

Abstracts

1

Learning Communities: Supporting Change in European School Education By Hannah Grainger Clemson

Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) is a strategic framework of the European Commission which creates fora for exchanges of best practices, mutual learning, gathering and dissemination of information and evidence of what works, as well as advice and support for policy reforms. Members of expert groups come from all ministries of education across Europe plus European stakeholder organisations. Recently, the ET2020 Working Group Schools published their report based on two years of collaboration with the title 'European ideas for better learning: the governance of school education systems'. This article explores the collaborative process of sharing and developing ideas on the governance of school education and how that process – with both its opportunities and challenges – closely relates to the concept of 'schools as learning organizations' that underpins the Group's work.

2

It Takes a System to Achieve Quality in Early Childhood Services By Mihaela Ionescu

Quality is a complex and complicated concept. That should not hinder our efforts to define it, co-construct it and unpack it so that we get to a deeper and (potentially) to a shared understanding of it. After almost 20 years of working towards improving *process quality*, ISSA had a vested interest in learning from 25 of its members about their achievements and the challenges they face in their countries while working with various stakeholders on quality definition and improvement using the resources and the 'know-how' co-created in the network. By documenting a systemic approach to quality which is based on democratic, child-centred values, ISSA brings through its most recent study a few insights on the key conditions needed for supporting continuous quality improvement, not only on the level of practitioners, but also on the institutional, inter-institutional and governance level, therefore on the system-level.

3

Sustaining Warm and Inclusive Transitions Across the Early Years (START): Facilitating Collaborative Learning of Childcare Workers, Preschool and Primary School Teachers
By Katrien Van Laere/Caroline Boudry, Arianna Lazzari/Lucia Balduzzi, Mateja Rezek and Angela Prodger

In the last decade, the relationship between ECEC and compulsory school has gained increased attention both in academic and policy debates (EC, 2010; Moss, 2013; Dockett et al., 2014). While continuity of pedagogical approaches – grounded in shared principles and practices – is advocated by research and international organizations (OECD, 2017), transitions between childcare, preschool education and primary school settings are still generating significant challenges for children and families, especially those in vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The article will present and discuss the preliminary findings from the transnational participatory action-research study (START / Erasmus +) carried out in four countries: Italy, Slovenia, UK and Belgium. We discuss how a collaboration between childcare services, preschool and primary schools can be strengthened to better meet the diverse needs of children (and parents) in a holistic way.

4

Learning for Well-being: Closing the Gap Between Aspiration and Practice
By Graham Leicester

The competent systems approach provides a useful set of lenses to help understand both progress towards and the means of achieving embedding of the Learning for Well-being principles in education and wider systems. However, it also reveals a gap between our aspirations and the reality of practice on the ground. The Three Horizons framework for understanding systems transition, and the practice of transformative innovation which it supports, can usefully complement the competent systems approach to help close this aspiration/practice gap. Some are already on this journey providing hope and encouragement that systems transition is indeed possible.

5

Everything is Connected. Really?
By Karin Morrison

Holistic development is very much what parents want for their children. Many people in different roles who are in positions to foster this in different ways agree holistic development is worthwhile. While this is respected and valued, are there holes between what is said about holistic development and what is happening in practice? How could those holes be filled to provide coherence and continuity in the ways children progress from birth through school?

What do you know about the levels of coherence and continuity that exist between all these parts that influence children's holistic development? If it is not meeting the goals you

believe are so important for children as they grow, what steps do you think could be taken to enable a more integrated approach?

6

What Contributes to Education Systems Being Nurturing for All Children?

By Jean Gordon

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 children, but is this happening on the ground? Education systems are complex, continually under development, address a very wide age-range and have to respond to very different needs. This article focuses on some of the factors that may contribute to education systems being nurturing for all children and on the extent to which the L4WB principles contribute to developing a vision or overarching goals for childhood that include ECEC, health, social services, youth policy, cultural, etc. as well as school education. Three factors examined are: learner agency (participation), relationships and diversity. Much has been written and discussed about 'competence' with the emphasis predominantly on the learner, frontline staff and leadership. The article suggests that this vertical level could be further enhanced by being complemented at the horizontal level through cross-sector working where the different parts are nested and communicating, taking a very different approach to addressing complex problems from fragmented and partial approaches.

Viewpoint 1

Is It Time to Rethink Our Perspective on Holistic Education?

By Emilie J. Martin

How can we provide young people with a truly holistic education?

As educationalists, we often use the term 'holistic' as shorthand for an education that goes beyond academic achievement and supports the individual's development of socio-emotional skills and their physical, mental and – sometimes – spiritual well-being.

Taking this as our starting point, is it now time to consider the benefits of moving beyond a view of holistic education centred on the individual, towards a more systems-based definition that would also seek to nurture that individual's understanding of their connectedness to the wider world? What would be the impact of an educational experience which goes beyond the *whole* person to focus on the *whole* system?

This Viewpoint will start to address these questions, taking as its focus the work that a UK school is undertaking to develop a curriculum informed by principles that maintain the health and harmony of systems in the natural world.

Viewpoint 2

How My Parents Brought Me Up

By Zoe Phoenix

A 16-year-old girl interviews her parents to find out what they did to encourage a sense of holistic well-being. She explains how they managed to maintain strong healthy relationships and what that entails from all parties, such as the amount of personal space and trust and how much is too much. She also talks about what her parents have given her such as the various opportunities, values and experiences she encountered in her childhood. She expresses what type of environment she was brought up in and what her parents did to assure it was a positive, diverse, open and social one. She touches on the challenges of being a teenager and dealing with life and everything that comes along with it.

Viewpoint 3

Considering the Soul in Education

By Ellen Hall

Each of us has an inner and an outer life. Children are no exception as they arrive at school whole; body, mind, heart and soul. The tragedy of education is that the soul is no longer addressed. As children enter the system, they get the message that “This is a material world, you must focus your mind and still your body.” This is a soul-crushing message.

When teachers shift their perspective to include the soul of the child, the results are more joy, creativity, kindness and learning. To accomplish this shift, teacher preparation should include an opportunity for teachers to explore their own essential nature, their own soul qualities. In this way, teachers are supported to communicate with their students soul to soul.