

Learning for Well-being Magazine ① Abstracts

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1

Valuing individual variation within ‘big data’:
What anthropological approaches can contribute
Shanti George

‘Measuring what matters: The role of well-being methods in development policy and practice’ – a recent publication from the Overseas Development Institute in London (McGregor et al., 2015) – discusses two complementary approaches to assessing well-being. One is a ‘top-down’ perspective based on formal conceptual frameworks and the other is a more ‘bottom-up’ process that draws on engagement with the people whose well-being is under discussion (op. cit. p. 3).

This article will look at Learning for Well-being as a combination of these two approaches, where the conceptual framework is closer to first-hand engagement with daily life, than to more academic origins (although the conceptual framework articulates well with theoretical discussions as well as with everyday experience). The focus will be on Learning for Well-being’s provision of ‘meta-indicators’ formulated in everyday language, as well as on its ‘core capacities and practices’ that are very close to the more ‘naturalistic’ methods used by social sciences like anthropology. The discussion will illuminate the process of bridging what might be described as ‘everyday research’ by ordinary people themselves and more distant academic research. The author will draw on her anthropological research across various continents – and not only in Europe and North America – as well as on perceptions from early childhood through to young adulthood, in the context of families and schools and communities.

2

Measuring what matters for young people’s health
and well-being: an asset approach
Antony Morgan & Aixa Aleman-Diaz

The more opportunities young people have in childhood and adolescence to experience and accumulate positive skills and emotions, the more likely they are to achieve and sustain physical and mental well-being in later life. We know this – but the predominant focus of policy and practice has been to build programmes that try to ‘fix’ the problems of youth. In turn, we have taken a negative approach to ‘measuring what matters.’ The asset model however assumes that achieving health and well-being has to start with people’s capacities to take control over their lives, which means that we begin with what is working and what people care about. This article introduces the key features of the asset model and its potential to realise sustained well-being for young people; highlights the types of indicators that naturally stem from its principles, and discusses relevant issues for policy and practice.

3

Can mental health services help people to flourish?

Ken Gordon

It is often assumed that well-being and mental illness lie at opposite ends of a spectrum. This leads to the idea that people with mental disorders will, after effective treatment, spontaneously improve their well-being, and also that programmes to improve population well-being at a national level will automatically reduce the incidence of anxiety and depression. The reality is more complex than this. If what matters is complete mental health, then we may need a two-dimensional approach which combines established, problem-solving psychological interventions with newer strategies to promote positive growth and flourishing. This article considers these issues and briefly introduces some examples of recent work, which has begun to demonstrate this approach. To progress further, we may also need better consensus on the definition and measurement of mental health and well-being.

4

The ISSA Principles of Quality Pedagogy: Quality Early Childhood Education and Care through democratic processes

Dawn Tankersley & Mihaela Ionescu

ISSA believes that quality in early education settings needs to be grounded in the right of young children to democratically and actively participate in their education and care processes. This belief is clearly delineated in ISSA's Principles of Quality Pedagogy, a quality framework that guides pedagogical staff in ensuring that children's voices, as well as the voices of their families, are heard, and incorporated into everyday pedagogical practice, which builds on children's rights, strengths, and interests. ISSA also believes in the importance of democratic processes for guiding the professional development of pedagogical staff, for building a shared understanding and empowering them to contribute to exploring and defining quality in practice. Grounded in and bridging practice, early childhood theory and research, ISSA's Quality Framework is the result of over 20 years of working with professionals from more than 27 countries primarily from Central Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) towards promoting the child's agency and well-being in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. ISSA's Quality Principles are translated into practice by being explored, reflected upon, prioritised, and adapted (if needed) by staff members who discuss and support each other. The Principles become a platform for social constructivist processes, where practitioners critically reflect on and enrich the definition of quality practices, thus having ownership of the Quality Principles and bringing them to life in their daily work. ISSA believes that the quality of the process in ECEC settings matters the most, as it shapes the relationships, interactions and contexts in which children learn and develop.

5

The Journey Towards Wholeness:
An Exploration of the Inner Life of Teachers

Anba Rathnam

Wholeness implies a balanced approach towards life. The words, “healthy”, “wholesome”, “hale” all imply being whole or free from disease. “Holy” also a root that is related to the root of whole. Etymologically speaking, wholeness could be seen as the primary goal of life since it means keeping our health in good condition, free from disease; being in this state also constitutes full development of the mind, body and spirit.

This article discusses Krishnamurti’s approach to holistic education and the nature of wholeness. In order to know what matters in this inquiry towards wholeness, we need to examine the thinking process and what Krishnamurti calls “the conditioned mind.” If thought is a reaction of memory and memory is knowledge stored as experience, the thinking process is always in the past. Since wholeness resides in the realm of the present moment and our thinking always lingers in the past, how can we know what matters?

An empirical research was conducted, through a series of interviews, to explore the wholeness of teachers who are teaching in a Krishnamurti school. The study was designed to inform, augment, and add to present understanding of what it means to explore teachers’ wholeness. Since the common goal of holistic schools is to develop the conditions that allow the observation of one’s wholeness, the exploration of teachers’ inner lives needs to be the foundation for creating the fertile ground for students to observe wholeness in themselves and others. In other words, teachers cannot bring their students to experiencing wholeness if they are not taking the journey themselves.

6

Large-scale Data Initiatives, Child Policy, and Measuring what Matters

Dominic Richardson

Policy-makers globally are increasingly looking to large-scale data to inform their decision-making. And the field of social policy, and specifically child policy, is no exception. At present, global data initiatives (e.g. World Development Indicators, Millennium/Sustainable Development Goals) and cross-national child and family surveys (e.g. PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, HBSC, and MICS) are key sources for global information on issues such as education, health, deprivation and family functioning. In an increasingly globalised world, these sources are feeding directly into public policy discourse (both internationally and nationally), policy guidance, and inevitably policy-making for children. But how might the proliferation of such data initiatives – and the influence they have on decision-makers – inform or stifle the goals of understanding and measuring what matters?

7

Children participating in measuring what matters – how, when, why?

Ferran Casas

The social indicators movement emerged in the 60s of the past century defending that subjective data may be useful for political decision-making at macro social level: what people say, opines, perceives, evaluates and aspires to, has relevant social consequences. Therefore, systematic data –that is to say, *regular statistics*– on some social and psychosocial phenomena are needed. Only 40 years after the social indicators movement we have started to debate whether what children say, opine, perceive, evaluate and aspire to have relevant social consequences. What we call the “child indicators movement” started to consider which kind of data provided by children could be used for political decision-making, in order to improve children’s lives and their rights. Children are users of schools, health services, and public spaces in their city or village. Their satisfaction with services provided to them should be considered as important as the satisfaction of adults with services provided to adults. Children must be recognized as experts in their own lives and as key informants about their lives – not only adults are experts in children’s lives.

In this article we take some self-reported information, provided by representative samples of children in 15 countries, as indicators of children’s well-being. Some of the results could only be obtained from children themselves, rather than other sources and may challenge our previous perceptions about children’s lives. Although sometimes uncomfortable for adults, we need to accept that information provided by thousands of children on their own lives is relevant for social policies.

8

Monitoring and Evaluating Children’s Participation

Gerison Lansdown & Claire O’Kane

In recent years, non-government organisations (NGOs) working to promote children’s rights, as well as governments and donors, have emphasised the need to develop better indicators against which to monitor and measure children’s participation in terms of three key aspects: structure, process and outcomes. Numerous models have been explored, and discussions have taken place across many different agencies and in different regions of the world, to identify indicators that are not only meaningful but based on data that can be collected and analysed with relative ease. This article presents the Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children’s Participation published by Save the Children in collaboration with Concerned for Working Children, Plan, World Vision, and UNICEF. The toolkit was piloted in nine countries over an 18 month period. The article presents the rationale, conceptual framework and tools, intended for use by practitioners and children working in participatory programmes, as well as by governments, NGOs, civil society and children’s organisations seeking to assess and strengthen children’s participation in their wider society.

9

Measuring UNICEF's 'whole school approaches' to child rights education

Marie Wernham

'After 16 years as a head teacher I cannot think of anything else that we have introduced that has had such an impact.' But how can we prove it? Measuring UNICEF's "whole school approaches" to child rights education'

UNICEF's work on child rights education in early childhood settings, primary and secondary schools encourages a holistic approach to learning as a right, learning *about* rights, learning *through* rights and learning *for* rights through what is known as a 'whole school approach' to child rights education. Manifestations of this may vary according to local contexts, but whole school approaches have certain principles in common: schools should be inclusive, child-centred, democratic, protective and sustainable and they should actively promote and implement the child rights approach and the provisions and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Whole school approaches aim to bring about a fundamental transformation in the school environment by embedding child rights into the everyday management, functioning and atmosphere of the school, particularly regarding relationships amongst adults, amongst children, and between adults and children. The benefits of transforming school environments to become rights-respecting ripple out into families, communities and beyond. This article addresses the relatively young, yet evolving field of monitoring and evaluation of whole school approaches to child rights education across different national and local contexts. It explores the types of criteria and methodologies used and raises the question of the extent to which the child rights approach is applied to the measurement processes themselves, in addition to the outcomes being measured. The article also highlights the methodology and findings of research exploring the implementation of child rights education more generally, at national level in 26 industrialised countries.

10

Can we measure happy, healthy and meaningful lives?

Linda O'Toole & Jean Gordon

Over the last decade there has been increasing discussion of how we measure 'progress' in society for individuals and groups as the methods used for the last fifty years (e.g. GDP) are less and less satisfactory for understanding what makes people happy, satisfied with their lives and more importantly what they need in order to flourish and lead healthy, happy and meaningful lives. Inevitably that leads to asking questions about the major goals formulated and how one measures progress towards them. In this article we will discuss the implications of 'starting with the end in mind' and our particular focus will be the contribution of Learning for Well-being – 'learning to be and become me in the context of the community and society in which I live and to contribute to the

community and society in a way that truly nurtures my uniqueness'. The aim of the article is to discuss briefly why it is essential to include inner diversity in discussions, pedagogy and research approaches if we want to measure what matters for children and adults. Firstly we briefly present what Universal Education Foundation - Learning for Well-being calls 'inner diversity'. Then we give two illustrative examples of exercises designed to take more explicit account of inner diversity that can be used with children young people or adults in different contexts.