

School-based mental health promotion: An overview of the current state-of-the-art

Catriona O'Toole & Emily Darlington



S·H·E

Schools for Health in Europe



**Maynooth
University**

National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Contact:

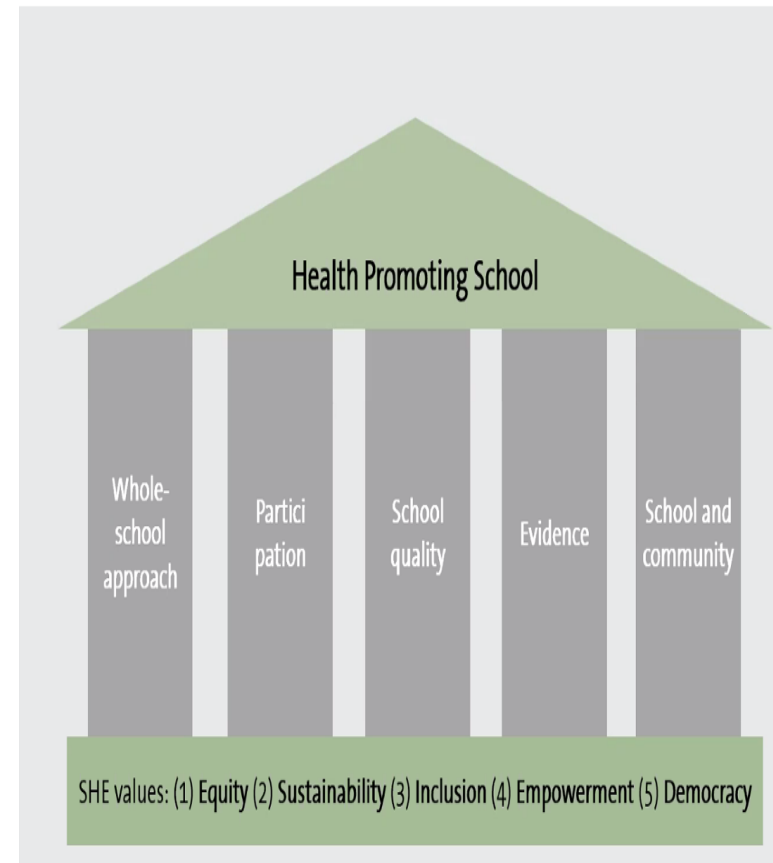
catriona.a.otoole@mu.ie

@catrionaotoole



Approach to developing SHE Factsheet

- Rapid Realist Review
- Whole-school approaches
- Impact (short/long term)
- Characteristics of successful approaches
- Barriers & facilitators
- Gaps & Future directions
- Inviting feedback...



Alignment with SHE values & pillars

What do we mean by mental health?

Mental health is a state of well-being in which 'the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community' (WHO, 2013; p. 6).

*Mental health is the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional, psychological, social and spiritual wellbeing **that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity** (MHPU, 1997).*

....Basic cognitive skills; ability to recognise, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathise with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; **and harmonious relationship between body and mind** represent important components of mental health... (Galderisi, et al. 2015).

The mental health of our children

- Globally 10–20% of children and young people meet the criteria for a mental health condition, and this is increasing
 - (Belfer, 2008; Harden et al, 2001; Kessler, et al., 2005; Kieling et al, 2011; Patel, et al., 2007)
- Childhood adversity is a key determinant
 - (Boyle, 2020; Felitti & Anda, 1998; Rogers & Pilgrim, 2010; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2018; World Health Organization, 2000, 2002, 2013).
- Covid-19 has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and increased the economic, social, and psychological pressures on children
 - (Save the Children, 2020; United Nations, 2020).
- The school is an ideal setting for promoting emotional and social competencies
 - (Barry et al., 2013; Bourke, 2003).



Mental Health Promotion

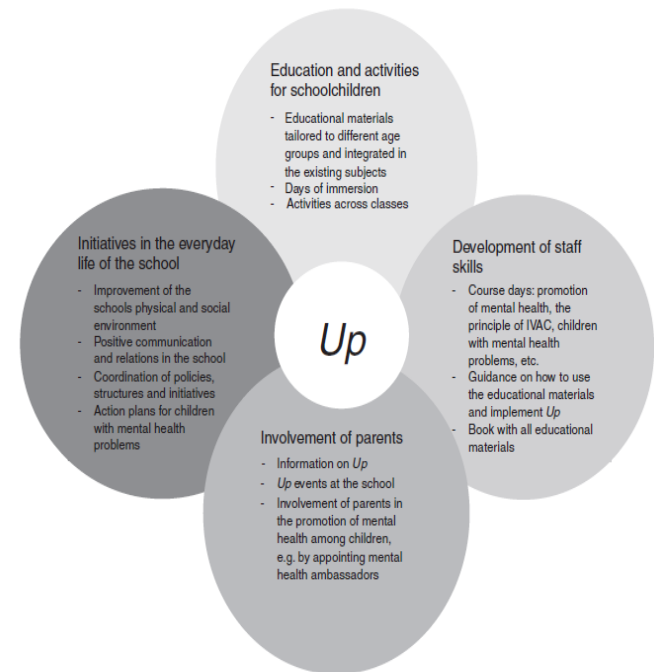
- The World Health Organisation (2018) defines mental health promotion as actions to create living conditions and environments that support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles. These include actions to optimise people's chances of experiencing better mental health.
- The Health Promoting Schools (HPS) approach places mental health promotion within the context of a general education mandate (Paulus, 2009).



Some examples of whole school approaches...

- *Up*
 - Denmark
 - Informed by HPS Framework (Nielsen, et al., 2014)
- *MindMatters*
 - National programme , Australia (Hazell et al., 2002; Lyn, et al., 2000; Mullett et al., 2004)
 - Adapted for Germany (Furze & Paulus, 2009)
- The Gatehouse Project
 - Melbourne, Australia (Bond et al., 2004; Patton, et al., 2006)
 - Adapted for Alberta, Canada (Omstead, 2008)

Figure 1.
The whole school approach intervention *Up* consists of four components: education and activities for schoolchildren, professional staff development, involvement of parents and initiatives in the everyday life of the school



From Nielsen et al., 2014

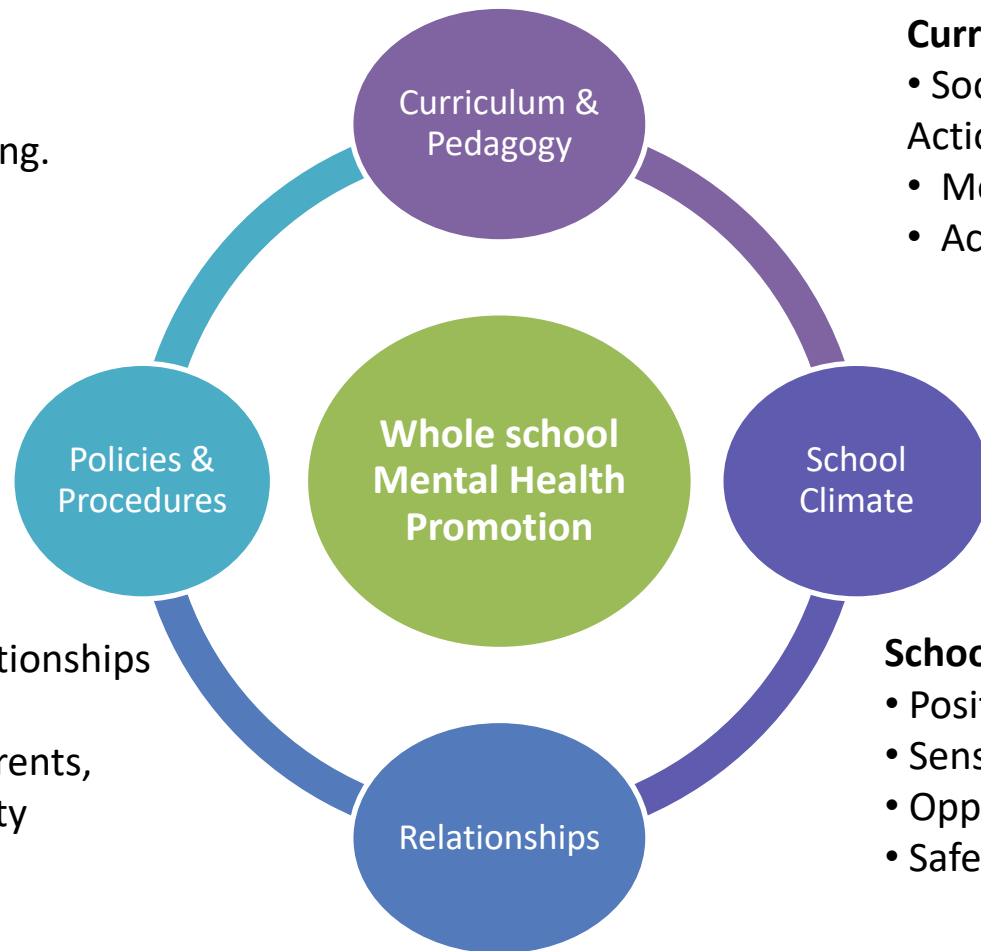
Current state-of-the-art

Policies & Procedures

- School policies – behaviour, anti-bullying.
- School scheduling
- Teacher wellbeing
- Staff CPD

Relationships:

- Student-teacher relationships
- Peer relationships
- Partnerships with parents, families and community



Curriculum & Pedagogy:

- Social and Emotional skills / Action Competencies
- Mental health literacy
- Active learning

School Climate

- Positive school climate
- Sense of belonging
- Opportunities for success
- Safe physical environment

Barriers and Facilitators

Teachers:

- Teacher training & professional development
- Teacher wellbeing, morale and reflective supervision

Leadership:

- Proactive and enthusiastic champion
- Joined-up thinking, coherence
- Time management

Resourcing:

- Providing professional development
- Paying for teacher release time
- Developing curriculum resources

Implementation & sustainment:

- Long term commitment
- The high quality implementation

Competing priorities

- The prominence of academic attainment and accountability



Future directions

Co-creation

- Bottom-up collaboration with parents, teachers, local community (Darlington et al., 2017; Darlington & Masson, 2021; Honingh, 2018)
- Peer-led programmes (Hawkins; et al., 2017); children's voice (O'Reilly et al., 2013)

Strengthening EDUCATION

- Educational theory, curriculum and pedagogy (O'Toole & Simovska, in press)

Childhood adversity and trauma

- The need for trauma-informed approaches (Magruder, et al., 2017; O'Toole, 2021; Scott et al, 2011; Stein, et al., 2019)

Beyond biomedical explanations

- Understanding emotional /psychological distress in relation to children's life circumstances (UNHRC, 2017; Patel et al, 2018, Johnstone & Boyle, 2018)

School-based mental health promotion: An overview of the current state-of-the-art

Catriona O'Toole & Emily Darlington



S·H·E

Schools for Health in Europe



**Maynooth
University**

National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Contact:

catriona.a.otoole@mu.ie

@catrionaotoole

