Examining the relationship among basic psychological need, social support and well-being of Hong Kong secondary school teachers

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Teaching Profession

School teachers' **increasing mental health problems** have been a persistent issue

Studies

» **Did not** address how teachers could be guided to **develop such expected qualities**

» Their **impact** in terms of **improving the well-being** of teachers may be **limited**

Self-determination Theory (SDT)

» The problem of well being by addressing the process of **how human being integrate in the social environment**

Self-determination Theory (SDT)

Experiencing of humans' basic psychological need → achieve wellness

School environment

| Basic Psychological Need | → | Teachers' well being |

Basic Psychological Need

The working environment may facilitate teachers' **three** **basic psychological need**:

Autonomy	Competence	Relatedness

» Desire to experience **choice and freedom**

» **Take control** of life decision

» Need to experience oneself as **effective in dealing problems and challenges**

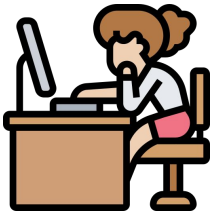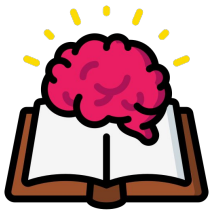» Need to be **cared of**, **connected to**, **provide support** to others

Well Being

» **Three** outcomes to measure teachers' wellness

1. **Work Engagement**
   » Whether teachers are **involved with**, **committed to**, **enthusiastic** and **passionate** about their work

2. **Psychological Meaningfulness**
   » Teachers' experiences of **meaning** and **feeling of worthiness** in work

3. **Health**
   » **Mental** (emotional states) and **physical** health (absence of minor psychiatric disorders)

Basic Psychological Need and Well Being

» According to SDT, the role of great autonomy and self-regulation in fostering positive human development (Ryan et al., 2019)

Basic psychological need	→	Well being

Basic psychological need:
- » Autonomy
- » Competence
- » Relatedness

Well being:
- » Work engagement
- » Psychological meaningfulness
- » Health
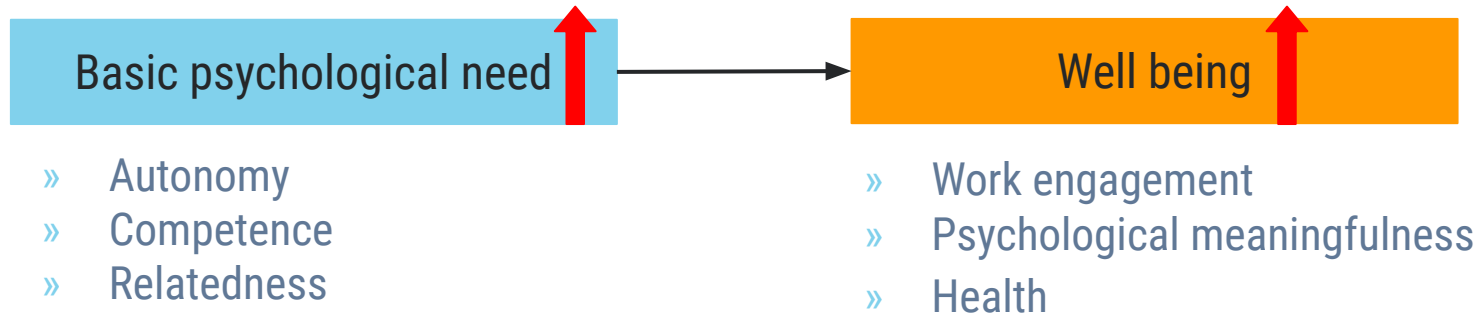
» **Basic psychological need** facilitate important psychological functioning and enable **positive well-being**

Social Support and Well Being

Goal content theory in SDT

Among teachers

Offering social support to students has an intrinsic goal behind it

» One of the factor that may determine a **sense of purposes for teachers**

Social support → Well being

» Work engagement
» Psychological meaningfulness
» Health

Social Support

Social Support

'verbal and non-verbal communication between recipients and providers that **reduces uncertainty** about the situation, the self, the other, or the relationship, and functions to **enhance a perception of personal control** in one's life experience.' (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987, p.19)

Health Psychology

» Receiving different forms of social support from others →
**feels loved, cared of, esteemed and valued,
feeling competent**

(Cobb, 1976; Lam, 2019)

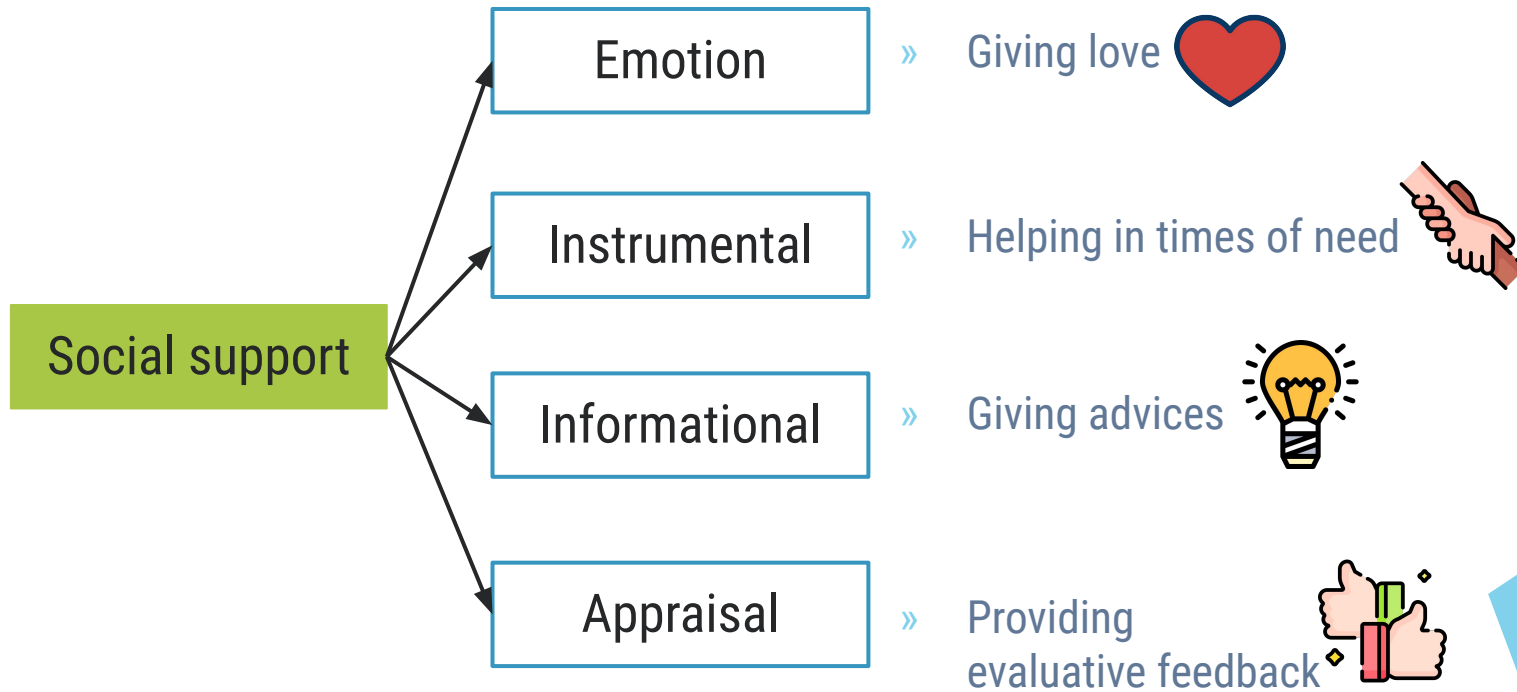# Social Support in Education context

Education

Care, empathy and virtuous personality traits of teachers → essential for earning trust from students and enhancing students' motivation

Social support

measured by teachers' willingness to provide students with
1. Personal **support**
2. **Patience** with students' **mistakes**

Social Support in Education Context

Social support

» Emotion → Giving love

» Instrumental → Helping in times of need

» Informational → Giving advices

» Appraisal → Providing evaluative feedback

Basic Psychological Need and Social Support

Basic Psychological Need Theory (BPNT)

Lack of Basic need

1. Work on things that **ran contradictory** to their **personal value**
2. Feeling **unsupported** in doing what they **aspired to do**
3. Feel **ineffective** instead of competent

Act in **non-self-determined** way

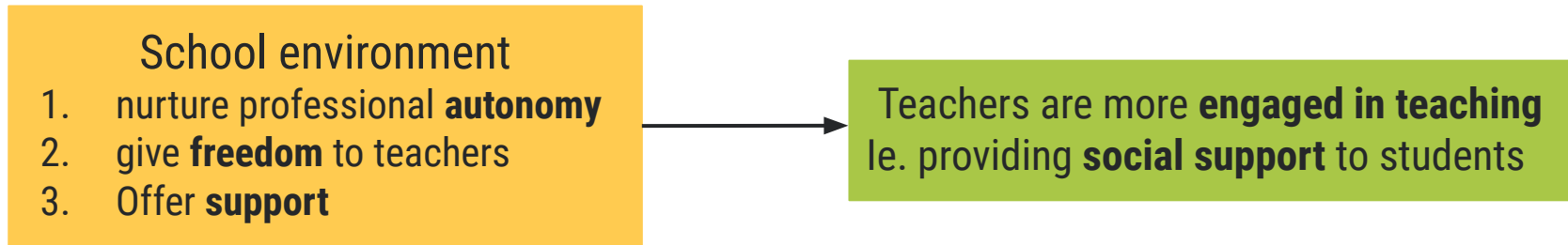Acts that **are not** intrinsically driven and done by enjoyment and interest

Cannot integrate meaningfully in the social environment

Less likely to offer support

Basic Psychological Need and Social Support

In education context

School environment
1. nurture professional **autonomy**
2. give **freedom** to teachers
3. Offer **support**

(Lam & Yan, 2011)

Teachers are more **engaged in teaching**
Ie. providing **social support** to students

| Basic psychological need | ➜ | Social Support |

Research Methodology

Target participants:

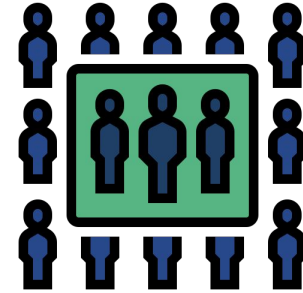Hong Kong **junior secondary** school level **teachers**
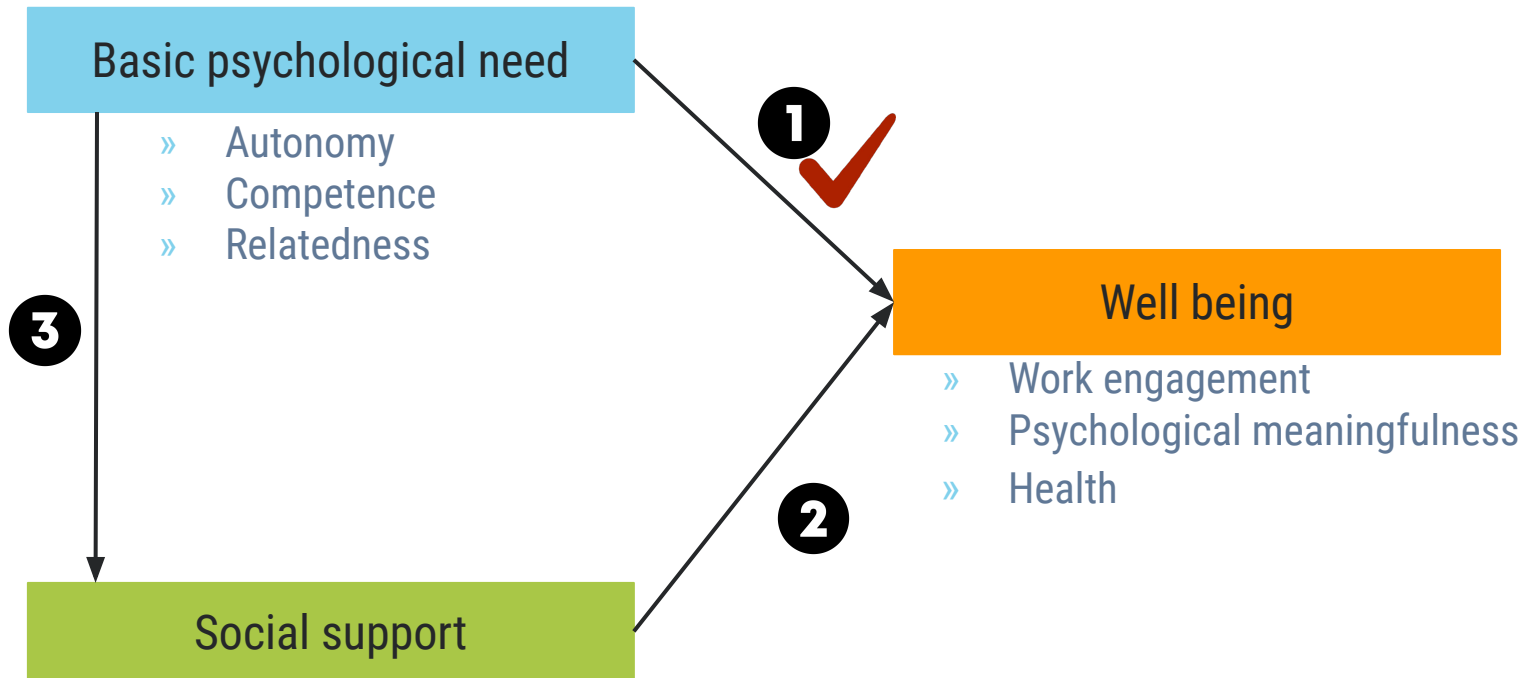
Sample size:

309 (teachers from 10 schools)

Represent a **wide spectrum** of secondary schools

» Stratified in terms of **academic standards**, **geographic locations** and **funding types**

◊ 7 Aided; 2 DSS; 1 Govt.

◊ 6 band 2 schools; 4 band 3 schools

» Requested to complete a **survey** to assess the factors

Examine the relationships of variables

Basic psychological need
- » Autonomy
- » Competence
- » Relatedness

Well being
- » Work engagement
- » Psychological meaningfulness
- » Health

Social support

1

2

3

Results - ❶ BPN and WB

Basic psychological need	→	Well being

The association of **autonomy, competence and relatedness** on

1. **Work Engagement**

2. **Psychological Meaningfulness**

3. **Health**

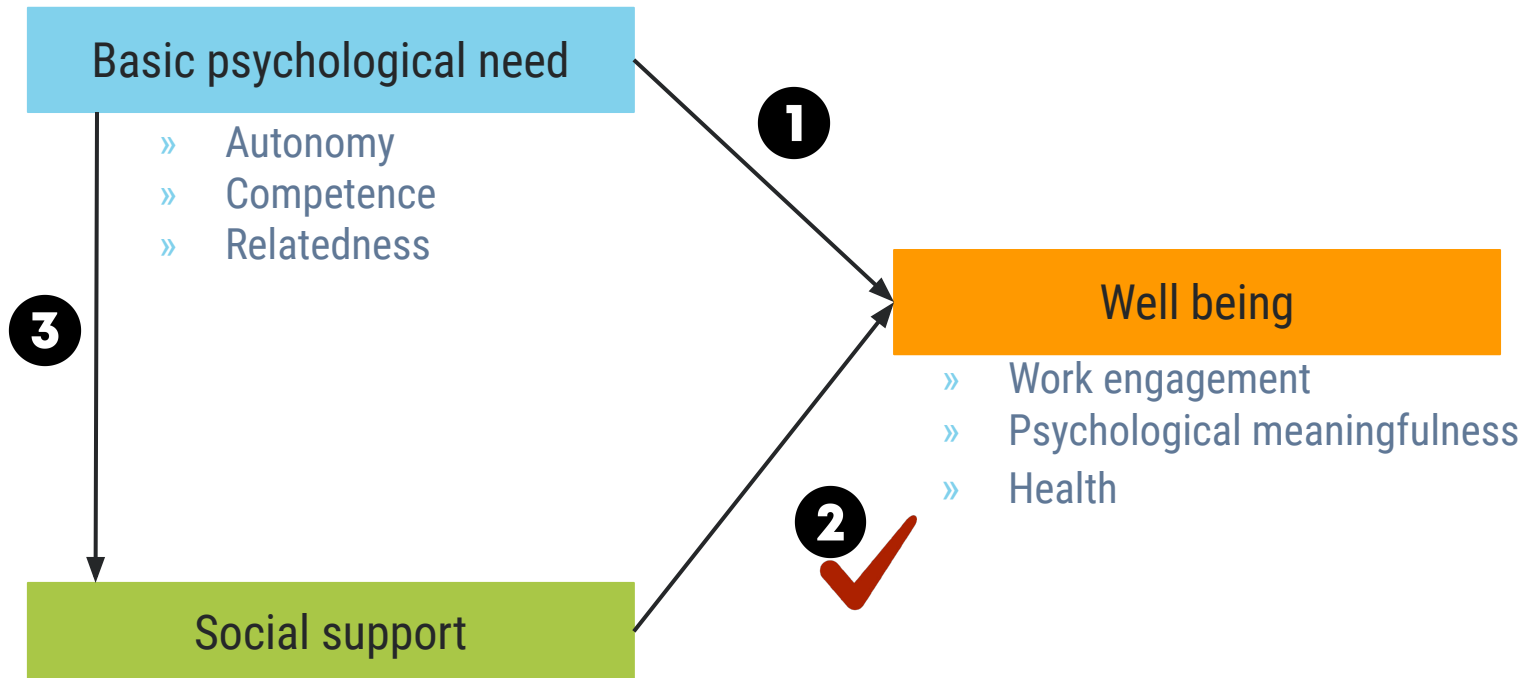# Results - ❶ BPN and WB (highlight)

Basic psychological need	Well being

(Basic psychological need → Well being)

- » Autonomy
- » Competence
- » Relatedness

- » Work engagement
- » Psychological meaningfulness
- » Health

» Basic psychological need significantly predicts the three indicators of well-being

» the predictive patterns of BPNW on well-being are **mostly consistent with SDT**

◇ Except Autonomy and health

Examine the relationships of variables

Basic psychological need
- » Autonomy
- » Competence
- » Relatedness

1

Well being
- » Work engagement
- » Psychological meaningfulness
- » Health

2 ✓

3

Social support

Results - ❷ SS and WB

Social support	→	Well being

The association of **social support** on

1.   **Work Engagement**

2.   **Psychological Meaningfulness**

3.   **Health**

# Results - ❷ SS and WB (highlight)

Social support	→	Well being

» Work engagement
» Psychological meaningfulness
» Health

» Social support significantly predicts the three indicators of well-being which supports the goal content theory in SDT
» Teachers' social support giving causes them to
  ◇ be more **passionate** at work (work engagement)
  ◇ have a greater sense of **worthiness** (psychological meaningfulness)
  ◇ Have better **physical and mental** health (health)

Examine the relationships of variables
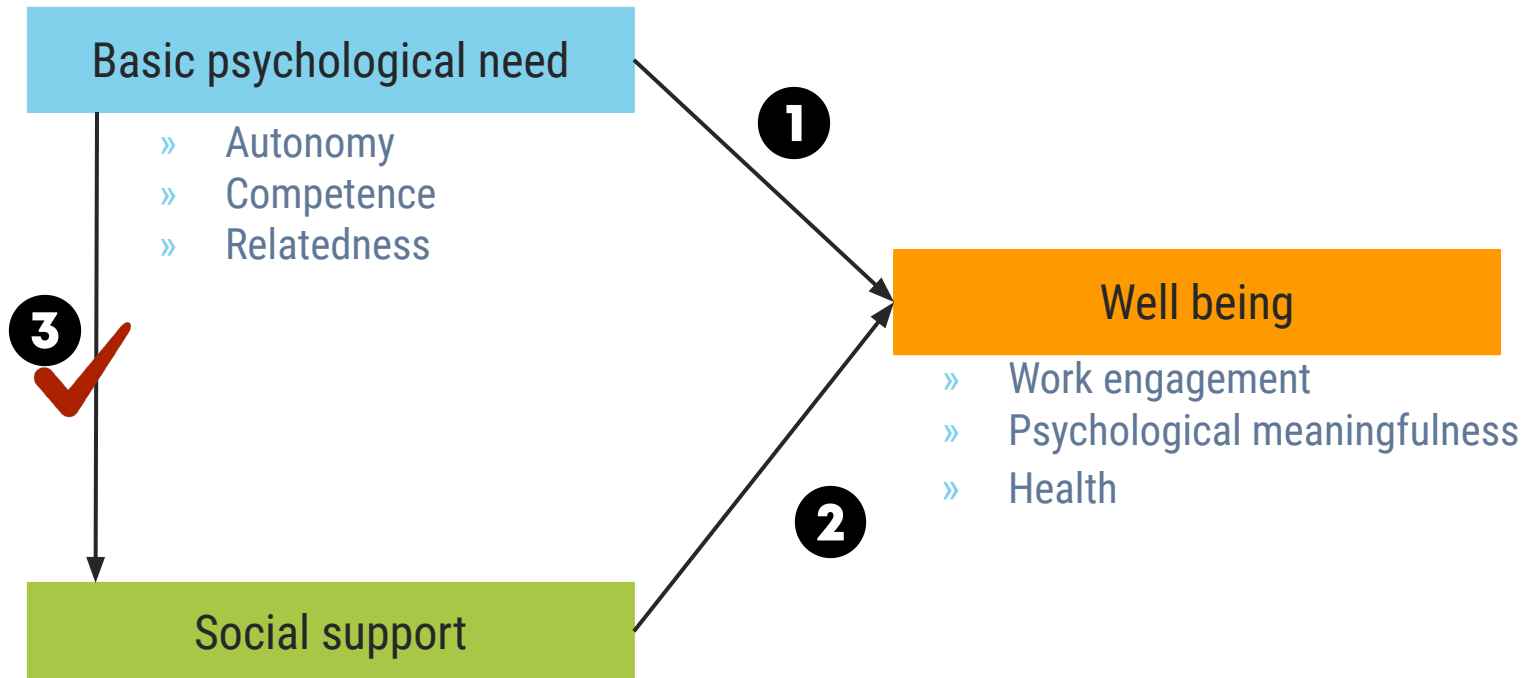
Results - ❸ BPN and SS

Basic psychological need	→	Social support

» Autonomy
» Competence
» Relatedness

The association of **1.Autonomy   2.Competence   3.relatedness**

on **social support**

Results - ❸ BPN and SS (highlight)

Basic psychological need	→	Social support

- » Autonomy
- » Competence
- » Relatedness

» Competence and relatedness significantly predict social support, except autonomy

» Teachers perceive whether the **school environment** facilitate their
   ◊ competence (feeling **capable**)
   ◊ relatedness (being **cared** for and **connected** to)
positively influence their willingness of giving social support to students

Suggestions and Implications

Suggestions for schools:

Enhancing teachers' well being by

1. **Facilitate teachers' basic psychological need** in working environment
2. Encourage teachers to **provide appropriate amount of social support** to students

HOW?

1. Policy making
2. Nurturing environment

Suggestions and Implications - Policy making

School managers should adopt **teacher satisfaction** and **positive affect** as goal in policy making

1. Senior teachers and supervisors make use of the annual review and **place students' development as their prime concern**

   Aim: encourage **social support** giving to students

   » Recognizing student development in curriculum policy → focus of management will be put on **student learning**

   » Emphasize students with **all round development**

Suggestions and Implications - Policy making

2. Provide a regular structure in timetable for **teacher-student interaction**

Aim: encourage **social support** giving to students

» Eg. **30 min** can be scheduled in weekly timetable for teachers to meet students

During the interaction:

» Teachers could see **positive development** of students

» Offer chance for students to **express appreciation** to teachers

3. Initiating alumni association

Aim: enhance teachers' **psychological meaningfulness** by facilitating their need in **relatedness**

» Sustain relationships of teachers and graduates

» Create opportunities for teachers to appreciate the satisfaction they have in **seeing the development and growth of students**

(Lam, 2019)

Suggestions and Implications - Policy making

(Lam, 2019)

4. Evaluate teachers' workload and job responsibility

Aim: encourage **social support** giving to students and enhance teachers' **health**

» Eg. reallocate resources to support teachers in relieving time-consuming administrative duties

» At the same time, creating space for teachers to **handle students matter**

◊ **Having more time** to give support to students

☑ Sustain teachers' enthusiasm in teaching

☑ Feeling of satisfaction in spending more time on students matter

(Lam, 2019)

Suggestions and Implications - Nurturing environment

1. Creating autonomy-supportive environment

   Aim: Enhancing **autonomy** among teachers

   - » School leaders should exercise **flexibility**
   - » Encourage teachers' autonomy by
     - ◊ Taking **teachers' interest** in the perspectives
     - ◊ providing opportunities for **choice and input**
     - ◊ encouraging **self-initiation**
   - » Implement **respect** in the school culture
     - ☑ Teachers to be productive and creative
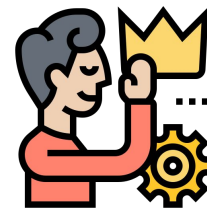
(Lam, 2019)

Suggestions and Implications - **Nurturing environment**

2. Acknowledge teachers' thought and provide teachers with **competence feedback**

Aim: Enhancing **competence and relatedness** among teachers

» Appreciate teachers' competence in work in giving feedback

Communication style: **non-controlling** and using **informational language**

   » Using **positive and non-harmful** language

   » **Constructive feedback** with specific examples

      → maintaining a **trust and caring** teacher-administrator

      relationship

   ☑ Teachers are willing to share and discuss

(Lam, 2019)

Acknowledgement

The end

Thank you

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