

Learning for Well-being: a policy priority for children and youth in Europe.

A Process for Change

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This chapter is based on presentations by Professor Ilona Kickbusch and Mr Daniel Kropf on the 6th September 2011 on behalf of the Learning for Well-being Consortium of Foundations in Europe.

SUMMARY

Since 2007, the *European Perspectives on Global Health; A Policy Glossary* supported by the European Foundation Centre and some member foundations, has become a valuable tool for policy making. Based on this successful example the Learning for Well-being Consortium of Foundations in Europe decided to launch a similar endeavour for learning for well-being. Professor Ilona Kickbusch (who led the first process) was commissioned to author the L4WB policy glossary, designed to provide conceptual understanding for policy makers in Europe. It focuses across sectors (e.g. health, mental health, social affairs, education, etc.), draws on state-of-the-art and multidisciplinary research on well-being and, crucially, it will propose principles for policies and ideas about how to 'make it happen'. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has given a grant to support the drafting process. To ensure a truly inclusive perspective, this policy glossary is being developed through a consultative process involving a broad range of stakeholders.

This chapter summarises the main arguments and messages contained in the draft policy glossary. It sets out our perspective and vision and addresses the issue of a new mindset for a new century; taking well-being as a measure of progress of European societies. We then examine the changes for which we are advocating in how we think about children, learning and about health and education. Following this we focus on taking action on learning for well-being, emphasising that the approach must be multi-dimensional, pro-active and include all sectors of society so that all policy arenas contribute to children's well-being. Finally we underline that children and youth must be part of the policy process as active participants in their own lives.

Learning for Well-being: a policy priority for children and youth in Europe:

We envision a society that values and enhances well-being.

Our goal is to inspire and engage people to make all environments more conducive to learning for well-being for children and youth.

We call for a new mindset which is based on changing how we think about: children, learning, health and education policies and systems.

Background to the Learning for Well-being (L4WB) Policy Glossary

In 2009, convened by the Universal Education Foundation (UEF), a group of foundations established the 'Learning for Well-being' Consortium of Foundations in Europe to make this vision a reality. They determined to work in partnership with other stakeholders for the purpose of inspiring and engaging people to make all environments more conducive to Learning for Well-being for children and young people. The founding group are: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Evens Foundation, Freudenberg Stiftung, Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace, Robert Bosch Stiftung and Universal Education Foundation.

Learning for Well-being is the process of fully engaging and expressing who we are as individuals within our common humanity in social, societal and environmental contexts. It inspires us to find ways for being our becoming – living in the present moment while developing, challenging, and creating ourselves for the future.

The creation of Learning for Well-being took inspiration from the resolutions adopted by major international bodies.

- The *World Health Organization* describes a state to be achieved by defining health as "*a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*"
- The *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) emphasises a child's right to achieve their full potential and participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- UNICEF stresses the responsibility "*to advocate for the protection of children's rights and to help meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.*"
- The four pillars of learning, as defined in the 1996 report to UNESCO by the international Commission of Education for the 21st century, *Learning: The Treasure Within*: learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together and learning to know, underline learning as process.

- The Council of Europe has described well-being as a universal human right, using the phrase "Well-being for All" to encompass individual well-being as well as societal and global well-being, extending to future generations.

Learning for Well-being offers an integrative framework that encompasses these aspects, giving a purpose to learning and creating a space that gathers different actors to collaborate outside their separate and separating areas of specialization. It provides a process for co-creation of a common language, towards a common agenda that all those concerned with the well-being of children can access and modify for their own circumstances.

The Consortium's working definition of well-being – **Realising one's unique potential through physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development in relation to self, others and the environment** – stresses that while individual development is central to well-being, it can only be realised through participation with the world around us, most particularly through our relationships. **Learning** for well-being focuses on conditions through which we can enhance our individual and collective capacities to make decisions and actions that serve ourselves, others, and the environments in which we live.

Since 2007, the ***European Perspectives on Global Health; A Policy Glossary*** supported by the European Foundation Centre and some member foundations such as Calouste Gulbenkian Fundação & Universal Education Foundation, has become a valuable tool for policy making. Based on this successful example the Consortium decided to launch a similar endeavour for learning for well-being. Professor Ilona Kickbusch (who led the first process) was commissioned to author the L4WB policy glossary, designed to provide conceptual understanding for policy makers in Europe. It focuses across sectors (e.g. health, mental health, social affairs, education, etc.), draws on state-of-the-art and multidisciplinary research on well-being and, crucially, it will propose principles for policies and ideas about how to 'make it happen'. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has given a grant to support the drafting process.

To ensure a truly inclusive perspective, this policy glossary is being developed through a consultative process involving a broad range of stakeholders. In November 2010, an expert meeting was organised with the support of Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace. Twenty high-level experts from across Europe, as well as from the USA, Canada and the Middle East, specialised in different fields of research, policy and practice (social policy, social affairs, medicine, psychology, education, health, etc.) affecting children's and young people's lives, provided guidance on how best to approach the challenge of drafting a policy glossary on learning for well-being.

In spring 2011 a first full draft was sent for consultation to experts, youth organisations, foundations, NGOs, European and international organisations. Specific meetings were organised at the European Foundations Centre's annual conference (May) and with youth during a 2-day seminar co-funded by the EU's Youth in Action Programme (June). Further consultation was provided firstly through the meeting organised by the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood at the European Parliament on the 6th September 2011 hosted by the Austrian MEP Karin Kadenbach (member of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, Austria). This meeting brought together 45 participants from the European Parliament and European NGOs. Secondly, in November 2011 a 2-day expert meeting on children's well-being was organised by OECD in cooperation with the Directorate-General for Social Affairs of the European Commission, UNICEF and the Consortium. Following these consultations the policy glossary will be finalised in preparation for its launch at a conference in Brussels early in 2012.

The Consortium is working with other alliances of organisations from different sectors and disciplines that share a common agenda towards Well-being for All, brought together under the impetus of Universal Education Foundation (www.learningforwell-being.org). The policy glossary is making a significant contribution to building a common agenda and creating a common language, hence preparing the ground for further collective action. Rethinking policy in a truly integrative perspective demands a thorough reflection and engagement towards the vision and can only be done with the participation of all of those concerned, especially young people. With the Learning for Well-being conceptual framework, the policy glossary also serves as a basis for creating a shared measurement system, by which we will be able to evaluate our success. Each of the alliances undertakes activities that are mutually reinforcing and benefit the overall common agenda with the aim of creating a synergistic effort at national and international levels.

In the following sections of this chapter we have summarised the main arguments and messages contained in the draft policy glossary. The Introduction sets out our perspective and vision. Section 2 addresses the issue of a new mindset for a new century; taking well-being as a measure of progress of European societies. The next three sections examine the changes for which we are advocating in how we think about children (section 3), learning (section 4), and about health and education (section 5). In section 6 we focus on taking action on learning for well-being emphasising that the approach must be multi-dimensional, pro-active and include all sectors of society so that all policy arenas contribute to children's well-being. Finally in section 7 we underline that children and youth must be part of the policy process as active participants in their own lives.

Learning for Well-being: a policy priority for children and youth in Europe. A Process for Change

1. Introduction

The well-being of children and youth is a key dimension of sustainable development; it is about our present and our future. It requires recognition as a central element of the European policy agenda for we do not treat our children well enough

The well-being of children and youth is a key dimension of sustainable development; it is about our present and our future. It requires recognition as a central element of the European policy agenda for we do not treat our children well enough. One reason for this is because children themselves are not offered the opportunity to have their voices heard and have weak or no political representation. Another is that we are not creative and daring enough in effecting change. We need to radically shift our mindsets.

There is no policy maker that does not underline the sentence "*children are our future – we must invest in them*". Yet the action that is needed rarely follows, despite the negative economic and social consequences for individuals, communities and society at large. Child well-being touches on many sectors of government but in particular it relates to the policy priorities of three of the largest service delivery systems in European welfare states: social services, education and health¹. There is increasing critique that these sectors do not deliver the outcomes that are necessary to ensure a more equitable society, better well-being and a healthy and well-educated population – indeed their failure rate is disconcertingly high. New approaches are needed – but while seeking to reform these systems policy makers are challenged by major barriers, due only in part to the impact of budget restrictions and the global financial crisis. Major entrenched interests, and path dependency, which is the tendency of systems to maintain traditional practices even when faced with better alternatives, also contribute to the resistance to change. But most of all we require a shift in perspective which will lead to a new systems design.

We need to

- consider children as full partners, not only as passive recipients of care and protection
- understand learning not only as a cognitive, but as an integral process with many dimensions – a whole child process
- move from disease and treatment-centred healthcare to promoting health and well-being
- move from standardised education to child-centred education.
- move from sectoral to systemic solutions in policy and society

¹ In this policy glossary we focus primarily on **children and youth/young people**, by which we mean from birth to 18 years old. Throughout this text, when we use the term "children's well-being" we are including young people too, and also recognising the need for policy to take account of young people in those difficult and complex transition years from childhood to adulthood that follow.

This policy glossary understands **well-being** as "*realising one's unique potential through physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development ... in relation to self, others and the environment.*" It is based on a view of society in which *all* people have the ability to realise their potential and all parts of society contribute towards child well-being.

An integral view of well-being indicates that many sectors and stakeholders are necessary to move forward a holistic agenda of children's well-being and it is imperative that government reaches out to include civil society and the private sector in such a quest. But many policy approaches and delivery systems in European welfare states are still caught in an "old paradigm" that is focused on deficits rather than resources, is input rather than output oriented and most importantly does not consider clients and users – neither children and parents nor patients and their families – as equal partners in the production of health, welfare and education and thus ultimately well-being. A new approach to enhance and co-produce well-being must be grounded in building **new competencies for learning and for health and engaging in the co-production of learning, health and well-being.**

While policy makers do show concern over the negative developments in relation to specific challenges such as child poverty, the obesity epidemic, mental health and functional illiteracy, there is less willingness to take the policy action necessary to address the "**causes of the causes**". There is an opportunity now to model education, learning and health that is oriented towards well-being and the challenges of the 21st century. Long term policies and programmes that enhance personal and community well-being, empower families and communities, support their resilience and allow children and young people to flourish can prove productive both in terms of costs and outcomes. For example, when we opt to engage in the promotion of health and well-being, we can reduce expensive medical solutions. These are not only related to the unequal distribution of power and resources as well as life chances, even in the richest European countries, but also to a model of education, learning and health that is not oriented towards well-being and the challenges of the 21st century. However, rather than base long term policies and programmes on the type of approach outlined above, many countries continue with constant, short term "fix it" approaches that frequently prove to be counterproductive both in terms of cost and outcomes – for example when we opt for expensive medical solutions rather than engaging in the promotion of health and well-being.

In the 21st century governments are faced with many complex challenges which are "wicked problems"². They need to be resolved through joined up government action, which is across ministries, as well as through the involvement of many other stakeholders. Many issues that were considered as sectoral responsibilities assigned to specialized professional systems have now moved up the policy agenda as social and economic goals

² The term "wicked problems" usually refers to problems that are highly complex, very challenging and continually evolving with no single solution

of the whole of government; for example, environmental shifts have created a new, and in many ways, more complex competition for the global work force and the brightest minds. Climate change is generating the need to protect not just ourselves but support a global approach that benefits all countries and peoples. We are beginning to understand that what benefits the planet also benefits our health.

Children's well-being: a policy priority

Every society has the option to invest today in happy, secure and flourishing childhoods.

To meet the challenge of the EU Treaty "to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples"- in particular of its children and young people – we need to base our actions on a new mindset and a new systems design which makes all environments more conducive to well-being. We call such an approach *Learning for Well-being*.

The agenda for children's and young people's well-being brings together three important rationales for action:

- Children's well-being is about our present and our future.
- Children's well-being contributes to a better and more just society and to well-being for all.
- Children's well-being is a value in its own right.

The imperative for a sustainable future calls for inter-generational policies with due regard for present and future generations. We can reach this goal by acknowledging that child well-being requires recognition as a central element of the European policy agenda – not only as an investment in future adults but in the well-being of the children of today.

While many European countries already invest significantly in children they frequently do so in a manner that is not well coordinated across portfolios, does not address the range of dimensions of child well-being and is not well targeted throughout the child's life cycle. (OECD 2009)

While many European countries already invest significantly in children they frequently do so in a manner that is not well coordinated across portfolios, does not address the range of dimensions of child well-being and is not well targeted throughout the child's life cycle. (OECD 2009) Policies and programmes need to recognise children as active agents who can play an important part in shaping their own lives and advocating their own well-being.

We must reframe what we do. A comprehensive approach must begin with a significant change in the perception of childhood and children's well-being, education and health. Children and young people are a specific social group that have commonalities, needs, and value in their own right. (Qvortrup 1993) Yet children also need to be recognized in their

diversity. Every child is unique. In addressing child well-being European policy makers need to consider that it is multi-dimensional and depends on many factors; there are multiple developmental pathways to the same well-being outcome; consequently, there is no single magic bullet intervention, or investment, which addresses all child well-being problems. Evidence indicates that many approaches exist which can provide better outcomes for less resources – if the willingness exists to overcome the path dependency of many programmes.

By embracing the following policy imperatives as processes to make all environments more conducive to ***Learning for Well-being*** of children and youth, we will achieve **better outcomes for children and young people as well as for society as a whole.**

Six policy imperatives for children's well-being

1. Children's present and future well-being must be a European policy priority for moral, social, demographic and economic reasons. All parts of society must engage at all levels of policy formulation and implementation.
2. European policy measures need to consider the structural conditions affecting the circumstances of children's lives (e.g., poverty, inequality; environmental and social resources and assets) as well as the individual psychological, social and spiritual dimensions of children's health and well-being.
3. A positive, holistic and systemic mindset should guide policy approaches to children's well-being by prioritizing processes that address the whole child through focusing on strengths, developing competences, and recognizing the unique potential of each individual.
4. The centre of government must provide the focus for action on child well-being through an integrated *Learning for Well-being - child investment portfolio*. All policy sectors need to contribute to child well-being and, through policy mainstreaming, policies need to be multi-dimensional and pro-active in order to be effective, efficient and equitable.
5. Child well-being must be measured, reviewed and monitored across a range of objective and subjective domains of well-being. It is imperative to include children's subjective viewpoints.
6. Children themselves must be invited to be part of the decision-making process that will shape their destiny – their voice must be respected, considered and represented.

These policy imperatives are reflected in the vision of Learning for Well-being.

2. A new mindset for a new century: well-being as a measure of progress of European societies

THE GOAL: A society that values and supports well-being

A new challenge

The new challenge is taking form: Europe needs to consider its place in the world and its future path. One contribution to this debate is a discussion of policies that aim to increase well-being and understand economic growth as a means of enlarging people's potential and quality of life, not as an end in itself. There are now increasing attempts to gain a better understanding of the interrelationship between wealth and well-being and how this knowledge can be translated into policy. (Diener et al 2009) A significant number of research studies show that despite unprecedented economic prosperity in the last 35 years people do not necessarily feel better as individuals or as communities. While economic output has increased over the last decades in many countries, levels of subjective well-being and happiness have remained flat. How then will our societies cope with economic downturn or other major crisis emerging from the global context such as environmental challenges or migration flow? Will our democracies respond in new ways? Will we as individuals and communities consider other priorities?

Policy works with a sectoral approach but people do not live in sectors – people view their life in its totality. Studies on subjective indicators of well-being have provided important insights about "*the quality of people's lives from their own perspective*". (Diener et al 2009) In democratic societies policy makers should consider this information as seriously as they view economic, environmental and social indicators. The "politics of happiness" or policies for well-being – as they are framed in some of the recent economic literature – are one possible reorientation of 21st century public policy goals. (Bok 2010)

Well-being - A change of perspective

Five concepts and approaches to better understand, measure and compare well-being have been developed in the international arena. They are of particular relevance to the framing of forward looking policies for well-being: human development, sustainable development, Gross National Happiness, social determinants of health and well-being for all. All aim to introduce new mindsets to overcome policy fragmentation. While all are formulated for an adult society, all are relevant to help us move forward in developing a new vision of children's well-being.

1. The United Nations: Human Development Index

For many organisations, academics or social activists at the global level the focus on

improving well-being in a holistic manner is not a new idea. Indeed, the idea of generating "social wealth and social growth" rather than economic growth measurable only in terms of GDP has been on the international agenda for some time. Many of the United Nations recommendations are based on the integral concept of human development which puts people and their capabilities in the centre of development.

There are four basic pillars of human development: equity, sustainability, production and empowerment. Equity is the idea of fairness for every person; we each have the right to an education and health care. Secondly, sustainability is the view that we all have the right to earn a living that can sustain us and have access to a more even distribution of goods amongst populations. In addition, production is used to show how the government needs more efficient social programmes for its people. Empowerment is providing people previously powerless with the power to act, such as women.

Since 1990 the United Nations regularly measures the well-being of nations by the Human Development Index with the intention to "shift the focus of development economics from national income accounting to people centred policies". The breakthrough for the HDI was the creation of a single statistic which was to serve as a frame of reference for both social and economic development.

2. The Brundtland Commission on "Our Common Future": Sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development complements human development by introducing a shift from a model of development based on inequity and exploitation of human and natural resources to one that requires new forms of responsibility, solidarity and accountability not only at the national but also at the global level. This approach has frequently been represented as the interaction between three circles: economy, society and the environment. Sustainable development is one of the most demanding policy concepts as it is both transnational and inter-generational. The breakthrough of the sustainable development approach was to create a mindset that adds an ecological and futures dimension to concepts of development and well-being.

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Our Common Future –Brundtland Report, 1987).

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3. The Global Gross National Happiness Survey

The "Gross National Happiness Index" was introduced by the King of Bhutan in the 1970s and began to gain increasing attention over the last decade. This survey of subjective judgments of the population's general level of well-being is based on a survey instrument developed in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. It has 4 pillars and 72 indicators. Policies in Bhutan must pass a GNH review based on a GNH impact statement before they are approved. The index is based on Buddhist principles which underline the interaction of material and spiritual development. The breakthrough was to present a holistic measure of happiness and well-being with the potential of international adaptability.

The four pillars of the Bhutan National Happiness Index are:

- Good governance and democratisation
- Stable and equitable socio-economic development
- Environmental protection
- Preservation of culture

www.iim-edu.org/polls/grossnationalhappinessurvey.htm

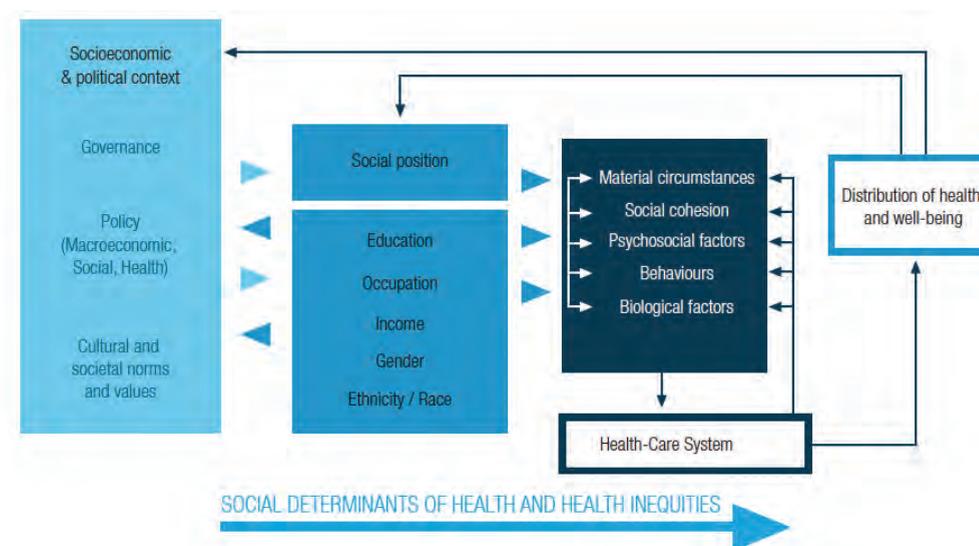
4. World Health Organization: Social Determinants of Health

The World Health Organisation has defined health as more than the absence of disease. Health is understood as *physical, mental and social well-being* and is considered a human right. Studies on health and well-being have drawn our attention to how both our way of life and the unequal distribution of life chances and capabilities have led to unacceptable differences in health and life expectancy, increases in chronic disease and a decline in mental health.

The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, which are themselves influenced by policy choices. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries. (Social Determinants of Health Report 2009)

The major report by the Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) draws attention to the fact that the freedom to lead a flourishing life and to enjoy good health is unequally distributed between and within societies. *"This inequity is seen in the conditions of early childhood and schooling, the nature of employment and working conditions, the physical form of the built environment, and the quality of the natural environment in which people reside. Depending on the nature of these environments, different groups will have different experiences of material conditions, psychosocial support, and behavioural options, which make them more or less vulnerable to poor health. Social stratification likewise determines differential access to and utilization of health care, with consequences for the inequitable promotion of health and well-being, disease prevention, and illness recovery and survival."* The breakthrough has been to take the health debate back to its social and political determinants and link it firmly to other policy sectors that contribute to health and well-being.

"Health is created in the context of everyday life where people live, love, work and play." WHO, The Ottawa charter 1986.



World Health Organisation (2008)

http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241563703_eng.pdf

"Health is created in the context of everyday life where people live, love, work and play."
WHO, The Ottawa charter 1986.

5. The Council of Europe: Well-being for All

"The well-being of one part of humanity is unattainable if another part is in a state of ill-being or if it is to be achieved at the expense of future generations who thereby inherit an uncertain world stripped of resources."

The Council of Europe emphasises through its use of the phrase *"well-being for all"* that we need to consider both individual as well as societal and global well-being, making well-being a universal concept and the foundation of social cohesion which also extends to future generations. Emphasis is placed on the idea that well-being cannot be attained unless it is shared and is a relational and a participatory concept: *"The well-being of one part of humanity is unattainable if another part is in a state of ill-being or if it is to be achieved at the expense of future generations who thereby inherit an uncertain world stripped of resources."* The Council of Europe has developed indicators through a participative methodology which addresses 'citizens' in neighbourhoods, towns, enterprises and schools. The breakthrough is that it takes well-being out of the realm of solely individual preferences into the realm of socially agreed preferences so it can enter the realm of policy-making, drawing attention for example to policies that promote social contacts and relationships (Council of Europe 2008).

3. Change how we think about children: Children's well-being is central to a future-oriented agenda. It must be a European policy priority to generate and improve children's well-being

THE GOAL: Supporting children and young people to develop their unique potential.

We are the children of the world, and despite our different backgrounds, we share a common reality. We are united by our struggle to make the world a better place for all. You call us the future, but we are also the present.

A World Fit for Us 2002

What policy makers need to consider

Too easily when formulating policies we focus on negative factors: Many of the child and youth indicators still track negative outcomes and negative environments – government programmes tend to focus on prevention and remediation of problems rather than on promoting strengths. Reasons are the high costs (monetary and non-monetary) that deficits generate and concerns of equity for more vulnerable children. But focusing only on deficits, neglects children's strengths on which society must build to enhance well-being (OECD, 2009; Lippman et al, 2009). More recent research includes research and measurement of positive traits such as caring, confidence, compassion and resilience. Many of the existing measures are also not culturally sensitive and this has significant influence on their validity (Brown 2008).

We do not sufficiently consider the holistic dimensions: No single dimension of well-being stands as a reliable proxy for child well-being as a whole. An optimal package of dimensions has to be considered. The development and expression of all these multiple dimensions is influenced by the environmental context. Even biologically-based aspects of well-being require a social context to induce their full and appropriate expression (Bornstein, 2003) Well-being is a state of successful performance throughout the life course integrating physical, cognitive and social-emotional functions that results in productive activities deemed significant by one's cultural community, fulfilling social relationships, and the ability to transcend moderate psychosocial and environmental problems. Well-being also has a subjective dimension in the sense of satisfaction associated with fulfilling one's potential. (Bornstein et al., 2003)

We do not focus enough on subjective dimensions: Children play an active role in creating their own well-being. Thus children's personal resources –their 'health' and 'subjective well-being' – are simultaneously the most basic outcomes and the very basis of achieving well-being. This is emphasised by research developments which call for increased investments in measuring children's own perspectives, especially also giving voice to

vulnerable groups of children. EUROCHILD has drawn attention to the fact that child-specific data is still limited. It advocates involving and engaging with children and young people in the development of indicators and in ensuring that indicators can include information on children's views and perception.

In this perspective the individual processes are crucial and overall life satisfaction permeates every dimension within the whole experience of well-being (Bornstein, 2003). Thus it is critical to ask children directly about their well-being. This self-reported subjective well-being of a child is still rarely taken into account because of limited theory, data and the adult scepticism about younger children's ability to respond to such questions. (WHO Europe, 2007)

4. Change how we think about learning: Learning to do, learning to know, learning to live together, learning to be

THE GOAL: A flourishing individual

Seven major thrusts can be identified in the changing patterns of education and learning:

- Learner-centred, self organised learning rather than teacher-centred learning;
- Encouraging variety, not homogeneity: embracing multiple intelligences and diverse learning styles;
- Understanding a world of interdependency and change, rather than memorising facts and striving for right answers;
- Constantly exploring the theories-in-use of all involved in the education processes;
- Reintegrating education within webs of social relationships that link peers, friends, families, organisations, and communities;
- Overcoming the knowledge fragmentation that is typical of a first enlightenment mode of understanding in favour of more holistic and integral ways of knowing;
- Favouring an increasing role for non-formal and informal learning. (Carneiro 2010)

New understandings of how we learn: the interdependence of cognitive, emotional, social and environmental factors

Learning is a social endeavour, with important emotional and spiritual components; it is related to cultural context as well as individual learning processes and it occurs not only in our brain but in every part of our body.

The many dimensions of learning: We are beginning to understand the many dimensions of learning, which take us far beyond the cognitive dimensions. Learning is a social endeavour, with important emotional and spiritual components; it is related to cultural context as well

as individual learning processes and it occurs not only in our brain but in every part of our body. The learning sciences are in an early stage of development but in recent years, brain imaging technologies have made it increasingly possible to observe the working brain (OECD 2007). Recent research suggests that the brain is dynamic and academic abilities can be built through many different learning pathways and it provides helpful insights into perceptual, cognitive and emotional functions which contribute to our understanding of the processes of learning and could help in structuring nurturing learning environments for people of all ages. Thus scientists have documented sensitive periods for certain types of sensory stimuli such as vision and speech sounds or for emotional and cognitive experiences (e.g. language exposure). Therefore we now know that even if the development of the macroscopic structure of the brain is largely finalised at birth, there are areas in the brain which are developed fully at different ages and that learning really is a lifelong activity and the more it continues the more effective it is. (Hinton et al, 2008)

The experience of well-being is unique for each child. The challenge for all societies is to close the gap between on the one hand what we know about the determinants of children's well-being and their ability to learn, and, on the other hand, what we do to enable them to flourish. Moral maturity is a product of long, ongoing learning processes. Cognitive learning processes lead to expertise (functional competence) and influence moral learning processes. Social learning processes lead to social competence and also influence moral learning processes. Knowing how to learn and having the capability to explore the ways in which you learn directly effects your sense of well-being.

Holistic approaches recognise the close interdependence of physical and intellectual well-being and the close interplay of the emotional and the cognitive – they focus on minds and bodies together and reinforce the possibilities of taking advantage of the brain's plasticity facilitating the learning process (OECD 2007). They also highlight how critical nurturing is to the learning process. Learning environments should be flexible and capable of meeting a wide range of individual differences and they should incorporate multiple means of representation, assessment and engagement to meet the various learning needs and interests of children and adolescents. (Hinton and Fischer 2010)

Emotions: It has long been thought intuitively that emotions have an effect on learning. Brain research is demonstrating that they do indeed have an effect, including on the neural tissue. The power of positive emotions and the pleasure of learning can be seen in so far as brain imaging shows that the brain reacts well to the illumination that comes with grasping new concepts. Similarly managing one's emotions has often been felt to be a key skill for functioning in society. Research shows (something that many teachers observe) that emotions can direct or disrupt the psychological processes such as ability to focus, solve problems, etc. and so are one of the key skills to being an effective learner (OECD 2007). Recent findings also underscore "*the critical role of emotion in bringing previously acquired knowledge to inform real-world decision-making in social contexts, they suggest*

the intriguing possibility that emotional processes are required for the skills and knowledge acquired in school to transfer to novel situations and real life." (Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007) The same authors conclude that when "*we educators fail to appreciate the importance of students' emotions, we fail to appreciate a critical force in students' learning.*"

Spiritual dimensions: It is difficult for an educational model which is based on rationality and on knowledge based on authority – to move towards a model which includes spiritual dimensions. Too frequently such spiritual dimensions are linked to religious values – but recently spirituality has begun to be recognized as a construct distinct from religion (Ingersoll, 1998). The right to a sense of spiritual well-being is firmly embedded in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and a clear duty is placed on all those involved to ensure that a child or young person's spiritual well-being is nurtured along with his or her physical and intellectual well-being. In its exploration of "learning to be", the 1996 UNESCO report included a focus on that learning that is beyond knowledge and information – the essence of spirituality. (Chittenden, 2000) Spiritual dimensions of well-being often refer to something larger than oneself – they can encompass an individual's relations to self, others and to the environment, as well as feelings of inner peace, strength, interconnectedness and giving meaning to life. Spirituality refers to something fundamental in the human condition, which is not necessarily experienced through the physical senses and/or expressed in everyday language. Spirituality can of course be understood differently in different cultural contexts. In modern societies the 'new spirituality' is concerned with discovering new and better ways of living, individually and in community." (DECS SA 2006) The deepening awareness of spirituality that so many researchers and writers have identified is potentially an important vehicle for change in education.

Natural environmental dimensions: Playing in a natural environment has cognitive as well as psychological benefits for children (Wells, 2000); also the way children relate to each other can be influenced by types of natural environments. These environments are attractive to children because of the diversity and the feeling of timelessness (White and Stoecklin, 1998), Three types of environmental learning can be distinguished: learning about the environment (learner gains knowledge about the environment), learning for the environment (learner is able to act in an adequate way in the environment), and learning in the environment (learner is encouraged to interact with and have experiences in the environment.) (Malone & Tranter, 2003) School playgrounds are outdoor classrooms and therefore have a rich potential as a resource for formal learning and are important for children's development of social and cognitive skills. (Malone & Tranter, 2003)

Learning for well-being

Hence learning for well-being requires a central emphasis on the unfolding of each person's **unique potential**, the vital energy and qualities that provide meaning, purpose and direction to an individual's life. We believe that for this unfolding to happen, we need to understand our inner processes –our way of being in the world and how we learn and develop (**inner diversity**). We need to cultivate the ways in which we communicate and express ourselves -- how to create qualitative relationships with ourselves, with others, with the environment in which we find ourselves (**relationships/communication**). We need to understand that learning for well-being requires us to take individual responsibility, to create and practice ways to develop one's capacities, to make choices and to take action (**engagement/participation**). Lastly, we need to recognize that our lives are dynamically interwoven with the systems within and around us (**self-organization/living systems perspective**).

Learning for well-being is the **process** of supporting and nurturing children's inner diversity and their capacities to relate and engage in order to create a solid foundation for developing the competences and skills for living their lives and dealing with today's complex environments. This includes the multiple, thorny social, economic and environmental problems challenging decision-makers and citizens, both today and in the foreseeable future. Understanding and working with the uniqueness of one's own learning processes is fundamental to the development of these necessary competences and skills. *"To give children and young people an accurate view of the world, education, whether in the family, the community or at school, must first help them discover who they are. Only then will they genuinely be able to put themselves in other people's shoes and understand their reactions. Developing empathy at school bears fruit in terms of social behaviour throughout life."* (UNESCO, 1996).

5. Change how we think about health and education: **LEARNING** for well-being, a new imperative for education, health and the social sphere

THE GOAL: To make all environments more conducive to Learning for Well-being of children and young people

Learning for well-being in the education and health sectors

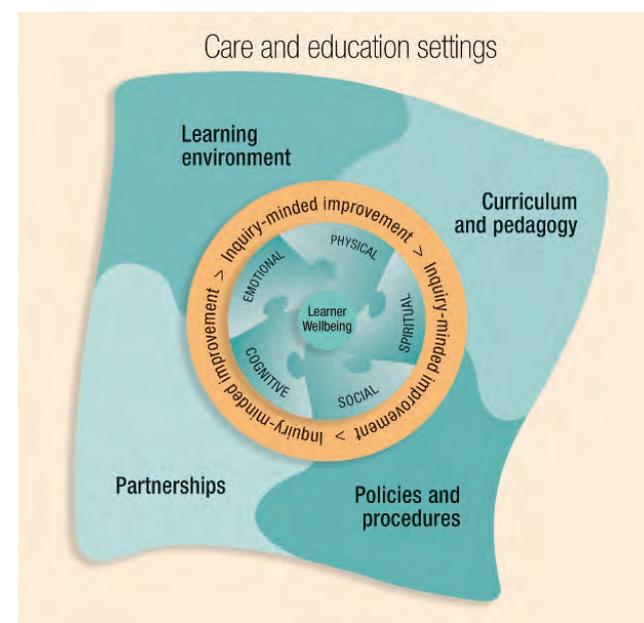
It is essential that established systems – in particular systems such as the education and the health sectors – reorient their approaches and enable children to participate and improve their capacities for learning for well-being. Both the health and the education systems need to become learning environments for well-being. This can be done in many ways using the setting of the school or the health care sector as entry points for learning

for well-being. In both systems children are still frequently seen as objects and many of the procedures of care and education are standardised, rather than centred on all children's unique needs. As outlined above, learning is so much more than a cognitive process – it includes many other dimensions and does not only happen in learning institutions but everywhere.

The same is true for health. The WHO definition of health already guides the way to new thinking. It defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." So in many ways it includes the same integral components as a holistic approach to learning for well-being. The concept of health promotion has further explored how health is woven into the fabric of our lives and states that health is created in the context of everyday life, where people live, love, work and play.

Programmes that focus on such an integral well-being and resilience-based approach can be found in many countries and many institutions but rarely are they brought to scale, too frequently they remain pilots and experiments, often dependent on motivated health professionals or teachers. One exception is the programme of the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) in South Australia: Learner Wellbeing Framework Programme which is implemented in schools throughout the state and has become fundamental to the educational approach.

DECD Learner Wellbeing Framework



http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/learnerwellbeing/files/links/link_72840.pdf

The framework identifies well-being and learner engagement as key directions for educators. It acknowledges the strong and mutual interconnection between well-being and learning and states that child well-being is more than the absence of problems. It recognises that the influence of continuous and rapid change upon today's learners and the consequent complexity of their lives require educators to inquire into new ways of working that support the well-being and learning connection. The DECD Learner Wellbeing Framework supports educators to build upon and improve on current effective practice through the use of an inquiry approach. It is consistent with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1959) and the Adelaide Declaration on Healthy Public Policies (1988). The dimensions of well-being need to be considered in the context of four domains within the site or service as a whole.

- The learning environment,
- curriculum and pedagogy,
- partnerships,
- and policies and procedures

which interact and are interdependent. What is learned through the curriculum will be practised in the learning environment, supported by partnerships with family and other agencies, and made explicit in the policies and practices of the site.

http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/learnerwellbeing/files/links/link_72840.pdf

The co-production of services and social capital

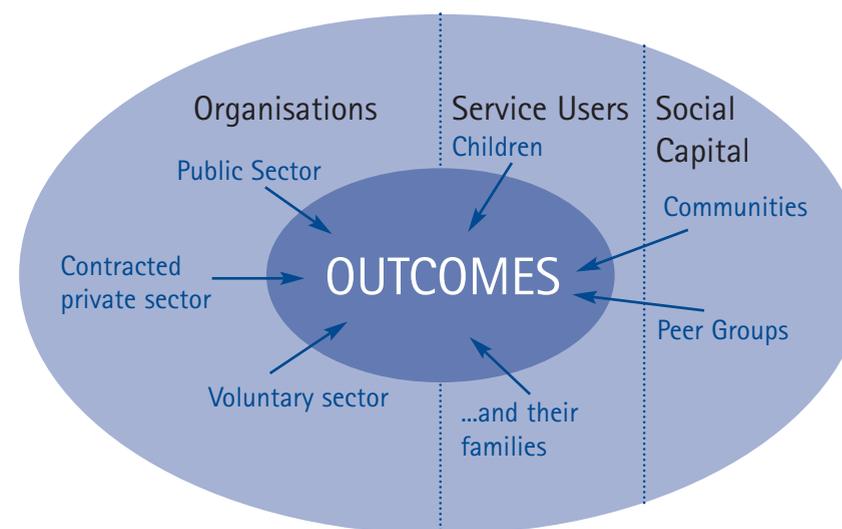
"Services do not produce social outcomes; people do". Children's services – be it health, education or welfare – need to be considered with a new mindset. In the 21st century these sectors will work increasingly with the concept of "co-production". A recent guide by the New Economics Foundation underlines this type of approach: *There has been increasing interest in co-production as a mechanism for embedding more participatory approaches in service delivery in recent years. Co-production takes a slightly different tack to normal engagement practices. It focuses less on identifying and responding to a child's 'need' or 'problem' in favour of a reciprocal approach, which builds on a child's interests, knowledge, experience, skills and support networks. (NEF 2009)*

Social outcomes – well-being, a sustainable environment, community safety, preventative health, managing chronic disease and educational attainment – are being co-produced through the joint efforts of service users and services. A co-production approach sees the purpose of engagement to provide children and young people with the opportunity to 'be the change'. To achieve this, it focuses on children as part of their own solution. The professional changes his/her role from the fixer to the facilitator. There are four key principles of a co-production approach to service delivery:

1. Valuing children and young people as assets;

2. Celebrating children and young people's contribution;
3. Reciprocal working which includes shared responsibility and a sharing of roles;
4. Growing social networks in which children engage with other children and the community at large.

Co-production is embedded in a system of social capital – this is best described as a set of networks to which people belong, within which they are engaged and whose values they share. Trust is a critical component of social capital.



Cummins/Miller 2007

Co-production already exists; it does not have to be created. The real challenge for the public sector is how to make it visible, both to themselves and to the public; to develop it with communities; and exploit its existence. There is much to learn.

One such critical outcome is social cohesion, defined by the Council of Europe as "the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means". Social cohesion is co-produced – it is a responsibility for all sectors of society. We are learning that well-being must become a goal shared by all social actors, the State, business and the individual.

6. Bringing it all together: taking action on learning for well-being. The approach must be multi-dimensional, pro-active and include all sectors of society

THE GOAL: All policy arenas contribute to children's learning for well-being.

"Childhood becomes a social space in which children learn to explore their own environment and to experiment with their agency." (James & James, 2004)

The need for all of society to contribute

Children learn everywhere: just as health is not created in the health care system so is learning continuously taking place, no matter where children are and what they do. The statement from the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion "health is created in the context of everyday life: where people live, love, work and play" can just as well be applied to learning for well-being. In the publication of OECD *Doing Better for Children* a range of policies to improve child well-being are reviewed. It echoes the statements from well-being research: "Child well-being encompasses quality of life in a broad sense. It refers to child's economic conditions, peer relations, political rights, and opportunities to development. Comprehensive interventions for young children and families which improved children's physical, psychological and social development have shown to be as cost-effective for individuals as for society overall (Eickmann et al., 2003, Watanabe et al., 2005)

Many different sectors and stakeholders in society need to work together in order to promote learning for well-being. The family and social networks are as important as is the workplace and as are formal services and policies that provide opportunities and supportive environments. The importance of multidimensional policies has been underlined by many; in particular the coordination between and within ministries, as well as at local and regional level, need to be enhanced, and gaps bridged between the measures taken at national and international level. (Eurochild, 2010)

There are many facets of a child's learning environment; the individual's personal strategies, interface with family and societal systems and values, neighbourhood security, quality and affordability of the health system, institutional practices, provision of basic needs, and economic considerations. Only by taking all of these environments into account, can a child's ability to develop positively be fully appreciated. (Bornstein et al., 2003) Learning for well-being prioritizes the promotion of factors for positive development.

7. Children and youth must be part of the policy process

THE GOAL: Children and youth as active participants in their own lives

It has been suggested that in the second decade of the 21st century, the agency and voice of children and young people will preoccupy agendas in the way that listening and participation did in the first decade (Kellet, 2011)

It has been suggested that in the second decade of the 21st century, the agency and voice of children and young people will preoccupy agendas in the way that listening and participation did in the first decade (Kellet, 2011). This is crucial to learning for well-being, which is about children and young people being empowered through their learning in diverse environments to be able to make the decisions in their lives that will support themselves in everything they do, in their health, their relations, as well as the decisions they make with and about others in their world and about the environment.

On the one hand facilitating participation, engagement and therefore agency needs child- and youth-friendly structures. On the other hand they can only work if the shifts in how we think about children, learning, health and education are real – in people's minds, attitudes and practices. Only in this way can the unique potential of every child be nurtured. The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets the baseline.

Article 12 states: *Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*

Implementing this involves a profound and radical reconsideration of the status of children in most societies and the nature of adult/child relationships. It requires us to begin to listen to what children say and to take them seriously. It requires that we recognise the value of their experience, views and concerns. It also requires us to question the nature of adult responsibilities and behaviours towards children. Adults need to learn to work more closely in collaboration with children to help them articulate their lives, shape their learning, develop strategies for change and exercise their rights.

"Let's put the decision-makers in school for a few days to live the normal life of a child"
(Member of the Finnish Children's Parliament)

Policies for children's learning for well-being: five defining components

"Child well-being and respect for children's rights is a litmus test for a vision of Europe where employment and the economy are at the service of social progress and overall well-being" (EUROCHILD).

Based on the research undertaken in the last 20 years a significant shift in the understanding of children and of child well-being has taken place (Ben Ariah 2008). For policy makers committed to improving child well-being five defining components can provide orientation.

Five defining components of child learning for well-being policies:

1. The interdependence of children's well-being and children's rights
2. Child well-being is a condition for as well as a product of human development.
3. Well-being is a whole child experience
4. Well-being is based on the unique potential of each child within their inner diversity
5. Well-being is relational and contextual

Each one is described in more detail below.

1. The interdependence of children's well-being and children's rights

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child lays emphasis on well-being as a key to the realisation of the child's rights. (Innocenti Report Card 7, 2007)

The UN Convention specifies that the realisation of the child's rights is connected with his or her well-being and development '*physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity*'. It lays out a radical shift in perspective: children are considered social actors, whose experiences must be taken into account (Prout, 2004). As of November 2009, 193 countries had ratified, accepted, or acceded to it (some with stated reservations or interpretations) including every member of the United Nations except Somalia and the United States.

2. Child Well-being is a condition for as well as a product of human development.

Well-being is not merely an outcome, but '*a state of being that arises from the dynamic interplay of outcomes and processes*' (McGregor, 2006, p. 3)

Well-being is a condition for development (Flammer, 1986) and well-being as flourishing acknowledges the necessity of taking into account the contexts and circumstances of the lives of children and their reports of their own well-being. Recent research points to the

critical importance in addressing both present well-being of the child and engaging in learning to enrich their future circumstances. (Fattore et al, 2009) A child who is realising his or her own unique potential is one who can be said to be flourishing. For a person's life to flourish, the activities and experiences that comprise that life have to fit the unique nature of the individual as well as being appropriate for the social and cultural context in which one lives. (White, 2007) Learning for well-being builds on this constant interaction between the individual with others and with the social and natural environment.

3. Well-being is a whole child experience

Well-being involves multiple facets and aspects of being and becoming human, including the unfolding of one's unique potential and the capacity to pursue life meaningfully within the larger social, cultural, political and economic contexts of which the child is a part. (UEF, 2008)

A holistic approach to Early Child Development, first and foremost, is the child's right
UNICEF, 2006

This definition provides an integral understanding of the whole person which is very different to the compartmentalised approach common to many perspectives, policies and interventions. Indeed UNICEF highlights that "*A holistic approach to Early Child Development, first and foremost, is the child's right.*" (UNICEF, 2006) The elements of each domain of life and self have impact on one another which constitutes "reciprocal influences on the development of the elements of well-being both within and across domains", and the strengths from these interconnected domains "reverberate in synergy" (Zaff et al. 2003). Recent research has highlighted the importance of emotions in development, and advances in neuroscience and the development of early brain scanning have shown that feelings, empathy and emotional understanding are hard-wired into our brains through our early relationship experiences in the first years of life.

"Children's well-being is a dynamic process, in which a child's external circumstances (e.g., their socioeconomic background, family circumstances, physical surroundings) are constantly interacting with their individual characteristics (e.g., their personality, cognitive ability and so on) to satisfy – to a greater or lesser extent – their needs and thus build psychological resources, capabilities and positive interactions with the world around them." NEF guide 2010.

By moving away from a deficit perspective to a focus on the positive attributes of children, it is possible to identify determinants that enable children to flourish (Pollard & Lee, 2002). A positive and holistic approach to defining well-being allows us to focus on human potential that enables individuals to be well and to flourish – children's assets, competences and capacities (Pollard & Rosenberg, 2003). Such an approach to well-being

allows for actions through which the benefit for children can become maximised while taking into consideration their individual characteristics (such as dispositions, abilities, environment and family).

4. *Well-being is based on the unique potential of each child within their inner diversity*

Well-being is "realising one's unique potential through physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual development ... in relation to self, others, and the environment." UEF

Unique potential refers to a connection to one's specific gifts, which includes the sense of personal identity, innate temperament, and the expression of life purpose and meaning (UEF, 2007). It represents both the essential nature of one's evolving self and the ways in which individuals learn, communicate, and grow, which reflect the diverse processes of each child. This uniqueness appears in every human being as a particular way to develop or to flourish fully.

The first principle of all living systems (whether natural ecologies, social communities, individual human beings, etc) is self-organisation. All individuals define and sustain their own unique identity, even as they constantly adjust and adapt themselves to their internal needs and to the forces and conditions in their environments. The dynamic balance of this capacity for self-organising provides stability and integrity to the individual. (Johnson 2000)

Connected to this unique way of self-organisation, but distinct from it, is the consideration of diversity – the ways in which each individual is different from some or all other people (O'Toole & Kropf, 2011). Based on research on diverse ways of thinking and knowing and on individual processes of learning the inner differences in how children learn, communicate, and solve problems require greater attention from researchers and policy makers (Bergstrom, 2004.).

5. *Well-being is relational*

Relationships are extremely important to the development of children (and adults) and are described as the most important aspect of their well-being by children (Lippman et al 2009).

In a well-being framework the individual dimensions, children's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects are in interaction with themselves, others and the environment. These interactions take place in the different contexts of family, peers, school, community, and the macro system at the level of policies. It is critical to differentiate relationships from the contextual factors in order to fully grasp their relevance to child well-being.

The development of, for example, empathy, conflict resolution skills, and social support is critical. There is also a range of promoting factors at the interpersonal levels. These include the quality of the interaction itself and interactions among individual characteristics of the

people involved such as showing empathy. The quality of interaction is mirrored in the way the participants are understood by one another. The 1996 UNESCO report highlights that "education must take two complementary paths: on one level, gradual discovery of others and, on another, experience of shared purposes throughout life which seems to be an effective way of avoiding or resolving latent conflicts."

All these aspects are encapsulated in the following diagram and principles:



UEF 2011 (www.learningforwellbeing.org)

Expression of one's unique potential: The unfolding of each person's *unique potential* requires us to encourage self-discovery and to appreciate the expression of one's particular gifts & contributions. In this way, we nurture the flourishing of the undivided and evolving self of each of us.

Respect for uniqueness and diversity of each individual: By natural design, every child is unique. We pay special attention to individual processes through which children learn, communicate, and develop. These are the "inner differences" – the ways in which children uniquely frame their perceptions and understandings – that are often not so readily apparent. Respecting these inner differences is at the heart of a vision centred on learning and the individual learner.

Focus on nature and quality of relationships: We are hardwired for social interactions, and learn primarily through our relationships with other people – family, peers, teachers and

other adults in our environments. The nature and quality of those relationships is critical to our learning for well-being. We also learn through our relationship to non-human creatures and the natural environment. Of primary importance is the relationship to self from which self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-expression stem.

Participation of those concerned (children and youth): To learn a child must take ownership for his or her own learning outcomes and be an active participant in that learning. Adults can act as catalysts and enablers through helping to create diverse environments for the benefit of children, but well-being is sustainable only when chosen and acted upon by young people. Internalizing the value and practice of well-being is the beginning of choice, responsibility and action.

Ensuring conditions for self-organization: Self-organizing is the way in which living systems adapt to their environments and create themselves anew. The principles apply to individuals, classrooms, communities, and so forth. Disruptions to self-organization – such as attempts to assert control by external forces – have a direct impact on the quality and sustainability of the system. When control is internal (for example, through following the interests, motivations, and enthusiasm of the individual), it is possible to optimize potentials and possibilities for growth, learning, and well-being.

Consider the whole person, whole processes, whole systems: Nature itself, and everything in it, works as living whole systems. The shift from a mechanistic, fragmented model to an organic system, changes our view of the way the world works, the nature of reality, and our understanding of human functioning within a web of living relationships. All living systems are greater than the sum of their parts; thus in learning for well-being we need to consider the various aspects of the person, the process and the environment – all in dynamic interaction with one another.

Taking Action: priority areas of a 'Learning for Well-being' child investment portfolio

We identify five priority principles as foundational for a 'Learning for Well-being' child investment portfolio. We believe that all policies and strategies that aim to make all the environments in which children and young people are living, learning, playing and growing up more conducive to learning for well-being, must be built on these principles. Any environment child is in can be viewed as a learning environment so when taking into account the child's/young person's perspective, the multitude of environments are all environments where one learns.

By policies and strategies we include all those developed and implemented at local, regional, national or EU level. We also refer to those developed and implemented by agencies, institutions and organizations working with children and young people. The learning

environment involves both the people and the space in which children develop and learn.

They are:

1. *Take the child's perspective:* shift from an adult perspective on children's well-being to a child's perspective, with broad acceptance for children's subjective perspectives on their own well-being and for children as reporters as a preferred method of assessing their well-being.
2. *Encourage expression of each child's unique potential:* take account of how children can develop their full potential by relating to the concept of thriving and flourishing, to successful coping and resilience, and to recognition of the qualities that provide meaning, purpose and direction to an individual's life.
3. *Focus on strengths and inner differences:* be explicitly strengths-based, focusing on cultivating children's assets, beliefs, morals, behaviours, and capacities to give children the resources they need to grow successfully across the life course, and to understand and express their distinct ways of communicating, processing information, and learning.
4. *Emphasise the nature and quality of relationships:* make use of the critical and pervasive influence of children's relationships and social contexts. The ability to nurture, sustain and enhance our interactions with others is fundamental to children's well-being, learning, and experience of life.
5. *Be holistic:* the learning to learn concept has moved beyond teaching intellectual skills and has embraced a host of emotional, social, and cognitive aspects that are needed for lifelong learners, such as perseverance, curiosity, self-knowledge and collaboration. This requires considering the whole person, the whole process, and the whole system.

Implementing these principles requires integrated systems based approaches -- frequently they need to be grounded both in multi sectoral and multi stakeholder policy engagement and activities at the community level.

For more information: <http://www.eiesp.org/site/pages/view/73.html>

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Linda O'Toole

Linda O'Toole brings over 30 years of experience in the human development field to her current role of well-being liaison with the Universal Education Foundation. Her professional experience has been as an explorer and illuminator of the multiple ways perception and communication function within and between people. Linda is particularly interested in addressing patterns in how we gather, process, and share information as foundational to our sense of well-being. Her approach involves a whole system perspective, which integrates the cognitive, emotional, and sensory functions, including the imaginative and intuitive senses.

Jean Gordon

Jean Gordon is the Director of the European Institute of Education and Social Policy (Paris) (www.eiesp.org) and Joint Editor of the *European Journal of Education*. She has wide experience in the comparison and analysis of education policies and systems, and in contributing to lifelong learning opportunities and personal development through improving access to learning and its recognition, individualising pathways and increasing transparency of learning and qualifications in Europe. She has undertaken many Europe-wide studies, including for the EU Commission and has carried out projects in the EU Member States, the Western Balkans, the MEDA countries and also in Central Asia. She coordinates the Secretariat of the Learning for Well-being Consortium of Foundations in Europe and contributes to programme development and implementation for the Universal Education Foundation.

Daniel Kropf

As a healthcare entrepreneur, Daniel has always pursued a deeper understanding of human diversity through approaches encompassing knowledge from western and eastern cultures. Such interest has permeated his business, social and philanthropic endeavors. He has established and chaired several healthcare businesses and he is the Founding Chair and Executive Director of the Universal Education Foundation (UEF) that works to support 'Learning for Well-being' (L4WB), a co-created, common agenda for collective action towards 'Well-being for All'. Daniel is also a member of the Board of the Evens Foundation and serves as the vice-president of Hommes de Parole. He is the secretary general of CEJI – an organization working in the field of diversity education, and a board member of the European Institute of Education and Social Policy (EIESP) and the European Peer Training Organisation (EPTO).