



CIDREE

Consortium of Institutions for Development
and Research in Education in Europe

Wellbeing in our schools: international perspectives

CIDREE Yearbook 2017

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PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD (*Extract*)

The CIDREE Yearbook 2017 presents a range of articles that explore the increasingly high-profile topic of learners' wellbeing. Countries across Europe and well beyond are placing much greater attention on ensuring that their children and young people develop the knowledge, understanding and skills that will help them demonstrate positive wellbeing. Our 2017 Yearbook explores how 12 countries within the CIDREE network are developing their approaches to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in their schools. Their different perspectives provide important insights into current definitions of wellbeing, as well as how wellbeing is supported by teachers and promoted effectively amongst learners.

Developments in promoting the wellbeing of children and young people highlighted in the articles presented here explore the what, why and how of wellbeing - and provide perceptive views and creative solutions. I am certain that the explanations, developments and advice set out in the articles will provide national education bodies, policy makers, researchers, teachers and partners with well-considered and evidence-based support. Reflecting on the key issues and drawing on the good practice in these articles will help everyone involved in shaping, supporting and delivering effective learning to continuously improve learners' wellbeing. Through this reflection, they will contribute very strongly to ensuring the positive achievements of all our children and young people at school, in life and in their future careers.

Alan Armstrong

President CIDREE 2014-2017

Strategic Director, Education Scotland

OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLES

ALBANIA

Teacher qualification – learning process for qualified teachers

Dorina Rapti & Gerti Janaqi

The paper from Albania focuses on the process of teacher qualification, and on the findings of a research study into quality assurance. Recommendations for improvement of the process include more stringent monitoring of trainee-teacher portfolios, the need for thorough upskilling of teachers in pedagogy and content knowledge, and, most significantly, development of the concept of the school as a professional development centre where supportive monitoring of young teachers by experienced colleagues can be of benefit. The premise of this article is that improvements in teacher qualification and professional development will make for better quality teaching and relationships within the school community, thereby enhancing student wellbeing.

[Read the full article from Albania](#)

AUSTRIA

Student wellbeing in Austrian schools

Ferdinand Eder & Erich Svecnik

The Austrian article conceptualises wellbeing as the state of being mentally, physically and socially healthy or happy, while regarding pedagogical and humanitarian reasons as crucial to pupils' wellbeing in school. The Austrian school system uses attributes like feeling comfortable at school, satisfaction with school, as well as school anxiety and psychosomatic disorders as indicators for wellbeing. In Austria, pupils' wellbeing is not only seen as instrumental for academic learning, but as a special value in itself. This means the mental and physical wellbeing of children and adolescents is a constant issue for the Austrian School Administration. The first investigation of children's wellbeing in Austrian schools was carried out from 1994 to 1995. This study used questionnaires, interviews and time sampling diaries. The study was repeated using the same methodological approaches in 2005. Data concerning Wellbeing at school (feeling comfortable at school); Pressure (school anxiety and stress) and Positive self-concept (general self-esteem) were aggregated. Currently researchers in Austria seek permission to repeat these studies once decisions on finance are agreed upon. The findings from this research led to initiatives to make the school experience more attractive and conducive to children and adolescents. They include strategies to reduce pupils' stress, gender mainstreaming and measures to reduce violence at school. In 1997, the number of obligatory school lessons was shortened by three hours for the first year of secondary education, by two hours for the second year, and by one hour per week for the third year. There is an increasing number of approaches to improve social interactions at school. There is also a special focus on supporting children during transition phases in the school system. The guidelines for the "Neue Mittelschule" (New Secondary School) focus on social learning and creating an encouraging atmosphere for all pupils.

[Read the full article from Austria](#)

FINLAND

Wellbeing as a right and means of learning

Arja-Sisko Holappa, Satu Elo & Marjaana Manninen

The paper sets out the cultural, structural and educational basis for the development of wellbeing in Finland while recognising a range of challenges and opportunities that continue to be present in the Finnish system. The concept of wellbeing has a broad meaning in Finnish education – encompassing physical, mental, social, as well as economic aspects. The wellbeing of pupils in pre-primary and basic education is enshrined in legislation and national core curricula. All children have the right to wellbeing, which also functions as a basis and resource for learning. Student wellbeing is embedded in the objectives for transversal competencies and instruction in different school subjects, as well as

in the goals set for the operating culture of schools. 'Support for learning' and growth and 'Pupil welfare' ensure multi-professional support for students. In addition, practices promoting health include school subjects (health education, home economics, physical education), free school meals, and possibilities for differentiated learning. The government promotes student wellbeing by funding large physical activity development projects. Education providers attend to pupil wellbeing, for example, by ensuring that school buildings and playgrounds offer a safe and healthy environment for pupils. Municipalities offer morning and afternoon activities for young children, as well as leisure time activities. Yet, there are some critical equality aspects relating to gender and minority issues as well as growing differences between regions in a sparsely populated country.

[Read the full article from Finland](#)

FRANCE

The French 'school climate policy': wellbeing as a collective outcome

Samuel Lézé

In France, wellbeing aims at developing the 'politics of happiness' and education is viewed as being an important component of the process. The article analyses the concept of wellbeing and the rationale for supporting and promoting it in France. The paper contends that although 'wellbeing' can be easily integrated into political language, conceptions of wellbeing can vary considerably especially in the education arena. There is no standard for promoting wellbeing at school yet. Notably, wellbeing was not a concept that was discussed prior to 2015 in France and is not yet at the centre of education policy. Equality and educational achievement are considered more important outcomes for the education system than a convivial atmosphere. Wellbeing is viewed as a secondary outcome arising from a school's climate. Indeed, the well-established *school climate policy* is the current model of wellbeing in France. The focus of this policy is on how learning outcomes relate to learning environments. Two conceptual models of wellbeing are provided: collective and subjective. There is a tension between them. The concept of **subjective wellbeing** and its concern for personal growth and development is valued in alternative and private schools where spirituality, creativity and authenticity are nurtured and valued. This promotes a new aim for education: equipping people to lead a fulfilling life. This educational experience is in direct contrast to the seriousness and rationalism of the Republican school system. Within this system for example, the wellbeing of children has low importance in early childhood education where the focus is to mould children into pupils from an early stage. From early on in a child's learning and development there is an emphasis on **objective wellbeing** centred on collective responsibility and duties. The aim of education is to learn skills and reduce social inequality. Consequently, classroom architecture and organisation is a very strong feature of the republican tradition of French teaching.

[Read the full article from France](#)

HUNGARY

Science for wellbeing in secondary education in Hungary

Mária Szabó & Attila Varga

The focus on wellbeing in this article takes place within the context of the curriculum development process. The authors present an overview of the most important initiatives to improve students' wellbeing in Hungary, succinctly outlining targeted interventions to ensure the needs of each student are cared for, before focusing the review of a curriculum development process for Science in the secondary vocational education track. They outline the situation which led to a decline in the uptake of Science and reflect on the impact of the old science curriculum on students' wellbeing. The article describes how this curricular reform has been exciting for students and teachers, and identifies the challenges for teachers in changing their practice. The article concludes that these changes can contribute positively to student wellbeing by making learning more enjoyable and interesting.

[Read the full article from Hungary](#)

IRELAND

Wellbeing in Irish education – towards a common understanding

Mary Daly, Ger Halbert & Colm Ó Cadhain

Adopting a largely historical perspective, this article follows the emergent thinking on wellbeing in curriculum documentation in Ireland from the implicit support for children's wellbeing in the Primary Curriculum of 1999, through the explicit requirement that wellbeing be a central pillar in children's learning exemplified in the framework for early childhood learning (*Aistear*, 2004), to consideration of the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) where the wellbeing of learners is a key focus in the curriculum planning and implementation of every post primary school. In addition, wellbeing has been introduced in schools in Ireland as an area of learning in itself, where the emphasis is on not only *learning about wellbeing* but also on provision of learning experiences through which the young person can have a positive experience of their own wellbeing and so develop confidence and motivation to reach their full potential.

[Read the full article from Ireland](#)

ESRI, IRELAND

School experiences and children's wellbeing in Ireland: insights from the Growing Up in Ireland study

Emer Smyth (Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin)

This article centres on the increasing emphasis on **children's own perceptions of their wellbeing** in research and policy discourse. However, the potential impact of school experiences on child wellbeing has been relatively underexplored. The paper draws on a largescale, nationally representative child cohort study, the *Growing Up in Ireland* study, examining child wellbeing in terms of behaviour, academic self-image, anxiety, popularity, body image and happiness at the ages of 9 and 13 years. Significant differences are found in child wellbeing across different classrooms and schools, with positive relationships with teachers playing a crucial role in enhancing wellbeing. The findings of the study point to the necessity of developing innovative ways for initial teacher education and continuous professional development to support teachers to engage students, manage classroom interaction and discipline, and provide feedback in such a way as to prevent potentially negative effects on students' self-image and performance.

[Read the full article from ESRI Ireland](#)

KOSOVO

Addressing students' wellbeing in the new Kosovo Curriculum: challenges and opportunities

Ismet Potera, Selim Mehmeti & Haxhere Zylfiu

In this article, the authors analyse the Kosovo Curriculum Framework and Core Curriculum for students in lower secondary education and examine the place of wellbeing within the curriculum. They have identified key competences and learning outcomes that specifically relate to the physical wellbeing of students and others that relate to the emotional/social wellbeing of students. The authors have also described some of the challenges faced when implementing the curriculum as designed, such as the limitations in a system that is not explicitly student centred, the lack of suitable activities and methodologies employed, the need for the professional development of teachers and further engagement with parents and other stakeholders.

[Read the full article from Kosovo](#)

LUXEMBOURG

Active schools pilot project – 'Clever Move'

Diane Dhur & Steve Tibold

Clever Move is an initiative that was developed in Luxemburg in response to a research project that unfortunately confirmed a Europe-wide trend: poor motor skills, inactivity and health risks amongst children have been increasing at an alarming rate over recent years. This article explores the

initiative which was underpinned by the ‘active schools’ concept. Drawing on health as a resource, the project aimed to ensure increased physical activity in the traditional sedentary school to enhance young people’s health and learning. The article outlines the various ways in which the project set out to achieve this, including the introduction of increased physical activity, active breaks and active learning approaches. Monitored and evaluated by the University of Luxembourg, the project’s results revealed significant increase in the use of active learning relaxation phases, indicating that these activities were equally popular with teachers and students. Similarly, the feedback from parents showed that they had noticed positive changes in children who now took more pleasure in sports, and exhibited better physical coordination. In addition, most parents reported progress in school and classroom climate. In June 2017, those schools that prioritise exercise in their daily school routine received the “clever move” label in recognition of their efforts.

[Read the full article from Luxembourg](#)

NORWAY

School as an arena for pupils’ mental wellbeing: a Norwegian study on systematic development work

Marianne Løken

The article from Norway offers a commentary on an important collaboration between the Directorate for Education and Training and the Directorate of Health. Based on the outcomes of the *School as an Arena for child and adolescent Mental Health (SAMH)* project combining both public health and education perspectives, the main objective of the paper is to develop an understanding of how schools can best promote mental wellbeing amongst all pupils. In support of the conviction that good mental health is imperative to learning, development and coping with life, the paper argues that schools are uniquely positioned to further learning and development and to promote mental health in all their pupils. Furthermore, promoting mental wellbeing should be viewed as an aspect both of **ways of teaching**, and of **other development work** at schools. Good learning outcomes and a clear focus on the pupils’ emotional wellbeing and mental health are two sides of the same coin. The focus of the paper, then, is twofold: to provide knowledge about how schools can best help to promote mental wellbeing amongst all pupils, and how schools can instigate systematic development processes. It also addresses ways in which schools across Norway can take forward a broader approach to mental wellbeing.

[Read the full article from Norway](#)

SCOTLAND

Health and wellbeing: responsibility of all

Suzanne Hargreaves

This article highlights how ‘health and wellbeing’ has been afforded continuous attention in education policy in Scotland since it emerged as a new curriculum area within Curriculum for Excellence. Indeed, the positioning and alignment of health and wellbeing in contemporary high policy priorities demonstrates that, in many respects, Scotland is leading the world, at least in its policy rhetoric. The article describes the shift from a ‘Health Promoting Schools’ model, to ‘Health and wellbeing Responsibility of All’, where it is embedded across learning. The three detailed case studies provide concrete exemplification of how this policy has been enacted in practice in the best interests of the child, showing how a framework within the ‘wellbeing space’ can, indeed must be, adapted to meet local needs and contexts.

[Read the full article from Scotland](#)

SLOVENIA

Formative assessment and problem solving as a wellbeing indicator among early school years

Sandra Mršnik & Leonida Novak

The article from Slovenia explores the relationship between formative assessment and student wellbeing. Wellbeing in this context is defined as the presence of a culture, ethos and an environment which promotes dynamic, optimal development and growth for all included in the school community. Combining this with the WHO perspective relating to the ability to cope with normal stresses, this article looks at how developing problem-solving skills can aid students in developing these coping mechanisms. The authors draw links between the development of students with a high level of self-reflective ability and that of personal wellbeing. It argues that changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of pupils are the highest aims of the capacity of self-reflective thinking, which is associated with wellbeing. Promoting wellbeing requires an approach that uses these priorities to make decisions which work for pupils. The article centres on monitoring problem-solving skills through the medium of mathematics to explore the transverse effect these skills will have in promoting student wellbeing.

[Read the full article from Slovenia](#)

THE NETHERLANDS

'Personal Development' as a curricular theme

Alderik Visser, Annette Thijs, Jan Jaap Zijlstra, & Desirée Houkema

The Dutch national curriculum is based around the three conceptual areas of qualification, socialisation and personal development. However, 'personal development' is a poorly defined concept and in this article the authors examine this concept in historical and contemporary discourse but also in practice in three case study schools. The authors identify three strategies by which schools can develop and implement their views on personal development: a specific subject-based strategy, a general strategy involving a school-wide rationale and an integral strategy whereby every facet of the school and school life is aligned with the vision of personal development. The resultant grid may give schools and curriculum developers a structured framework to develop their thinking on how to improve their implementation of 'personal development'. The view of 'personal development' within the article focuses on the cognitive and moral/spiritual aspects of wellbeing rather than the psycho-physical aspects evident in other frameworks.

[Read the full article from The Netherlands](#)

REFLECTIONS ON THE ARTICLES

The thirteen articles that fill the pages of the Yearbook represent a shared commitment across the participating countries to improving the educational experience of children and young people, and so to enhance the wellbeing of learners. The articles reflect a wide variety of perspectives on wellbeing, from reflections on teacher qualification, to formative assessment, to questions of curriculum design and implementation. Wellbeing in school has to do with teachers and the qualities and values they bring to school; it has to do with pedagogy and supportive meta-practices; and it has profoundly to do with curriculum because of the choices we make and the values we embed therein. Many of those choices seek to make our schools places where children and students will *learn for wellbeing* through the supportive culture they experience and the nurturing relationships they develop there. Therefore, the Yearbook includes an article which tells about schools where every facet of school life is aligned with a vision of the personal development of students. It includes an article which tells about a jurisdiction in which all children have a legal right to wellbeing and where that right is reflected in a whole range of practices including targeted

funding that extends to the learning environment and the school buildings. The Yearbook includes articles, too, which discuss the collective agency of a school climate policy designed to ensure that the **objective wellbeing** of students is protected in pursuit of academic achievement and social equality. There are articles that speak of the collective responsibility of all stakeholders in the care-giving areas of education and health to ensure that the physical and mental wellbeing of young people are nurtured, and this from a profoundly-held view that good learning outcomes and a clear focus on pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health are two sides of the same coin. Reverberating through the articles are images of active, happily engaged learners, and of policy-makers in search of creative solutions; you read of learner freedom, of independence, of children and young people having positive experiences of school that will help them to develop confidence and so achieve their potential. Inevitably, such worthy aspirations throw up prosaic questions such as: how will we know they are well; and how can we be sure that the changes we have made at school and system level actually work to the benefit of learners? Therefore, the Yearbook includes articles that say: well, we wanted to learn about young people's wellbeing, so we asked them! These articles raise, directly and indirectly, the thorny issue of how we might assess wellbeing at system and school level. One reports on how data gathered from students and their parents on the impact of a comparatively small-scale initiative contributed to its evaluation and subsequent development, and how it helped to inform policy into the future. Two others discuss data from large-scale surveys of school-going children and young people to ascertain their experiences and perceptions of their own wellbeing. The findings from these studies have been used to gauge the impact of school experiences on student wellbeing and to influence the direction of policy discourse.

This Yearbook is not a manual on 'how to do wellbeing' but rather a forum in which different perspectives on wellbeing talk to each other. Some of those conversations are just beginning; others are well-advanced. And, because wellbeing is such a multi-faceted and slippery concept it is useful to think of it in metaphorical terms, as a space we inhabit rather than an idea we grasp.

Hal O'Neill

Editor, CIDREE Yearbook 2017