

# Learning for Well-being Magazine ⑤

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'Editorial: Living System Perspective,' in Learning for Well-being Magazine, Issue 5, published by the Learning for Well-being Foundation.

## Editorial: Living System Perspective

By Linda O'Toole & Jean Gordon

Welcome to the fifth issue of the *L4WB Magazine*.

A key objective for this magazine is to give readers multiple perspectives on selected themes. In a world where a frequent tendency is to stay with one's familiar reference points, we are delighted to offer a space for researchers and practitioners from various fields and sectors to write about their work and experiences for an audience living and working in different countries and circumstances.

For the current issue of the *L4WB Magazine* we have selected the theme of *living systems*, specifically how a living system perspective enhances actions and interactions in various arenas of life. It is worth taking a moment to describe what we mean by the term 'living systems.'

### System: A sense of the whole

According to online dictionaries, 'system' is variously defined as: 'a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming an integrated whole', 'a set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network', 'a group of related parts that move or work together', and so forth. A systemic approach is broadly defined but generally contains a focus on paying attention to the whole – whether object, situation, or process – and recognizing the elements or part of this whole as connected and impacting one another. A systemic approach to social policies, for example, emphasizes that 'all elements in the system impact each other vertically/horizontally, affecting the transitions across age, sector, services, but also from service delivery to policy. Therefore, changes need to be seen through the complexity of their impact inside a system.' (INTESYS Toolkit, page 33, Retrieved from <http://www.europe-kbf.eu/en/projects/early-childhood/intesys>)

Systems science and systems dynamics were originally used primarily in engineering, mathematics, and computer science, and then increasingly in biology, economics and the management sciences. In the last 50 years there has been a growing application of systems

theory and systems thinking to the varieties of human experience, so we understand individuals, groups, communities, and societies as systems. With this inclusion of the human experience into the systemic approach, there has been a significant shift towards what is called a living systems approach. What is the difference between a systems approach and a living systems approach, and why does it matter?

The most significant difference, from which the other points flow, is that a living systems approach – whether you refer to it as complex adaptive systems, whole systems perspective, ecological systems or a living systems approach – follows the patterns of nature. The basic premise asserts that life is more accurately viewed as a process, built on relationships and relating, rather than seen as a product or end state. Nature itself, and everything included within that term, works as a *living whole system*.

A living system approach highlights an important distinction with mechanical systems. Machines (computers, airplanes, blenders) are systems, but an intrinsic aspect of mechanical systems is that parts or elements can be repaired and replaced without disturbing the whole. Yet we know, for example, that this does not work in a classroom (which is also a system): you cannot just replace 10 students in a classroom with 10 other children and expect stability. Often, you cannot even predict the impact on the system according to the systems thinking rules for reinforcing and balancing feedback loops.

However, you can apply the basic principles of a living systems perspective to any situation and understand more completely how to work with the circumstances – whether it is a manufacturing organization, a community, a classroom, a child, a star, or a cell. Because these principles are based on the processes of Nature, they apply broadly.

## Understanding the dynamics of living systems and the impacts on our well-being

In different contexts and situations, various authors have offered principles of living systems. In fact, in an article in this issue, Richard Dunne lists several principles of living systems that relate to his way of educating.

One of the most distilled lists we have encountered are the three points synthesized by Tom Johnson, a management professor who studies and writes about accounting systems in automakers.<sup>1</sup> He asserts that these principles are fundamental to living systems:

- **Self-organization** refers to the capability of all living entities to define and sustain their own unique identity, even as they constantly adjust and adapt themselves in response to feedback from their environment. This self-organizing power implies the potential to grow limitlessly.
- **Interdependence** refers to the principle by which unlimited growth is prevented. It says that everything in nature is inextricably connected to everything else, and any entity

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, Tom and Anders Brom (2000). *Profit Beyond Measure*. New York: The Free Press.

seeking to use all the energy in the universe for its own purposes is bound to bump up against, and be challenged by, other entities.

- **Diversity** is the consequence of the interactions among self-organizing entities – the endless generation of new things and, in terms of human entities, new thinking.

Taking an education system as an example of applying these principles, it seems obvious that education must act as a *living* system, rather than a mechanical one. An implicit mandate is that the ways in which people design and think about education matches and capitalizes on the natural and unique ways in which people learn. One of the major attributes of all self-organizing systems – that is ‘me’, ‘us’, ‘them’ and ‘it’ – is that they **learn**. They do it all the time, and all by themselves. In fact, the structures and controls for this learning come from *within* the system, rather than being derived from outside of it. This is particularly important for us humans to remember because it implies that learning is as natural for us as breathing,

We also know from the principles of living systems that the dynamic balance of individuals is influenced by relationships with the many environments they inhabit, as well as the growth and development within the individuals themselves. This includes all environments – the physical environments of the planet, our homes, our communities, our own bodies, including our senses; the mental environments of our personal beliefs and our cultural norms; the emotional/social environments of how we feel and relate to others; and our spiritual environment – that which inspires us and connects us to something larger than ourselves. These dynamic environments function as nested systems, both vertically (that is, a child in a classroom in a school in a community, etc.) and horizontally (a hungry child interacting with their peers and the available classroom resources, etc.).

Further, the three principles of living systems remind us that diversity is not a concept to be celebrated or an initiative to be implemented but a fact of life. Diversity – which results in the generation of new ideas, new forms, new possibilities and potentials, and optimized choices – is an outgrowth of the interactions of uniquely functioning and interdependent individuals, within the larger contexts of which they are part. This fact has profound implications for how we work with individuals, groups, organizations and communities.

The shift in the worldview from a mechanistic paradigm to one that embraces the living systems perspective directly impacts how we think about issues of well-being for it changes how we think about reality and about what it means to be human.

## The articles

In this issue we feature six articles and two viewpoints, all exploring the theme of living systems from different perspectives. The first two articles share a common focus on education, both recommending a living systems approach as a useful way to reshape education systems. The next two articles also examine education from the perspective of living systems, but in both cases with the focus on vocational education and training systems. The last two articles express different views of the impact of systems of specific communities: in one article on the community of those seeking to influence and inform EU

policymakers and in the other article exploring the values and the self-organizing principles on community associated with an international conference centre.

We are pleased to begin this issue with Richard Dunne's article on 'Why We Need an Education Revolution.' As head teacher of an English primary school, Richard provides his experience in how teaching can embody the principles of living systems through shaping the experiences in the classroom and the school. He advocates addressing the 'big questions' and engaging students in the world around them so that lessons become projects that are authentically connected to life, and not simply theoretical. It is an approach that offers a blueprint for a new way of educating while referencing the old ways of human–earth interactions.

Jean Gordon's article asks 'How Can a Living Systems Perspective of Learners Contribute to How We Think About Education?' Her ideas resonate with those of the first article, but her perspective broadens to include the ideas of researchers, thinkers and educationalists, specifically on the topics of holistic processes in learning, what we mean by 'the whole child' and the implications for education systems. She concludes with a section on the importance of finding new ways to approach education and schooling in order to foster open democratic systems that allow the creativity of individuals and communities to express themselves fully.

In the third article, 'The Systemic Development of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Three Countries', David Parkes offers his experience and reflections on systemic change at national level in the vocational education sector in three countries. He links his key question: 'how to make systemic change work **in practice** within the complexity of politics, people, social policy, bureaucracy and the overall environment?' with the questions Jean Gordon explores about developing the whole person in the context of the overall environment, specifically the education environment. The focus is on approaches and mechanisms to bring people(s) together to reach consensus over ways forward, the priority of the consultant being to facilitate consensus rather than to impose agreement.

The interest in Vocational Education and Training continues in the fourth article by Frédéric Bruggeman, 'Has French Decentralisation Fostered Systemic Approaches to Employment, Training and Guidance? The Example of Further Vocational Training.' Frédéric Bruggeman suggests that the process of decentralization in France over recent decades has left a fragmented provision of VET services. His article examines 'how to make systemic change work **in practice** within the complexity of politics, people, social policy, bureaucracy and the overall environment?' He ends on a cautiously optimistic note that the introduction of new experimentation may allow different actors and service providers to work together, to concretely experience the problems-fragmented approaches and to look for ways to overcome them.

Georg Jürgens takes a different view in 'Lobbying for Well-being' on working within large and complex systems. Jürgens is associated with the information and influencing activities of the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education. ECSWE is a network of 26 national Steiner Waldorf school associations representing 712 schools and 159,230 pupils in 28

European countries. Jürgens shares his experience and perspectives on working with the vertical and horizontal complexity of the EU political system and offers this to associates in the ECSWE network as a practical guide for providing policymakers and other stakeholders with information to influence systemic decision-making.

The sixth article for this issue looks at the intrinsic and nested systems of an international conference and training centre, the Caux Forum, run by Initiatives of Change. 'Employing Values, Silence and Dialogue to Bridge Gaps in Status, Culture, Gender, Age, Role and Purpose' by Nick Foster suggests that the 70-year-old-experiment in peace-building and reconciliation activities rests on the fundamental that 'change begins with me.' The living system approach is particularly strong in the self-organizing environment that is created by the different conferences over the summer period, through shared values and practices that stress service, connection, and diversity. Various embedded videos provide insights into the experiences of speakers, participants and organizers illustrating individual reflection that facilitates new ideas, undermines stereotypy, and builds unique, often unlikely, alliances that can create new opportunities for change; individual, corporate and/or systemic.

Lastly, we present two viewpoints. Susan Booth shares her experience on 'Facing the Inevitable' as she designs and facilitates a discussion course for her peers (senior learners) on addressing, questioning, challenging and deliberating on the cycles of life and what we experience as the last phase in our individual life cycle, and how we want to approach this season while living fully.

We conclude this issue with Nik Dee Dahlstrom's viewpoint on 'Arts Reflecting Living Systems.' Dahlstrom asks many provocative questions in his presentation, but his central invitation is to ask the reader to engage with all senses open and aware, to move beyond the linear expression of words, and to experience his viewpoint!

We hope you enjoy reading (and experiencing) this issue of the *L4WB Magazine*. We will be very pleased to receive your feedback.

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Dunne, R. (2018) 'Why We Need an Education Revolution,' in Learning for Well-being Magazine, Issue 5, published by the Learning for Well-being Foundation.

## Why We Need an Education Revolution

By Richard Dunne

### Introduction

If we are to take seriously the idea of a sustainable future, then the current education system is not fit for purpose. This is not to decry the need for high standards and rigour in education. Rather it is a call to re-contextualize learning, to join it up around project-based enquiries that provide students with a much more holistic view of how the world works and their part in it.

At its simplest level, if we are to learn about a particular historical period, it makes sense to look, too, at the architecture, the artists, the writers and philosophers, the music and the culture of that time. More than that, we can then ask what it is that this particular period in history teaches us. What is its relevance to today and how might these past practices inform our thinking into the future?

Food is fundamental to a good education. If we are what we eat, then we surely need to consider what we eat. And yet, very often, there is very little reference at school to the food that is served on our plate. It is detached from the story of how it was produced and the journey of where it came from, stories and journeys that are rich in learning opportunities and full of ethical dilemmas.



\*All the photos included in this article were taken by the author.

We may well know the nutritional content of certain foods and why some foods are better for us than others, but if we have no understanding of where the food has come from, how far it has travelled, whether it was sourced locally and in season, what production system made it and the impact of that system on environmental and human health, then we have missed the fundamental first chapters of the food story.

We know that food and farming is the biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and yet for the most part, education is barely connecting the food that we eat with the systems that produce it. When we are unaware of something, we are not going to be interested in it. Conversely, when we start to explore some of the issues around, for example, the provenance of our food, we are likely to take a real interest in it and become increasingly discerning about what we choose to eat.



Once we start to learn in this way, learning comes alive. In the case of food, we can link what we learn to what is served in our school kitchen. We can look at local sources of food or even whether it would be possible to grow food on a reasonable scale in our school grounds. We might look to build a partnership with local growers. We can consider the cost implications of buying free range or organic food over other more industrially produced food and whether we think it is right to pay a true cost for this more sustainable approach to food production.

## A joined-up approach to learning

This approach is remarkable in its absence since education, for the most part, teaches for separateness. It divides up learning into separate subject silos and there is often no connection from one subject to another. Students learn in boxes.

There are clearly always going to be times when a subject-specific concept or method needs practicing and securing, but if a concept or method is not then applied in any meaningful way, the learning quickly loses any sense of purpose. When learning is taught in this way, then it will have little or no relevance to students beyond a test grade. This is an incredibly narrow and uninspiring way to learn.

If we look to the natural world, we see that it works systemically. The idea of separateness does not exist in Nature as everything is connected. Indeed, as the Prince of Wales reminds

us in his book, *Harmony, a new way of looking at the world*, Nature teaches us wholeness. And, of course, natural systems are sustainable systems. The way they work shows us how we should work if we are to replicate similarly sustainable practices. They teach us about connections, relationships, consequences. This is how all learning could be.



For the most part, sustainability in education is seen as an add-on. It might be presented as a one-off environmental day or eco week. It will almost certainly be presented outside of the formal curriculum. It may engage the interest of a good many students, but the mere fact that it is not integrated into the broader curriculum means that the opportunities to link learning together are unlikely to be explored.

We cannot hope to create a sustainable future with this kind of approach.

### The way forward

So, what needs to be done? The solution is closer at hand than we might think. Rather than departmentalizing learning into subject separate units with no thought for how they might connect together, it surely makes sense to take a particular theme or area of study and look at how subject-specific skills and knowledge can feed into this work. It will need some creative thinking to align subjects, one to another, and there will clearly need to be space within the timetable to teach discrete elements of any given subject, but the key is to see the learning as a cohesive whole.



The best way we have found to do this is to build learning projects around enquiries or big questions. These questions guide the learning to a meaningful conclusion at the end of

each half-term. They usually focus on a historical, geographical or scientific theme. Writing tasks and supporting grammar skills are related to the enquiry, maths and science concepts are delivered through the enquiry, too. A series of weekly questions creates a sense of journey towards a concluding activity or event that we call a Great Work. This is a way to recognize and celebrate the work that has been done. It could be an exhibition, a presentation, something made or performed or planted. And this approach gives students a clear sense of where they are going, like a river to the sea.

Half-termly enquiry questions might include:

What journey does our river take?  
How can we build community?  
Where does our food come from?  
How can we ensure our oceans stay amazing?  
Why are bees so brilliant?  
What can we learn about trees through the seasons?

And each enquiry of learning references a sustainability issue. From considering how to use water wisely to learning how to build community, from understanding food provenance to responding to the issue of plastic waste in our oceans and how this links to our throw-away culture, from seeing how a bee colony works to the benefit of its wider ecosystem to planting orchards of heritage fruit trees, every project is addressing an aspect of sustainability and building a picture of how a sustainable future might look.

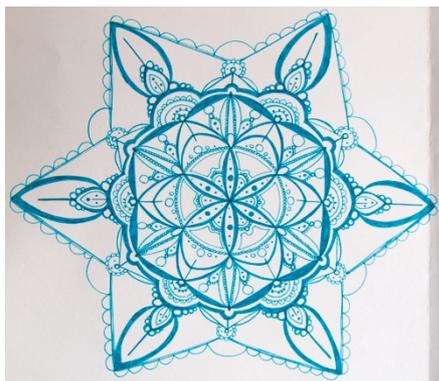
Importantly in this model, Nature is our teacher. Natural systems have worked for millions of years and they provide the best model for our future well-being. The Prince of Wales, in his book *Harmony, a new way of looking at the world*, tells us how the great traditions, cultures and religions have always understood this need to live in harmony, and he references how principles of Nature teach us how to recreate it.

## Principles of Nature

So, what are these principles and what do they mean for education?

In no particular order, they are:

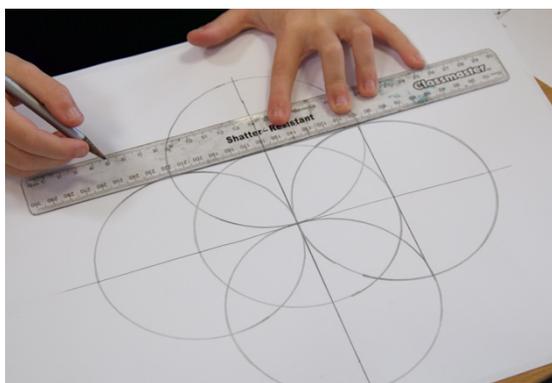
The principle of the cycle – Nature works in cycles. These cycles create no waste or pollution. They are self-sustaining and self-limiting. They never stop. This is the perfect model for a sustainable future. So how can we teach our young people to understand the importance of cycles, to develop a cyclical mind-set and to design cyclical systems so that they learn how to live within limits and recycle everything back into the system, just as Nature does?



The principle of interdependence – Nature’s systems are wholly interdependent. They are all about the relationships that exist between one thing and another. They work at a local level and on a global scale. They remind us that for every action, there is a reaction or consequence. This is a great way for us to see how we live and interact. And, as this article points out, this idea of interdependence is critical to a joined-up way of learning. It is essential to seeing how everything works together.

The principle of diversity – Nature values diversity in all things. Its biodiversity is its strength. It ensures resilience in the system within which it works. This diversity is something to revere. So how can we not just recognise diversity and difference in one another, but in the diverse ways in which we all learn? It is clear that a sustainable future will need more than one solution. The strength of what is achieved will be based on the diversity of the solutions created and in how we promote diversity in the way we learn, in how we work, in what we grow, and in what we value in our world.

The principle of adaptation – Nature is brilliantly adapted to its place. Its adaptations have evolved over millions of years and its intelligent designs have much to teach us. With so much to learn, we need to protect and preserve Nature if we are to discover more about it. Adaptation in terms of learning is about adaptation to place and giving learning a local context. Often learning bears little relevance to the place where it is taught. And yet, if we engage students in learning that develops in them a sense of belonging, they are far more likely to feel part of and contribute to the community in which they live. We know that community is a central tenet of a sustainable future, so finding ways to nurture it in our young people is essential.



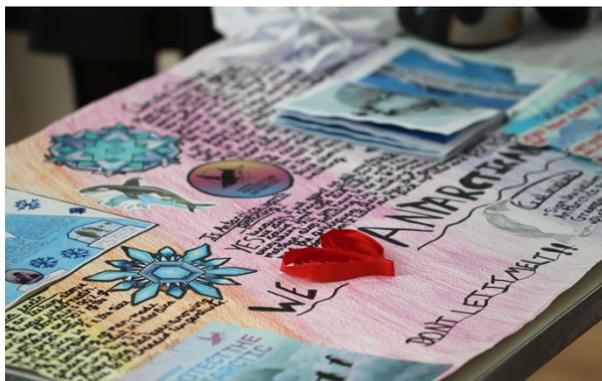
The principle of health – Nature is inherently healthy. Its systems and practices serve the well-being of the greater whole. Through its dynamic processes, these systems remain in good health. Just as importantly, we feel healthy and well in Nature. It is why it is so critical that our young people spend time outside, experiencing the awe and wonder of the natural world. In a world where so many systems and practices are unhealthy, it is essential to explore what we need to be healthy in body, mind and spirit, and how we can ensure the health of our soil, air and water. In educational terms, how might we judge the health and well-being of a school through the health and well-being of its staff and students? Is learning successful if it disengages the majority? Conversely, what kind of learning gives students a real sense of well-being in what they do? We believe it is when they are purposefully engaged in meaningful projects.

The principle of geometry and beauty – Nature has a geometry. This geometry can be seen at a micro and a macro level. We notice it in the circles, spirals and symmetries that exist in us and around us. And the more we learn the geometry of Nature, the more we see that we, too, are Nature. This way into learning gives students a wholly different view of the world.



The principle of oneness – we are all one in Nature. This idea of oneness both relates to the fact that all these principles exist not separately, but as one integrated whole. And it relates to a deep sense of connection we may experience to something greater, a spiritual dimension to who we are. In all our busy doing, it is important for our students, indeed for us all to nurture our being through mindfulness, meditation, contemplation or simply by taking time out to stop and be present.

These principles enable students to see the world from a new perspective, through a different lens. They enable students to articulate their understanding of the world in profound and enlightened ways. They provide a rich and meaningful context for learning. They are a blueprint for a sustainable way of life.



## A new story

Right now, education needs a new story. We know that there will always be some kind of measure to learning, but if this becomes the dominant model for how we educate, and subjects are taught with no sense of cohesion in how they are planned and delivered, then learning will remain piecemeal and often of little relevance to young people.

Instead, we need to find ways to bring learning together around purposeful projects and give students a lead role in showcasing the outcomes of their research and the issues they want to highlight through this process. This may not be possible with the pressures of a GCSE syllabus, but from Early Years right through until the end of Key Stage 3, when students are 14-years old, it is certainly achievable with some creative thinking and a will to make it happen.

The more this approach can be trialled and developed, the more we can shift education to a better place. This is beginning to happen in a small, but growing number of schools. A new story is being told. It is a story of hope, of meaning, of relevance and purpose. And the best bit of all is that the narrators of the story are the students themselves, students who are learning how to live in harmony.



## Author

Richard Dunne is head teacher of Ashley CofE Primary School, an Ofsted graded 'Outstanding School'. The school has over 500 children aged 4-11 and it teaches through enquiries of learning, big questions that provide the focus for each half-term's learning. The children play a lead role in running the school's sustainability projects from monitoring the school's energy to measuring water and food waste every lunchtime to growing organic fruit and veg in the school grounds and looking after the bees. More recently, Richard has established a set of Harmony principles inspired by the Prince of Wales's book *Harmony* that references how principles of Nature can guide all learning. This work is now being shared widely in schools and teacher training colleges in the UK and around the world.

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Gordon, J. (2018) 'How Can a Living Systems Perspective of Learners Contribute to How We Think About Education?,' in Learning for Well-being Magazine, Issue 5, published by the Learning for Well-being Foundation.

## How Can a Living Systems Perspective of Learners Contribute to How We Think About Education?

By Jean Gordon

### Introduction: schools and living systems

No minister of education or policymaker would suggest that our education systems should aim to produce fragmented individuals. There is a general acceptance by educators, researchers and some policymakers of the importance of taking a holistic approach to education in order to support deep learning and nurture the well-being of learners. But how does that work in practice?

In a school if you want to talk to someone about 'living systems' you probably need to go to see a biology or life sciences teacher because the concept will be part of that curriculum. However, can we learn something valuable by looking at how this concept can enhance the way we think about schools, their missions and practices, and the members of the school community, the children and the adults?

What are we referring to by a 'living system'? Living systems theory was developed by James Grier Miller (Miller, 1978)<sup>1</sup> to formalize the concept of life as a general theory about the existence of all living systems, their structure, interaction, behaviour and development. Miller postulated that a 'living system' must contain a certain number of 'critical subsystems', which are defined by their functions and visible in numerous systems, from simple cells to organisms, countries, and societies. As such, this concept refers as much to individuals and social systems as to the natural world around us.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a useful summary see: <https://www.panarchy.org/miller/livingsystems.html>

<sup>2</sup> For more information: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living\\_systems](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living_systems)



Illustration: Learning for Well-being Foundation

While each one of us can be seen as a unique and whole living system, we are all part of different groups (through family, school, work, teams, etc.) that are directly or indirectly interacting. In schools, for example, individuals are grouped into classes most often made up of students and teachers. They take on a certain dynamic that is probably a bit different from the class next door. Such systems are generally more or less open, in that they relate at certain moments to each other and in that way exert some mutual influence. And these individuals in the class opt to be part of teams or clubs or other groups, all of which are interacting together within the school as a larger living system, in itself part of a neighbourhood, an education system, etc. In this article I want to look at the implications for education systems and institutions of engaging with children (as well as their teachers, families, etc.) as whole human beings. Understanding human functioning within a web of relationships or a 'living systems perspective', weaves together the various aspects of the person, the process and the environment, all in dynamic interaction with one another (Gordon and O'Toole, 2015). While it is beyond the scope of this article (and the capacity of the author) to elaborate on living systems theory, the purpose is to look at how such an approach can open more avenues for thinking differently about education. The relevant key aspects of living systems theory are the notion of wholeness (the individual, the class, the school, etc.), being open to other 'systems' (other individuals, schools, clubs, etc.), encouraging interactions and recognizing interrelatedness both within the individual and among different types of 'systems.'



Slide: Carlos A. Gonzalez-Carrasco, A New Culture for the XXI Century, presentation at Regent's University of London, Nov. 2015 <https://www.slideshare.net/CarlosAGonzalezCarra/a-new-culture-for-the-xxi-century-regents-university-nov2015-sec> (Equanime 2015, [www.equanime.eu](http://www.equanime.eu))

## Engaging with the whole child through holistic processes

It is not uncommon for academic research, policy reports, strategic documents, etc. to use the terms 'holistic' and 'whole child' when talking about goals and intentions for and observed practices of education systems. Generally, the term holistic signifies a process or purpose, while the notion of the whole child tends to refer to engaging with the physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and mental aspects of each person. Waldorf educators express it as educating the 'head, heart and hands' of each child (Easton, 1997). The focus may be placed on certain aspects of the human experience or on addressing the needs of the 'whole child' through 'whole education,' the latter being defined by David Crossley as: 'a broad and inclusive one that helps children and young people to develop a range of skills, qualities and knowledge that they will need for life, learning and work. It [the Whole Education Network] also argues that it is the combination of these skills and qualities that is important' (Crossley, 2015).

In the same vein, Jacqueline McManus in her research on holistic learning<sup>3</sup> in the context of organizational learning emphasizes the relational nature of learning and how holistic learning involves the recognition that all the variables are relevant and important in a model where there is interaction among the learner, the environment or situation and the learning outcomes (McManus, 2011). In her article, 'What Does It Mean to Educate the Whole Child?' Nel Noddings asks questions about the proper aims of education, how public schools serve a democratic society and what it means to educate the whole child, warning, furthermore, that needs cannot be rigidly compartmentalized and that the massive problems of society demand holistic (or integrated) treatment and processes (Noddings, 2005). She reminds us that 'students are whole persons not mere collections of attributes, some to be addressed in one place and others to be addressed elsewhere.' (Noddings, 2005)

So, for example, in early childhood education and care we would be referring to how the environment supports (or not) a 'whole child' approach through holistic processes involving all services and agencies, such as health, social services, education, day care, justice, etc. (Gordon et al., 2016) taking account of environmental factors. In the case of ECEC provision, in addition to the networking and integration of different types of services, it would also entail ensuring that these services are sensitive to young children's physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual needs, as well as recognizing them as social agents and therefore ensuring that their voice is heard and is central to all processes.

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<sup>3</sup> By 'learning' I'm referring to the processes taking place during formal and non-formal education and training.



Illustration: Learning for Well-being/INTESYS ([Learning for Well-being Foundation](http://www.l4wb-magazine.org))

## The whole child: referring to all aspects of a person/child

Developing approaches that take account of all aspects of children is what Loris Malaguzzi called the 'hundred languages' of childhood and the image of the child who is 'rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and connected to adults' (Moss in Cameron and Moss, 2011). Malaguzzi was the founder of what has become known as the 'Reggio Emilia approach' to early childhood education and care in Italy. The notion of nurturing children and thus enabling them to develop certain attitudes, ethics and a sense of meaning, however expressed by different authors, always points towards an image such as the 'hundred languages' of childhood, notably in the field of early years' development.



Image: Exploring the One Hundred Languages of Children <http://blogs.ubc.ca/melissafalabella/>

This raises the issue of the policies and strategies necessary to enable such a vision to be a reality in everyday practice in schools or early years' centres as whole communities concerned with the total development of children and encouraging teachers and students to interact as whole persons (Noddings, 2005) because:

Most of us want to be treated as persons, not as the 'sinus case in treatment room 3' or the 'refund request on line 4.' But we live under the legacy of bureaucratic thought – the idea that every physical and social function should be assigned to its own institution. In the pursuit of efficiency, we have remade ourselves into a collection of discrete attributes and needs. This legacy is strong in medicine, law, social work, business, and education. (Noddings, 2005)

Even when educators recognize that students are whole persons, there is the challenge of ensuring that every aspect or attribute is in some way somehow present in the curriculum leading too often to overcrowded curricula (Noddings, 2005).

In terms of outcomes, there is still a tendency among those responsible for education systems to consider that the traditional methods (whole class teaching, little interaction among classes, discipline, learning by heart, etc.) will produce better academic results. Taking a different position from this, Adele Diamond argues that the best way to foster deep, meaningful learning and achievement is through the development of the human being overall.

Ultimately, the key is recognizing 'the fundamental interrelatedness of the different parts of the human being (the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical parts) and of all human beings to one another. Academic achievement, social – emotional competence, and physical and mental health are fundamentally and multiply interrelated. The best and most efficient way to foster any one of those (such as academic achievement) is to foster all of them. Each of the diverse disciplines specializing in any aspect of these has an important piece of the whole to contribute. We need to see the human being and human development as one whole, that those who care deeply about developing cognitive competence, social skills, emotional wellness, or physical health and fitness are not in competition, that one component is not more important than any another, and that we have much to learn from the insights and accumulated wisdom of our counterparts in other fields and specialties. (Diamond, 2010)

Moving outwards from a specific focus on education and into the complexity of social systems, cross-sector initiatives aim to address the different needs and life situations of individuals, such as children and their families. The 2013 Communication from the European Commission, *Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage*, was a joint communication of several Directorates-General responsible for different sets of issues concerning children and childhood. The Communication focused on the need to strengthen synergies across sectors and develop integrated strategies that include education but as part of a larger social and economic whole including health, housing, poverty, justice, social sector, etc.



The next level of questioning could then be whether the current political context actually enables integrated approaches nurturing wholeness. Many authors consider that what is generally called the neo-liberal approach has strongly influenced major trends in education policies since approximately the mid-1980s (Fielding and Moss, 2012; Desjardins, 2015). Richard Desjardins argues that one of the effects on schools is on choices they make about what to prioritize, given the perceived impact of education on economic outcomes, and also what education systems are expected to achieve, including the types of learning outcomes. He argues that this is increasingly seen to be in competition with the socialization function of education and its role in identity and value formation (Desjardins, 2015). For Fielding and Moss, in the neo-liberal approach, 'The dominant values are cognition (above all other facets of human being), competition (between children, between teachers, between schools), calculation (of best returns on investment), commodification (in which everything can be costed, calculated and contracted), choice (of the individual consumer variety), and inequality (fuelling and fuelled by competition).' This clearly sits uncomfortably in a scenario in which a holistic process focusing on the whole child is valued and in which democracy is a fundamental underpinning concept (Fielding and Moss, 2012).

## Implications for education systems: wholeness, openness, interacting and interrelated

A broad encompassing view of learning should aim to enable each individual to discover, unearth and enrich his or her creative potential, to reveal the treasure within each of us. This means going beyond an instrumental view of education as a process one submits to in order to achieve specific aims (in terms of skills, capacities or economic potential), to one that emphasises the development of the complete person... (Delors, 1996)

One of the well-discussed tensions in education systems is between the more child/person-centred approaches to the development of the 'complete person' illustrated in this quote from *Learning: the treasure within*, and approaches focused on competition, best returns, inequality, etc. (see above Fielding and Moss) that compartmentalize the individual through the fragmentation of processes, learning content and places. In practice, in many countries and settings, needs (though not necessarily those that would be identified by the children or their families), are addressed through fragmented services from birth on. On the other hand, research and practices demonstrate the substantial advantages of recognizing interrelatedness and working towards integrated approaches (Gordon, 2016). Echoing Desjardins on the value formation function of education, Mamphela Ramphela expressed a fundamental challenge of learning in today's world as 'learning how to be human in a world that's changing' (Ramphela, 2015). Moreover, the notion of wholeness is at the heart of human competence in that it embodies many facets of each person and recognizes complexity:

A competence refers to a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes and desire which lead to effective, embodied human action in the

world in a particular domain. One's achievement at work, in personal relationships or in civil society is not based simply on the accumulation of second hand knowledge stored as data, but as a combination of this knowledge with skills, values, attitudes, desires and motivation and its application in a particular human setting at a particular point in a trajectory in time. Competence implies a sense of agency, action and value. (Hoskins and Deakin Crick, 2010)

Thinkers and educationalists have long criticized standard approaches to education, putting forward (and frequently into practice) their ideas and the results of their observations. Whatever country they came from and their specific background, they were emphasizing the importance of educating and empowering the whole child (or adult) for life. But despite the daily work of educators in schools across the globe based on those ideas, old paradigms in education remain deeply embedded and have been further reinforced by neo-liberal agendas. Geoffrey Caine in his 2004 paper to the AERA conference refers to a common feeling that education is notoriously resistant to change, and progress is slow mainly because of a deeply held belief that learning is a 'largely mechanistic process' (Caine, 2004). He argues for change based on an understanding 'more in tune with the nature of life itself.'

This suggests that emotions may have a role to play in how we learn. Daniel Goleman considers they are one of the key skills to being an effective learner. In his work on emotional intelligence he explored the importance of emotions in processes such as the ability to focus, solve problems, etc. (Goleman, 1996) Ten years later, writing about social intelligence, he also highlighted that we are ' "wired" to connect with others and that this social circuitry appears crucial for our life happiness, health and success with definite consequences for how we do at work or at school.' (Goleman, 2006)



Image: Middle Web <https://www.middleweb.com/2847/how-to-build-happy-brains/>

Brain-imaging technologies have made it increasingly possible to observe the working brain and the resulting research provides helpful insights into perceptual, cognitive and emotional functions that contribute to our understanding of the processes of learning (OECD, 2007; Hinton et al., 2008) bringing greater understanding of the 'inherent interconnectedness of body, brain and mind' (Caine, 2004). Learning is a relational process: to 'engage in reciprocal activity, an individual mentally creates self and other's feeling' (Tayler, 2015). Immordino-Yang and Damasio explore the connections between emotion, social functioning and decision-making and emphasize the critical role of emotion

in bringing previously acquired knowledge to inform real-world decision-making in social contexts. They suggest 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). Moreover, it has been noted that during the early years developmental tasks are full of emotional issues which can be difficult for young children, thus requiring emotional competence (Denham et al., 2016).

Observation suggests that young children who enjoy warm attachments and whose families and educators are aware of their emotional state are well placed to develop as competent human beings (Tyler, 2015). However, one issue is that though respecting the wholeness of learners is central, it leaves educators grappling with a paradox: while there are some specific skills, processes, etc. to master, each of these specifics nevertheless engages the whole person: 'Learners are not just systems. They are living systems, and they are human.' (Caine, 2004)

All of this suggests that we need to think of schools as more than the juxtaposition of distinct subjects or disciplines. Fundamentally they are living organisms interacting with their subsystems (pupils, staff, etc.) and with the community around. Each subsystem is complex, adaptive, self-organizing.

## Final thoughts

Why does any of this matter anyway? Is it just of academic interest? Well, children and young people spend a lot of time in school and 'Schools are powerful institutions in the lives of young people, and they impact on their present and future development' (McLaughlin and Gray, 2015). It would be difficult to deny the critical role they play, successfully or unsuccessfully, in the nurturing and well-being of students. But 'studies of young people's lives today suggest that the old frameworks for schooling do not engage with the complexity of young people's lives, poverty and complexity itself. A new approach, one that emphasizes relationships, connection, control and meaning is a better model for the social and educational world young people are in.' (McLaughlin and Gray, 2015).

Though specific skills are clearly of value and needed, research and experience suggest that meaningful learning engages the student as a whole person, based on an understanding that knowledge and competence development are complex processes involving emotions, values, skills, etc. in an interrelated way. McLaughlin and Gray refer to 'relational' to highlight, firstly, the importance of relationships among pupils, between children and adults in schools and between the school and its surrounding community and, secondly, the interactions among all the different elements of what a school does (McLaughlin and Gray, 2015). The focus is the interplay of the individual in his/her complexity within the wider web of interactions in and beyond the school, a 'whole' system in its own right. Noddings sees this as fundamental to democracy: '... we must allow teachers and students to interact as whole persons, and we must develop policies that treat the school as a whole community. The future of both our children and our democracy depend on our moving in this direction' (Noddings, 2005). If, as Michael Fielding writes 'The challenges facing education

today are ill-served by the insistent drum beat of delivery, education, in both its principled and pragmatic senses, requires a subtler mutuality and a more holistic, more humanly fulfilling orientation. Its rigour is relational rather than directive, its urgency collaborative rather than commanding' then democracy is fundamentally a way of living and learning together. (Fielding, 2015).

The challenges facing education are many, made more difficult by the pace of technological change – what do you teach 5-year olds today for an unknown future? The biggest challenge could be designing education systems and practices relevant for all learners that will enable people to work together democratically and creatively, with each individual able to make their unique contribution, towards novel solutions to the very major environmental, social, economic and human problems facing us. Learning to be open to other people and societies, encouraging interactions and recognizing interrelationships contributes a promising way forward.

## Author

Bringing change and improvements to education and training and all situations where children, young people and adults are learning so that everyone can flourish and lead happy, healthy and meaningful lives is the core of Jean Gordon's work. She worked for many years for the EIESP, a European institute based in Paris (where she was director from 2003 to 2013), working mainly with the European Union, countries across Europe, and the Mediterranean region. Her work aims to contribute to lifelong learning opportunities and personal development through improving access to learning and its recognition, individualizing pathways, developing key competences and increasing transparency of learning and qualifications. Jean is now a consultant, was Joint Editor of the European Journal of Education from 2004 to 2015 and is currently Co-editor of the Learning for Well-being Magazine. She is a member of the CATS (Children as Actors for Transforming Society) core team for design, planning and organisation.

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## The Systemic Development of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Three Countries: Bosnia And Herzegovina (BiH), Syria, the United Kingdom (UK)

By David Parkes

### 1. Introduction

This article is concerned with systemic change at national level in the vocational education sector. A **systemic** change may be defined as one experienced by the whole of an organization or a country and not just particular parts of it. The article explores such change in three very different countries and circumstances and in different periods of time – the late 1980s, the late 1990s and early 2000s. The three countries indicated in the title are examples of applying major change in an education sub-sector with a key question: 'how to make systemic change work **in practice** within the complexity of politics, people, social policy, bureaucracy and the overall environment?' Here, we concentrate on approaches and mechanisms to bring people(s) together to reach consensus in political (small and big 'p' contexts). The mechanisms are intended to provide the means (and the money) for individual actors to reach consensus over ways forward. The three countries have been chosen because the attempts at change were not just notional but funded in many millions of euro or pounds and were subject to complex national, international policies and values.

For the purposes of the article, three countries have been chosen as different examples of attempted systemic development at national level. The fact that each country's development project presents a different period in time as well as different levels of complexity makes it possible to review both short and longer-term outcomes. In each, the author had responsibility (as head or part of a team) for both designing the project and for its implementation. **Section 2** deals with how to make sense of the complexities of vocational education and training (VET) as a sector given the different types of intervention;

**section 3** presents the 3 countries' project objectives and financing; **section 4** the provision of working frameworks to take the projects forward; **section 5** looks at managing change in complex situations; **section 6** examines managing the interaction of the different actors as change occurs; **section 7** asks what contributed to outcomes and of what kind? **Section 8** reviews what went right and wrong and why? **Section 9** is a Post script.

## 2. How to make sense of the complexity

Firstly, what is vocational, education and training (VET)? Basically, it covers a broad set of formal and non-formal initial and continuing education and training. VET provision extends from very low basic skills up to higher education level access and qualifications, across the full spectrum of the economic sectors and their needs for skilled, competent and specialist staff.

VET is a very complex area, an inter mix of often changing labour market needs, complex qualification systems and frameworks and competence-based outcomes together with curricular and organizational demands (general education is only a little less complex).

One way of handling this complexity (for the projects) is to review the *architecture* common to all VET systems (however divergent) which make up a system (and within which sit government and management) and to review how each element may be developed in relation to the others. (Parkes, 1995)

The suggested architecture of a VET sub-system consists of:

1. Mission – the overall aims and objectives (including an understanding of constant change in the sector);
2. VETs relation to the labour market: its structures and actors;
3. Content: curriculum: certification; quality; evaluation (currently embraced by national qualification frameworks);
4. Capacity development (particularly teacher/trainer and management development);
5. Location of decision-making/decentralization;
6. Development of institutional homes to house key functions such as curriculum development;
7. Legislation;
8. Finance.

Items 4, 5 and 6 above are supportive to items 1, 2 and 3 with finance and legislation supporting them all.

**This general architectural framework is important since finance (and the whole organizational and decision-making process) are there only to support student learning (mostly still in institutions – schools, training centres, enterprises etc.) Students undertake courses and/or acquire competences. All the rest is to support that.**

Within this framework a VET system works, if it can:

1. define occupational sector priorities;
2. identify appropriate sector knowledge, skills and competences required;
3. turn these into standards and appropriate curricula;
4. transform and deliver these in institutions at national level;
5. assist in making the learning process attractive for students and teachers;
6. provide timely and effective feedback through reporting, monitoring and evaluation;
7. be governed in an acceptable way for all stakeholders;
8. establish quality control and tracing of student destinations;
9. be a balanced system;
10. have recognized and transparent qualifications;
11. be cost efficient.

Elizabeth McLeish (1998) in her Introduction to *Processes of Transition in Education Systems* starts with four post-communism stages of reform:

1. **Corrective Reforms** that are initiated with immediate repairing objectives;
2. **Modernizing Reforms** that are interventions aimed at reducing gaps and catching up with advanced institutions and structures;
3. **Structural Reforms** that are targeted at the structures, legal framework and management of educational systems;
4. **Systemic Reforms** that are deeper and have a global character because they call for a genuine change of paradigm in terms of educational policy. (McLeish, 1998)

For our three countries, then, the Responsive College Programme in the United Kingdom (UK) (Bilborough, Parkes and Thomson, 1988) come under stages 1 and 2; Syria under 3 but Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) under 4 since we are dealing with a post war, fragmented country mixing three different peoples and religions being subject to EU criteria as part of the path towards negotiating eventual EU membership.

With BiH and Syria we have funding and therefore structures and values coming from international donors, not only the EU but also the World Bank (in the case of BiH) and the UN, plus individual countries with their own agendas – donor cooperation is tricky (Parkes, 1997). International donors such as the European Union (EU), the World Bank, the United Nations (largely through UNESCO), the Asian Development Bank and many others, including individual countries, have substantial funds to aid development in countries undergoing change – though of course with their own agendas and values. For example, for education the EU tends to be supporting the public sector and for the World Bank it may be private initiatives. The US as an individual country may support the development of American-style community colleges and the UK that of business education. The beneficiary country and the individually funded project need to coordinate the different donor approaches – rather like a marriage ceremony where the groom and bride do not want to receive five washing machines.

### 3. The actual projects in the three countries

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

Initially, for VET the European Union had a smallish (circa Eur 4 million) programme to assist with the post-war development of vocational education and training. The programme derived from a needs analysis undertaken in Summer 1996, jointly for the World Bank and the EU. The author was one of the coordinating consultants (Boglia, Lutz and Parkes, 1996) designing the programme and was then responsible for the 'policy and strategy' component of the resultant project (1998–2002). There were three elements to the programme:

1. Curriculum development for initial skill training in nominated occupational sectors;
2. Continuing education and training for special needs;
3. Both components related to pilot schools and training centres – that is people on the ground.

Subsequently, the author was asked to lead the policy and strategy component within the project to develop Green (2000) and White (2001) Papers and subsequently the White Paper for general education (2003).<sup>1</sup>

#### Syria

For Syria, in 2000, the author was a member of the EU team designing a EUR 21 million VET strategy to be addressed by two main sets of activities: support to the Syrian government in an overall approach to VET development culminating in the creation of a 'national institution' to house the outcomes. The proposed outcome for such an 'institution' was perceived by the Syrian government as likely to be one of three scenarios: Scenario 1 – an authority reporting to the prime minister or deputy prime minister that takes control of decision-making and operations in all areas of VET; Scenario 2 – an authority reporting to the prime minister or deputy prime minister that has a mix of decision-making and advisory roles leaving most existing activities involving the provision of VET with current ministries; Scenario 3 – an authority reporting to only one minister that takes control of decision-making and operations in all or most areas of VET, bearing in mind that the then situation had 17 separate ministries with responsibilities for VET.<sup>2</sup>

The overall project would build on the outcomes from the VET and labour market interventions under pilot activities to help to create the conditions for general VET provision and employment services to be more responsive to local labour market needs. Subsequently, over a longer period, the author had responsibility for developing the finance component through to 2008 (see section 4 below).

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<sup>1</sup> A 'green' paper is a set of policy recommendations presented for consultation to key constituencies at a stage when amendments (minor or major) can be made. A 'white' paper is government agreed policy and strategy. It is a stage prior to implementation but it represents a commitment on what is politically, technically and organizationally feasible.

<sup>2</sup> Modernization of VET Programme for Syria 2007; Europe AID 20173/C/SU/SY, a partnership between the government of Syria and the European Union, 2007.

## The UK

From 1986 to 1989 the author was Director of the GBP 2 million Responsive College Programme (Bilborough, Parkes and Thomson, 1988) funded by the then Ministry of Labour, concentrating on VET colleges (supply side) responding to client needs, that is employers, students and parents (the demand side). The project required:

1. The creation of a systematic marketing management information system, quality control and market research;
2. The management of change and the management of short-term projects to facilitate change.

## 4. The provision of working frameworks

All three projects were subject to an overall development architecture – for example:

### In Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Content: curriculum development, certification and qualifications, standards and assessment;
2. Capacity: teacher and management development;
3. Institutional Development: the latter is seen both as State/Entity/Cantonal (an administrative region) and local development and the evolving profile of the school(s) in the face of reform initiatives;
4. Structure: harmonization of legislation and finance.

### In Syria

For the development of the VET finance system in Syria (a component of the overall project) the starting point was that 'reform strategies do not exist without a budget line attached.' The four key questions for VET financing in Syria were:

1. What are the current and future sources of finance?
2. How will they be collected and by whom?
3. How will they be dispersed, by whom and by what criteria?
4. What measures are in hand to reform current finance mechanisms?

### In the UK

Both of the objectives, set out in section 3, were subject to an outline model of:

1. Market research (what are employer and student needs for skills and training);
2. Product development, selling and promotion (basically curriculum and competence needs identified via extensive interactions between the demand and supply sides);
3. Quality control (basically extensive review of outcomes and costs);
4. After sales service (follow up of outcomes and consequent modification of inputs).

These were fashionable business marketing terms of the period and seen by the then Thatcher government as likely to be perceived particularly favourably by employers and employer associations. Attached to the project was the creation of performance indicators,

another tool becoming fashionable in the mid-1980s UK – as the beginning of the measurement of outcomes in the overall British education and training systems. Indicators included client satisfaction measures for students and for parents. After sales service included follow-up of student destinations.

## 5. Managing change

At this period organizational theory and change management were little understood by the actors in the field. A process of cultural transformation and the translation of policy into practice is almost always an extremely lengthy process.

McLeish (1998) argues in her introduction to *Process of Transition in Education Systems*<sup>3</sup> that

the completion of the transition process at the structural/legislative level in no way implies that educational transition at the micro level has been achieved. To change a label is easy, to effect a comprehensive change in practice is very difficult (see section 8 below). System change has to build on the given historically grown institutional structures. It is likely to be achieved only through small, incremental change in narrow and targeted areas and only where there is equilibrium between radical change and traditional forces.

Change requires a clear sense of public purpose, new partnerships and new skills, as well as careful policy coordination, compensatory mechanisms and collaboration in adequate forums for consultation and decision-making. These are the challenges.

Reform and change has to be carried out largely by existing staff, and despite widespread agreement with global policy objectives and improved policies, there may still be great discomfort felt by the reform actors at the prospect of changing traditional ways.

Accomplishing change is about reversing deeply embedded policies and strongly held beliefs.

At national level, governments need to facilitate change by:

1. Understanding fully social partners' goals, competencies and capacities in regard to VET as the first step towards building consensus.
2. Being fully aware of where developments should be heading, especially in regard to how much decision-making power can be transferred to a social partnership structure. The importance of this is further stressed if VET management and/or delivery is done by a number of ministries, committees etc. (remember Syria had 17 ministries dealing with VET).
3. Facilitating a process where the government itself is a major player.
4. Acknowledging that employers (and maybe even trade unions) are reluctant to push harder for influence simply because they are afraid that it might backfire. This is likely to be true in transition countries. Employers are exploring the emerging opportunities and their boundaries, often taking a cautious approach making sure not to step unnecessarily on the authorities' toes.

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<sup>3</sup> A 'transition country' refers, normally, to a country undergoing economic reform, usually from communism, but here refers more particularly to countries undergoing systemic reform in education, aided by donors with their own values.

The difficulty in all of this is the administrative and management capacity to implement policy and structures even when legislated for. For how it worked out in the real world of our examples BiH, Syria and the UK see sections 7 and 8.

## 6. Managing the process with people

If we take the case of the BiH initial project outlined in section 1, then the 'policy and strategy' component was intended to help establish common and cooperative policy strands for the two entities (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republika Srpska). The former consists of ten cantons of which three had a large Croat population and seven were predominantly Bosniac. The country's population is made up of three contributing peoples: Orthodox Bosnian Serbs, Bosniac Muslims and Croat Catholics, all recently at war. Why mention the three religions? – because the timing of meetings was complicated by widely different religious holidays quite apart from differences having helped create war in the first place. Given that the Republika Srpska was intended to move from a centralized structure and that the Federation had ten cantons with wholly independent education ministries and ministers there were likely to be a number of separate scenarios for strategic plans but (very hopefully) linked to common policy statements.

For professional development in the policy and strategy component, the actors consisted of ministers, vice ministers, civil servants in ministries of education, labour and finance; social partners; education officers and school directors. Working together, there were 25 actors from the Federation and 15 from the Srpska Republic – working on six key themes: legislation, education administration, the labour market, curriculum development and evaluation plus finance.

The principal outcomes were green/white papers (see above) providing common policy initiatives for VET. The fact that the three key groups worked together was a major outcome in itself. It is also noticeable with the titles of the White Papers that for VET in 2001 the ownership is given to the EU PHARE programme funded by the European Union<sup>4</sup> – but for primary and secondary education in 2003 it is given to the BiH Education Authorities assisted by the EC-TAER Programme – a quite proper switch of ownership. The author would argue that, among all considerations, it is the priority of the consultant to facilitate consensus rather than to impose agreement.

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<sup>4</sup> The Phare Programme was a pre-accession instrument financed by the EU for about a decade before 1989. The EC-TAER Programme was a specific programme established for BiH.

## 7. What contributed to outcomes and of what kind?

**Firstly, money:** post the Balkan war, despite continuing enmities money was needed for reconstruction and to overcome resistance – it came not only from the EU, as in our case, but from the World Bank, the UN and individual countries (all of course accompanied by donor cooperation, a feature of the project). (Parkes, 1997)

Continuity of project funding is a key issue for success. In a second phase one canton had a successful introduction of modularized curricula but EU funding is only for pilot projects – systemic introduction is to come later. Despite all parties finding the introduction of modularized curricula successful, it ceased with the end of the flow of money. When the money ran out there was no means even of repairing the photocopier – quite simply it was the end of modularization (no copier, no modules).

**Second, political will** both from inside BiH and from outside: It must be always borne in mind that, post the Dayton Agreement ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dayton\\_Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dayton_Agreement)) for peace in BiH (brokered by the West and signed in December 1995) there was, for most of the project period, pressure from the international community. Much of the pressure passed through the Office of the High Representative (nominated by the Western Governments with overriding powers including the ability to remove presidents and ministers). Additionally, international bodies such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were given a coordinating role for education between 2001 and 2005). UNESCO and the Council of Europe put considerable pressure on politicians for reform in all domains, education being only one. As above, major donors such as the EU and the World Bank, plus non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as SOROS (The SOROS Foundation's Open Society provided USD 50 million of support to Sarajevo during the Balkan war) and bilaterals have all had varying though not always compatible influences. The outbreak of the Iraq crisis transferred the political will and the money away from BiH. 'See you in Baghdad' was the departing cry of the UN representatives in Sarajevo.

**Third, timeliness:** The UK's Responsive College Programme (RCP) (Bilbrough, Parkes and Thomson, 1988) was helped by aims and objectives which were consistent with local, national and international pressures. At that period, VET colleges were mixed-economy institutions with traditional local authority-subsidized education and training for the public good, full-cost courses for the private sector and a third intermediate sector – a category of learning activities subsidized by government agencies

**Fourth, incremental and attitude change:** For RCP, credibility was earned and developed from specific and concrete achievements taken incrementally.

Change in attitudes was perhaps the greatest single achievement, a factor which uses vast energies and requires constant sustaining in systems. In some cases, the operational stage was only undertaken when the 'attitude changers' (usually with deputy director posts in individual colleges/schools and senior administrators at local/regional level) having used up their credibility moved on to other posts and left the mopping-up process to their untainted successors.

**Fifth, Consolidation** occurred during the embedding of systems: The development of procedures and the building of continuity via responsibility in senior management roles.

The Syrian system of VET financial management had been characterized by two features: an extremely high level of centralization and a low level of participation of actors other than public authorities, mainly representative of the education sector.

To ameliorate this lack of financial delegation the system for financing needed to be consolidated around the following 13 requirements (Managing VET: Towards a Modernization Strategy 2008):

1. Fit within the budgeting cycle of the government;
2. Correspond with the policy and management cycle of the proposed authority in its VET coordinating role for overall government and line ministry priorities (remember 17 of them);
3. Acknowledge the self-initiatives (relative autonomy) of a VET school;
4. Be sufficiently flexible to adapt to new developments and needs;
5. Incorporate multi-funding resources;
6. Stimulate VET schools to attract co-financing from the labour market;
7. Value labour market-oriented certificates;
8. Give sufficient steering capacity for the government;
9. Provide stability with adequate financial means for VET schools;
10. Stimulate the efficient use of financial means;
11. Be simple and transparent;
12. Avoid possibilities for deliberate misuse;
13. Have controllable development costs.

## 8. What went right and what went wrong?

**Right:** the **BiH project** was, for the EU, an outstanding success with a White Paper agreed between the Srpska Republic and the Federation entities – the success of the VET project led to a similar exercise for general education which also produced green and white Papers.

**Wrong:** but have they been implemented? Only partially – largely the Serbs and Croats have continued to run their own separate curricula but at least dialogue continued and coordinating bodies were established at national level.

**Right: the outcomes of the Responsive College Programme** were implemented nationally (and indeed the approach was subsequently replicated in three transition countries).

**Wrong:** however, the politics of the UK meant measurement and performance indicators were increasingly put in place to a point of exaggeration. Supply/demand problems (20 years later) largely continue – with ongoing crises of skill shortages.

**Right: the Syrian project** continued on track from 2000 to 2008.

**Wrong:** One should explain that the EU Office in Damascus was keen to see the EUR 21 million programme succeed in its own right, but also (among other projects) as a contribution to regional stability – then war came – then war came.

## 9. Post script (luck and judgement)

In the case of a different country project, project money ran out for phase 1 and phase 2 was delayed. During a project study visit to Paris, we visited the Commission in Brussels to discuss interim funding with a team of the country's three deputy ministers who were briefed to be unanimous in their submissions. Negotiations were on track when one deputy minister explained his minister could not agree to X; thus negating the prospective agreement. The brave interpreter translated into French 'my minister is in full agreement'; a million-euro package was then agreed (an interesting, if delicate, example of a personal judgement for the general good).

## Author

David Parkes worked until recently as an independent international consultant under French legislation. His clients included the EU, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, UNESCO, The Council of Europe, national and regional governments and enterprises in the private sector (but he has taught in primary, secondary, vocational education and training and higher education in the UK and the USA). He was formerly a senior staff member of the National Education Staff College in the UK and Deputy Director of the European Institute of Education and Social Policy in Paris. He works across all education sectors and has combined the management of large-scale world-wide projects and consultancy with reflection and review, for example with regular editorship/contributions of and to the European Journal of Education.

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## Has French Decentralization Fostered Systemic Approaches to Employment, Training and Guidance? The Example of Further Vocational Training

By Frédéric Bruggeman

### Introduction

This article sets out to present a specific example of how the very entrenched habit of working in 'silos' makes it exceedingly difficult to design and implement public policies for something like vocational training because the beneficiaries of the training do not all fall into a 'one size fits all' category. They may be employed with low-level skills, needing to learn new or more complex skills; unemployed and in need of further or different training in order to find a new job; workers who want to undertake further training in order to change jobs or to improve their chances for career development, women returning to the labour market having raised children, workers and job seekers with a disability, migrants and refugees, etc. Imagining and implementing new approaches that are systemic in their vision, that seek to bring together all the key actors and cross the borders of the different professional ways of working is far from simple. Developments in the multifaceted training sector in France provide a timely example.

France is well known for being a centralized country. It nevertheless decided to decentralize in the mid-1980s by turning the existing administrative regions into political bodies with an elected regional council. Their political power has since been reinforced twice (in 2005 and in 2015). As the process began nearly 40 years ago, it is now possible to understand what will probably be achieved: transforming the old French political organization of centres of power – one state, 100 *departments* (counties) and 36,000 or so *communes* (municipalities) – into a new organization. Soon, a (less powerful?) state should be ruling France liaising with

13 regions and 1,266 EPCI,<sup>1</sup> of which the 19 biggest already have the special status of 'métropoles' (metropolitan areas). If the French decentralization process has triggered a real 'deconcentration'<sup>2</sup> of the state and progressively reinforced regional political power, fostering approaches that are less fragmented than previously has proved much more difficult. This article proposes to briefly examine why the French further vocational training system (1) became less and less effective, (2) what has recently been done to put things right, and (3) what could be done to further improve the situation.

## Further vocational training in France: a very complicated situation

In France, as probably in many other countries, public policies are sharply divided into separate fields: employment, training, guidance, economic development. This division of public policies into different fields is often called 'silos' to underline the difficulties it creates for cross-cutting approaches, such difficulties being propped up by the practice of segmenting the workforce<sup>3</sup> into different target audiences such as low-skilled workers, job seekers, young people (under 26), older workers (over 50). The further vocational training system is a good example, having of course 'benefited' from this kind of treatment.

The French further vocational training system was born in 1971 through, as is usually the case in France, a collective bargaining agreement at national level<sup>4</sup> followed by a law swiftly incorporated into the Labour Code. It worked quite well as long as full employment went along with relatively linear career paths inside the same company or corporation but has been heavily criticized for its inability to properly foster professional transitions as well as to efficiently equip low-skilled people with skills demanded on the labour market. In other words, the 'French further vocational training system is fragmented, unequal since it favours the main core of salaried employees and made of several weakly coordinated actors.' (Tuchszirer, 2017).

Two mistakes were probably made at the very beginning of the process (Freyssinet, 2013). The first one when the state decided to embed the right to further vocational training into labour laws. It created a link between the existence of a labour contract and the right to benefit from further vocational training. Consequently, when unemployment began to grow and when vocational training became necessary for people without labour contracts (namely job seekers) specific provisions were designed and responsibility for their training was given to the national employment agency (the then ANPE and today's Pôle Emploi). Further vocational training for job seekers and employed people was therefore split into two separate fields steered by different rules and organizations. One might accidentally remark that a working individual who became unemployed was the same person but the system as it had been designed was not able to recognize this. Two small examples

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<sup>1</sup> Depending on its size, an EPCI (établissements publics de coopération intercommunale) is a public body for cooperation at local level. They can have different names.

<sup>2</sup> Difficult to translate. Decentralization refers to the process of transferring political power to the newly created regions while deconcentration refers to a process through which the different ministries create regional bodies to implement their policies.

<sup>3</sup> Reminder: job seekers belong to the workforce.

<sup>4</sup> When successful, the result of this kind of collective bargaining is called 'Accord National Interprofessionnel' (ANI).

illustrate the kind of problems it raises. First, the right to benefit from vocational training for a casual worker whose working life is made up of successive short-term contracts with spells of unemployment in between, changes overnight at the end of each contract when he or she becomes unemployed. Second, workers laid off by big companies will benefit from the advice and support of outplacement cells, which are very often granted lump sums to finance training. But for a very long time it has been difficult for a worker who had engaged in training before being laid off, to enrol as a job seeker and be paid his job-seeker allocation, since he or she was not immediately available for a new job.

The second mistake was when the social partners (employers and trade unions) did not agree on the negotiation of training plans at company level since it is up to the employer to decide what training is useful and for whom. As a counterpart, it was decided that a right to individual training be granted to employees. However, since then, a full disconnection has existed between business company training plans and individual training leave.

The field of further vocational training is nevertheless one of the few in which the social partners decided to work together through bodies called OPCA<sup>5</sup> that are in charge of collecting funds for training from companies belonging to the same collective bargaining agreement. Again, this works quite well as long as what is at stake is to organize training for people who will go on working in the same company or the same sector. But when the workforce is shrinking in a given sector (textiles or metalworking industry for example), OPCAs tend to consider that it is up to someone else to finance training for workers leaving (even compulsorily through redundancies) the companies belonging to the collective agreement by which they are financed.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after 30 years or so, the system had become complex. Around 80 or so OPCAs were in charge of financing the further vocational training of workers through company training plans, around 30 others were in charge of financing individual training leave of employed people, while the national employment agency was in charge of organizing and financing vocational training for unemployed people. Of course, the right to be trained and receive a training allowance for unemployed people was not the same as for those who were employed, and among job seekers training opportunities and payments were different depending on whether they were young or old, with or without job-seeker's allowances. To complete the picture, further vocational training and employment policies were weakly linked and guidance was deemed as a separate activity, carried out in different spaces by separate organizations. Numerous organizations existed, each one with its own rules, knowledge and know-how, most of them ignoring what was done by the others.

At first the rise of the regions did not change anything except add a level of complexity to the system. In the field of vocational training the state first transferred to regions the responsibility for vocational training of young people in the 1990s and then in 2005 enlarged it to unemployed adults (to be coordinated with the national employment agency whose role had been – and still is – unchanged). In 2015, full responsibility for vocational

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<sup>5</sup> Organismes Paritaires Collecteurs Agréés.

training was given to the regions along with the French Ministry of Education (for initial vocational training) and the national employment agency.

## Recent developments

As they were new centres of power, regions engaged in a process of coordinating regional stakeholders and in the middle of the 2000s some of them took a new step in the slow process of coordinating stakeholders and the various service providers in the field of further vocational training. There were 22 regions at this time and not all of them did it and none of them did it the same way. But it can nevertheless be said that an initiative was taken by the regions to coordinate the social partners, the state and the region itself to organize a kind of territorial dialogue in the field – among others – of vocational training. Through a lengthy process it has given birth through legislation in 2014 to the creation of two different types of bodies, in each and every region as well as at national level, and it can be said that ‘local initiatives have played the role of spur in the engaged reforms’ (Tuchszirer, 2017 *op.cit.*).

The first one<sup>6</sup> is dedicated to social dialogue and gathers trade unions and employers’ organizations and, among other things, they have been given the power to establish the national and regional lists of training courses that are eligible for the various vocational training funds. The second one, linked to the first since it integrates the social partners, is a committee for employment, guidance and vocational training.<sup>7</sup> At first glance, this is not a big deal in itself since, congruent with French culture, the second type of body is merely consultative, both at national and regional levels. It nevertheless gathers all the partners that one way or another are involved in initial and further vocational training, employment or guidance and it creates a space where these partners can simultaneously embrace public policies in these different fields. Believe it or not, it is the first time ever.

During the same period of time, the number of sectoral funding bodies for training (OPCA) has been severely reduced and three different devices have been set up or transformed:

1. Careers Guidance Counsellors<sup>8</sup> have been created and a right has been granted to all employees (whether they work for a public body or private company) to consult one and benefit from their advice.
2. The existing ‘right to individual training’<sup>9</sup> which could not be transferred from one company to another has been turned into a ‘Personal Training Account’<sup>10</sup> that can be used whatever company a given person works for and the status (working or unemployed) he or she has.

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<sup>6</sup> COPAREF in regions, stands for Joint Employment and Training Regional Committee for and COPANEF.

<sup>7</sup> CREFOP in regions that stands for Regional Committee for Employment Vocational Training and Guidance) and CNEFOP at national level. There are 13 regions and then 13 CREFOP and one CNEFOP.

<sup>8</sup> Conseil en Évolution Professionnelle (CEP).

<sup>9</sup> Droit Individuel à la Formation (DIF).

<sup>10</sup> Compte Personnel Formation (CPF).

3. Last, it has been made compulsory for companies to organize a ‘Professional Interview,’ every two years, with all their employees to discuss their career opportunities inside or outside of the company. This is intended to take into account careers that develop through working in several companies and different jobs and to foster the habit of deeming professional mobility a normal element of human resource management. Undoubtedly, progress has been made toward a greater coordination between actors in charge of further vocational training, guidance and employment and the three new measures are heading in the right direction. Moreover, they are better than the older ones where professional transition and risks of career discontinuity are at stake, and if the empowerment of the individuals is an objective.

But altogether, it is very unsure that the further vocational training system is set to drastically reduce its shortcomings and ensure systemic approaches for the individuals who enter it. It is very unclear for example whether the Professional Interview, however good the intention, will be useful to employees and companies or deemed to be this kind of crazy obligation nobody really wants to bother with. And if it is useful, will it be implemented in small and medium companies or not? The success or failure of Careers Guidance Counsellors depends a lot on whether working employees will be given easy access or not, whether the companies will liaise with those counsellors or not. One of the main criticisms of the system is that it fails to address the people who need it most, namely workers with low-level skills and people for whom the internet and computers are more a problem than a solution. In this field, everybody knows that creating a new right may change nothing and that nearly everything depends on the way the different actors liaise and the kind of practical device that is built to encourage people to use it and support those who do so. In other words: what is now needed is actors’ cooperation around common projects to accompany individuals in using their rights.

## Old habits are difficult to get rid of

There is in France a consensus on the idea that an exceptional effort has to be made in the field of education in general and vocational training in particular. This is the reason the so-called 500,000 plan<sup>11</sup> was launched in 2016 and a High Commissioner for Skills Investment<sup>12</sup> recently nominated to propose a Skills Investment Plan that will be implemented in collaboration with the regions. More than EUR 15 billion should be spent during the four next years; this plan represents then a real effort and could be an opportunity to change habits. It nevertheless has to be observed that the aim of the plan is to train unemployed people. As said above, further vocational training was first established for working employees and collecting funds has been split in several OPCA. A special system was set up afterwards for unemployed people and even though the number of OPCA has been reduced there are still 20 or so of them. A habit of working in silos was therefore created that is still valid 50 years later, embedded in various interactions and organizations whose very existence depends on their ability to simultaneously innovate and stay in the same framework. This underlines the importance of the period when devices and

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<sup>11</sup> The name tells the story: the objective was to train 500,000 unemployed people during the year.

<sup>12</sup> Haut commissariat à l’investissement dans les compétences.

rules are first created as well as the power of path dependency. It also raises questions: how can a given system evolve toward a more systemic approach taking into account the needs of individuals, rather than the status he or she has for a given period of time. A question that is as easy to ask as it is hard to answer. In the absence of a radical or revolutionary move, one of the possible ways is to foster experiments. What is then at stake is to gather the various actors and service providers involved in a given field, set up a common project and find a budget to implement it.

In the field of further vocational training and in the context of the French culture that is a big challenge. Contrary to Germany or Sweden, where different shapes of co-decision-making exist, social dialogue in France is only about providing information with a view to consultation. In other words, social partners have been used to receiving information and being consulted, but not to setting up and implementing projects together, let alone with the state and a region. The state has always been used to deciding and implementing alone whatever has been decided and the regions are keen to consider they should do the same in the fields they are responsible for. Furthermore, social dialogue as well as public policies tend to pay attention to sectors defined by collective bargaining agreements and to big companies whatever is said about the importance of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises).

It is nevertheless possible to be cautiously optimistic for two reasons. First the need for change is more and more obvious; second territorial approaches are more frequent. The latter is important since looking at problems or situations from a territorial point of view gives a far broader view of what is at stake than when things are observed from any other points of view. When a given company closes down for example, subcontractors are also hit, as are the areas where the people made redundant live (e.g. local shops and service providers) and the problems are best addressed with a multi-actor approach. The same is true when development is at stake and this is why various kinds of territorial dialogue have developed during the last 20 years or so in various countries (Gazier and Bruggeman, 2016). In the field of further vocational training the combination of a big national training effort and a territorial approach could make it possible to implement a kind of job rotation – a system in which job seekers are trained to replace working employees attending trainings. This kind of experimentation would both allow different actors and service providers to work together, and for them to concretely experience the problems that fragmented approaches create and look for a way to overcome them. It would also demonstrate the interest in no longer considering further vocational training provisions for job seekers and for working people separately but addressing them as being linked within an interlinked system.

## Author

Frédéric Bruggeman is a consultant who specialized in restructuring and economic change. After three years dedicated to the economic and financial study of companies and sectors of activity for banks, he has worked with work councils which were confronted with restructuring and change at company level, conducting business diagnostics focused on anticipating risks. He then led a team to capitalize on know-how and formalize the

methodological tools for managing restructuring. From late 2004 to mid-2007, he was international coordinator of the project 'Monitoring Innovative Restructuring in Europe' (FSE art.6), the results of which are published as a collective work: *Restructuring Work and Employment in Europe: Management and Policy Responses Labor and Employment in Europe, public policies and managerial responses*, Edward Elgar, 2008. Since 2007 he has worked at territorial level and has monitored several experiments dedicated to multi-actors' anticipation and management of economic change.

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## Lobbying for Well-being

By Georg Jürgens

### Lobbying for a paradigm shift

The European Union is frequently criticized for its predominantly economic focus and the perceived distance between decision-makers in Brussels and ordinary citizens. Media paint a picture of the EU being held hostage by corporate lobbyists at the cost of people's health and well-being. While there may be truth in this perception, civil society that makes too little use of the manifold opportunities presenting themselves in Brussels is the other side of the coin.

Only the active involvement of well-being-oriented stakeholders might eventually shift the balance towards more well-being-oriented policies. 'Lobbying' in its narrow definition is often seen as focusing only on one's own interest or a narrow field of interest. 'Lobbying for well-being' on the other hand requires a systemic approach based on an awareness of the whole system in its horizontal and vertical dimension.

The following article explains what lobbying is, illustrates its relevance for well-being-oriented stakeholders and democratic systems and gives practical advice on how to lobby in complex multi-level systems like the EU.

### What is lobbying?

Lobbying can be defined as actions directed towards institutions and/or political decision-makers in order to influence concrete legislation or policy-making,<sup>1</sup> while there are variations when it comes to the range of lobby actors, lobby targets, the methods used and the concrete goals. The following considerations might be relevant in this regard:

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Council of Europe (2009). Report *Lobbying in a democratic society (European Code of conduct on lobbying)*, Doc. 11937, Paragraph B.1.10., or OECD (2012) 'Private Interests, Public Conduct: The Essence of Lobbying', in: *Lobbyists, Governments and Public Trust, Volume 2: Promoting Integrity through Self-regulation*, OECD Publishing, pp. 21–33.

- Are corporations, lobby consultancies and trade associations the only lobby actors or do we also take NGOs, trade unions, law firms and think tanks into account?<sup>2</sup>
- Are governments, EU Institutions, officials and elected representatives the only lobby targets or do we include other stakeholders as well?<sup>3</sup>
- Is lobbying limited to *inside tactics* directly addressing decision-makers, or do we include *outside tactics* like grassroots lobbying, demonstrations and media campaigns into our definition?<sup>4</sup>
- With regards to goals, is it enough to distinguish positions according to whether they 'promote', 'modify' or 'block' a proposed policy<sup>5</sup> or do we include attempts to influence the content of party programmes or the political agenda and the backing of preferred candidates for political posts?

While these considerations help to understand lobbying from an involved actor's perspective, they fail to explain the receptiveness of lobby targets and their specific interest in being lobbied. According to an OECD report of 2012,<sup>6</sup> governments and officials value lobbyists as sources of 'useful information and expertise', a voice of those 'adversely and unintentionally impacted by a poorly deliberated public policy' and as interpreters of information ranging 'from scientific data to public opinions' thus pointing to a perceived need of lobbying.

A popular strand of lobbying theory integrates both sides of the spectrum and defines lobbying as 'trading information for access'<sup>7</sup> with lobbyists providing 'understaffed and pressed-for-time decision-makers with policy-relevant information for legitimate "access" to the EU policymaking process.'<sup>8</sup> According to Pieter Bouwen,<sup>9</sup> different types of stakeholders have different capacities with regards to the provision of 'access goods', that is the information traded in this process. He sees companies as best suited to provide 'Expert Knowledge' (EK), European-level associations to provide 'Information about the European Encompassing Interests' (IEEI) and domestic-level associations to provide 'Information about the Domestic Encompassing Interest' (IDEI).<sup>10</sup> European Institutions differ in their information needs as well with the European Commission most likely favouring EK, the European Parliament preferring IEEI and the Council most likely favouring IDEI.<sup>11</sup> Although empirical tests suggest the need for slight modifications to the theory,<sup>12</sup> it offers valuable

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of types of lobby actors in Brussels, see Lundy, David (2017): *Lobby Planet Brussels. The Corporate Europe Observatory guide to the murky world of EU lobbying*. Corporate Europe Observatory, Brussels. pp. 8–11.

<sup>3</sup> A broad overview of relevant actors to address inside and outside EU institutions is given by Van Schendelen (2013). *The Art of Lobbying the EU. More Machiavelli in Brussels*. Amsterdam University Press, pp. 121–124.

<sup>4</sup> For further explanations and comparative research on this important distinction, see Mahoney, Christine (2008): *Brussels Versus the Beltway: Advocacy in the United States and the European Union*, Washington D.C., pp. 127–165.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp. 63–64.

<sup>6</sup> OECD (2012), *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Chalmers, Adam William (2013). "Trading information for access: informational lobbying strategies and interest group access to the European Union", in: *Journal of European Public Policy* 20:1 January 2013, pp. 39–58.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> Bouwen, Pieter (2002). "Corporate lobbying in the European Union: the logic of access", in *Journal of European Public Policy* 9:3 June 2002: pp. 365–390.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. pp. 375–378.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp. 379–382.

<sup>12</sup> See Bouwen, Pieter (2004). 'Exchanging access goods for access: A comparative study of business lobbying in the European Union institutions', in: *European Journal of Political Research* 43: 337–369; and Chalmers (2013) *op. cit.*

advice for lobby groups trying to identify the information needs of policymakers at different stages of the policymaking process.

## Why lobbying?

Looking at it from a *practical angle*, the answer is *pragmatic*, plain and simple: As a lobbyist promoting a holistic educational approach on behalf of the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE),<sup>13</sup> I have understood that aiming for systemic change in education inevitably requires political action. Learning for Well-being (L4WB) faces a similar challenge with implementing its vision ‘*to inspire and support individuals and communities in realizing their unique potential*’.<sup>14</sup> Bringing it to life requires systemic change in a whole range of relevant sectors and policy fields, such as *health, family, education, welfare, justice, media & ICT and arts & culture*<sup>15</sup> and, again, this is where political action and, thus, lobbying comes into the picture.

From a *normative perspective*, things are a little more complicated as we then enter the realm of *idealism*. Alberto Bitonti<sup>16</sup> has identified two camps holding different views in this regard: ‘*those who deem lobbying as a distortion of the democratic will*’ and ‘*those who view lobbying precisely as a democratic right*’ allowing for legitimate inputs into the policymaking process on behalf of both individuals and groups.

Quite surprisingly, even prominent lobby watchdogs like Transparency International follow the second camp in so far, as they describe lobbying as ‘*an integral part of a healthy democracy*’ that ‘*allows for various interest groups to present their views on public decisions that may come to affect them*’.<sup>17</sup> Their approach qualifies them as *pragmatic idealists*<sup>18</sup> focusing their efforts on the potential of regulation to sustainably change the rules of the game. Key measures to this effect are (1) maximizing ‘*transparency*’, (2) ensuring ‘*integrity*’ and (3) achieving ‘*equality of access*’ for all types of stakeholders.<sup>19</sup> This approach is fully in line with the L4WB principle to ‘*support the engaged participation of those concerned*’.<sup>20</sup>

Against this backdrop, I prefer sticking to a narrow definition of lobbying instead of using the wider concept *advocacy*: Advocacy not only encompasses policy-oriented lobbying but also less focused and more general forms of interest representation.<sup>21</sup> In my opinion, the

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<sup>13</sup> ECSWE (2018a). *Factsheet 2017-2018*. Accessed via [http://ecswe.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ECSWE\\_Factsheet\\_2017-18.pdf](http://ecswe.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ECSWE_Factsheet_2017-18.pdf) on 3 March 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Learning for Well-being (2018a). *1 Purpose*. Accessed via <http://l4wb.org/#/en/we-promote/page/1-purpose> on 3 March 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Learning for Well-being (2018b). *Postcard / Core Capacities*. Accessed via [http://l4wb.org/L4WB\\_Rest/uploads/ne7FCUz5/L4WB\\_%20POSTCARD%20CCapacities%20v03.pdf](http://l4wb.org/L4WB_Rest/uploads/ne7FCUz5/L4WB_%20POSTCARD%20CCapacities%20v03.pdf) on 3 March 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Bitonti, Alberto (2017). “The Role of Lobbying in Modern Democracy: A Theoretical Framework”, in: Bitonti, Alberto & Phil Harris (Ed.): *Lobbying in Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 17–30, here: p.17.

<sup>17</sup> Mulcahy, Suzanne (2015). *Lobbying in Europe. Hidden Influence, Privileged Access*. Published by Transparency International, Brussels. Accessed via: [http://files.transparency.org/content/download/1909/12646/file/2015\\_LobbyingInEurope\\_EN.pdf](http://files.transparency.org/content/download/1909/12646/file/2015_LobbyingInEurope_EN.pdf) on 3rd March 2018, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> For a good definition of this term, see Anikst, Jennifer (2015). “How millennials make ‘pragmatic idealism’ work.”, in: *The Globe and Mail*, 5 October 2015, Accessed online via <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/leadership-lab/how-millennials-make-pragmatic-idealism-work-for-them/article26663877/> on 20 February 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Mulcahy (2015). *op. cit.*, pp. 24–51.

<sup>20</sup> Learning for Well-being (2018c). *7 Principles*. Accessed via <http://l4wb.org/#/en/we-promote/page/7-Principles> on 4 March 2018.

<sup>21</sup> See e.g. Lobbyit.com 2016. *Advocacy vs. Lobbying: Understanding the difference*. Accessed via <http://lobbyit.com/advocacy-vs-lobbying-understanding-difference/> on 4 March 2018.

frequent interchangeable use of both concepts is dangerous. Personally, I often experience their selective and political use by various stakeholders. Own lobby work is then whitewashed as advocacy while the advocacy of despised opponents is discredited as lobbying.

Of course, lobby regulation and a more neutral perception of lobbying alone cannot guarantee the meaningful participation of all actors. Even with a lot of goodwill on the institutional side, a substantial change in policies can only be achieved if stakeholders seriously concerned with the well-being of EU citizens become aware of the manifold opportunities to participate in policymaking at European level, enter the political arena and take action.<sup>22</sup>

Let us now take the view of a pragmatic idealist as we explore how lobbying for well-being could look like in practice:

## Lobbying in complex systems

### Having clear objectives

In order to lobby successfully, firstly the *nature of your cause*<sup>23</sup> should be clear. Four categories can be distinguished in this regard:

- *'Intent'*<sup>24</sup> refers to whether your cause requires political *change* (activity) or upholding the *status-quo* (inactivity). When lobbying the European Commission on revising the key competences framework, ECSWE aimed for strengthening its focus on personal development.<sup>25</sup> We therefore suggested substantial changes to many competences. Regarding the national implementation of the framework on the other hand, ECSWE called for flexibility (status quo) in order to preserve the special status that our schools enjoy in many countries.
- *'Scope'*<sup>26</sup> refers to whether your cause is *controversial* or *simple* and thus requires a bigger or smaller lobby effort. While getting first references to age-appropriate media education into the European Parliament report on a new skills agenda for Europe<sup>27</sup> was challenging, lobbying the MEPs for re-tabling similar amendments on later occasions has proven to be much simpler.

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<sup>22</sup> How the presence and active involvement of a broad range of different stakeholders in EU policy making and their growing professionalism can contribute to more democratic policymaking at EU level and why the inactiveness of others is not only to their own disadvantage but also to the disadvantage of the system, is well illustrated by Van Schendelen (2013), *op. cit.*, pp. 325–361.

<sup>23</sup> Vance, Stephanie (2012). *The Influence Game. 50 Insider Tactics from the Washington D.C., Lobbying World That Will Get You to Yes*, Hoboken, NJ, pp. 32–36.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 32–33.

<sup>25</sup> ECSWE (2017b). *Towards a human-centred education: 7 priorities for the revision of the Key Competences Framework*, Position paper prepared for the public consultation on revising the key competences framework, accessed via <http://ecswe.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017-05-15-ECSWE-Position-Key-Competences-revision.pdf> on 3 March 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Vance (2012). *op. cit.* pp. 33–34.

<sup>27</sup> See European Parliament 2017. Report on a new skills agenda for Europe (2017/2002(INI)). Accessed via <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A8-2017-0276&language=EN> on 4 March 2018.

- ‘Importance’:<sup>28</sup> The question here is whether, from a decision-makers point of view, your cause is *necessary* or merely *optional*. Finding support for the public funding of independent schools has proven to be more challenging than convincing MEPs to promote parental involvement. ECSWE therefore started highlighting the interrelation between public funding and parental school choice to increase the ‘weight’ of our arguments.
- ‘Time frame’<sup>29</sup> refers to whether your cause is *short-term* or *long-term*. To implement L4WB’s vision of a paradigm shift in EU policy towards well-being is a long-term challenge requiring systemic change and thus a long-term strategy, whereas merely getting the term well-being into specific legal texts is a short-term goal that has proven to be realistic on several occasions.

Your cause should, furthermore, be transformed into SMART goals, meaning that they are *specific* in terms of the issue, *measurable* by means of concrete success indicators, *attainable* in terms of external factors, *realistic* based on your own capacities, and *timely* in relation to external deadlines.<sup>30</sup>

When lobbying the European Parliament on its report on a New Skills Agenda for Europe,<sup>31</sup> ECSWE derived SMART goals from its cause of an age-appropriate media pedagogy: *Specificity* was achieved by lobbying for the tabling of concrete amendments. They were *measurable* as the thorough documentation of the decision-making process on the Parliament’s website allowed for verification of the tabling and adoption of amendments to the committee and plenary. Furthermore, they were *attainable*, as MEPs on both committees appeared to be open to inputs from civil society, and *realistic* in terms of established routines of our Brussels office when following committee work. Finally, the goals were *timely*, as parliamentary deadlines were used as a basis for defining the concrete milestones to be achieved.

## Understanding the system

An important factor in successful EU lobbying is understanding the EU’s political system in its horizontal and vertical complexity. The deepening and widening of European integration over several decades<sup>32</sup> have resulted in a complex and constantly evolving multi-level system of governance that not only produces binding legislation for a very diverse group of Member States, it has also created a European playing field for a constantly growing number of stakeholders, who have come to realise that national and European-level administration are more and more intertwined.<sup>33</sup> Interest groups who manage to master the inherent complexity can benefit considerably, e.g. by means of orchestrated lobbying across all system levels.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. pp. 34–35.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. pp. 35–36.

<sup>30</sup> See Vance (2012). *op. cit.*, pp. 37–43.

<sup>31</sup> European Parliament 2017: Report on a new skills agenda for Europe (2017/2002(INI)). Accessed via <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A8-2017-0276&language=EN> on 4 March 2018.

<sup>32</sup> See Europa.eu 2018: *The history of the European Union*, accessed online via [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history\\_en#the\\_founding\\_fathers\\_of\\_the\\_eu](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history_en#the_founding_fathers_of_the_eu) on 27 February 2018.

<sup>33</sup> To better understand the implications of this development, consult: Van Schendelen (2013), *op. cit.*, pp. 71–118.

In our current attempt to get references to *freedom in education* into a resolution of the European Parliament, ECSWE makes use of such an orchestrated approach. Our Brussels office has provided relevant MEPs with information of European relevance, while additional information of domestic relevance was presented through the national associations in an MEP's country of origin. Our lobby approach thus reflects the interdependence of European decision-making under the specific conditions of a *nested system*.<sup>34</sup> In this way, we seek to strengthen our cause and to increase its relevance for all actors involved.

Another way to benefit from the EU's multi-level governance is our membership in the *ET 2020 Working Group Schools*<sup>35</sup> that brings together experts from national ministries and a selected group of other stakeholders and social partners to 'support Member States in reviewing the governance of school education systems in order to promote higher quality through sustainable innovation and inclusion'.<sup>36</sup> In this context, we can contribute to both EU-level and national-level policymaking while benefiting from various synergies.

### Knowing and managing the arena

While drafting SMART Goals helps to clarify and concretize an issue, an arena analysis helps to grasp the context of decision-making. 'An arena is not a physical place, but the virtual collection of stakeholders, including EU officials, together with their interests-at-issue with regard to a specific dossier at a specific moment'.<sup>37</sup> The analysis includes cataloguing all involved stakeholders, analysing their previous actions and potential influence and figuring out their specific hopes and concerns with regards to the issues at stake.<sup>38</sup>

While the approach was not yet fully implemented in ECSWE, when lobbying the European Parliament on its report on a New Skills Agenda for Europe,<sup>39</sup> our first step was identifying relevant MEPs from each political group and gathering information on their position on media education. Further work went into getting an idea of who else holds a stake in the matter. As a result, we left all shared themes and concerns to the Lifelong Learning Platform, knowing that they would prominently champion a holistic vision of learning. ECSWE in turn focused its main efforts on drafting amendments calling for an age-appropriate media education and promoting these to MEPs through our Brussels office, the very supportive staff of the Lifelong Learning Platform and our national members from the Czech Republic and the Netherlands.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> L4WB principle 6, see: Learning for Well-being (2018c), *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> European Commission (2018a): *Working Group on Schools*. Accessed online via [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups/schools\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups/schools_en) on 3 March 2018.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Van Schendelen (2013). *op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 165–204.

<sup>39</sup> European Parliament (2017), *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> ECSWE (2017c): *European Parliament calls for age-appropriate media pedagogy*, accessed via <http://ecswe.net/european-parliament-calls-for-age-appropriate-media-pedagogy/> on 4 March 2018.

## Mastering the process

Klemens Joos has recently identified a *'paradigm shift from content competence to process competence'*.<sup>41</sup> His diagnosis is of particular relevance for EU lobbying where, as a result of continued European Integration and growing complexity,<sup>42</sup> awareness of the *procedural dimension* of politics is growing, while the *formal dimension* (polity) and the *content-related dimension* (policy) have decreased in value.<sup>43</sup> A valuable analytical instrument in this regard is the *policy cycle*<sup>44</sup> with its six stages of (1) *problem definition*, (2) *agenda setting*, (3) *policy formulation and decision*, (4) *policy implementation*, (5) *policy evaluation* and (6) *policy termination*.<sup>45</sup> After tailoring it to the specifics of EU policymaking in a given sector, its thorough monitoring and confident management in combination with careful observation of the *'temporal dimension of politics'*<sup>46</sup> are essential pre-conditions of lobby success.

Learning for Well-being, ECSWE and many others have identified the narrow focus of traditional school education on knowledge acquisition as a political problem that could be solved by placing more emphasis on personal development<sup>47</sup> (problem definition). When the European Commission announced a revision of the key competences framework in 2017<sup>48</sup> (agenda setting), a window of opportunity opened to lobby for including a holistic vision of learning<sup>49</sup> into the new framework (policy formulation). To this end, ECSWE, like many others, contributed a policy paper that called for *'making personal development a priority'*<sup>50</sup> in the ongoing revision. The joint effort of many involved stakeholders must have been heard as the current Commission draft indeed features personal development.<sup>51</sup> Once the Council of the EU has decided on the final wording, policy implementation at Member State level will follow, and ECSWE members will have to convince their national governments to follow suit.<sup>52</sup> In the evaluation stage, ECSWE and its partners might then want to contribute their assessment of policy implementation and, if necessary, lobby for a redefinition on the next opportunity.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Joos, Klemens (2016). *Convincing political stakeholders. Successful lobbying through process competence in the complex decision-making system of the European Union*. Wiley, Weinheim, Germany, p. 113.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121–123.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118–120.

<sup>44</sup> Jann, Werner & Wegrich, Kai (2007). 'Theories of the Policy Cycle'. In: Fischer, Frank et. al. (ed.): *Handbook of Public Policy*, Taylor & Francis Group, Boca Raton, pp. 43–62.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Joos. (2016). *op. cit.*, pp. 130–134.

<sup>47</sup> For the specific relevance to L4WB, see Principle 2: 'allow the unfolding of unique potential in individuals and communities' in: Learning for Well-being (2018c) *op. cit.*

<sup>48</sup> European Commission (2017b): *Roadmap. Proposal for a Council recommendation on strengthening and reinforcing the operation of the European Framework of Key Competences Framework.*, accessed via [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2016\\_eac\\_020\\_key\\_competences\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2016_eac_020_key_competences_en.pdf) on 4 March 2018.

<sup>49</sup> A concrete way of delivering on L4WB principle 5: 'Support the engaged participation of those concerned' in: Learning for Well-being (2018c): *op. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> ECSWE (2017b). *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> European Commission (2018b). Annex to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, (COM(2018) 24 final), accessed via <https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/annex-recommendation-key-competences-lifelong-learning.pdf> on 4 March 2018, pp. 4–5.

<sup>52</sup> Here, L4WB principle 6 becomes visible: 'Recognize nested systems as impacting one another.' See Learning for Well-being (2018c) *op. cit.*

<sup>53</sup> This would best be achieved under the condition of systemic awareness for L4WB principle 7: 'Ensure conditions for feedback and self-organization'. See Learning for Well-being (2018c). *op. cit.*

## Joining forces

While being a lone ranger is sometimes necessary to protect your own interests, the importance of '*collective action*'<sup>54</sup> for both lobby success and high-quality policymaking at system level cannot be underestimated. While forming alliances helps to reduce lobbying costs on the supply side of information and promises an increased political weight, alliance formation is actively promoted on the receiving end as well. EU institutions appreciate the provision of aggregated interests by European stakeholder platforms and federations, benefiting from simplified information acquisition and consultation procedures while achieving greater representativeness of the inputs for a given sector.<sup>55</sup> If all types of actors enjoy equal access, collective action thus contributes to better policies at system level.

While ECSWE itself represents 26 national Steiner Waldorf Schools Associations,<sup>56</sup> these are neither representative for the independent school sector as a whole nor for school education in general. To partially compensate for these limitations, we have joined European platforms and networks such as the Lifelong Learning Platform that bring together a wide range of stakeholders across education sectors, or the Alliance for Childhood and the Learning for Well-being Community that have joined forces to promote quality of childhood and well-being. Apart from that, we have repeatedly and successfully engaged in ad hoc and issue-specific cooperation with various organizations representing independent schools.

## Making yourself heard

A lot could be said on the importance of good communication, but to keep things simple, allow me to focus on Stephanie Vance's *SPIT formula*. She suggests making communication *specific* in terms of your target's needs, *personal* by means of telling stories, *informative* by means of offering additional context, and *timely* with regards to the decision-making process.<sup>57</sup>

When lobbying the European Parliament for freedom in education, we have asked our local members for help with explaining to national MEPs the *specific* political implications of our policy proposals in their constituencies, we have tried making our demands more *personal* by showing their effect on families in a given MEP's country, we have aimed for *informative* communication by sharing our views on how freedom in education promotes social cohesion of society at large and, we have communicated all information in a *timely* manner by respecting key dates of the decision-making process.

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<sup>54</sup> Van Schendelen (2013). *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142–146.

<sup>56</sup> ECSWE (2017a). *op. cit.*

<sup>57</sup> Vance (2012). *op. cit.*, pp. 148–152.

## The importance of being involved

I hope, my little journey into the Brussels lobby jungle helped to illustrate both the importance of lobbying and the opportunities presenting themselves in Brussels and beyond. My goal was not only to show that systemic change indeed requires the ‘*engaged participation of those concerned*’;<sup>58</sup> I also wanted to demonstrate with practical examples that small steps towards realising Learning for Well-being’s vision are entirely feasible at any time. If similar little *drops* rain down in all the different policy fields and sectors targeted by L4WB,<sup>59</sup> they might eventually turn into a powerful *network* of *streams* and *rivers* bringing the whole vision of L4WB to life at all levels of the system. And while a paradigm shift of the envisioned scope will not happen overnight, work towards our shared vision is already in full swing. Want to join in?

### Author

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<sup>58</sup> Learning for Well-being (2018c). *op. cit.*

<sup>59</sup> Learning for Well-being (2018b). *op. cit.*

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## Employing Values, Silence and Dialogue to Bridge Gaps in Status, Culture, Gender, Age, Role and Purpose

By Nick Foster

### Introduction

Is it unique? Perhaps. Is it unusual? Definitely. The Caux Forum creates a space to challenge our daily assumptions and stereotypes and rebuild hope. But how?

Every European summer a constantly evolving living system is established a kilometre above Lake Geneva in an old luxury hotel; the Caux Palace. The purpose that has driven Initiatives of Change to keep inviting people to come to 'conference' across the last 71 years of this activity is to 'inspire, connect and equip' people to become agents of change in their own families, towns, countries and beyond.

The Caux Forum is an annual event run in Caux, Switzerland welcoming 1500+ people from across the world between the end of June and the middle of August. The theme of the Caux Forum 2018 is Developing Human Potential for Global Change. The main events are:

- Ethical leadership for business,
- Just Governance for Human Security,
- Towards an Inclusive Peace,
- Caux Dialogue on Land and Security,
- Addressing Europe's Unfinished Business, and
- Children as Actors for Changing Society

In addition, there is training which includes:

- Caux Scholars Program,
- Caux Peace and Leadership Programme, and
- Caux Artists Program (every other year.)

Sometimes a short video says more than text: [See an introduction to Initiatives of Change](#)

Over the summer period there are six different conferences that each last from about four to seven days and that bring together a varying number of participants – from about 100 to over 250. Each of these conferences is specific to the Caux Forum and most of them have existed for at least five years. In addition, there are other specific programmes such as the Caux Peace and Leadership Programme that enable young adults from many different countries to spend a month learning through workshops and service in Caux how to create positive work environments in diverse and intercultural teams, and how to lead ethically for a just, peaceful and sustainable world.

To function, the system requires multiple dynamic subsystems to work in some kind of harmony, each with different drivers and desired outcomes. The most salient subsystems are not unique to this specific case and are mainly interdependent, but worth identifying as salient features of the landscape in which this activity takes place.

In my experience the success of the main events and training (outlined in the text box above) depends on the strength and well-being of the various teams, the confidence with which current political and environmental issues are being addressed, how sustainable financial and human resource are developing, as well as less obvious systems such as partnership relations with collaborators, local communities and governance structures, indeed with mother nature herself! Some of these subsystems are explored below.

## How does it work?

People from across the globe attend the events, serve each other, spend time in reflection, and build alliances and, vitally, deepen their appreciation of the values upon which ‘the other’ functions. Considering each of these ideas separately:

The global view of diversity is shifting. Increasingly in international politics it is tainted and employed to curry voting favour leveraging fear of the unknown, or religious difference. However, the experience of diversity can be intensely strengthening and unifying, when we turn our judgement into curiosity, and explore what is common as well as what is different. This is one value of consciously bringing together groups of people from very different countries, backgrounds, experiences, etc.

Time spent in reflection rather than just action is becoming widely understood to have wide-ranging benefits at an individual and corporate level, yet it is still a rare commodity as most minutes have a price on them. In the Caux Forum there is an emphasis on integrating silent reflection to call upon conscience, the Divine, or to seek stillness (depending on individual interpretation) as a means of amplifying the experience and this supports understanding and thereby meaning-making. Simply put; silence helps make sense of noise and can support profound learning. Those moments are built into the different programmes in ways that are appropriate to the themes and age-groups. They contribute to transcending communication difficulties that come from bringing together people who speak a wide array of languages.

During their stay in Caux all participants of conferences and training programmes contribute to the running of the house, whether it be through service in the dining room, at tea-time, at the reception, etc. Serving alongside someone shoulder-to-shoulder gives quite a refreshing insight into different problem-solving approaches and sharing information. Moreover, providing the opportunity to serve others seems to promote a sense of ownership and responsibility, even a sense of 'belonging'.

Informal dialogue is a key outcome of such exchanges; sharing life experiences and enjoying the practical as well as the cerebral is essential and can establish trust based on more than words. It is here that values are expressed and lived out, awarding credibility to their owner.

Experiencing another's commonalities and differences in 'safe' discourse as well as in service to one another provides an illuminating view of those who can too easily fall foul of stereotyping and labelling. The aim is to facilitate openness that enables a lasting change in perspective. In this short film participants talk about the impact their time at the Caux Forum has had on their local community.

## A values-based approach

So, how does a values-based personal approach meet the needs of the current political and social climate? Connecting personal aspirations and experiences to global challenges is another practice that drives the Caux Forum themes as illustrated in this short video.

The underlying principle of everyone caring for the shared environment and serving others in that process is a strong value of the Caux system: looking across the dining hall and realizing that the person serving the meal is the keynote speaker is a very powerful reminder of what we are doing and how the system works.

Addressing the environment and acting environmentally is a test for all international conferences and meetings attempting to tackle sustainable living. There is an inherent degree of conflicting interest in flying people across the world to talk together about sustainable farming, renewable energy and redressing the ecological balance. With increasing capacity to engage remotely using VOIP or other internet-based communication channels, justifying face-to-face gatherings is more than important. However, from our experience over many decades it appears that some processes, particularly those requiring deep levels of trust, should start in person. To find out how some have taken their experience of the Caux Forum and developed inclusive approaches to their agricultural challenges practices click here. Future communication developments may overcome the impersonal nature of remote connection, but for now the personal interaction seems essential for meaningful development. Taking personal steps in the safety of the Caux Forum that can be translated into action when going 'down the mountain' is a common ambition across all the activities of the season.

## Understanding history; building the present and the future

History is another important resource when forging a vision for the future. The Swiss people who bought the building and dedicated it to the remaking of Europe after the Second World War (inviting Germans and Japanese to participate in early conferences to start discussions about the future) were setting the stage all those years ago, thus, enabling current problems to be raised and addressed. Unfortunately, the issues which drove the Swiss to purchase the dilapidated building half way up a mountain have not been resolved. Challenges of polarization, mistrust and historic injustice persist; these are some of the reasons to Address Europe's Unfinished Business that are presented in this short video.

Again, here, the benefit of bringing together people from across the globe, adds context and insights that isolation does not enable. Learning from Colombia when talking about peace in Europe or Ireland can be informative. The Initiatives of Change network is active in 60 countries and can provide further exchange on different local and international issues when people return home from the Caux Forum. Every year participants from over 95 countries come to participate in the events. The investment of their time and energies is indicative of how important it is for them to be able to address issues important to them in a special environment where nobody is judged. There are various local and international partners and stakeholders involved in different aspects of training and events at the Caux Forum, who also benefit from engagement with trainees and event participants following their time in Caux; local and international systems feed into each other.

The current fracturing within Europe and stiffening controls and visa access across borders worldwide play against learning. Regulatory changes in Switzerland have also had an impact on the operating practices in the Caux Palace, challenging the original spirit of sacrifice and service with which the Swiss benefactors launched the project; reaching out to friends across the world to come and help restore the former palace following its demise and its second life as a refugee shelter for Jewish families in the Holocaust. Some charming images capture the efforts made to prepare for the first conference in this historic footage. Holding tightly onto the essentials and holding lightly the interpretation of them are principles that have enabled I of C to work across beliefs, cultures and status and supported locally inspired programmes to develop. This short film about the personal impact of the Ethical Leadership in Business event highlights the individual developments that can have wider-reaching impacts.

Building sustainable futures is also about inter-generational transfer, perhaps most creatively described as partnership. Sharing and handing on responsibility and power systemically is a constant feature of lasting organizations. While navigating the needs and expectations of culture and age is not simple, it can be both educational and deeply rewarding. The Children as Actors for Transforming Society (CATS) event, invests in bringing generations together to showcase working together; doing 'with', not 'to' or 'for' future generation. The video about CATS 2017 captures the seriousness within a joyful atmosphere where everybody's stories are listened to as an important contribution to reaching for a world where everyone can find their place.

## Practical challenges

There are considerable difficulties in managing the financial realities of maintaining a historic building, running a Forum that appeals to a current world audience, managing the needs and expectations of a world fellowship (Initiatives of Change). Justifying the costs of bringing people together to 'talk' and explore differences and commonalities when there are competing demands on that finance is not always straightforward or self-evident. There are changing regulatory pressures on hospitality, human resources and access to visas, changing the international voluntary nature of the operation. These kinds of considerations propel the organizational features of the work entailing continuous reflection on how to address the challenges in a way that supports the core of our work. Also engaging with such a varied stakeholder group is challenging, especially when systems are changing at such a rapid pace. Evaluations of the different activities highlight the flourishing of hope, the arresting testimony about life-changing experiences, and the determined carriage of responsibility into the future. These seem to be sufficiently powerful motivators to overcome the challenges facing the organizers of the Caux Forum and the participants themselves, many of whom overcome substantial challenges just to arrive in Caux and participate.

Ultimately, it **is** the search for common values, shared silence, and dialogues that brings about the individual reflection that facilitates new ideas, undermines stereotype, and builds unique, often unlikely, alliances that can create new opportunities for change; individual, corporate and/or systemic. While it is often a profound experience, it is also a joyful one. Having fun together with people who are widely different from yourself can instil a sense of hope which transcends the problems of the day. It can also energize participants to carry on their good works back home. Importantly, it is rare to be provided with an opportunity to weigh up our own sense of purpose in light of the demands of the world and see what it is that we ourselves need to change.

## Author

Dr. Nick Foster has been the Caux Forum Director since 2013. He is responsible for setting the schedule and managing the teams who run the events and training through the summer. He studied arts and psychology specializing in the psychology of music. He has lived around the world and worked in education and the not-for-profit sector and run his own manufacturing company in South Africa. He has also worked as a consultant to businesses on topics such as partnership development, staff retention and burnout. Before starting the role in Switzerland Nick worked as the Deputy Academic Director in Open Universities Australia and was responsible for managing relations with the various academic institutions providing content and services via the OUA platform.

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Booth, S. (2018) 'Viewpoint 1: Facing the Inevitable,' in Learning for Well-being Magazine, Issue 5, published by the Learning for Well-being Foundation.

## Viewpoint 1: Facing the Inevitable

By Susan Booth

Like all living systems, the cycle of our lives has a beginning and it has an end. In Western society we celebrate the beginning and shy away from even talking about the end, let alone adequately preparing for it. *Let's Talk About Death and Dying* is the name of a discussion group I'm currently co-facilitating for the Society for Learning in Retirement London (Ontario, Canada).

Why do this? Because it's time for me personally to look at my life's ending. It *will* happen and each day I'm more aware that my body is giving me signals, my intuition is telling me that it is time to prepare, and the reality is that my friends are dying – some totally without warning and some with warning and finding themselves unprepared.

It's not that I am afraid of dying; I just didn't know how to have a conversation with others about it or about theirs. I found myself floundering on many occasions not knowing how to help or what to say to ease or participate in their passage. I felt so uncomfortable with the death and dying process of others that I began to realize I made excuses to avoid visiting them because I had no earthly idea of what to say that would not seem trite. As well, I really needed to do the 'get your own affairs in order' bit. So, I challenged myself out of my own need to learn, and I proposed the idea of a course on death and dying.

It's been an incredible process. First there was the resistance to the topic. One would think that a group of retirees who want to continue learning about all sorts of worldly topics would readily embrace the possibility of talking about the end of our human journey. But no. 'Who wants to talk about death and dying, it's so... so morbid, so depressing' was the constant refrain. Finally, someone said: 'I do! After all, it's the last great adventure,' and at that moment the committee bought in and the course was born.

We spent much time describing the course in 65 words or less and finally came up with: *Death is the one great certainty in life and a personal journey each of us approaches in our own way. Let's consider our own unique path with death, dying, and grieving by exploring this important though uncomfortable topic. Together we will be posing vitally important*

*questions, sharing experiences, and offering thoughtful observations that can profoundly change the way we live and die.*

In our community, there are beginning to be some informal meetings of people who want to talk about death and dying over tea or coffee. Known as death cafes, they have not yet caught on here, although the movement is growing worldwide. As well, one of our university colleges teaches an excellent course on Thanatology that many of my friends have taken. But it is usually offered in conjunction with a degree program and quite costly. Other than that, we weren't aware of anything of a like nature in our community.

The Society for Learning in Retirement (SLR) is a non-profit, member-run organization of retired or semi-retired individuals from all walks of life who share a love of on-going learning in a social environment. It is totally peer-learning, either through study, discussion or activity groups. Ours was a discussion group with a limit of 14 in order to create an environment of comfort where people could talk freely and feel heard. The course filled immediately. When asked why they wanted to talk about death and dying, the responses were varied, from one man who had recently and suddenly lost his wife and wanted to know how to move on and a woman who was terminally ill, to those who felt it was time to deal with the practicalities, to others who were just intellectually curious about the topic.

We needed to focus each of the 10 sessions and did this by listing the topics we would be discussing. A handout was created for each of the sessions to provide the 'meat' for a thoughtful discussion. We began each 2-hour session with a short focusing exercise. Then we divided the members into 3 small groups so they could talk more personally about what they had learned from the handout or other readings or from their own experience about the day's topic. The small group assignment allowed each person 2–3 uninterrupted minutes to share, followed by the group determining the topic they most wanted to explore in further depth with the class as a whole. The groups reported back, and we devoted 20–30 minutes to each of their chosen topics. There was never a moment's silence. The more the class spoke about each topic, the more in-depth and personal they got. There were a few times when we had to remind the group that judgements were not allowed and everyone's thoughts and beliefs in our shared-learning process would be honored. Each week one member volunteered to read a poem or short article or play a song as an inspirational closing.

Our first session was focused on 'living well until death do us part.' We wanted to ease people into the topic of death and dying so they wouldn't feel overwhelmed. We were also cognizant of needing to build trust among the members, so we could truly delve deeply into the unique journey each of us was on or would be entering. We asked them to journal about how they would live if they knew for sure they had five more years and not a moment more. We mentioned some things they might want to consider to get their ideas flowing. We made it a writing, not a thinking, exercise so we gave them only two minutes to trust their inner wisdom and to write whatever came without censoring. Then we continued, reducing the time frame to two years and then to three months. The last entry was: If this were my last three months to live, how would I live until I died? We went even further, asking them to choose the three goals that were most important to them from anywhere in

their responses, and then had them list specific activities they would need to do in order to accomplish those three goals. We drilled down further by asking them to commit to doing at least one of those activities in the next week. We finalized the exercise by having them make a contract with themselves that in the next three months they would have accomplished (or at least begun) to work on each of their goals. They signed the contract, self-addressed and sealed an envelope and gave it to us, with the promise that we would mail it back in three months, so they could take stock. Thus, ended the session on living well until we die.

The rest of the sessions followed in much the same manner. The topics ranged from Death, The Final Mystery; How to Have a Good Death; Caring for Ourselves/Others; End of Life Options; Assisted Death – Another Option; Funeral Preparations and Rituals; Grieving; an open session for them to discuss whatever they wanted; and the last session, Celebrating Our Lives. The evaluations throughout the sessions were consistent and along the lines of: 'I thought this course would be depressing or tough, but instead it brought a positive process to dying as well as information and practical ways to take charge of what needs to be accomplished to help family and friends who are left behind.' Many commented about how much laughter we shared.

Time has passed since our first offering, and we are now well into our second. During this time, I've had three friends die. Each of their dying processes was unique and I've gratefully learned from each of them. Two died in palliative care in hospital and one in a hospice. Over the years I've also had two dear friends die at home. Given this, my hope for myself is that, if circumstances allow, I will die in the hospice because the space created embodies the sacredness of the passage.

My friends had chosen very different ways in which to acknowledge their passing, with one enjoying a Celebration of Life days before dying, three having a celebration shortly after death, and the other requesting no funeral or service of any kind.

These experiences are teaching me much about what matters to me and to others when we die. All of us live such multi-faceted lives, influencing others for better or for worse, and leaving our mark – whether we know it or not. For me when a loved one dies I wish for some closure, some way of acknowledging how that person impacted my life, and a chance to discover much more about that person than I ever imagined. Stories that bring out the fullness of the life lived inspire me to carry on my friends' finest qualities. It is deeply moving to learn how many lives they have touched and how significantly, and to honor their legacy.

As my friends rest in peace, I carry on my own life cycle knowing I am changed because they were a part of my life. How grateful I am to bring this more fully into consciousness! And how much more I still have to learn that will help me when it's my turn. My journey continues.

## Author

[Susan Booth](#) is a retired adult educator who currently volunteers as a facilitator of courses for the Society for Learning in Retirement, London, Ontario. Her work has always been about understanding the learning capacities and possibilities inherent in living systems. She uses this information to create meaningful actions within her world.

# Learning for Well-being Magazine ⑤

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Dahlstrom, N. (2018) 'Viewpoint 2: Arts Reflecting Living Systems,' in Learning for Well-being Magazine, Issue 5, published by the Learning for Well-being Foundation.

## Viewpoint 2: Arts Reflecting Living Systems

By Nik Dee Dahlstrom



Dear reader, breeder, breathe..... before you do anything..... just take a pause..... breathe! Seriously, I mean it! Take a big breath in..... and out..... No cheating!! ;-)

Now hold your breath and read the following sentence:

*Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take,  
but by the moments that take our breath away.*

*Quotation attributed to a wide variety of people<sup>1</sup>*

Now please, ;- ) don't forget to start breathing again.

This article is a 'breathing & breeding' exercise. The latter in the context of 'giving birth' to a reflection on a reflecting system. And then to take action; artistic action in the living system of our cultural heritage. Feeling lost? Don't worry! Just take my hand and:

Take a chance,

come and dance,

in order to enhance

your co-creation of the mirroring aspect of this

point of view – I can't do it without you; dance with the words as leaves in the wind.

*Dancing Leaves*  
Your juicy, textured,  
heart of green makes a  
pretty nature scene. Dancing  
all around the trees in  
the soft wind's  
whispering  
breeze

Angela Yardy<sup>2</sup>

You see, this viewpoint is titled  
'Arts reflecting living systems'

but could equally have been called:

'Living systems reflecting Arts'.

It's a playful transdisciplinary attempt to capture but a glimpse as a gentle reminder that the world of creative arts is filled with living systems of all kinds. As an article, it is rather an article aiming to be 'arterate' as well as literate; a transforming transformer or 'trans-reader' that instead of context has an 'artext' and therefore is coined 'artextual'<sup>TM</sup>. It is a text that is expanding or rather 'artspanding' outside its very own format. You can either read this viewpoint as a pure text in 15 min or follow the many [blue hyperlinks to videos](#), read shape poems etc. and spend 45 min. So please (and I'm addressing your inner child now) come and play with me! Come and dance with your inner child as captured so well by J.T. & Robert and their [mirror dance](#).

And be kind to yourself, remember that 'what goes around – comes around' also works in its positive aspect.

GOES AROUND...  
WHAT COMES BACK AROUND

Artist unknown.<sup>3</sup>

In order to make sense I want to take you through some of our senses and try to be both sensitive and, why not – sensational.

Now close your eyes ... and read on – switch on the inner eye; your artistic eye!

What is art? Is it a product, originated in the mind of its creator/s or as received in the eye of the beholder? As often stated: Art is not what you see but what you make others see.

Art  
is not  
what you see but  
what you see  
make others  
see.

Art  
is not  
what you see but  
what you see  
make others  
see.

Nik DD <sup>4</sup>

Is ART an abbreviation, and if so for what? Artistic Relief Technology, Age Refining Technique, Awareness Responsibility Technique, or when reflecting living systems; Artificial Reproduction Technique? Or is it simply the products of human creativity?

Looking from an individual perspective. Is the artist a special kind of person or rather is each person a special kind of artist? As Picasso once put it: 'Every child is an artist.' and thus art is a core component of the unique potential within each of us.

Looking from a global perspective – would the world at large make any sense without it?  
The 'earth' without 'art' is just 'eh'.

**Impressions of a leaf**

By: Tyler Pedersen ©2011

A  
leaf  
floats  
freely by  
its thin edges  
collide onto cement  
cell walls shaking briefly  
chloroplast pigments recoil  
dendritic veins drained of color  
sickly stomata, gang green stem  
passing pedestrians, footprints  
flatten and crunch cuticles  
musty, earthworm scent  
rises from the dirt  
decay ensues  
adding  
form  
to  
E  
A  
R  
T  
H

Tyler C. Pedersen <sup>5</sup>

## The linked play on interplay

Or in looking in the mirror, as in the chosen viewpoint here, I cannot avoid the fact of my artistic background in *the performing arts – music & drama* and quote one of my late and sad to say, never to have met soul mates, W. Shakespeare. 'The object of art is to give life shape.' and 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women are merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages.' So, I've invited two of my inner characters in a scripted dialogue on how performing arts and film interplay with living systems. The many video links Mr Drama and Ms Music refer to are all little moments that can take your breath away. These links are also listed at the end of this viewpoint.

### (Entrance)

#### **Mr Drama:**

Each theatre ensemble and crew is like a big family sharing the stories of human interactions.  
Performing arts is a living system reflecting a living system.

#### **Ms Music:**

Yea, it is a collective process where the separate entities play their parts in order to contribute to the whole.

#### **Mr Drama:**

You mean also like in a film production!?

#### **Ms Music:**

I mean, as in the orchestra.  
Have a look at what happens when this little girl gives a coin to a street musician and gets the best surprise in return. It's such an [Ode to Joy](#).

#### **Mr Drama:**

Ah good teamwork! How then does that compare with living systems as artistic monograms presented by the single artist?  
Like this TALE-O-GRAM Nik made on the meaning of life titled [The Broken Mirror](#).

#### **Ms Music:**

Well a single performer can make an equally strong statement on our living system, while still being part of it or even performing in it. Watch Ludovico Einaudi adding his voice to those of eight million demanding [protection of the Arctic](#).

**Mr Drama:**

Nice one! Or this classic, following the theme of mirrors, telling a story of [the man in the mirror](#), visualized not by performing but through powerful images of human ills in the world and leaders willing to 'make that change'.

**Ms Music:**

Mmm, and this [emotional piece](#) of music also by Einaudi mainly presenting living systems in nature.

**Mr Drama:**

And here's another staged cross media narrative on the '[Love of Life](#)' by Sand Artist Kseniva Simonova.

**Ms Music:**

Yes, life can be very fragile. Often captured in poetry.

"Hope" is the thing with feathers –  
That perches in the soul –  
And sings the tune without the words –  
And never stops at all...

*Emily Dickinson*

**Mr Drama:**

Ahh! and mentioning feathers, if the object of art is to give life shape perhaps this [well-balanced performance](#) by Miyoki Shida makes us better understand the fragility of an interconnected living system.

**Ms Music:**

In music terms Bach and his fugues are good examples of interconnectedness. Musical themes that imitate and repeat themselves. Here in "[Little" Fugue in G minor](#) animated in order to visualize how the 4 parts playfully dance together.

**(Exit, and pulling myself together)**

This last digital visualization brings me to the point of new technology. We have seen the digital natives fully enter a new era of interaction with the audience where the borderline between arts and entertainment become hard to separate. Computer games working hard to be accepted within the definition of ARTS. In Virtual Reality 'VR' we become totally immersed and surrounded by the experience – we even create virtual 'art-ificial' living social systems; complete worlds where we can live as avatars and double identity – is that then art or a living system? Computers, as we know them today, are already doomed and very soon to be replaced by VR and AR (Augmented Reality) devices. Here is a film *VR version* on living system '[Virtual Nature 360°](#)'. If you follow this link on your phone, ideally using VR-glasses. You can spin around and become part of this living system. In the next clip you can see how two living systems, that would naturally never meet, are artfully enabled to interact with each other by the use of AR. '[BBC Frozen Planet](#)' at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.

So, is the meeting of the creator and receiver a passive or active one or even interactive and collaboratory? And in a world of new technology, what is that artistic reflection versus reality, versus virtual reality, versus augmented reality?

These are a few questions that I leave as food for thought. Though still being very aware of my limitations within this 'wordy' format. Art, as here presented in an art-icle, forming nouns which were originally diminutives; a fickle attempt at capturing arts in words knowing that *Arts speak where words are unable to explain*. So how then can words, put in a viewpoint, do justice to its very subject? Well, we will have to live with that challenge and see where this journey or rather mirrored piece of 'art' i.e. 'travel' between life and death will take us.

Still breathing?



Good – then on we go!

## Travelling between Life & Death

Life

Part of the cool thing in the creative process is that it really is real creation, that is, it has the ability to change and transform, to start up processes with creators as well as those who are the recipients. Not least, the verbal and written language has a strongly transformational power – through words, pronounced as well as put in thought. Hence shaping our own lives and influencing our fellow human beings in one way or another.

TRAVEL

All kinds of creativity are powerful languages with which we can express ourselves and communicate who we are as well as meet

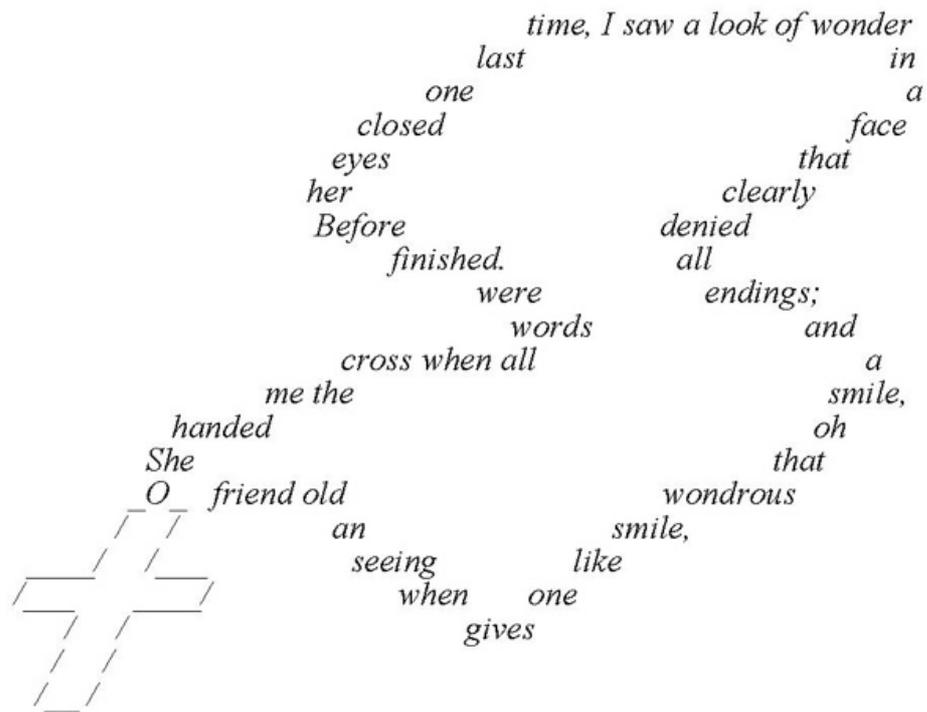
beyond common language boundaries. The art leaves clear impetus in human living systems, both for the individual and for the larger society, and is as crucial for our well-being.

It is therefore not just the art that reflects living systems, but also the opposite. Just as these mirrored word-images are bi-directional, the relationship between art and living systems is two things that belong to some kind of back and forth breathing symbiosis, rather than just a one-sided mirroring from one to the other. This topic named 'mimesis and anti-mimesis' goes, as follows below, way back in time.

Death

*Life/death Ambigram<sup>6</sup>  
Travel Ambigram<sup>7</sup>*

*Cross*



John Ecko<sup>8</sup>

FALSE

**Anti-mimesis**\*<sup>1</sup> is a philosophical position that holds the direct opposite of Aristotelian mimesis. Its most notable proponent is Oscar Wilde, who opined in his 1889 essay 'The Decay of Lying' that, 'Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life.' In the essay, written as a Platonic dialogue, Wilde holds that anti-mimesis 'results not merely from Life's imitative instinct, but from the fact that the self-conscious aim of Life is to find expression, and that Art offers it certain beautiful forms

through which it may realize that energy.'  
Langdon<sup>9</sup>

TRUE

John

What is found in life and nature is not what is really there, but is that which artists have taught people to find there, through art. As in an example posited by Wilde, although there has been fog in London for centuries, one notices the beauty and wonder of the fog because 'poets and painters have taught the loveliness of such effects...They did not exist till Art had invented them.'

In George Bernard Shaw's preface to *Three Plays* he wrote, 'I have noticed that when a certain type of feature appears in painting and is admired as beautiful, it presently becomes common in nature.' He stated that 'the real world does not exist...men and women are made by their own fancies in the image of the imaginary creatures in my youthful fictions, only much stupider.'

Shaw, however, disagreed with Wilde on some points. He considered most attempts by life to imitate art to be reprehensible, in part because the art that people generally chose to imitate was idealistic and romanticized.

Julian Sterling<sup>10</sup>

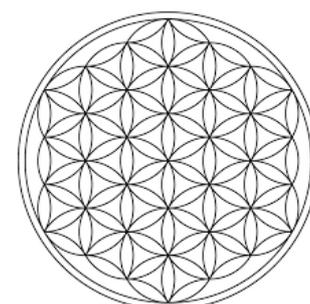


### **Mimesis**\*<sup>1</sup>

In ancient Greece, mimesis was an idea that governed the creation of works of art, in particular, with correspondence to the physical world understood as a model for beauty, truth, and the good. Plato contrasted mimesis, or imitation, with diegesis, or narrative. After Plato, the meaning of mimesis eventually shifted toward a specifically literary function in ancient Greek society, and its use has changed and been reinterpreted many times since.

In art history, 'mimesis', 'realism' and 'naturalism' are used, often interchangeably, as terms for the accurate, even 'illusionistic', representation of the visual appearance of things.

As previously mentioned, one might as well write an article on the theme 'Living system reflecting arts'. Just as the above mirroring words of false and true are two-dimensional, the relationship between art and the living



system are interconnected as a symbiotic breathing rather than one-way mirroring of the other.

*Seed of life*<sup>11</sup>

## Our cultural heritage: where the past meets the future...

2018 is labelled as the year of European Cultural heritage. Celebrating the past to build the future – discover what is cultural heritage and why it is important.

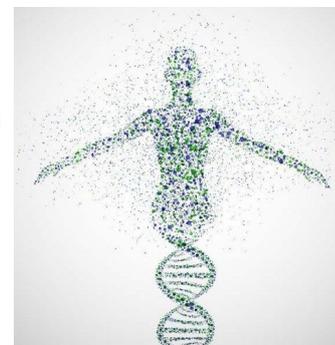
Cultural heritage has a universal value for us as individuals, communities and societies. It is important to preserve it and to pass it on to future generations.

Through cherishing our cultural heritage, we can discover our diversity and start an inter-cultural conversation about what we have in common. So, what better way to enrich our lives than by interacting with something so central to who we are?

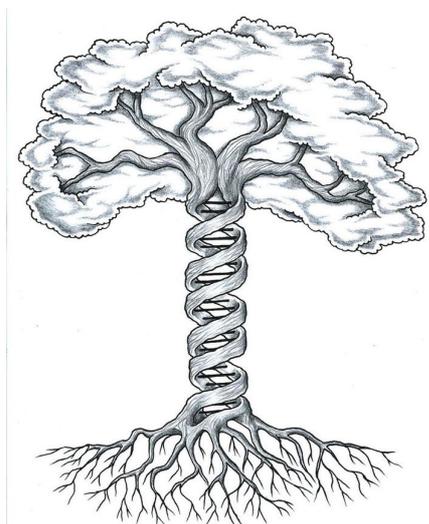
*Unknown artist*<sup>12</sup>

You may think of heritage as being 'from the past' or static, but it actually evolves through our engagement with it. What is more, our heritage has a big role to play in building the future of Europe. That is one reason why the initiative of European Cultural Heritage Year wants to reach out to young people in particular.

Cultural heritage shapes our identities and everyday lives. It surrounds us in Europe's towns and cities, natural landscapes and archaeological sites. It is not only found in literature, art and objects, but also in the crafts we learn from our ancestors, the stories we tell our children, the food we enjoy in company and the films we watch and recognize ourselves in.



*Artist unknown*<sup>13</sup>



Throughout 2018, we will celebrate our diverse cultural heritage across Europe – at EU, national, regional and local level. The aim of the European Year of Cultural Heritage is to encourage more people to discover and engage with Europe's cultural heritage, and to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space. The slogan for the year is: *Our heritage: where the past meets the future.*

*LaTay D. Harris*<sup>14</sup>

## To conclude

Dear reader, dear creature, creative, co-creator being part of this specific living system and network; the learning towards well-being.

Still breathing?



I jolly well hope so because now it's over to you!

I am about to end but the end is, as always, the beginning of something else and that else is you. I hand over the relay stick and challenge you. My reflection is reflecting in you – in the eye of the beholder. My food for thought is digesting in you. Thank you for breathing with me, for holding my hand and dancing with me.

My humble aim with this viewpoint, as part of your learning for well-being, is to awaken and art-tickle your creativity as a co-creator of our living present cultural heritage and hence invite you to join the year of European Cultural heritage. The year of European Cultural heritage is not time limited to 2018 but rather the kick-off for further development and knowledge sharing on how we can all be part of building cultural bridges and trust across the world's divides. Let's merge with the symbiotic breathing of the arts and our living systems in order to deal with our current challenges making our place on earth a better place for all. Once again remembering that the 'earth' without 'art' is just 'eh'.

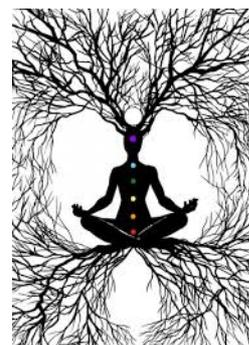
My current work is an officially labelled project as part of the Year of European Cultural Heritage called ['A Viking Princess at the Kings Table'](#)

Please have a look at this video introduction.

It is a cross-border and cross-cultural stage craft/film collaboration in Northern Europe where our aim is to become inspired by historical living systems and find solutions for challenges in our life today. Main target group: youth.



Vincent Ramirez <sup>15</sup>



Dear reader, breeder, breather – just take a final pause – breathe!  
Take another big breath in..... and out.....

Now hold your breath and read the following sentence once again:

*Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take,  
but by the moments that take our breath away.*

Let's create those magic moments – together!

Nik Dee Dahlstrom



Tattoo template <sup>16</sup>

 Initiatives of Change – Sweden

PS – as part of our co-creation – any reflection of the above would be most appreciated –  
please forward to [nikdeedahlstrom@gmail.com](mailto:nikdeedahlstrom@gmail.com)

## Author

Nik Dee Dahlstrom is a Youth & Child Specialist, Culture & Health Manager and Head of Communication at Initiatives of Change – Sweden, with a background as Transmedia Producer, Performing Arts Director, Pedagog, Actor and Writer.

Nik has a special interest in transmedia and the art of storytelling as means of well-being and finding one's unique potential. This includes a special focus on Healing Stories for the little child that resides in us all, regardless of age. His main work is in Swedish and English. Nik is also *Chief in Editor* and member of the European Cultural Parliament (ECP).

Lin Hai Wen <sup>17</sup>

To  
think  
in only  
two colors:  
Black and  
White. To be oblivious  
others. only black. or  
shallow or deep, high  
or fight I only think in  
Have you finished your  
Then you must not have  
at all. How was your  
No? Then it must  
much have been quite  
ball. I ask what color  
grass If not green, then it  
be red. I ask how your mother  
not well, she must be dead. What is  
2 equivalent to? If not 4 then  
be minus 4. Is it  
love and adore? If not, then I  
one you abhor. I think in two  
both length and width. Depth  
myth. Like a paper I have  
see just one face Its blank stare is one you  
if I had finished the job halfway and my day  
grass looks like a dead yellow and I hear  
mellow. What if one had changed divid-  
lover, we were just friends. These are  
life. This is where identity and variety  
cerulean, and deep pink. Ecru, flam ingo, indigo and pitch  
like ink. Do not think there is just wrong and right For we  
cannot think in only black and white. Do not fall  
for any extremist propaganda. For we are not as  
to all  
white. Or  
or low, agree  
black or white.  
job? No?  
even tried  
day? Terrible?  
very  
the  
is the  
must  
is? If  
8 over  
it must  
me that you  
must be the  
dimensions I see  
is a mystery To me, a  
but two sides. Each time you  
cannot erase. BUT! what  
had just been okay. The  
your mother feels quite  
ends And rather than  
the truly unique colors of  
are rife. With amethyst, bronze,  
Ecru, flam ingo, indigo and pitch  
is just wrong and right For we  
and white. Do not fall  
For we are not as  
monochrome as an innocent small panda.

## Video links

- 1) Bach, "Little" Fugue in G minor, Organ  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDbxFi3-UO4>
- 2) Ludovico Einaudi performs an original piece "Elegy for the Arctic",  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DLnhdnSUVs&t=41s>
- 3) Ludovico Einaudi – Nuvole Bianche [HD]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcihcYEOeic>
- 4) Man in the mirror  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PivWY9wn5ps>
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- 7) Feather balance act  
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- 9) DEE TALES no. 3 The Broken Mirror TALE-O-GRAM  
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### Quotes & images

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