Task Team on Teacher’s Psychosocial & Social-Emotional Well-being

Terms of Reference

Background

What are some of the realities of being a teacher, especially in conflict and crisis (EiCC) settings?

Teaching can be one of the most stressful and challenging professions, especially in EiCC contexts (Flaxman et al., 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Recent studies in US and EiCC contexts document the link between teachers’ working conditions as well as their high levels of stress along with impacts on their social-emotional and physical health, motivation, job satisfaction, burnout, and low retention in the profession (Flaxman et al., 2017; Frisoli, 2013; Winthrop & Kirk, 2011; Schonert-Reichel; Wolfe et al., 2015). This trend seems especially elevated for different groups of teaching professionals, like female teachers, where education system policies continue to promote inequitable gender-norm and other unfavorable gendered-working conditions, which further puts pressure on and alienates them from remaining in the profession (FHI 360). For example, female teachers can be extremely overburdened with a number of responsibilities leading to high rates of burnout and high dropout, which male teachers may not experience. Teachers are rarely provided sufficient attention or support to address work-related stressors in order to address and mitigate these issues.

However, when teachers are well and supported by school leadership and community members, research in EiCC contexts demonstrates the powerful impact that teachers can have on more equal student participation and outcomes. An individual’s well-being is greatly influenced by human capacity (physical and mental health and individual knowledge, capacity and skills), social ecology (social connections and support), and culture and values (how people experience, understand and respond to their surroundings) (INEE, 2016). In a teacher well-being study of Iraqi internally displaced and Syrian refugee teachers in the Kurdish Region of Iraq, researchers found that respondents’ burnout scores decreased 0.54 points with every point increase in school leadership support, especially when more women were recruited to school and education leadership positions. (Frisoli et al., 2015). In West Africa during the Sierra Leone and Liberia crises, deploying female classroom assistants in refugee camps created a girl-friendly environment where girls felt protected, they attended more regularly, and participated in extracurricular activities (Kirk & Winthrop, 2005). With the provision of female teachers in EiCC, adolescent girls indicated that spaces were safer, more friendly, welcoming and conducive to their participation and that they belonged and mattered (Kirk & Winthrop, 2005). Female teachers can generally have a positive impact on girl pupils in terms of enrollment and retention rates, increase exposure to female role models, create more girl-friendly school environments, and lower rates of girls dropping out of school.

Why focus on teachers’ social-emotional well-being in EiCC?

Emerging research from US and European contexts highlights that teachers’ social-emotional competence matters:
First, in terms of teacher retention, investing in teachers and especially their social-emotional well-being can be a powerful return-on-investment, promoting teachers’ persistence in the education profession. Retention of teachers requires a well-being strategy that identifies inhibiting and enabling strategies, taking into account teacher equity dimensions (McCallum & Price, 2010).

Second, teachers are critical partners for children’s social, emotional and academic development. A large scale randomized control trial of a teacher social-emotional intervention in the United States demonstrates that “the quality of teacher-student relationships, student and classroom management, and effective social and emotional learning program implementation all mediate classroom and student outcomes” (Jennings et al., 2017). Teachers’ own well-being is correlated with creating healthy relationships with their students, managing the classroom effectively, implementing social-emotional programs well, and improving classroom climate for all students (Jones et al., 2013). When teachers have trouble with their own social-emotional management in the classroom, we see drops in students academic achievement and behavior, especially for the most vulnerable (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

What is the opportunity and why focus on equity?

In many EiCC contexts teachers are working in complex classrooms with minimal support, training, supervision, materials, or compensation, while also dealing with their own experiences of trauma and displacement. Despite the recognition of the significant role teachers play in supporting the well-being and development of their learners, little attention has been paid to teachers’ own well-being in these challenging settings and the systemic barriers that contribute to inequitable levels of support. We know that teachers play an instrumental role in ensuring their classrooms are safe and secure environments that promote the mental, physical and psycho-social well-being of all their students (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Shriberg, 2007), but more attention is needed regarding how teacher’s well-being impacts their ability to address background factors, such as displacement and language barriers, and more equitably impact student learning outcomes.

It is undeniable that teachers’ background assumptions and prejudices influence students’ experiences of education, however research also indicates that when teachers are able to manage their stress and find the support they need, they improve their relationships with their students, they model social-emotional skills, and they are equipped with skills necessary to overcome systemic barriers to create a protective, safe, and constructive learning environment where all children can thrive. This supports the idea that teacher well-being has an effect on equitable access to teaching and learning opportunities for different populations. Evidence also suggests that when teachers are well, they are increasingly able to adapt and modify their teaching and learning environments to support improved and equitable outcomes for students.

We postulate that teachers’ well-being and social-emotional competencies can:

1) Retain different types of teachers in the profession for the benefit of all students; and

2) Create more inclusive and equitable classes that close the achievement gap for different types of students.

Time Period

October 2018 - October 2019
Objectives / expected results

The objective of the Teacher Social-Emotional Well-being Task Team is to build evidence and greater understanding of the dynamics that influence teacher well-being to identify ‘what works’ most effectively to improve teacher’s social-emotional well-being. We will examine what influences teachers’ abilities to support more inclusive work environments and classrooms that promote equitable retention of teachers in the workforce and close outcome gaps for the most marginalized students. Our theory of change is as follows:

The focus of the task team’s work will be around exploring how teaching well-being is an equity issue by examining the links between the different components of teacher well-being and learning / student outcomes, and the extent to which that is connected to improved equitable outcomes for students and teachers.

Deliverables

Evidence Map / Landscape review: We will work with an expert consultant or consultant group to provide technical oversight, review, and support to better understand the evidence that supports a more nuanced understanding of the overarching theory of change presented above. The landscape review consultancy will explicitly explore and define essential terms from a variety of different cultural contexts (e.g. holistic well-being, social-emotional competency, self-care, efficacy, mindfulness, etc.) as well as search and vet empirical evidence from a variety of different sectors and disciplines, as they relate to teacher well-being and social-emotional competence (e.g. education, health, mental health, human development, protection, humanitarian sector, etc). The landscape review will attempt to answer the following broad overarching questions:

1. What evidence is there to support the theory of change? What are the gaps? What’s missing? How do intervening factors challenge the theory of change?

2. What does the evidence say in developing countries and EiCC contexts about the impacts of well-being interventions on staff retention, the quality of service provision, and the links to beneficiary impacts, such as more inclusive classrooms? How does this relate directly to teachers and students?
3. **What social-emotional skills do teachers in these contexts need the most to support equitable holistic student outcomes? How does a teacher’s own personal well-being impact their well-being as a teacher?**

4. **What are the most effective and equitable means of developing teacher’s social-emotional competencies? How does equity come into play in the theory of change, especially as it relates to teachers’ own well-being, retention, classroom climate, and outcomes for different types of students?**

**Teacher Well-being Pre-Conference Workshop at CIES 2019**

To ensure coordination with other SEL-focused groups, we will co-conduct a pre-conference workshop that explores teacher well-being evidence in conflict and crisis settings through collaboration with the INEE’s TiCC and PSS / SEL collaboratives. This workshop will also feed into the teacher well-being evidence map / landscape review. The report from this workshop will be shared with working group members, and other SEL groups such as INEE’s measurement reference group and ECCN’s SEL Task Team.

**Measurement Report**: Once the evidence map / landscape review is complete, we will use the findings to create a detailed terms of reference to better understand ways in which teacher social-emotional well-being programs can measure the impact of these interventions on teacher well-being and student outcomes. We will work with an expert consultant and provide technical oversight, review, and provide technical support to answer the following question: *How do we measure teachers’ social competencies and well-being and relationship with their students’ equitable outcomes?*

**Measurement toolkit** (TBD based on available funding - September 2019)

The INEE measurement reference group is currently putting together a measurement toolkit to track children's holistic development, with a focus on children’s social-emotional and psychosocial development. This toolkit will take the findings from the measurement report to create a draft toolkit for testing and validation related to teachers’ social-emotional well-being and classroom climate. It will use a similar format to the INEE measurement reference group toolkit in order to create a complementary package that can be used together. The main questions to be answered will be: *What tools can measure change in teacher social-emotional competence and well-being over time? What tools can measure how teachers’ social-emotional competence has influenced equity factors in the classroom?*

**Activities**

Illustrative activities will include:

1. Officially Launch SEL Teacher Wellbeing Task Team with Equity Initiative and INEE PSS/SEL collaborative members and agree on TOR (October 2018)

2. Create SEL teacher well-being pre-conference workshop application for CIES (by September 14th 2018)

3. Create Job Description for Evidence Map / Landscape / Measurement Report Consultant (October 2018) (funding available until April 2019)

4. Create draft Evidence Map / Landscape Review (January 2019)
5. Get feedback on evidence map / landscape review from INEE and ECCN members (February 2019)

6. Co-conduct CIES Pre-conference workshop with INEE TiCC / PSS / SEL collaborative members (April 2019)

7. Disseminate Final Evidence Map / Landscape Review (e.g. through ECCN SEL task team)

8. Create Draft Measurement Report (coordinate with 3EA measurement reference group)

9. Get feedback on Measurement Report

10. Disseminate Measurement Report (Sep 2019) (e.g. through ECCN SEL task team)

11. Create Measurement Toolkit (TBD based on funding, September 2019)

Membership & Ways of Working

This task team will perform this work in collaboration with INEE’s PPS/SEL and TiCC collaboratives as well as other external SEL experts. Tasks will align with the PSS/SEL collaborative’s work plan and this group will serve as a technical reference group. We will disseminate findings through Twitter, the newsletter, sharing reports and research with SEL groups (ECCN SEL Task Team, INEE’s SEL Measurement Reference Group, INEE PSS/SEL Collaborative, TiCC Collaborative, SEL CoP) and the website. This group’s focus on teacher well-being will meaningfully contribute to holistic SEL programming within the EIE sector. When appropriate, this group will also engage in high-level, bilateral and multilateral meetings to ensure transparency in carrying this agenda forward.

This group is co-chaired by FHI 360 (Paul Frisoli) and Save the Children (Julia Finder).

Level of Effort

We anticipate that there will be about 2.5 hours of work per month, on average, which will be disaggregated by:

- 1 monthly call (1 hour)
- Regular feedback on technical documents (1 hour)
- Additional communications and other tasks related to the TOR (.5 hours)

References


