

Job Description

An assessment of the effectiveness of second level educational policies and curricula at promoting students' emotional and social wellbeing

Purpose:

This is a full-time research project (MA) which will involve conducting a comprehensive survey of Irish second level educators to assess the means by which they promote students' wellbeing and their attitudes and opinions as to the efficacy of the approaches that are taken to do so.

Main Tasks:

- Undertake a literature review of wellbeing, education and teaching performance.
- Design and conduct a quantitative survey of Irish second level educators to ascertain the approaches they currently take to promote students' wellbeing and their opinions as to current official guidelines as to the promotion of wellbeing in second level educational settings.
- Conduct qualitative interviews with educators to assess their attitudes and opinions as to the promotion of students' wellbeing, the barriers, if any, that they encounter in attempting to do so and any suggestions that they may have for optimising the promotion of wellbeing in second level educational settings.
- Analyse current educational policy related to the promotion of second level students' wellbeing and suggest changes, where necessary, based on the results of the quantitative and qualitative surveys outlined above.
- Act in accordance with the objectives of the research project and conform to highest standards of ethics possible.
- Undertake other duties as may be reasonably required from time-to-time.
- The research student will be required to be present at the Postgraduate Research Centre in the LINC at ITB full-time Monday to Friday.
- Candidates should be resident in the EU at the time of their application.

Required Skills and Aptitudes:

- Research skills, both qualitative and quantitative.
- Analytical and critical evaluation skills.
- Good communication skills, in particular, report writing and presentation skills.
- Attention to detail and strong organisational skills.

- Ability to manage a complex workload and work to tight deadlines.
- Excellent interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Desirable Experience:

- BA/BSc with 1st class honours or MA/MSc in psychology, social science, education or a commensurate discipline.
- Strong research skills both quantitative and qualitative.
- Ability to work both independently and with others.
- Ability to demonstrate project development skills and a track record of delivering on objectives.
- Ability to demonstrate strong analytical and writing skills.

Location:

The LINC Centre, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, Blanchardstown Road North, Dublin 15.

Commencement:

This project will commence on 1st September 2017.

Terms:

The funding available is for a maximum of 2 years and will cover fees up to €4,500, materials up to €2,000 and a student stipend grant of €10,000 per annum.

Application:

A letter of application along with a full CV and the names of two referees should be emailed to shane.walsh@itb.ie or posted to:

Mr Shane Walsh, Administrator, The LINC, Institute of Technology
Blanchardstown,

Blanchardstown Road North, Dublin 15 by 12 noon, Friday 2nd June 2017

Informal project queries should be directed to Dr Aiden Carthy at
Aiden.Carthy@itb.ie

Other enquiries should be emailed to Shane Walsh at the following address
shane.walsh@itb.ie

Project Description:

Previous research has demonstrated that promoting the development of second level students' wellbeing through the provision of classroom based activities focused on developing emotional awareness and social skills can yield positive results including reduced levels of anti-social behaviour and increased GPA. New 'wellbeing' guidelines have recently been released by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). As of September 2017 all Irish secondary schools will be mandated to provide 300 hours of instruction across the junior cycle curriculum pertaining to the promotion of students' wellbeing. Although guidelines have been issued by the NCCA, schools will largely have autonomy to decide how best to support the promotion of students' wellbeing, This constitutes a significant change with respect to the provision of the junior cycle curriculum, yet to date, the attitudes and opinions of educators towards this reform have not been systematically appraised. This study aims to address this gap in knowledge by conducting a large-scale survey and focus groups with second level educators to determine their attitudes and opinions as to how best to promote students' wellbeing

As educators are charged with the direct delivery of knowledge to students, it is of immense benefit to ascertain their opinions towards the curricula they teach and to determine what, if any, changes to current curricula they may recommend to better support students' social and emotional development. Educators are also well placed to ascertain what barriers may limit the effectiveness of social skills development. Gaining insight as to educators' opinions would contribute to a more informed knowledge and understanding of students' social skills development and would help to ensure that any efforts to promote students' wellbeing in Irish second level educational settings yield maximum benefit for students and educators.