Education and Health - Archive

First published in 1863, the journal has an impressive archive that contains a range of subjects of interest to those concerned with young people’s healthy development. Please visit our website for indices to articles and authors. Although an abstract of each article is not available, the following extracts provide a flavour of the material available from 1863. Photographs of articles from back issues can be ordered and please check the website for past articles available as free pdf files.

www.sheu.org.uk/publications/indexarchive.htm

Pictures of health
1863, 11 (3), 33-37

Helen Babb and Andrew Sparkes describe the perceptions of young people regarding health issues. Using tape-recorded group interviews with Year 10 girls the study found that the group had very clear ideas of what it was to look healthy or unhealthy. ‘Health’ was seen as directly linked to certain lifestyles and social activities including exercise and healthy eating. The group blamed people with poor health for their own shortcomings. Health was seen to be directly linked to environmental and financial circumstances and parental influence was the main factor controlling their health.

SHEU publications

“Education and Health” is published by SHEU, an independent organisation, which provides research, survey and publishing services to all those concerned with the health and social development of young people. SHEU incorporated the School Health Education Unit founded in 1979 by John Balck. The Unit has carried out over 5,000 school Health Related Behavioural Questionnaires involving over 700,000 pupils aged 8-16 years of age from across the UK. The first series of reports from SHEU, Buralde House, Bonhay Road, Exeter EX4 4AY T: 01392687272 F: 01392687269 E: sheu@sheu.org.uk W: www.sheu.org.uk The following titles are on the selection from the website and can be ordered online:

www.sheu.org.uk/publications/indexarchive.htm

Trends 1983-2005
A series of reports showing trends, from 1983-2005, in young people’s health related behaviour. Data come from a sample of up to 10,000 young people between the ages of 12-15 from over 200 schools each year, collected as part of the SHEU Health Related Behavioural Questionnaire. The reports include information on health and eating trends 1983-2005 (12 issues) and smoking trends in young people 1983-2005 (5 issues). The reports show how young people’s health related behaviour has changed over the years. The reports can be ordered electronically:

www.sheu.org.uk/publications/indexarchive.htm

Helping to produce happy young adults when they leave the school at 18 is my highest priority as head. I have been saying this for 10 years! And so far my year 12 have begun to realise this isn’t just an airy-fairy aspiration, but can be tied in with their happiness in years to come. Hence this decision, announced nowhere, (18th April 2006), to teach happiness and positive psychology in Year 11 at my new school, Wollongong College.

Positive psychology

Last year, I came across Dr Nick Baylis of Cambridge University, who lectures in positive psychology and the science of well-being, and who has just set up the ‘Wellbeing Institute’ at the university. Then I started hearing about the highly popular and well-publicised courses on happiness at Harvard University. I realised what might be done. I recognised the duty to do something about it at my school. Hence, the changes that begin later this year, which will be taught by our staff, to be overseen by the team at Cambridge.

Ill-balanced education

I believe our education in schools is fundamentally ill-balanced. Of course exams matter greatly - they are the passport to an individual’s higher education and career. A school, which fails to prepare its pupils for the realities of life beyond the school grounds is a failure. But where are the balanced lives of our children? Those who do well in league tables, and the reversion in which they are treated, is wrong. They say nothing about the reality of the teaching (or the content) of the wider life of the school, or whether it is turning out essential and ill-balanced young people, who are helplessness and produce young men and women who are happy and who know themselves and what they want to do in life.

Tortured and unhappy pupils

As a teacher, I have seen far too many tortured and unhappy pupils who have achieved less or more. A grade at A level if they can achieve these grades while leading balanced lives, taking part in a wide variety of activities which will develop different facets of their character, and if they blossom as human beings, then all are well and good. But as any teacher will know, this isn’t always the case with high achievers. Neither is it with high achievers in life. These driven people see their lives flash by in fast living and fast cars, and most fail to realise they are missing the point of life. It is more important to be highly successful, or to be a respected colleague and a valued friend, and a loving parent whose children grow up in a secure environment in which they know they are valued and treasured? I have had to learn the hard way, the answers are obvious. Hence the need to teach happiness while at school, while individuals are still having their characters and habits formed. It is much harder to acquire good habits later in life.

Lesson content

So in what will the lessons contain? There will not be less science like history or physics, where it is primarily the intellect involved, and whereas the acquisition of knowledge is all important. This is about emotional, learned and emotional, intelligence and is a far more reflective activity than traditional classes. Pupils will learn about how to form and sustain a meaningful relationship. They will gain understanding about the goals they should want to set in life, which should be realistic and appropriate for their own talents and interests. The negative emotions which are an inevitable part of life will be explored.

Dr Anthony Seldon is the Master of Wellington College, historian and author. The article was first published by the Independent (19/04/06) and has been reproduced with permission from Dr Seldon.

Anthony Seldon Lessons in life: Why I’m teaching happiness

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Adolescent Smoking: Behavioural risk factors and health beliefs
2001, 19 (4), 89-71

Canary Omoh and Mark Griffiths questioned 885 teenagers, aged 13-17 years, to assess their smoking habits, behavioural risk factors and intentions. Previous research had suggested that young people are generally aware of the link between cardiovascular disease and associated behavioural risk factors, especially smoking. Results of this study showed that the threat, of future diseases from smoking, were too remote to be appreciated and that adolescents anticipating future risk behaviour expect the consequences, no matter how improbable, to be dire.

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The Schools Health Education Unit
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Happiness lessons

The purpose of these happiness lessons becomes abundantly clear when one considers the lives of students at university. Once there, they will not each day enjoy the presence of loving parents, or caring teachers. They will no doubt have to cope with loneliness, depression and rejection in love. Yet schools send them off ill-prepared to cope with these eventualities, as they mostly fail short in preparing their leavers to manage money, accommodation and looking after themselves.

Purpose of schooling

What is the purpose of schooling if not to prepare its young for higher education and beyond? It is not only at university that personal difficulties arise. Most of us have had to cope in our lives with personal rejections, breakdowns of relationships, borrrowings and periods of depression. These are all part of life. Personally I wish that I had received a better grounding at school, not only in what kind of career I might have followed to make me feel fully equipped to cope with the difficulties that life throws at one.

Similar conclusions

Studies as diverse as those from the Cabinet Office, the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research and Harvard University point to similar conclusions, that money, fame and worldly success do not necessarily lead to happy and fulfilled lives. Despite the large increases in income in Britain over the past 30 years, studies show the levels of satisfaction have not increased commensurately. Research further shows that focusing on materialistic pursuits often diminishes personal well-being. Yet governments, for reasons to do with their own re-election, try to convince us that life is getting better for all because of economic growth, just as they try to convince us that schools are getting better because exam results are improving. If they are re-elected, it makes them happy. But does it make the nation happier?

Greater understanding

Schools cover some of the positive psychology curriculum in existing classes. But the focus is on the acquisition of knowledge, about the effects of drugs, sexually transmitted diseases and so on, rather than on encouraging the pupils to reflect on their own lives and learn to understand themselves and their relationships better.

I would like to see all schools within five years begin to teach positive psychology and happiness. The Well-being Institute is becoming involved with advising the health service and businesses about the subject. Valuable though this will be, I believe it is almost too late to teach, and it is much better to put the whole subject over to individuals when they are still at school. Governments will not be able to boast of quantifiable improvements, and schools won’t be able to show off any tangible benefits for league tables (although I would say that happy children are more likely to do their best in exams).

But I believe that by taking the subject seriously, schools will not only be doing a much better job morally for their pupils, but they will also help produce young men and women who will help to build a far better society than their parents did. This is a real challenge and it is one to which I believe all schools should rise.

Educational Work on Problem Gambling

A new programme, to encourage education about problem gambling in Britain’s schools and youth clubs, will develop and promote new resources and training for teachers and youth workers.

The Responsibility in Gambling Trust, or RGT, is an independent charitable body, funded by the UK gambling industry, which commissions treatment, education and research into problem gambling. The aim of the Trust is to make it less likely that people will become problem gamblers and more likely that those who do will be able to seek and to secure effective help.

Background

One of the three primary aims of RGT (www.rgt.org.uk) is to commission education about the possible risk of problem gambling delivered to young people. After extensive review of what works in education for risky-behaviours, and extensive consultation with leading experts and the Department for Education and Skills, RGT put a three part contract out to tender. This approach involves developing and promoting resources for use by teachers and youth workers with young people. After an extensive review process, a decision was made at the end of January 2006 to award all three parts of the contract to a single consortia provider. This contract will run for three years in the first instance.

TACADE & IGRU

RGT is pleased to announce it has appointed TACADE, working in partnership with the Nottingham Trent University International Gaming Research Unit (IGRU), to be the provider of new work to encourage education about problem gambling in Britain’s schools and youth clubs under contract to RGT.

Speaking of the new contract, the RGT Chairman, Sir David Daurie, said:

“The Trust sees the education of young people about problem gambling as one of the key parts of its work. Up till now this has been an area the Trust has focused on for far less, as it developed increasing treatment availability for problem gamblers. We are very pleased that with this contract, RGT is now working with the leading body in education of this type, and is confident that this will lead to much more education about this serious social problem. In turn we hope this will reduce numbers of problem gamblers in the future.”

Outcomes

• Teachers and youth workers will be trained, motivated and supplied with brand new, professionally produced resources likely to lead to positive behavioural change amongst young people
• Much greater volume of educational work in schools and youth work settings
• Greater awareness amongst young people of the risks of problem gambling

Mark Buczakiewicz

Mark Buczakiewicz, Chief Executive of TACADE, said: “Tacade is delighted to be given the opportunity to work with RGT to develop these much needed educational materials and disseminate them through seminars, training sessions and professional networks throughout the United Kingdom. Although for the majority of young people gambling does not present any major problems, Tacade and the IGRU recognise that materials are needed to prevent problem gambling and that secondary schools and the youth service are ideally placed to enable this process to be effective”

Mark Griffiths

Professor Mark Griffiths (Director of IGRU), said: “Strong user engagement is a key element of this project. Tacade and the IGRU will incorporate user perspectives by actively involving stakeholders throughout the project including representatives from business, the voluntary sector, government, international policy makers and practitioners. Wide ranging consultations will take place with young people and professionals (teachers/training mentors/youth workers), plus a variety of stakeholder organisations.

In order that professionals working with the resources are fully informed about gambling issues, background papers will be included in both resource highlighting key facts such as incidence and extent of young people’s gambling, issues around young people gambling; support networks and information for parents/carers.

Feedback from the groups above via a variety of media (telephone and email discussions, focus group discussions, questionnaires, and face to face meetings) will help to inform the structure and content of the resource including issues such as accessibility and appropriate to young people. Bespoke feedback will help inform the development of the draft resources for trialling as appropriate in secondary schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), schools for Emotional and Behavioural Disturbed (EBD) young people and other youth settings. The aim of the resources will be to enable young people to:

• Better manage their gambling
• Make informed safer and healthy choices about gambling by providing them with opportunities to develop the knowledge and understanding about the impact of gambling, the personal and social skills to make informed choices and the opportunity to develop healthy attitudes and values with regards to gambling
• Avoid the pitfalls of problem gambling, possibly through behaviour change
• Help others who may have problems with gambling