

A Framework for Ensuring Wellness of Faculty Members for Higher Education Effectiveness

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Abstract

Main intent of this paper is to highlight the concept: Faculty Wellness and its relevance in Higher Education *inter alia* Management Education. It is argued that “One cannot give what one doesn’t possess”, indicating the core of education system: ‘motivated and talented faculty members’ who will play a prominent role ensuring quality of higher education. The main intent of this is to make a conceptual review of Faculty Wellness in Higher Education context and suggests a framework for assessing Faculty Wellness making Hubbal and West model⁴ more India-specific (an education system more focused on rote-learning rather than enquiry-based). On the basis of above framework ground reality of faculty wellness can be checked: whether Faculty members are Thriving (Wellness strong and consistent), Struggling (Wellness moderate and inconsistent) and Suffering (Wellness low and inconsistent) in five areas: purpose (liking what one does each day and being motivated to achieve one’s goals), social (having supportive relationships and love in one’s life), financial (managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security), physical (having good health and enough energy to get things done daily), and community (liking where one lives, feeling safe, and having pride in one’s community).

Keywords: Faculty wellness, Hubbal and West model, Dimensions of wellness, Evaluation and improvement

Introduction

These days, when the term ‘Vidyadaana’ turned out-moded and ‘Vidya’ can be secured at a price, ensuring quality education receives significance. For instance, the “FICCI Vision 2030 for Higher Education in India” outlines Higher Education Infrastructure that would create high quality, yet equitable and affordable Indian Higher Education System. Educational Service quality can be ensured when: one, the educational administrators (the management, the university and the government) show institutional leadership for funding and infrastructure development; two, the faculty members (teachers) are fine-tuning themselves exhibit scholarship in teaching and research; three, above two are partnering to meet the challenges of changing times by reframing instructional strategies (curriculum and pedagogy) in reaching the students.

Commonly wellness-ensured teacher teaches well, may it be primary, secondary or tertiary education. In essence the present day human resource concept

‘Emotional Ownership’ is all about Wellness itself. Ensuring teacher wellness in higher education context throws up two caveats: ‘Teacher Beware’ and ‘Employer-Beware’. First, ‘Teacher Beware’: unless a faculty member proves the ‘learning, teaching and research credentials’ that person won’t survive long as a worthy academic. ‘What got him here won’t get him there’ i.e. minimum academic qualification may secure a teaching-post, but it will not support higher-pedestals of academic career. Second, ‘Employer-Beware’: unless teacher-wellness is ensured to a large measure, quality teaching, learning and research will remain a pipedream in such an educational institution. Innocuous Latin saying “Nemo dat quod non habet” reminds that “no one gives what one doesn’t have”. And, hence, the faculty wellness is to be embedded within the organisational, leadership and operating cultures of institutions, academic units and individuals⁴.

The main intent of this is to make a conceptual review of Faculty Wellness in Higher Education context

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and suggests a framework for assessing Faculty Wellness making Hubbal and West model⁴ more India-specific (an education system more focused on rote-learning rather than enquiry-based).

This paper is organised as follows: after the introduction of the concept of wellness, it moves into teacher wellness to dissect the concept of institutional wellness and faculty (teacher) wellness. Thereafter, it moves into suggested Wellness Action Plan for Higher Education Faculty leading to final section of conclusions.

Concept of Wellness

What is wellness for the developed West may not hold much water for the East. Yet, commonly it is held that wellness is more than being free from illness; it is a dynamic process of change and growth.

Maintaining an optimal level of wellness is absolutely crucial to live a higher quality life. Wellness matters because everything a person does and every emotion that person feel relate to his/her well-being. In turn, the well-being directly affects one's actions and emotions. It's an ongoing circle. Therefore, it is important for everyone to achieve optimal wellness in order to subdue stress, reduce the risk of illness and ensure positive interactions.

Wellness: Some Conceptual Clarity

These days 'Wellness' is a topic of intellectual studies world over. Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life. Whatever it may be the definition of wellness may be an inherently personal one for every individual of any age, nationality or gender¹.

Hatfield and Hatfield³ state that wellness can be defined as a "conscious and deliberate process by which people are actively involved in enhancing their overall well-being - intellectual, physical, social, emotional, occupational, spiritual." This definition supports a proactive, rather than reactive approach to wellness, and involves a philosophy of self-care and self-respect that nurtures its ongoing process¹.

"...a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." - The World Health Organization.

"a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential." - The National Wellness Institute of USA



Poulin (2001) had focused on the traditional 4-quadrant Medicine Wheel recognizing physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing as being important components to integrate with mindfulness. Soloway (2006) expanded upon the Medicine Wheel's teachings and created a 7-quadrant wheel that integrates traditional knowledge from Yogic traditions. The wellness wheel thus integrated physical, social, emotional, ecological, vocational, mental and spiritual aspects of well-being (see Table 1).

Soloway coined the term "Mindfulness-Based Wellness-Education and the program was first piloted in the winter of 2006. It is interesting to note that this program goes beyond Wallace and Shapiro's (2006) recent focus on the contribution of Buddhist thought to understanding and fostering mental well-being.

Under this definitional analysis, one can note that the chief characteristics of wellness are expressed through the 'five life tasks' of spirituality, self-regulation, work, love and friendship. These life tasks dynamically interact with the life forces of family, community, religion, education, government, media, and business/industry. Wellness is not a static endpoint; rather, wellness fluctuates and varies around

Table 1: Indian's Wellness Indicators

Well-Being Element	Thriving (%)	Struggling (%)	Suffering (%)	Regional	Global
Purpose	16	54	30	13	18
Social	15	49	36	19	23
Financial	21	49	30	25	25
Community	33	60	7	25	26
Physical	23	68	9	23	24

Source: Gallup Healthways State of Global Wellbeing Report 2013

defined upper and lower limits. These limits set the range of normal variability within which there is constant dynamic fluctuation¹.

2.2 Review of Global Wellness Studies

At this juncture, it worth noting the throw light on 'Gallup Study of Wellness (2013) on India. The Gallup World Poll indicates that over the last several years, Indians' average ratings of their own lives have been slowly declining with an increase in the percentage of those who are suffering. Economic conditions likely have much to do with this: Only about one-fifth of Indians (21%) are thriving in financial well-being, while about half (49%) are struggling and 30% are suffering. Millions of young Indians are flocking to the country's metropolitan areas looking for jobs and leaving behind their traditional farming villages. This has led to surging youth unemployment rates in the cities and may help explain why the proportion of urban residents thriving financially (24%) is similar to the thriving rate among rural Indians (21%). However, greater access to education and social services in the cities may make more of a difference at the bottom end of the financial spectrum; about one in three rural Indians (32%) are suffering in financial well-being, versus one in five urbanites (21%). Sixteen percent of Indians are thriving in purpose well-being, indicating the vast majority do not feel fulfilled in their day-to-day lives. A slight majority (54%) are struggling and 30% are suffering in this element; these figures are similar to results for Asia as a whole, and to the global results. Notably, having a job makes little difference in Indians' likelihood to be thriving in purpose well-being. Gallup's most recent

global study of employee engagement found that India's workforce is among the least engaged in the world - a finding that has powerful implications for productivity and innovation in the country.

According to Friesen, people should work at a slower pace and cultivate a cheerful attitude. A "get away from it all holiday" is important each year, and so are daily exercise and fresh air.

Kunkel⁶ reports that wellness is a key factor in having such attributes as enthusiasm and a positive outlook. Wellness depends on living a healthful lifestyle and taking care of oneself. People with a hope report a greater sense of energy and moods which are more up than down. Optimism and realism are characteristics of a hopeful person. According to many studies, wellness is influenced by physical and psychological factors and their contributing health habits.

Dimensions of Faculty Wellness

Teacher wellness has been a concern in assessing the effectiveness of the nation's education system. Kyriacou⁷ stated that the international concern with teacher stress and burnout stems from:

...1) the mounting evidence that prolonged occupational stress can lead to both mental and physical ill-health, 2) a general concern to improve the quality of teacher's working lives and 3) a concern that stress and burnout may significantly impair the working relationship a teacher has with his pupils and the quality of teaching and commitment he is able to display (p.147).

Faculty wellness is influenced by interconnected and critical domains of institutional and personal wellness.

Institutional Wellness

'Institutional wellness' occurs at a macro level and includes the organisational, academic and disciplinary culture; interdepartmental dynamics; educational leadership practices; and workload conditions and expectations on campus⁴ (Catano *et al*, 2007). Critical question is how they facilitate or hinder faculty wellness in both short-term and long-term time-zone. Furthermore, it throws light on institutional and/or departmental best practices: strategies, supports, provisions (e.g. lounge and green space areas, recreational facilities, faculty social events, etc.) enhance faculty wellness in institutional setting.

Faculty Wellness

Faculty wellness has seven dimensions: occupational, emotional, spiritual, environmental, physical, social, and intellectual⁴. Each dimension of wellness is interrelated with another. Each dimension is equally vital in the pursuit of optimum health. One can reach an optimal level of wellness by understanding how to maintain and optimize each of the dimensions of wellness.

- **Vocational (Occupational/purpose) wellness** is about enjoying one's occupational endeavours and appreciating contributions. This dimension of wellness defines the purpose and encourages personal satisfaction and enrichment in one's life through work.
- **Social wellness** helps one to perform social roles effectively and comfortably, and create a support network. This dimension of wellness allows one not only develop encouraging relationships with peers, but also intimate relationships with romantic partners.
- **Emotional wellness** relates to understanding one's feelings and coping effectively with stress. It is important to pay attention to self-care, relaxation, stress reduction and the development of inner resources so you can learn and grow from experiences.
- **Physical (Resourceful/Financial) wellness** relates to maintaining a healthy body and seeking care when needed. Physical health is attained through exercise, eating well, getting enough

sleep and paying attention to the signs of illness and getting help when needed.

- **Environmental (Ecological) wellness** encourages you to respect the delicate balance between the environment and yourself. Respect for other living things in our environment is just as necessary as respect for the physical environment itself.
- **Intellectual (Mental) wellness** involves having an open mind when you encounter new ideas and continuing to expand your knowledge. It encourages active participation in scholastic, cultural and community activities.
- **Spiritual wellness** allows one to develop a set of values that help that person to seek meaning and purpose. Spirituality can be represented in many ways, for example, through relaxation or religion. But being spiritually well means knowing which resources to use to cope with issues that come up in everyday life.

On the basis of above framework ground reality of faculty wellness can be checked: whether Faculty members are **Thriving** (Wellness strong and consistent), **Struggling** (Wellness moderate and inconsistent) and **Suffering** (Wellness low and inconsistent) in five areas: **purpose** (liking what one does each day and being motivated to achieve one's goals), **social** (having supportive relationships and love in one's life), **financial** (managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security), **physical** (having good health and enough energy to get things done daily), and **community** (liking where one lives, feeling safe, and having pride in one's community). It can be noted that some elements: intellectual wellness subsumes in occupational wellness and spiritual can be included in community wellness.

Suggested Wellness Action Plan for Higher Education Faculty

Successful faculty wellness programmes are characterized by:

- Individualised behaviour change information (self-care information, health risk assessments, behavioural counselling);

- Social supports (wellness challenges, classes, support groups);
- Senior-level management intervention (financial incentives, department-wide policy changes, communication, long-term commitment); and
- Environmental supports (workplace fitness centres, on-site health services, smoke-free worksites, canteen facility with healthy meal and snack options).

When the State is allowing maximum space for private participation in higher education, it is felt that the faculty wellness can be ensured by five steps action model suggested by Blaydes²: (a) building a climate of caring in the educational institution – developing a personal and approachable administrative style, (b) building a sense of commitment – through such activities as working on professional growth plans together, limiting classroom interruptions, and making sure the accomplishments of the college/school/institute are visible within the community, (c) building a sense of belonging - creating a team of teachers that works collaboratively to improve its school, (d) building a sense of security – creating a safe and orderly environment so students and teachers feel protected and secure, and (e) building a sense of personal competency – using positive feedback and reinforcement to enhance teacher self-esteem.

Cruz (1995) adds to these steps by citing that an effective Institutional Head will also share decision-making power, establish credibility, and understand the norms, beliefs and attitudes that characterize the school culture.

Suggested Action Plan for Faculty Wellness

1. *Health promoting actions*: The education institute shall disseminate information, build awareness, provide health education, and support health-promoting activities that focus on skill development and lifestyle behaviour change for staff members.
2. *Access to facilities*: Staff shall have access to facilities that meet employee wellness needs and interests.
3. *Safe social and physical environments*: Social and physical environments shall be safe

and supportive, supported by management's expectations of healthy behaviours and implementation of policies that promote health and safety and reduce the risk of disease.

4. *Integration of the staff wellness programmes*: The staff wellness programmes shall be integrated into institutional structure and culture.
5. *Linkage with other programs*: Staff wellness programs shall be linked to related programs such as employee assistance programs, emergency care, and programs that help employees balance work and family life.
6. *Evaluation and improvement*: The institute shall conduct ongoing evaluation to inform the improvement of the staff wellness program's effectiveness and efficiency.

Conclusions

Institutions of higher learning including those of management education can be arranged in a pyramid. Top cone represents 'Research Focused Institutions' their primary focus is research and innovation and their primary role is addressing intellectual imperatives. The middle part represents 'Career Focused Institutions' whose primary focus is to produce industry-ready graduates and post graduates and their primary role is addressing economic imperatives. The bottom of the pyramid is Foundation Institutions, with a primary focus on providing holistic education to masses; imparting relevant skills and their primary role is addressing social imperatives of equity, access and excellence. Wherever it may be: top, middle or bottom of educational institutional pyramid, the critical element quality rests on ways and means of attracting top talent, providing enough motivation and incentives to retain existing resources. It rests solely on teacher/faculty wellness. In nutshell, a 'thieving teacher' can vibrantly transfer the knowledge-block to students within the classroom or beyond, but not a 'struggling' nor a 'suffering' teacher. To quote Stokes et.al (2006) "Wellness programs in the workplace have great potential to impact employees' long-term lifestyle choices because the average employee spends 50 hours-a-week at work and eats one third of his/her meals at work."

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