

# Exploring school children's wellbeing and school engagement in Kazakhstan

This poster summarises and describes work conducted to date by the Faculty of Education and Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education through an Institutional Links partnership to conduct a large-scale research project examining secondary school children's wellbeing and school engagement in Kazakhstan. The collaborative research process commenced in April 2015 and has funding until March 2017. Funding is provided by the Newton – Al-Farabi Partnership Programme and coordinated by the JSC Science Fund and the British Council. Further details of the project are available here: <https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/kazakhstan/projects/nugse/>

## Aims of the research

## Research Questions

- To adapt Western scales of wellbeing to provide a culturally sensitive and appropriate instrument that will assist in identifying and then improving students' wellbeing in secondary schools

- How well do existing models of educational wellbeing apply in the context of Kazakhstan?
- How do schools define and contextualise the wellbeing of students throughout the academic year, especially in vulnerable populations or those under extreme academic stress?



Data collection — North/Central Kazakhstan



Data collection — South Kazakhstan



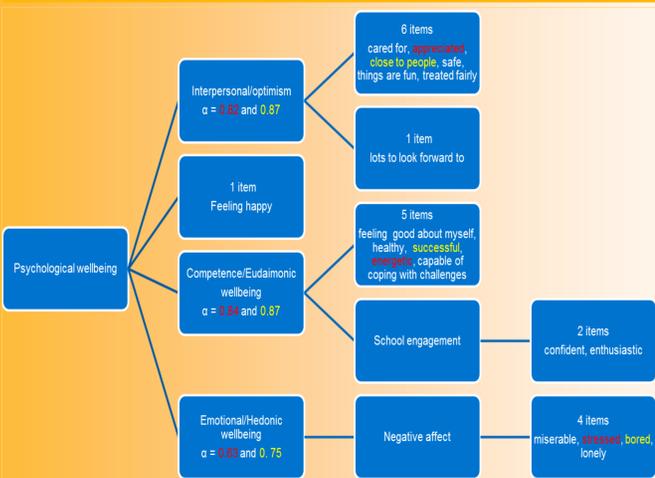
Data collection — East Kazakhstan



Data collection — West Kazakhstan

Research design and phases	Quantitative data	Qualitative data
<b>Phase 1 (May 2015)</b> First inquiry into how wellbeing in secondary schools is conceived and distributed. Initial application of UK psychological wellbeing scale	<b>21 - item</b> questionnaires in separate language versions (Kazakh & Russian) administered to 2205 students (sample 1) in 9 schools (5 selective and 4 non-selective schools) in four regions of Kazakhstan. In and out of school contexts examined to relate to previous empirical work in the UK using Western theories and constructs of wellbeing.	<b>9 focus groups with students</b> (grades 9, 11 & one mixed grade) <b>11 focus groups &amp; 11 individual interviews with school personnel</b> (vice principals of pastoral care, school psychologists, teachers and tutors)
<b>Phase 2 (November 2015)</b> An improved and broader wellbeing model to reflect wider constructs of wellbeing in Kazakhstan and to relate this measure to school engagement.	<b>82 - item</b> questionnaire in dual language format (Kazakh & Russian) administered to 2403 students (sample 2) in 21 schools (5 selective and 16 non-selective schools) in four regions of Kazakhstan. 11 demographic items, 52 items relating to overall wellbeing and 19 items relating to school engagement.	<b>41 focus groups with students</b> (grades 9, 10, 11 & 12) <b>28 focus groups &amp; 20 individual interviews with school personnel</b> (school psychologists, teachers, curators, vice principals of pastoral care, vice-principals responsible for upbringing)
<b>Phase 3 (April 2016)</b> A repeated measures application of the Phase 2 survey to capture individuals' wellbeing and engagement at two time points in the academic year.	<b>82- item</b> questionnaire in dual language format (Kazakh & Russian) administered to 2239 students (sample 2) in the same 21 schools and regions as Phase 2. <b>Additional 5 items</b> relating to end of year educational ambitions and hobbies items added.	<b>43 individual interviews with students</b> (grades 9, 11 & 12)
<b>Phase 4 (October 2016)</b>	<b>&lt; 50 item</b> questionnaire in Kazakh and Russian for final appraisal (sample 3) and publication	<b>no more qualitative data will be collected</b>

## PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING IN SCHOOL PHASE 1 RESULTS (KAZAKH/ RUSSIAN LANGUAGE VERSIONS' RELIABILITIES AND MOST HIGHLY LOADED ITEMS)

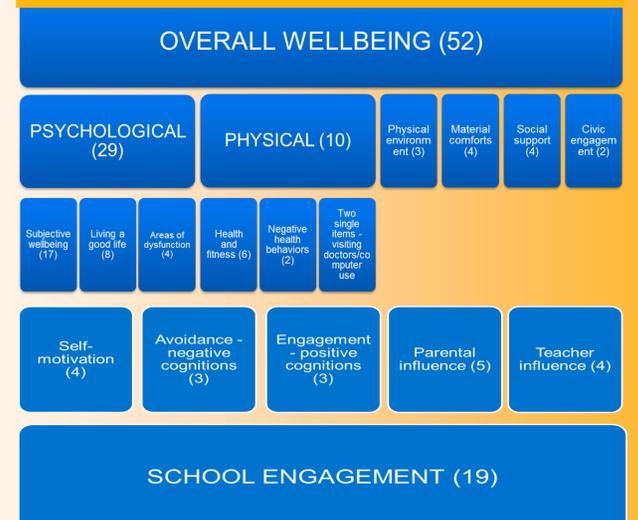


## ENGAGING WITH STUDENT VOICE



Placing students centrally as research participants is fundamental to the methodological approach of this research. More importantly, learning from the students' voices became a vital step in the development of a potentially more relevant and appropriate measure of wellbeing.

## WELLBEING MODEL DERIVED FROM AND BEING TAKEN FORWARD FROM PHASE 2 RESULTS



## STUDENTS' CONCEPTUALISATION OF WELLBEING

**Interviewer:** What does wellbeing mean to you?  
**GM2 (female):** The parents tell their child you have to be like this in the future and the child feels the pressure from the parents. I think wellbeing is when the child gets to decide what he wants to be.  
**GM6 (male):** First of all, a person needs to have a social circle, own values and self-worth. It means that he doesn't really depend on the judgment of others. He knows his goals and he goes towards them. He doesn't go on the leash of someone. In my opinion experiencing wellbeing and being self-confident are synonyms.

## STUDENTS' CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF WELLBEING

**Interviewer:** How do you understand wellbeing in the context of your school?  
**GM3 (female):** When all students are happy.  
**GM5 (male):** Simply having friends.  
**GM2 (female):** When there is a mutual understanding between teachers and pupils.  
**GM4 (female):** Positive atmosphere in the school.  
**GM5 (female):** It's to have Wi-Fi in school and when we have enough desks for the students.



## STUDENTS' KEY DETERMINANTS OF THEIR WELLBEING



- Family support
- Pets & Hobbies
- Having Friends
- Self-confidence
- Clean environment
- Positive school climate
- Sense of autonomy
- Health

**Preliminary recommendations for school improvements:** longer school breaks, improved teacher-student relationships, more free time, having a choice of school subjects based on their own interests and starting school in the morning.

## Dissemination



Networking



Conferences



Roundtables



Wellbeing Workshops