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Remembering Jean

By David Parkes

1. Introduction

All who knew Jean recognized there was a remarkable consistency in her values and contributions. She never wavered in promoting what she believed was most effective, particularly for those who are most vulnerable. In that spirit, we asked David Parkes, long-time collaborator of Jean, to describe how he saw the seeds of her interest in Learning for Well-being in her earlier work life.

2. Jean – colleague and friend

Jean and I worked together as close friends and colleagues over nearly 25 years, from the early 90s until the second decade of the 21st century. During that period, she moved from being Research Associate to Deputy Director then to Director of the Paris-based European Institute of Education and Social Policy (EIESP) while involved with significant changes, internationally, in education policy and implementation.

The question posed here is how in her earlier years, working largely on vocational education and training (VET) and general secondary education, she developed interests towards her subsequent focus on optimizing the well-being of children. I have three principal responses: **firstly**, there are overlapping themes and concerns between the context and themes of her earlier work and her subsequent focus on Learning for Well-being (illustrated below); **secondly** during that formative period she developed the experience, frameworks and skills to operate both at systemic and grounded levels whether with students and parents, ministers of education and bodies such as the EU, World Bank, UNESCO and OECD together with the complex policy and practice of moving among competing philosophies, donor values, national priorities and local-level implementation; **thirdly**, as deputy then director of EIESP she had the relative freedom to evolve her own prioritized focus.

Among the many projects where we worked together as colleagues and friends, I have chosen two – 17 years apart – to illustrate both the overlap of interests and the development of skills evolving towards her focus on and contribution to Learning for Well-Being. The first is Albania in 1993 to 1996 with general education and vocational education development funded by donors, in separate projects, by the World Bank, the EU, UNESCO and the Soros Foundation; this also provided a classic case of managing donor coordination. The first photo attached shows Jean beaming from a windowless railway carriage on Tirana station on her way to swim in the sea at the port of Durrës – but that's another story. Typically, she didn't seem fazed by the weight of working with four donors each with a separate agenda, and it shows in the photo.



The second project is the similar development of policies and implementation for both general secondary education and vocational education and training in Romania from 2010 to 2012 funded by the EU's Social Fund and monitored by both the Romanian Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Families.

In Albania I was the project director and Jean the research associate; in Romania 17 years later, as indicative of her evolutionary process, Jean was the project director and I was the hired independent consultant. It was Jean determining the priorities and structures within the terms of reference.

For the *European Journal of Education*, Volume 30, no. 4, 1995 – we wrote an article together which took as its starting point the main issues affecting vocational (VET) and general education (in Europe particularly) over the then past 20 years and how the outcomes were applied to the restructuring of Albania's systems (via the projects we undertook together). Key phrases from the objectives include '*restructuring of systems, the management of change, parity of esteem among sub systems and comparative methodologies applied to policy reform*'. **What five Albanian and five external experts agreed were the principles for preparing young people which included:** offering opportunities for access to further levels; preparing young people for access to citizenship; flexibility as regards delivery, assessment and certification; collaborative active partnerships involving educators, parents and children; simple in organisational structures and divisions of responsibilities. The second photo is of a dinner with Jean being wonderfully expansive with the Albanian Minister of Education sitting to her left.



For the Romanian Project key issues were the policy, strategy, organization, finance and managing a changing (and more autonomous) situation at school level alongside innovative curriculum development and head teacher and teacher training. All this implied human resources (the capacity of teachers, management and administration to cope with changing situations). This needed to include the standing of general education as a sub sector within the overall education system. What was important were the implications at the different levels of implementation (central, regional, local and school) derived from the policy/strategy issues at macro level. **For parents and students** issues included: why they made the choice of school; their perception of the advantages and/or disadvantages of the particular courses chosen; how students are supported and how their future employment path is projected; equally important was attractiveness to clients (students, parents and employers in particular).

Let me conclude by re iteration of the three evolving themes that led Jean to her focus on promoting the well-being of children: the overlap of concerns from other education and sectors she worked on; the development of structures and skills for dealing with the management of change over 25 years; ultimately her contact and close relationship with the Learning for Well-being Foundation and its magazine with that focus enabled by her directing the European Institute of Education and Social Policy. Finally, I attach a photo taken at EIESP in 1993, at a project development meeting with civil servants from the UK, Norway and the Netherlands. Jean is about to disagree with the chair.



3. Jean's many lives

Jean Gordon (1 September 1950–30 October 2018)

