

The Meaning of Wellbeing from the Perspectives of Individuals Involved in the Local Education System

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Abstract: The wellbeing of learners has been manifest in the education policy of a number of countries. However, there is often controversy over the measurement of wellbeing, partly due to various socio-cultural differences. This study aims to examine the meanings of “student wellbeing” from the perspectives of students, parents and teachers who are associated with learning; these meanings will be then be translated into student wellbeing indicators. Two schools with different socio-economic conditions were purposively identified and selected for this study. Qualitative methods were adopted to obtain data, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were employed with students, parents and teachers. The findings indicated that the meaning of student wellbeing was covered in eight dimensions including family, physical and mental health, relationship between students and friends, characteristics of teachers, teaching methods, school environment, characteristics of students and community support.

Key words: Wellbeing of student, multi-dimension of wellbeing, local perception on wellbeing, education, skill, health

INTRODUCTION

Educational development in Thailand has evolved through a number of stages with several ‘education reform’s being made by the government. The enforcement of the National Education Act BE 2542 in 1999, under the latest reform has led to changes in a number of aspects which include national policy and planning, curriculum, learning management, evaluation of learning, standard and quality assurance, school management and administration, personnel development and participation of stakeholders in managing education at the local level. In addition, the basic education core curriculum was initiated and the amendment in BE 2551 (AD 2008) brought the establishment of the office for national education standards and quality assessment (public organization), educational service area and so on. One important thing arising from these changes is that learners are given more emphasis in the learning process as stated in the policy document as ‘student centered’. The outcomes of learning are therefore broadened to include physical and mental health, intelligence, knowledge, virtue and morality as well as the culture of living life happily with other people. Achievement of this reform is assessed by three desired characteristics of the learners, namely being smart, talented and happy (ONESDB, 1997).

Although, the policy preference is clear, its implementation and results have been mixed. It was reported that a number of schools were graded below the expected standard with low average scores in the national and international tests such as the World Competitiveness Report that ranked the quality of Thai education as the lowest within ASEAN. Furthermore, the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) test in 2009 (BE 2552) revealed that in three key subjects (Reading Literacy, Mathematics Literacy and Scientific Literacy), the average score of Thai students was lower than that attained in the year 2000 and in 2012 (BE 2555) their score was still lower than average. In addition, the average length of education of people aged 15-59 was 8.8 years which was far from the national education benchmark goal of 15 years and the education level of the workforce, aged 25 and over was lower than elementary level. On the other hand, the Malaysian and Indonesian workforce had finished elementary school and workers from China had graduated from secondary school. The low quality of education occurs despite the fact that Thailand has been among the top countries of Asia when providing budgets for education.

The causes of the low quality of education mentioned above are mixed and complicated. Partly this is due to comprehensive and complex policy instruments, especially those concerned with the desired

characteristics of being smart, talented and happy learners. Also, the instructors lack an understanding of the school curriculum; they continue to use traditional methods (teacher centric) in their teaching. The education reform also increased the workloads of teachers, especially with regard to 'paper work'. More importantly, the evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of the new system is problematic, particularly regarding the criteria and indicators that are complicated and difficult to implement. Since, each school has different contexts and factors resulting in diverse qualities for example, the student's home surroundings, their abilities to learn and their environments as well as the locations of the schools; using a single standard examination to compare the quality of each school has its limitations. Finally, the wellbeing of the students was not clearly taken into consideration in the implementation of the reformed policy.

In a number of countries such as Australia, Finland and New Zealand, there is strong evidence of a link between the quality of education and the wellbeing of the students (Murray-Harvey, 2010). Current studies also suggest that educational achievement plays an important role in shaping a person's wellbeing (Hayward *et al.*, 2005; Coulombe *et al.*, 2004; Ben-Arieh, 2008). However, wellbeing has been defined in different ways for instance in the health perspective, student wellbeing means a perfect state of physical and mental health but from a psychological point of view, wellbeing is evaluated from the student's satisfaction with themselves and their surroundings. Moreover, wellbeing is defined as being a condition (socio-economic) or environment which enables students to achieve their goals (Allardt, 1976a, b, 1989; Zhan, 1992; Knowles and Lander, 2011).

It is necessary to recognize that 'wellbeing' is both socially and culturally constructed. The definition of wellbeing in most policies is largely guided by theories and therefore the definitions are faced with limitations in terms of indicator validity (Ben-Arieh, 2007; Camfield *et al.*, 2009; Casas *et al.*, 2013). This is also the case in Thailand where the definitions of wellbeing in education are guided by theory and policy and this has resulted as discussed above in wellbeing indicators that are complicated, difficult to implement or even irrelevant. In respect to wellbeing validity, the definition of wellbeing must not only be guided by theories but must also be derived from the perceptions of related groups of people. In order to pursue this goal this study focuses on the perspectives of how student wellbeing is defined by the students and others involved in the local education system.

This research aims to study how student wellbeing is defined by the students studying in junior high schools in the northeast of Thailand. In fact, the quality of education in the northeast is lower than that of the other regions whether evaluated by international assessment of Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) or the national assessment of O-NET (NIETS, 2015, 2010). Moreover, at this level of study, there is an unceasingly high rate of dropouts, when compared to other levels. For example in the academic year of 2013, the dropout rate of junior high school students was 0.95 whereas that of elementary and senior high school students were 0.14 and 0.91, respectively. The causes of dropout might be due to the fact that the students did not enjoy learning, they were bored with studying, they fought with others, they were overly attached to friends, they were addicted to drugs or they faced an unwanted pregnancy. Those who dropped out were likely to violate the law or cause some social problems later (Chobphol, 2008). Apart from focusing on the student's viewpoint, parent's and teacher's attitudes towards wellbeing are also included, since they are considered to be involved with the education system (Konu and Rimpela, 2002; Knowles and Lander, 2011). Therefore, this study includes definitions of student wellbeing from the points of view of students, parents and teachers in terms of characteristics and elements.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The idea of considering constructing the meaning wellbeing from our literature reviews, approaches to wellbeing in education can be classified into four groups. First, wellbeing was studied through a framework of humanity according to the convention on the rights of the child (UNRC, 1989) which stipulated the full accomplishment of body, mind, spirit and societal wellbeing. These accomplishments will be possible only through freedom and therefore freedom is an intrinsic value of human beings (Masters, 2004; Camfield *et al.*, 2009). Second, wellbeing as considered in psychology suggests that satisfaction is central. The assessment of life satisfaction can include values and goals which will be varied within cultural contexts (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). The study of wellbeing by psychologists is usually covered and is referred to as subjective wellbeing (Balatsky and Diener, 1993; Kahneman *et al.*, 1999; Strozik *et al.*, 2016). Assessment of wellbeing could provide both positive and negative self-reporting of subjective wellbeing. However, it is noted that negative assessment of self-reporting could conceal a person's ability (Ben-Arieh, 2005). The third group

focuses upon the combination of internal and external factors or contexts that shape wellbeing. A number of studies found that student wellbeing is structured by a range of factors including the physical health of the students, relationships between friends and teachers and the school environment (Konu and Rimpela, 2002; Boyden *et al.*, 1998; PW., 2003). These factors can also be captured in two groups; the individual's goals and the processes adopted by an individual to achieve their goals (Soutter, 2011; Camfield *et al.*, 2009; Allardt, 1989; Boyden *et al.*, 2006). The research on student's wellbeing in the literature classified the wellbeing of the students as follows.

Physical wellbeing refers to good health without illness, having the ability to use the body appropriately and displaying healthy behavior (Masters, 2004; Camfield *et al.*, 2009).

Mental wellbeing suggests a positive mental condition reflecting good mental health with no mental illness such as engaging in conflict or anti-social behavior. Indicators of mental wellbeing include positive self-esteem, self-regulation which is useful rather than obstructive such as controlling oneself in being enthusiastic when working to achieve a goal, resilience which means the ability to adapt to situations and recover from encountering trouble or crisis and problem-solving skills. In addition, some studies also suggested that mental wellbeing concerns perception and thinking (intrapersonal) and other components which are autonomy, purpose in life, self-acceptance, self-efficacy and optimism (Ryff and Keyes, 1995).

Emotional wellbeing relates to the social dimension that covers emotional development and control. These are coping skills, autonomy and self-development.

Social wellbeing characterizes a positive situation between children and others in their lives. Minkinen proposed that this positive situation reflects through social relationship and relationship support. The United Nations explained that relationship support is the freedom to make decisions within an appropriate age range. Social wellbeing includes empathy, trust, peer and family relationships as well as desired social behaviors or skills for getting on with others (Ryff and Keyes, 1995).

Cognitive wellbeing involves, perception, memory, decision and reasoning. Cognitive wellbeing is important in communicating expressions of an individual's own feelings and demands that will shape adaptation to the environment and social relationships. Cognitive wellbeing is reflected through memory, thinking, intelligence, mastery, curiosity and motivation in learning.

Spiritual wellbeing is generally defined as the construction of meaning, purpose or individual value

(Soutter *et al.*, 2011). Fisher suggested that spiritual wellbeing has a connection to other dimensions of wellbeing and that individual spiritual wellbeing can be seen as meaning, purpose and value while community wellbeing includes morality, culture and religion.

Economic wellbeing is sometimes referred to as material wellbeing. This includes the condition of having materials that positively impact upon wellbeing. In the context of student wellbeing, economic wellbeing can manifest itself in the shape of a nutritious diet, living standards and occupations of parents.

Although, the literature reviews summarized above will guide the study of the student's wellbeing, the design of this study will not be entirely and strictly structured by these theories. Rather this study will focus on examining wellbeing from the experience and perceptions of students (Ben-Arieh, 2007, 2008; Camfield *et al.*, 2009; Soutter, 2011) as well as their families and schools.

This study employed qualitative research methods to obtain the required data. First, the study categorized the target schools into two groups, based on their distances from the urban center. This is primarily due to the fact that the quality of education in Thailand has been evidently unequal. Schools in Bangkok and in major town centers tend to be fully equipped with high quality instructors, infrastructure and materials while schools in small districts, towns and rural villages are largely of a lower priority. This research therefore identified Khon Kaen and Nakorn Phanom as the research sites from which the target schools would be selected. Khon Kaen has been among the top provinces of the northeast of Thailand which a GPP (Gross Provincial Product) per head that is the highest while Nakorn Phanom Province is the opposite, being among the lowest. Two schools in Khon Kaen and Nakorn Province were selected to be studied, Ban Don School (alias) in Ban Don sub-district (alias) and Ban Khok in Ban Khok sub-district, respectively. The names of the schools and districts remain anonymous and prior to the fieldwork, the research proposal was reviewed and approved by ethical review committee of Khon Kaen University.

The environments or contexts surrounding the selected schools are evidently different and it is these contexts that will allow this study to explore and cover the ranges of the meaning of wellbeing in different contexts. Most of the parents that send their kids to Ban Don School are a mix of agriculturalists, factory workers and commuters to the service sectors of the Khon Kaen urban center. The school is located in a rural village that has been increasingly sub-urbanized over the years. Most teachers at this school live outside and have little interaction or relationship with the community where the

school is located. The researcher was informed that most of these teachers are waiting to transfer to more 'lucrative' schools in the urban center. This school is located only about 20 km away from the provincial, urban center of Khon Kaen.

Conversely, Ban Khok School of Ban Khok sub-district is about 60 km away from Nakorn Phanom provincial town. Most of villagers who send their children to this school are farmers; however, they also derive significant parts of their livelihoods from non-agriculture sources. This non-agriculture income is primarily through the migration of villagers who left school after they completed their lower secondary school education to seek employment in major cities such as Bangkok, Rayong, Pattaya, Phuket, etc. Occupants of the villages where this school is located are of the Phutai ethnic group. The school teachers at this school are mostly living nearby or in the village and they have good relationships with the local people.

In regard to data collection, the study divided the key informants into three groups; students, parents of students and school teachers. For the students, 32 students were identified and invited to join in two focus groups. These students were subdivided as follows: informants for the study were separated into 3 groups student; 32 junior high students were selected and then the group was separated into 2 sub-groups students whose school-record was over 2.50 and students whose school-record was below 2.50 and would possibly drop-out of school. The groups of students were designed since their well-being and learning achievements have correlated with each other and the drop-outs have been considered as a variable able to predict the well-being of the students (Murray-Harvey, 2010). The focus group discussion was conducted in two groups of students. The 1st group was for students who had a school-score over 2.50 and the second group was for students who had a school-score below 2.50. Based on observation, students who had a school-score below 2.50 rarely spoke or expressed their opinion when they were in the same group with the over 2.50-students. A semi-structured interview guideline was applied in the focus group discussion. The group discussion was started with simple questions for instance, general characteristics of the student and their opinions regarding the school's context, followed by questions regarding the meaning of well-being based on the student's opinion and condition of the student's well-being at present. Parents; in-depth interview was used to collect qualitative data from 20 of the parents of junior high students. Teachers; junior high school teachers, counseling teachers and administrative-position teachers, a total of 24 were

interviewed using the in-depth interview method. The interview guidelines for parents and teachers were similar. For instance, familial context, schooling context, meaning and components of the student's well-being based on the parent's and teacher's opinion and then followed by questions regarding the well-being including condition of the student's well-being based on the parent and the teacher's opinion, factors affecting the student's well-being and suggestions for encouraging the student's well-being.

RESULTS

In the study of student wellbeing, the individuals involved reflected the meanings of wellbeing in eight aspects including a warm family, physical and mental health having peers and peer relationship, teacher characteristics, teaching methods, school environment, student characteristics and community support.

Warm family: All 3 groups of informants defined student wellbeing by mentioning the family first. They shared a similar understanding that wellbeing is "having a warm family". However, when considering the meaning of a warm family, they tended to have different viewpoints. The students thought that a warm family meant living together, no quarrels, doing activities together and no pressure or force to study as in the statement, "wellbeing means having a warm family, living together with no quarrel" (Group discussion with students from Ban Khok School, December 24, 2015) and "I wish that my parents and my brother/sister would talk to one another and help to solve problems. Also, I want my parents to take me on a trip because now they each travel alone, even for dinner; we rarely have time to dine together" (Group discussion with students from Ban Don School, January 8, 2016).

From the parent's perspective, a warm family means loving and understanding in a family and the students should obey their parents as well as understand their parent's good intentions. Besides, the parents emphasized the ability to support and raise children for example, providing healthy food, appropriate clothes, financial support for their children's study and other facilities which could make their children agreeable and happy.

Moreover, the teachers expressed their opinions that a family which could give wellbeing to children is a warm family, being like a friend who gives some advice, not expecting or putting too much pressure on the children and understanding the nature of children at different ages. They added that most problems concerning children and

youth are caused by one important aspect—understanding and accepting the opinions of other family members. If children are not happy to live in a family, they might go out to find happiness in other places. “Those problems including drugs, unwanted pregnancy and dropping out are caused by a family in which the parents and children don’t understand one another or don’t listen to and accept one another, so it leads to problems” (Interview with a male teacher from Ban Don School, January 13, 2016).

The findings mentioned above suggest that student wellbeing relates to the family. The characteristics of a family that lead to wellbeing include the fact that a family both supports and encourages, it is loving, understanding and advising, it provides physical health care such as attention to diet, clothing and other facilities.

Strong physical health-happy mind: Students revealed that wellbeing relates to both physical and mental health “having good health without illness or stress, good feeling and fun” (Group discussion with students from Ban Don School, January 8, 2016). Furthermore, it includes exercise and relaxation to relieve stress, “I think it must be about being strong physically, having exercise, able to relieve stress such as playing with friends, listening to music or doing sports” (Group discussion with students from Ban Don School, January 8, 2016).

Parents mentioned the physical and mental strength of students, stating that physical health means having a strong body, eating nutritious food and exercising while mental health was described as having happiness and no stress.

Similarly, the teacher’s viewpoint regarding physical and mental strength demonstrated that having good health means, happiness, no illness, no stress and not too much anxiety. When faced with a problem, the students are able to solve it. Also, they have healthy behaviors: eating healthy food, exercising to strengthen the body. Management of mental health is important; poor mental health could affect physical health and the student’s academic achievement.

From the perspectives of the three groups, it is obvious that they all agree that students who are considered as have ‘wellbeing’ are those who have good physical and mental health. They need to show good behavior towards their health such as consuming a healthy diet, exercising and having the ability to deal with stress.

Peers and peer relationships: In this aspect, a student said that “happiness is staying with friends; when I am stressed I can play with them which reduces my

stress. Also, when I don’t understand a lesson, I can ask them. I like to come to school because of my friends” (Group discussion with students from Ban Khok School, December 24, 2015).

From a parent’s perspective, friends are supposed to help one another, especially in study as in the statement “friends are for helping and supporting one another in a good way for example, when someone cannot catch up with a lesson, they can tutor their friend or study together, not persuade one another to play games or go riding a motor bike because this is not appropriate and I don’t want my children to have such friends” (Interview with a male parent from Ban Don, January 17, 2016). From the teachers perspective having peers is for assisting one another and doing activities together. However, the difference from the other two groups is that friends must accept the differences of friends; whether their friends are poor, rice farmers, sick, disabled or special needs children, they must understand and accept them as well as working together with their friends.

Characteristics of teachers: The students said that teachers should be friendly, not fierce and speak politely so that students could feel free to ask for advice. These viewpoints reflect the fact that most teachers are fierce and talk loudly so the students do not feel brave enough to ask questions when they have problems concerning their studies. Also, teachers should pay attention to students and understand those who are not as smart as others as in the statement, “I want a teacher to talk to me when I don’t understand a lesson but I’m afraid because he/she speaks loudly and likes to complain when I fail a test. I want the kind teacher who doesn’t complain because this would definitely make me happy to study” (Group discussion with students from Ban Khok School, December 24, 2015) and “I want a teacher to help me when I don’t keep up with a lesson or he/she teaches me slowly because when I don’t do well in a test and I have bad score, the teacher complains and my parents scold me” (Group discussion with students from Ban Khok School, December 15, 2015).

The parents mentioned that teachers should pay attention to the students and take care of them all also, half of the student’s lives are spent at school thus, teachers play an important role in encouraging the students to be happy.

Regarding the teachers themselves those who can provide their students with a feeling of wellbeing will be those who pay attention and are fair. The crucial principle is the understanding and acceptance of student behaviors at different ages (Interview with a female teacher from Ban Khok School, December 29, 2015).

Teaching methods: With respect to teaching methods, students stated that “I don’t want my teacher to talk much or read from books because it’s boring and I feel sleepy but I like playing games during the class, like when trainee teachers come to teach me with games or we work in group projects, helping one another, solving problems, it’s fun and I always look forward to them teaching again” (Group discussion with students from Ban Khok School, December 24, 2015). Moreover, a student revealed that “I like studying outside the classroom for instance in an art class, a teacher lets me go out to draw in a field or under a tree. Studying like this is fun and I don’t feel stressed” (Group discussion with students from Ban Don School, January 8, 2016). The statements reflected that it is important to not only focus on lectures; there should be more varied activities both in and out of the classroom.

The parents, on the other hand, mentioned the content of study rather than the teaching methods. They proposed that apart from teaching students to be legible, the teachers should provide information to them on how to live their lives, how to survive in society and initiate protection for example, learning about sex and pregnancy/disease prevention, how to get on with other people, virtue, morality and provide basic career information so that the students have choices in their future occupations, even if they do not continue their studies.

The teachers expressed the opinion that there should be teaching methods which involve life skills, virtue and morality and the sufficiency economy. Besides, the teachers should teach their students to know about their roots as well as having an informed view of the world. The teachers also need to provide other activities such as concerning leadership and how to live with each other, emphasizing on the child-centric concept and the differing potential of the students. Teaching materials are also important but the teachers have limited time for preparation.

School environment: The students gave their opinion, stating that a cool, pleasant and clean environment with spaces for activities is an essential factor in ensuring their wellbeing. By contrast, students from Ban Don School rather focused on the physical condition of the school environment as suggested, “the classroom should be improved because it is hot, especially in the afternoon and I can’t concentrate on the lessons” (Group discussion with students from Ban Don School, January 8, 2016). Also, the drinking water is not clean and insufficient; students need to buy water for themselves, “the school’s drinking water is not plentiful enough because sometimes the water system doesn’t work, so we need to buy

water... even if it works, I’m afraid that the water isn’t filtered and clean, so I buy water” (Group discussion with students from Ban Don School, January 8, 2016). The students from Ban Khok School put an emphasis on having “a sports stadium and space for activities” which conformed to the student’s needs as mentioned above. Besides, teaching materials must be sufficient for all the students.

The parents stated that a school that provides student wellbeing should have a good atmosphere, no pollution and the water and food should be of good quality since these are basic elements. Moreover, teaching materials should be sufficient for the number of students so that they can access the resources and pay more attention to studying. Also, the school should be safe with no risk of accident, theft and drugs. If the school is close to home or in a community, it will be looked after thoroughly and there will be less chance of road accidents.

Additionally, some teachers suggested constructing learning resources and creating an atmosphere, providing a wide variety of media as well as the internet to aid the search for information. They also mentioned that the community should play a role in this aspect; thus, there should be learning resources within the community.

Characteristics of students: Students reflected two perspectives in this aspect. The first being having free time as in the statement, “my happiness is having time to play and do activities but my mother doesn’t want me to go and do this because she wants me to stay at home and do homework or housework” (Group discussion with students from Ban Don School, January 8, 2016). The students think that their parents limit their time and in some families, the students have to work after school in order to help their family financially for example, they get hired to make sticks for grilled chicken, pork, meatballs, etc. The second perspective is of having freedom. The students said that they should have the right to make their own decisions such as regarding activities and subjects that interest them as in the statement, “I think I should have the right to do what I want to study what I’d like for example, I want to study art but my mother tells me it’s useless and makes me read a book” (Group discussion with students from Ban Khok School, December 24, 2015).

Conversely, the parent’s attitudes were different from those of the students. They mentioned that the students should study with purpose and pay attention because they believe that this is an important factor for students to have wellbeing in learning.

The teachers stated that students with wellbeing are those who do voluntary work and have responsibility, they are citizens who are in charge of various issues at school and are pleased with life. They should have a positive behavior to come to school that is they should look forward to going to school have enthusiasm to take part in classroom activities and always attend school. One further, important thing is that the students should have goals and determination.

Community support for teaching and learning: In this dimension, the students mentioned the services or facilities provided to search for additional information such as an efficient internet which is widely accessible as in the statements from Ban Don students “I think nowadays the internet is important for example, when a teacher assigns homework to do a report, we have to search for information and save some pictures from the internet. The internet in the school isn’t sufficient, here the local government provides the internet for certain areas and it’s weak, so it makes it difficult when I have to do my homework” “adults often think that we have the internet for Facebook and Line but they don’t know we can use it for work”.

The teachers and parents shared a common attitude suggesting that the community should support the students in terms of teaching and learning as well as with other activities. For instance, providing scholarships for poor or talented students as this can be an example for other students and providing space for the students to do activities such as exercise, a learning center or other activities. However, there is an issue on which the teachers think differently, it is that the parents or local leaders should play a role in teaching and learning together with the school as in the statement “the school needs parent’s opinions, when we have a parent meeting or basic education committee meeting, they always agree with what the teachers say but this isn’t only the duty of the teachers or the school”.

DISCUSSION

Considering the results, it can be concluded that student wellbeing from the perspective of the individuals involved in the education system, covers eight dimensions including having a warm family, good physical and mental health, peers and peer relationships, characteristics of the teachers, teaching methods, school environment, characteristics of the students and community support for teaching and learning. These definitions of wellbeing reflect the view that student wellbeing is thought to come from the surroundings or

conditions that provide the wellbeing to the students; this is in accordance with the meaning of wellbeing as defined by the Research Group on Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (WeSD) that stated wellbeing means social conditions and situations which facilitate human beings, enabling them to find and achieve their goals without reducing other’s wellbeing (Promphakping, 2013). Similarly, Soutter *et al.* (2011) suggested that wellbeing is composed of two parts including a goal from evaluation and a process which consists of assets and action.

Moreover, the elements of student wellbeing include more than just the school environment and health; they emphasize on the family dimension first which differs from the review of literature which considered mainly health matters (Awartani *et al.*, 2007; Kuno and Rimpela, 2002; Casas *et al.*, 2013) and suggests the fact that student wellbeing should be considered in other contexts. The findings of this study are in accordance with suggestions from Knowles and Lander (2011), Boyden *et al.* (1998) indicating that there are inputs from family, community, school and policy. Besides, they conform to the wellbeing model by Kuno and Rimpela (2002) that mentions that wellbeing in school consists of internal and external school environments, social relationship, characteristics of the students and wellness. The findings also accord with an idea from Erawan (2004) that proposed the concept of wellness should have healthy people, school, environment and family or community or even a healthy surrounding society.

When considering the different meanings of wellbeing given by students and adults (parents and teachers), the student’s viewpoint differed from adult’s on the issue of activities with the family. Although, students in this age tend to spend more time with their friends rather than with their families, the findings indicated that they still need family time. However, the pressure created by the family was not desirable for the students. Furthermore, regarding the issue of having free time, the students mentioned that their parents limited their time, especially those from poor families who needed to work after school to earn extra income. This issue accorded with having freedom for decision making or choices of study as well as activity but most parents set choices for the students which were the result of their beliefs and values. Clearly, Borphit Isara in 2007’s study indicated that freedom to choose what to study according to student’s interests, influenced happiness in learning.

Additionally, adults had a different attitude, compared to the students with regard to safety. They stated that the students should stay in safe places to protect their life and property including with their families, communities and schools in which teachers should look

after them thoroughly. In the aspect of safety, this is considered as one of the need satisfiers that Doyal and Goough (1991) mentioned; it is necessary that safety be responded to and when it is satisfied, it leads to wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

This study argues that the subjective wellbeing of learners in the local education system not only covers academic achievement or skills but also includes both the internal and external surroundings of the schools, social relationships, student personality and wellness.

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