



Leading the Self and Managing Subjective Well-Being



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What we know:



- Well-Being is an area of contemporary focus. In educational contexts there is concern about student well-being, staff well-being and also the well-being of leaders and aspirational leaders.



- Phillips and Sen (2011, as cited in Riley, 2012) reported that, “work related stress was higher in education than across all other industries...with work-related mental ill-health...almost double the rate for all industry” (pp. 177-8).

Research shows:



Numerous researchers (Anderson et al., 2007; Lacey 2007, Mulford, 2003) have highlighted the significant shortage both current and predicted of skilled principals nationally and internationally (Pont, Nusche, & Hopkins, 2008) due to a combination of three factors:

- reticence of principals to self-promote into seemingly more complex roles
- retention of principals
- early retirement

There was a trend where principals were choosing to retire five years earlier on average than would otherwise be expected (Mulford, 2003) and a lack of skilled principals wanting to promote (Pont, Nusche, & Hopkins, 2008), exacerbating the current and predicted shortfall. Principals as a group have voiced their own concern with their well-being (Lacey, 2007; Riley, 2012).

Importance of maintaining well-being



- Individual - being well should be a core priority for everyone (World Health Organisation, 2006)
- School – students, teacher, community to Devos, Bouckenooghe, Engels, Hotton, and Aelterman (2007)
- System – need according to Lacey (2007) to retain Principals in the workforce.



- I conducted an interpretive case study investigating and exploring how school leaders maintained their SWB. Data were gathered from a representative geographical sample of eleven experienced school principals in one Australian state.

The Participants



- The principals in this study were experienced and had certain attributes that were important to the maintenance of SWB.
- These are: resilience, wisdom and self-knowledge.
- These principals all shared a worldview where they saw their work as having four key elements:
 1. goal orientated ethical stance focusing on core motivators (i.e. making a positive difference in the lives of students);
 2. mitigation of negative happenings (i.e. competently dealing with multiple issues simultaneously whilst still remaining focused on the core business);
 3. descriptors focused on achieving the goal (i.e. coordination, delegation, decision-making, supervision, direction, problem solving, crisis management, guiding, prompting, supporting, steering decision-making);
 4. and self-reflection.

All of these principals work in a complex environment with the motivation of maintaining their SWB.

The findings:



Participants were utilising:

- tacit knowledge and a way of knowing to maintain their SWB
- three processes
- processes selected were based upon the principal's evaluation of the moment.
- cognitive evaluation
 - Management mindset
 - Engineering mindset

So what...



- What is the relevance of the findings and the pragmatics of leading in an educational context?

Mmm.....

There are learned ways of working that help people to maintain their SWB even though they are in a complex situation.

Let's consider ...



- What is leading the self?
- What is SWB?
- Why is leading the self relevant to SWB?





- There are a variety of ways to conceptualise the self.
- The *self* is a term generally applied to describe “the conscious reflection of one's own being or identity, as an object separate from other or from the environment” (Huitt, 2011).



- Knowledge of the Self
 - deep knowledge gained through introspection in complex times
 - deep strengths
 - deep weaknesses
- Deep understanding of how to utilise the strengths of those around – the team



- Leadership of self is considered to be the practice of intentionally influencing your own thinking, feelings and behaviours to achieve your objectives and goals (Bryant & Kazan 2012).



- Subjective Well-Being (SWB) is acknowledged to be a wide-ranging concept (Larsen & Eid, 2008)
- Diener, Oishi, and Lucas (2003) describe SWB from a psychological perspective as “people’s emotional and cognitive evaluations of their lives, includes what lay people call happiness, peace, fulfilment, and life satisfaction” (p. 403).



Diener's (2009) definition of SWB consists of three components, all of which involve *cognitive appraisal*.

The three components are:

- life satisfaction, where one has cognitively appraised that one's life was good;
- positive affect (also termed high levels of pleasant emotions); and
- relatively low levels of negative moods.



To achieve the outcome of SWB maintained, participants in the study brought to light that it involved:

Understanding of Self +
competent utilisation of three learned processes =
Healthy Subjective Well-Being
(personal capacity and improved work performance)

How to achieve the outcome



Enact three processes:

- FIT
- ATER
- MegaPositioning

Explanatory Framework: School Principals Maintain Their SWB



THE PRINCIPAL – has experiences, self knowledge and a way of viewing the world

STIMULUS EVENT – Principal experiences a 'moment' and feels unbalanced

EVALUATION of the moment with a MANAGEMENT

Mindset.

EVALUATION of the moment with a CONTROL

and ENGINEER outcomes mindset

RESPONSE Type 1 Agentism

Decision to enact 1 of 2 process

RESPONSE Type 2 Agentism

Decision to enact 1 of 3 process

RESPONSE Type 3 Agentism

Decision to work fluidly with processes

FIT Process

Maintenance strategies

ATER Process

Intervention Strategies

FIT Process

Maintenance strategies

ATER Process

Intervention Strategies

MegaPositioning

Intervention Strategies

Processes become an intuitive WAY of WORKING

FIT Process

ATER Process

MegaPositioning

OUTCOME: SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IS MAINTAINED

Key



Evaluation: Am I satisfied with life?

No. Enact or continue with intervention strategies.



Yes. SWB Maintained.

Processes Involved Ways of Working



- The term “ways of working” arose from the data and it describes an activity based paradigm that encapsulates how actions are conceptualized, prioritised, and performed on the basis of personal and socio-cultural contextual knowledge acquired through experiential learning.
- This could also be termed as tacit knowledge.



In explaining what that did with what they had learned all participants used terms like *“it is just the way I do it”*, *“it is the way I work”*, *“not really sure I can explain it, I just know and work this way”*.

The literature defines this as tacit knowing.

Dialogical Self (Hermans, 1996, 2002., 2002b, 2003, 2006)



- “Occurs within the individual as imaged dialogue with others” (McIlven and Patton, 2007, p. 5).
- The words of other people, invested with indignation, anger, doubt, anxiety, or pleasure, enter interior dialogues and create an “inner society of voices” that, in its oppositions, agreements, disagreements, negotiations and integrations, does not, in essence, differ from the communications in the outside world. (Hermans 2003, p. 94)



- Four Suggested Steps to Building capacity in maintaining SWB

Step One: (Establish Who + Fit)



- What: What are you currently doing and where are you now with balancing your Subjective Well-Being? (consider work and life) 😊 😄

ACTIVITY:

Complete – What are you doing now to maintain your SWB.

Then - Think Do Pair Share

- How can you further develop this: Deep conversation with the Self



Consider some protocols:

- Ensure the setting allows for deep conversation with the Self. (No interruptions, phone off etc.)
- Ask probing questions.
- Listen to yourself and the answers you give. (How do I really feel?)
- Listen to alternate perspectives. (Do I really do/feel that way all the time? Why?)
- Strive to establish the deep meaning by reflecting on what you have discovered? (What are you really currently doing or are others doing that is causing you stress? What alternatives are available?)
- Use some data to inform your decision making.

Establish evidence based practice on a daily basis and then a weekly basis (SET – sleep, eating, toileting)

Step Two (Discussion of the ATER process)



Awakening

- What: Create a culture of personal learning change
- How: Process of explicit instruction

Thinking

- Apply – self knowledge + purposeful use of data (e.g., eating times, sleeping , thinking, networking)

Enacting

- Connect – old knowledge plus new knowledge (what have I learnt)
- Transform – meaning making for future scenarios

Reflecting

Step Three - MegaPositioning



- Engaging the Dialogical Self – to deepen understanding
 - invite voices (critical friend, positive friend)
- Making think time – head space
- Conceptualising the moment - situational understanding
- Using Agentism - engineering outcomes
- Engaging Multiple Networked Realities – dialogical self + situational understanding of the complexity + scenario planning (actual and virtual) +engineering outcomes
- Invite input from actual team
- On-going self evaluating (using courageous conversations) and situational reflecting +feedforward for the Self

Using the dialogical self



- What are the skills of interpersonal dialogue and how do these relate to the dialogical self?
- Anticipating and preparing for an event or situation.
- Entering a thinking space
- Engaging the dialogical self - the many voices
- Skills of use - from monologue to the metaposition

Step Four



- Continue deep reflective practices
 - What worked for all participants?
 - Why did it work?
 - How can it be improved?
 - What do I need to do to improve? Etc

- Access on going mentoring if needed



- Think through multiple perspectives before engaging externally.
- Plan for possibilities
- Manage risks
- Prepare thoughtful responses
- Enhances leadership capacity
- Influence or create desired outcomes

The better perceived the outcome:

- a) The more satisfied the person feels
- b) The more satisfied others feel – flow on effect

Where to from here



- I encourage you to: understand the self and develop skills to engage the dialogical self in order to help with the maintenance of your Subjective Well-Being. ***You are important and you matter!***
- If you are interested in finding out more about my research or engaging me for workshops please contact me susan.carter@usq.edu.au

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