Appendix II - Catholic Education Formal Permission to Conduct the Research

This administrative form
has been removed

Appendix III - Letters of Approval from School Principal

This administrative form
has been removed

Appendix IV - Information and Consent Forms



INFORMATION SHEET – TEACHERS
PROJECT TITLE: **The Art of Wellbeing in Primary School: A Mixed Method Study**

You are invited to take part in a research project about wellbeing in the classroom. The study is being conducted by Jacqueline Ranatunga and will contribute to the Doctor of Philosophy in Education at James Cook University.

If you agree to be involved in this study, your involvement will be as follows:

- You will complete a wellbeing survey at the beginning and end of the study. Each survey should take no longer than 10 - 15 minutes to complete.
- You will participate in a weekly focus group. Focus group sessions will be conducted once a week for approximately 40 minutes for six consecutive weeks. These sessions will be discussions about personal and classroom wellbeing, including learning mindfulness skills and undertaking mindfulness art activities. With your consent, these sessions will be audio recorded and creations and artefacts will be photographed.
- You will keep a visual diary and send in a digital copy weekly to the principal investigator for the duration of the study (6 weeks).

Further, the principal investigator will conduct two focus group discussions and two observations with students, at the beginning and end of the study, and your class may be invited to participate.

While there are no anticipated risks involved in taking part in this study, it is important to note that when discussing or reflecting on personal feelings and thoughts, some individuals may feel the need to explore these beyond the group sessions. We recommend that if the need arises, you seek professional counselling, which is provided to all staff through Centcare Counselling Services (1300236822). It is important to note that these sessions are not considered as clinical therapy sessions and are run purely for research and educational purposes.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice.

Your contact details will be confidential. The data from the study will be used in research publications and reports. You will not be identified in any way in these publications. However please note that confidentiality cannot be assured in focus groups.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact – Jacqueline Ranatunga or Reesa Sorin.

Principal Investigator:
Name: Jacqueline Ranatunga
College of Arts, Society and Education
James Cook University
Email: jacqueline.ranatunga@my.jcu.edu.au

Supervisor:
Name: A/Prof Reesa Sorin
College of Arts, Society and Education
James Cook University
Phone: +61 7 423 21116
Email: reesa.sorin@jcu.edu.au

If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:
Human Ethics, Research Office
James Cook University, Townsville, Qld, 4811
Phone: (07) 4781 5011 (ethics@jcu.edu.au)



INFORMED CONSENT FORM – TEACHERS

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	Jacqueline Ranatunga
PROJECT TITLE:	The Art of Wellbeing in Primary Schooling: A Mixed Method Study
COLLEGE:	Arts, Society and Education

I understand the aim of this research study is to explore classroom wellbeing. I have read the information sheet and consent to participate in this project. I have also been provided with a written information sheet to keep.

I understand that my participation will involve completing two surveys and participating in 6 focus group sessions, and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the information sheet.

I acknowledge that:

- taking part in this study is voluntary and I am aware that I can stop taking part in it at any time without explanation or prejudice and can withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided,
- that any information I give in surveys will be kept strictly confidential and that no names will be used to identify me with this study without my approval, however,
- I am aware that confidentiality cannot be assured in focus groups.

I consent to complete a questionnaire/ survey	☐	Yes	☐	No
I consent to participate in 6 focus group sessions	☐	Yes	☐	No
I consent for the focus groups to be audio recorded	☐	Yes	☐	No
I consent for my creations/artefacts to be photographed	☐	Yes	☐	No

Name: (printed)

Signature:

Date:

If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:
Human Ethics, Research Office
James Cook University, Townsville, Qld, 4811
Phone: (07) 4781 5011 (ethics@jcu.edu.au)



INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS
PROJECT TITLE: **The Art of Wellbeing in Primary Schooling: A Mixed Method Study**

Your child is invited to take part in a research project about wellbeing in the classroom. The study is being conducted by Jacqueline Ranatunga and will contribute to the Doctor of Philosophy in Education at James Cook University.

If you agree for your child to be involved in the study, the following will occur:

- Your child will complete a wellbeing survey at the beginning and end of the study. The survey, which will be completed in the classroom, should only take 10-15 minutes to complete.
- The Principal Investigator will observe classroom activity and document interactions during the research period. With your consent, your child's creations (art and writing) during the classroom observations and focus group discussions may be photographed. The photographs will be part of my data collection for my thesis.
- At the beginning and the end of the study some classes will be invited to join a focus group (which will be conducted at your child's school) to discuss their ideas about classroom wellbeing. Each focus group will take approximately 20 minutes and, with your consent, will be audio-recorded.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and your child can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice.

Your child's details and survey will be kept strictly confidential, although this cannot be assured in focus groups.

Data collected will be analysed and used in my thesis and research publications. Neither the school nor your child will not be identified in any way in these publications. Please note that confidentiality cannot be assured in focus groups.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact – Jacqueline Ranatunga or Reesa Sorin.

Principal Investigator:
Name: JACQUELINE RANATUNGA
College of Arts & Society & Education
James Cook University
Email: jacqueline.ranatunga@my.jcu.edu.au

Primary Supervisor:
Name: Reesa Sorin
College: of Arts & Society & Education
James Cook University
Phone: +61 7 423 21116
Email: Reesa.Sorin@jcu.edu.au

If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:
Human Ethics, Research Office
James Cook University, Townsville, Qld, 4811
Phone: (07) 4781 5011 (ethics@jcu.edu.au)



INFORMED CONSENT FORM – PARENT/S/GUARDIANS

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	Jacqueline Ranatunga
PROJECT TITLE:	The Art of Wellbeing in Primary School: A Mixed Method Study
COLLEGE:	Art, Society and Education

I understand the aim of this research study is to explore classroom wellbeing. I have also been provided with a written information sheet to keep. I have read the information sheet and consent for my child to participate in this project.

I understand that my child's participation will involve a survey and focus group discussions and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the information sheet.

I acknowledge that:

- taking part in this study is voluntary and I am aware that my child can stop taking part in it at any time without explanation or prejudice and can withdraw any unprocessed data they have provided,
- that any information my child provides in the surveys will be kept strictly confidential and that no names will be used to identify my child with this study,
- further, I am aware that confidentiality cannot be assured in focus groups.

(Please tick to indicate consent)

I consent for my child to complete two surveys about wellbeing	☐	Yes	☐	No
I consent for my child's classroom activity to be observed	☐	Yes	☐	No
I consent for my child's creations (art and writing) to be photographed	☐	Yes	☐	No
I consent for my child to participate in two focus group discussions	☐	Yes	☐	No
I consent for the focus groups to be audio recorded	☐	Yes	☐	No

Name: (printed)

Signature:

Date:

If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:
Human Ethics, Research Office
James Cook University, Townsville, Qld, 4811
Phone: (07) 4781 5011 (ethics@jcu.edu.au)

Appendix V - Educator Wellbeing & Resilience Survey

Gender Male Female
 Age group 21 - 25 26 - 35 36 - 45 46 - 55 56 - 65 66+
 Teaching experience (years) 1 - 3 4 - 7 8 - 12 15 - 20 21+
 Currently Teaching year level early prep -2 middle 3-4 upper 5-6

Question 1

How do you feel today?					
How did you feel yesterday?					
How did you feel in the past week?					

Question 2

Please indicate (by selecting the appropriate answer) to what extent each of the following applies to you:	Always	Usually,	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a. I feel happy					
b. I feel relaxed					
c. I feel energised					
d. I feel confident					
e. I feel loved					
f. I feel good about myself					
g. I think clearly					

Question 3

Please indicate (by selecting the appropriate answer) to what extent each of the following applies to you	Always	Usually	Some-times	Rarely	Never
a. I feel close to other people					
b. I am interested in other people					
c. I talk to people in my family about how I feel					
d. I talk to some people at work about how I feel					
e. Other people like to spend time with me					
f. I know how to behave in different situations					
g. I have chances to show others what I am good at					

Question 4

Please indicate (by selecting the appropriate answer) to what extent each of the following applies to you	Always	Usually	Some-times	Rarely	Never
a. Doing well is important to me					
b. I deal with challenges well					
c. I spend time doing what I love					
d. I make decisions with ease					
e. I am interested in new things					
f. Home is a happy place to be					
g. Work is a happy place to be					
h. I feel positive about the future.					

Question 5

Please indicate by ticking the most appropriate answer	Yes	Unsure	No
a. I know my strengths			
b. I have good (positive) relationships			
c. I have good friends			
d. I know my weaknesses			
e. I have people I want to be like			
f. I have goals for the future.			

Appendix VI - School Letter to Parent

12 April 2016

Dear Parents and Caregivers

Student wellbeing is integral to student learning and valued highly at St [redacted]. The Australian Curriculum recognises the importance of student wellbeing in the Health and Physical Education curriculum and aspects of the General Capabilities.

This letter is to inform you about our classroom Wellbeing Program in Term 2. We are working towards enhancing wellbeing skills in the classroom.

Jacqueline Ranatunga is a Doctoral candidate at James Cook University and she has asked if our school would be part of her wellbeing study. She is currently working on an arts and material engagement based program to enhance wellbeing and resilience skills in the classroom. Jacqueline has already worked with our teachers on a series of workshops in Term 1. In order for your child to participate in this research study on wellbeing and resilience, your consent is required. If you agree to your child taking part in this study, please return the attached consent form by next Monday 18 April. Please read the attached documents and if you have any questions you may call or email Jacqueline Ranatunga [redacted] or Jacqueline.ranatunga@my.jcu.edu.au

Yours sincerely

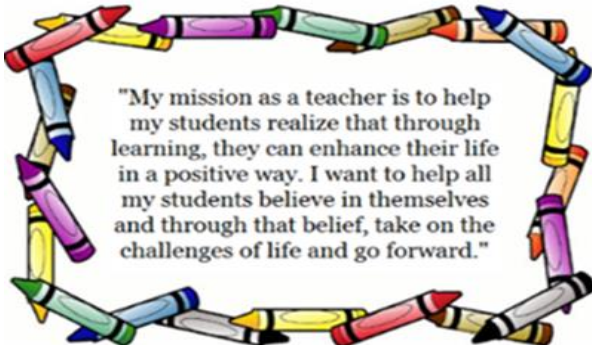
[redacted]

Classroom Teacher

[redacted]

Principal

Appendix VII - Collated Educator Reflections

Reflections I - Finding my passion activity
 "My mission as a teacher is to help my students realize that through learning, they can enhance their life in a positive way. I want to help all my students believe in themselves and through that belief, take on the challenges of life and go forward."
<i>I found writing about my passion very difficult. I used to have lots of passions (and time) before having my kids, and now, at this point in my life, I find I don't have any passions I just go from one term to the other, looking forward to my holidays... Being a single mum bringing up 2 high school kids on my own is very difficult, and finding time for myself is a challenge. I know this will not always be the way, and I look forward to finding more time for myself as they get older...</i>
<i>Found it sad that I had no idea what I was passionate about. When did that get lost in the system? Although very much a work in progress, I created the following mission statement: My mission is to enthuse, encourage and love myself and others to further develop personal relationships.</i>
<i>My passion and my mission - what I see is the purpose in life.</i>
<i>My mission is to nurture, led by example and motivate, Love to/ for or with my family.</i>
<i>My mission is to relax and brighten with creativity with gardening. Having moved into a small unit at the end of last year, my mission is to work on my garden - something I love but have neglected.</i>
<i>My mission is to encourage, inspire and motivate (3 verbs) trustworthiness and responsibility (core values) to educate children (group)</i>
<i>My mission is to practice, nurture and return kindness to the community of..... "The value of family - spend time with them when they are here, only work when they are not!" -</i>
<i>My mission is to reflect, encourage and motivate creativity and peace for home health for the elderly.</i>
<i>"My mission is to nurture, relax, play and love to, for, or with my children."</i>
<i>My mission: To appreciate and demonstrate love and care through acts of kindness and experiences of joyous play to achieve a sense of inner harmony for my health and family</i>

<i>My mission is to Relax, create and understand (3 verbs) Kindness (core value) With fashion (group /word that excites)</i>
<i>What most excites me about the world? That each day brings a new experience and an opportunity to make the world a better place.</i> <i>What most angers me about the world? That people don't stop and listen to the Earth.</i> <i>If I teach 3 things to others about what excites me in the world, what would they be? To listen to the earth, take in the fresh air, and focus on what is good about the world.</i> <i>Three things about what angers me: What would you convey? The Earth is here to share, and no one owns any part of it. We should look at the beauty and not destroy it. Everyone should just chill out from time to time and just breathe and communicate peacefully.</i> <i>What/how can I use most experiences to affect or change what most angers me? Become involved in replenishing the earth, give to others, work in collaboration with others to make changes in small ways, and try to make the lives of those in need a little more bearable.</i>
Reflections and Discussions II on Happiness
<i>I think it is important for the teacher to be in a good space, to model the steps for being happy, or to get to the flow zone.</i>
<i>I am happier, the people around me are happier, and it means we laugh a lot... too many things (deaths) have put life into perspective for me. I try not to sweat the small things, learn lessons from mistakes and laugh with my friends and family, I don't have time to focus on the negative.</i>
<i>I listen to my bird tweet in the morning and afternoon. It brings a smile to my face to know that she is happy.</i>
Reflections and Discussions III -Wellbeing
<i>...I could describe what my wellbeing is.</i> <i>I'm just struggling to get back up, and it's just, yeah, a lot of different things that are impacting my life. It was just really hard to get back up there, you know, yeah, I am just trying to work on myself because school is the most important thing, and those kids deserve my attention, and yeah really struggling.</i>
<i>Being able to talk openly and honestly about my current state of wellbeing (or lack thereof) may be a good starting point.</i>
<i>I know to achieve wellbeing, I will need to prioritise, let some things go and make time for me... have been trying to do this for some years ...able to achieve it for short periods of time, but difficult to sustain...especially when things, in particular work demands, are out of my control...</i>
<i>I feel like I've hit the wall, and it's week three...</i>

Reflections and Discussions IV *Balance* and *Wellness*

Wellbeing is about *balance* and juggling family and career....

*I have been thinking about the tension between personal wellbeing and all the external pressures that exist in life, and I found this quote - it made me realise that if everything is in *balance*, we can plan ways to work through all the pressures. If not, everything is connected, so the impact of external pressures can throw our lives off-*balance* for a little while until we get back on track...
Wellness is *contentment* and *balance*.*



This has been very tricky, so I am embracing a very commercial logo to help...



*...This sums up my whole idea of my own personal wellbeing. My four men, my world. My reminder of what is important when life gets so busy and I don't feel *balanced*.*



*Creative
Originality
Heart-warming*

*Relaxing
Challenging
Engaging*

*Individual
Needing
Giving*



COGNITIVE

THINK

Learn

Memory

SPIRITUAL

PEACE



Reflections and Discussions V: Focus Group Discussions Relevant to Question Two in the Survey and the Time Factor

I'd say I don't feel like my wellbeing is in a very well place, Yeah, ...because I think we've just had so much on, and depending on the class group you've got, you know, ...I, there is a fair bit of worrying and a fair bit of stress. And I think we're all feeling like we just, the usual story, we just don't have the time to, you know, to do what we need to do... I would say as far as from last week to this week, yeah, I don't feel like I'm in a terribly good place to how I'm feeling. Home is home, and I mean, thankfully, home is peaceful. yeah, I think school is just chaotic and frantic; there's just so much to do.

...definitely the workload, the expectations, if you introduce something that you need us to do, what are you taking out, ... It's like going out shopping. I'm guilty of this and buying clothes, and I don't want to throw anything out, but the wardrobe can't cope. but you've got to take something away, and I think there has to be that balance if you want us to up the effectiveness as teachers, you can't do everything incredibly well. You cannot. So that puts stress, particularly, we are all very committed to our jobs, and I think that's something, you know, and I don't know how that will ever change because I don't see anything being taken away.

I have been trying to take time out for me and to do some of the activities that I would like to do. Thank you for your beautiful sessions.

<i>Sorry about not getting back to you last week with a reflection, but I am still trying to find my feet and have been juggling so many things....</i>	
<i>Lists, planning, diaries, and more lists!! Getting my week organised to attempt to lessen the stress!!</i>	
<i>It's like, you know, you work ridiculous hours, it's kind of embarrassing to say how many hours we put in per week if you calculated it, it might be a bit depressing</i>	
<i>I'm so busy being something for everyone else that I leave nothing in the tank for myself.</i>	
<i>My reflection is simply, "Let it go...."</i>	
<i>I need to find time for me.</i>	
<i>I know to achieve wellbeing I will need to prioritise, let some things go, and make time for me... I have been trying to do this for some years ...able to achieve it for short periods of time but difficult to sustain...especially when things, in particular work demands, are out of my control.</i>	
<i>I have found myself saying the old mantra 'Less haste, more speed' to myself all week. Then, tonight came across this tweet (see below). I really like 6&7 and plan to ask at least one thoughtful question this week of my teaching partners. I also realised that I haven't been eating lunch regularly, so hope to improve on that habit this week.</i> 1. Prune your goals. 2. Prune your calendar. 3. Allocate time to opening meetings. 4. Allocate time to closing meetings. 5. Prune the agenda. 6. Ask a colleague a thoughtful question. 7. Ask a student or a parent a thoughtful question. 8. eat lunch. 9. take a sick day. 10. Practice self-care	
 What is wellbeing? Wellbeing is all about time. Time at work Time at home Time in the kitchen cooking meals for my family or cleaning up Time at kids' after school sports and activities Time doing work at home or just spent wasting it on Facebook Time to myself Time to rest. Too much Too little Finding it Wasting it Enjoying it	AGEING <i>The older we get, we sometimes forget, but we should not be forgotten. Through love and good care, we should not despair that we still have good stories to share. If only people would stop to listen.</i>

Reflections VI focused on *mindfulness, flow state, and stress reduction.*

Mindfulness involves many aspects of your being. It's harder than I thought!

*Every day I am *mindful* of my car park. I have parked in the same spot for years. Now I choose to change it around, different spots, reverse in, etc. I try to breathe before reacting to a situation, choose my words and select an appropriate tone to deliver the message.*

*After hearing the success of other teachers using meditation techniques in the classrooms, I have decided to try setting an alarm every hour so that we can pause and focus on *being mindful* for a brief moment several times a day. I am going to join in with the children when we do it so that I can get to 'breathe' too!*

*I have learned about being *mindful* and the importance of being present and not just doing. I feel I need to appreciate this more.*



*...Being *mindful* of being stressed and worried when my son was in hospital, I took with me some crochet which I had not done for ages, and I found that I could calm myself down by concentrating on the stitches, and it helped to bring my thoughts into perspective.*

*I am the type of person who is *mindful*, and I like to think about things; however, I don't feel the need to share my emotions with the group in conversation. I prefer to write them down...*

I found this week's wellbeing meeting a real challenge as I find meditation really difficult. I have never been able to get into meditation and find I cannot relax my body to do it. I have tried for several years but just can't do it...

I found the stone meditation distracting. I was rushing to move the stones back and forth. But that's just me. I'm sure others preferred the stone method over the stillness method. I like the practice of stillness because you can't rush that.

... Sometimes, we just need to slow down and let something go. I'm taking time to sit with a cup of coffee and read today's paper this morning, and I came across this rather apt article for me this week. Not new news, but timely in the stress of the last couple of weeks.



I went to Palm Beach at the weekend and enjoyed relaxing by the sea with a good book. I thought I



would share the photo there.

I can stay up till midnight working on a quilt.

Flow state for me happens when I am doing either Yoga or something crafty.

Yoga ticks all the boxes for me. I love the sense of being part of a friendly community. It provides a connection to God and gets the blood/chakras in my body all flowing. My mind becomes calmer after a Yoga session. I love it :)

Reflections VII - Gratitude Activities and Comments



*What I am **grateful** for today.....*

That it is Friday, and we only have 3 weeks left of this term. Even though I am enjoying this term, I am feeling exhausted.

I was happy this week when I had several children come to me after I did a math lesson with them, and they said that they didn't understand this concept last year, but they get it now, and I make learning fun... This made me feel that what I am doing is worthwhile and that I can be a Year 4 teacher (something I didn't really think I could do or see myself doing).

*I have so much to be **grateful** for... a comfortable home, being able to afford any item of food, a car, being able to pay the bills... generally all those things that perhaps we take for granted and now see as necessities in our society.*

*I am **grateful** that I have a job (even though it does cause me stress and worry), but thankfully, I work with people that are supportive and caring.*

Smiling mind meditation made easy... we have used this app with J this week. So calm and contented. Amazing.

*I am **grateful** for my family and for the fun and laughter, we share. I am grateful for my husband, who is there to listen and who does so much for me ...taking on the extra household chores when school life becomes busier than normal.*

*... and I am **thankful** that I live in a peaceful country.*

*A reflection on **gratefulness**:*

At the beginning of last year, I would write three things I was grateful for at the end of every day. It was always simple stuff: a working car, my mum, a roof over my head. As the year went by, those musings happened a couple of times a week, then once a week, then once a month. By July, I had given up. Being grateful and being positive all the time sometimes requires more energy than I have to give.

*I am **grateful** for ...Love, being loved, and Loving others*

Reflections VIII - Discussions on Relationships

Friendships that take no effort to be a part of- they are equal, and they don't need words.

This Week's Quote resonated with me:

"Your value does not decrease based on someone's inability to see your worth"

I have attached a picture for my reflection. I am enjoying a year of firsts! This was my daughter's first swing! I really appreciate all the small stuff this year!



I'll go home and speak to my husband about how many things we have to do and stressful days and whatever, and you know, we try and say you have to choose, you have to prioritise, but sometimes I try to explain to him that all these things all have to be done. I don't know how I'm going to achieve it.

Lately, I've been considering how I feel following an action I have performed: Do I feel negative or positive? This is helping me make better decisions throughout the day. At the end of each day, when I find my inner voice running through the day's events, I like the feeling that I chose the best path. I am finding that this helps me find my way towards my inner peace.

Today, through the eyes of a child



Through my eyes, when I was a child



Reflections and discussions IX - Lessons with our students	
<i>It is important to try and incorporate wellbeing into everyday lessons; use the general capabilities or The Arts to do this. It's disappointing that the health curriculum does not focus more on wellbeing:</i>	
<i>"The ordinary arts we practise every day at home are of more importance to the soul than their simplicity might suggest." Thomas Moore, Poet 1779-1852</i> <i>This quote from Thomas Moore brings me comfort for two reasons: firstly, for me, it is saying that the enormous effort I put into running my household and the time I spend with my husband and children is important, it counts - not just for them, but for me and ultimately my wellbeing. Secondly, I find it fascinating that a quote from the 18th/19th century is still relevant hundreds of years later. I don't imagine that social health would have been quite the industry back then as it is now, and relaxation techniques, resilience, and self-talk were probably not widely practised either. But I like that quote it proves that the art of mindfulness did indeed exist, and that people thought and felt the same way back then that we do now.</i>	
<i>Part of our Year 1 Religious Education unit for Term 1 had a focus on the importance of treating all people with dignity and respect.</i> <i>We read Whoever You Are by Mem Fox. Discussed as a class how we are all different, but it doesn't matter what we look like or where we come from God accepts and loves everyone. Following this, we read You Are Special by Max Lucado, another text which highlights the fact that we all have special qualities, and should we loved and respected for who we are – no matter how different we may be.</i>	
<i>As a way of incorporating The Arts and general capabilities, I initially thought of adapting the mandala idea – children would draw and use collages to represent their uniqueness. (Just as we did in Session 1, but I haven't done this yet). I did have a go of incorporating a simple form of "poetry" / reflective writing where children had to think about their own qualities, feelings, and thoughts. The 'poem' had "Sentence starters" that children completed – unfortunately, we had very little time to spend on the task and really develop it; however, below are a couple of examples they produced.</i>	
<i>God Made Me</i> <i>I am happy and funny.</i> <i>I wonder why clouds are white.</i> <i>I cry when my mum is not here.</i> <i>I try to read.</i> <i>I love my dad.</i> <i>I am creative and sporty.</i>	<i>God Made Me</i> <i>I am cool and sporty.</i> <i>I wonder what people do in other countries.</i> <i>I cry when people die.</i> <i>I try to listen my very best.</i> <i>I love my cousins and my family.</i> <i>I am creative and happy.</i>

The wellbeing of students is instrumental in producing happy, productive children. It's imperative to provide wellbeing breaks within the day to recharge and refocus. I'm finding the 10-minute meditation I offer to students after the first break is working well. Students are more settled afterwards and are ready to work. They enjoy being offered a variety of activities to choose from rather than being forced to do the same activity together. I'm looking forward to continuing this into term 2. I would like to try some guided meditations with the class and then perhaps offer them to the students via the use of their laptops with earphones during our 10-minute downtime.

Final Reflections X - Learning and Thankfulness

With regards to the sessions, they were helpful and gave great ideas to use in the classroom with the students. Personally, my wellbeing did not improve...I found it stressful trying to fit in another weekly meeting with all of my own personal places to be and things to do, plus term 1, in general, seemed to be exceptionally busy. In saying that, it was always a safe place to release built-up tension to others who often felt the same.

I have learned so much about myself in these past six weeks. This has felt like a particularly stressful term. I have felt rushed, at times overworked, and like my work/home balance is completely off-kilter. I decided to take the time this term to do something for me. As I have mentioned, I have taken up Tai-chi classes. This, combined with the advice and guidance you have given us, is starting to make me feel like I can get my balance back.

I really looked forward to the sessions and have taken away such a lot. Learning not to feel guilty about making time for myself is hard, but I am learning, and I guess that is my reflection this week.

Thanks for the sessions

I was wondering if you would run further courses for adults away from school after this one has finished. I would really like to continue, especially in the area of meditation.

Thank you so much for starting early on Monday. I was told I was doing cross-country on Monday and thought I would have to miss your session.

I love your calm presence in the class.

Looking forward to seeing you on Monday.

Thanks, I hope phase 3 goes well for you. 😊

Appendix VIII - Student Statements from Focus Groups

Student Statements from Focus Groups			
Initial			Final
What is wellbeing?			
You feel good and be well, Great means you are well, Behaving right, Being healthy, Getting and being well, Not angry, Feeling nice. Have a smile, Feeling calm and relaxed, Laughing with friends and not emotional	Being good, Going well, Happy, Not sick, Staying fit, Not really really cranky, Not cranky, Having a nice attitude, Feeling excited, Having fun, Meditating	You make sure that your body is all controlled. You are controlling your behaviour. You are kind and helpful. You are doing well, and you are mindful. Like being calm and peaceful, You feel joyful.	Good wellbeing is when you are happy. You are excited when you feel you are calm, I think wellbeing means that you're not lonely, You have lots of friends, You are well, and you are doing well, You're well, and you're healthy, You are happy, Being good
How do you know if your wellbeing is not so good?			
Feeling sick, Someone is being mean, No friends, You are crying, Someone being mean to you.	You are cranky, You might be sad, healthy, sick or injured. Someone might be hurting you,	You are not laughing, Leaving people out of games is not Having good wellbeing, Hurting people, Not playing fairly, and not being nice to other people. Bullying people when not listening, Calling out	Sometimes, when I am not calm, I feel annoyed and angry. Not treating you well, treating you like a (servant) Not being relaxed and not learning Sometimes the monster is getting out...The monster is not learning.

How do you take care of your wellbeing?

Eat lots of **fruit and dairy**,
 Not eat bad food,
 Keep your body **healthy**
 Eating **healthy**,
 Eating lots of fruit, dairy,
 Being **healthy**,
 Stay fit,
 Walking actively,
 Play rugby,
 Don't eat junk food,
 Don't eat lollies,
 Eat protein grains,
 Drink lots of water,
 Being good to your **stomach**,
 Walk the dog,
 Keep fit, **healthy**,
 Go to school,
 Play more sport?
 Practice **good sleep, has a shower**,
 Share **your feelings**,
 Forget about it,
 if you are feeling **scared** and your
 parents are not there, **tell someone**
you know

Calm down, deep breath,
Relaxing and try to be **calm**, not
 cranky,
 Take a deep breath, talk to a
 friend,
 I go for walks,
Do something with your brain.
 Thinking, exercising, being
happy, managing anger,
 stretching, don't fight.
 Be **happy** for what you get.
 Fun, smile.
 Having a real smile on your face,
 Being **happy**,
Work on controlling nerves,
 Deal with your anger,
Learn to control your anger,
 Talking in a respectful way,
Relax
 Go by yourself and **calm** down,
 Spend time with yourself.
 Tell other people about **how you**
feel.
 If you are **sad**, **tell someone**.

You **can exercise**,
Drink lots of water,
 Like whom we are and **think about**
something when you are feeling sad.
Controlling your anger.
 Getting more smarter and **caring for**
other people even though they are
not even my friends,
Meditating if you are really angry,
Calming yourself down or having
Rest, staying **safe**
 If someone is mean, **controlling your**
anger and don't be mean and kicking
 them or hurting them.
 Make sure that you know that you
 are **safe**.
 When I get angry at home I colour
 in, to **calm** down, sometimes you can
 write...
 Something that you like makes you
calm down...
 We make things, **sometimes**.
counting in 5's to 100.
 Keeping **safe**,

You can eat **healthy** food.
 It means that when you are angry, you
 can **calm** down and take a deep breath,
 you **can stop and think about it**,
Calm down, go for a sit-down.
 just **think about good things**
 you can play a **board game** if it is
 raining,
 You can **meditate** and sleep.
 You could do a **peaceful** activity.
 Being **calm**, taking a deep breath when
 you are angry.
 When you are sad, just take a breath and
 get **happy**.
 Keep learning, play games,
 continue reading, keep on reading
peaceful meditation books,
 To be a wellbeing keep on **meditating**,
 keep being **calm** and just **relaxing**, keep
 doing meditation, colouring, keep being
 kind,
 Draw **a picture or make origami**,
 You could like to be **calm**
 You could **do a puzzle**.

How do you care for others' wellbeing (if someone's bucket)?

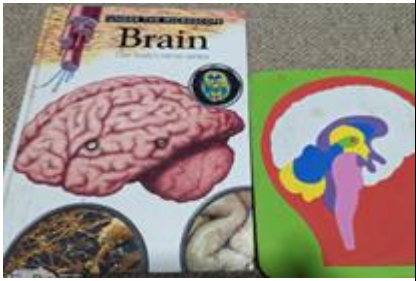
Just **letting it go**,
Don't fight with other people.
 Keeping **each other company**.
Telling a teacher,
Do not pick on others,
 Staying **safe**

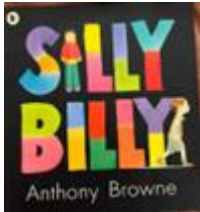
Helping them if they are sad,
Becoming a friend,
Caring for other people and your
 friends,
Not hurting others, playing with
 friends,
 and **playing with others**.

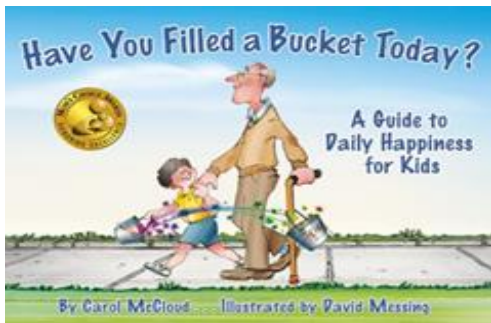
I try **not to flip my lid so I can fill**
other people's buckets and not empty
 my own.
Fill their bucket instead of dipping; I
 just walk away.
 I try and fill a bucket by being
generous and kind

I learnt don't dip in anyone else's bucket.
 We are learning that there's like an
imaginary bucket that you are holding
 you **fill them with love, care, and**
friendship and all those things.

Appendix IX - An Example of the Activities and Workshops in Phase Three

Session 1 	Wilma Wellbeing puppet story (oral storytelling) Explore the letters in wellbeing - the words within (we, I, be, being, well) The Brain – Understanding our Brain and how it is regulated. The Handy Model of the Brain and Do Not Flip Your Lid Book -The Brain 	Exercises - Stroop, brain activity – Brain art - meditation (belly breathing) Brain exercise crosscrawl, hook up. Short-term memory activity:  Object Memory: Show a box of objects, pass it around in a circle, remove one or two items (making sure no one sees what is removed), and pass the box around again. Ask students to recall what is missing. Initial (audio-recorded) focus group
Session 2 	Mindfulness –what is it? Mindful eating and walking - Book -Charlotte and the Quiet Place by Deborah Sosin. Other books - Giraffes an' ance 	Meditation (visualisation) mindful reflection, collage glitter jar craft for Mindfulness 

Session 3 	Stress, Anger, where do we feel it- body clues and teddy feelings, senses, Feeling words beyond happy and sad) Story - Silly Billy by Anthony Browne  Controlling my emotions and Behaviour -  other books to read  	Worry doll activity, stress release meditation (deep muscle relaxation), feelings and emotions, colour and music.  Teddy reflection cards  Test-taking skills (years 3 and 5). 
Session 4 	Kindness, compassion and gratefulness performing random acts of kindness book -Have you filled a bucket today	Memory games, ways to fill a bucket. Write or draw as many as you can on a sheet of paper, make paper chains and bead activity. 

		
Session 5	The many roles we play and ways of being, belonging and becoming Nine dog norm - story 	Meditation (repeating words or phrases): ‘Ting’ Chinese character to understand, pay attention, or listen (Colinwbaters, n.d.)  playdough - feathers – stones –for meditation
Session 6	Story -Who am I by Valrie M. Selkowe & Laurel Era  Goals vision, revisit where we have been...how is our wellbeing?	Finding flow zone meditation (quiet focus) and sand play  Final focus group questions: How has your wellbeing improved? What have you learned?

Appendix X – Consent for Artifacts and Stories

This administrative form
has been removed