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Learning for well-being: creativity and inner diversity

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This article explores the perspective that well-being and creativity can be nurtured in children through understanding and addressing the diverse ways in which children learn, communicate, and develop (inner diversity). In particular, our working hypothesis is that focusing children's and young people's learning towards the realization of their well-being supports and enables creativity. But it also requires, firstly, addressing how children perceive, engage with, and express creativity in different ways and, secondly, nurturing the development of core capacities to, in turn, underpin their capacity to develop key competences and skills in formal and non-formal learning settings. In recommending that education systems take the well-being of children as their central purpose, we are suggesting that there are capacities, ranging from personal qualities to behavioural skills, which are necessary for the development of the personal resources to enable lifelong and life-wide learning.

Keywords: well-being; diversity; learning; education; creativity; children; competence; core capacities

Introduction and background

This article explores the perspective that well-being and creativity can be nurtured in children through understanding and addressing the diverse ways in which children learn, communicate, and develop (what can be termed their inner diversity). In a poem written by Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of what has become known as the 'Reggio Emilia approach' to early childhood education and care, he refers to the "hundred languages of the child" and the need for them to be able to express all those languages because "The child has a hundred languages (and a hundred hundred hundred more) but they steal ninety-nine the school and the culture separate the head from the body." (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 3 where the full poem can be read) The 'Reggio Emilia approach' to early childhood education and care is based on the image of the child who is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and connected to adults (Moss in Cameron & Moss, 2011). In particular, our working hypothesis is that focusing children's and young people's learning towards the realization of their well-being supports and enables creativity. But it also requires, firstly, addressing how children perceive, engage with, and express creativity in different ways and, secondly, nurturing the development of core capacities to, in turn, underpin their capacity to develop competences and skills in formal and

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non-formal learning settings. In recommending that education systems and the policy makers responsible for them take the well-being of children as their central purpose, we are suggesting that there are capacities, ranging from personal qualities to behavioural skills, which are necessary for the development of the personal resources that will enable children to learn and live fully, actively contributing to the communities and societies in which they live.

Contemporary Europe is faced by complex issues for which there is a growing awareness of the need for multi-sector, multi-agency approaches; also the recognition that remedies addressing the symptoms rather than the root causes are no longer sufficient. Many examples could be listed here, but the following one illustrates a current concern for European societies. However important it is to provide literacy for adolescents given that one in five of our 15-year-olds in the EU still has insufficient reading skills (EU High Level Expert Group on Literacy, 2012a), ensuring much earlier in their lives that all children receive the support they need to develop literacy for learning and living in the twenty-first century would clearly avoid many problems, including lack of self-confidence and self-esteem and, probably, later in life unemployment, low wages, and risk of poverty and exclusion (Carneiro & Gordon, 2013). The 2013 communication from the European Commission, *Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*, is a joint communication of several Directorates-General responsible for issues facing children and childhood, and focuses on the need to strengthen synergies across sectors and develop integrated strategies. Despite the clear difficulties facing formal education systems (e.g. high rates of early school leaving in some European countries, major issues of equity – once more underlined in the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2012 results – and taking account of the diversity of learners, issues of teacher recruitment and retention, over-crowded curricula, etc.), there is not a clear identification of what the purpose of formal education should be and the implications and consequences for its organization, content, and delivery. As far as pupils are concerned, indicators for evaluating systems measure their achievement mainly in academic terms, but do not seek to measure the holistic development and flourishing of children. The economic crisis raises many questions about what sort of society we want to live in. There is an increasing focus beyond the classic criteria of growth and Gross Domestic Product as explored in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Better Life Index (<http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>) or in the human development approach developed, among others, by Martha Nussbaum (2013). European societies are not creative enough in affecting changes for the well-being of children, which implies radically shifting our mindsets and transforming how we think about children, learning, health, education, and society (Kickbusch, 2012). This is the broad context in which 'Learning for Well-being' has been developed and it is also the context in which learning systems are addressing the issues of building the competence that children and young people need now to lead happy, healthy, and meaningful childhoods, as well as for their future lives.

Since the mid-2000s, through our work with the Universal Education Foundation (UEF), mainly in Europe and Palestine, and with a range of academic, practitioner, foundation, civil society, and government partners, as well as young people and European and international organizations, a framework of foundational capacities necessary for learning for well-being has been developed which are illustrated in Figure 1. They focus on:

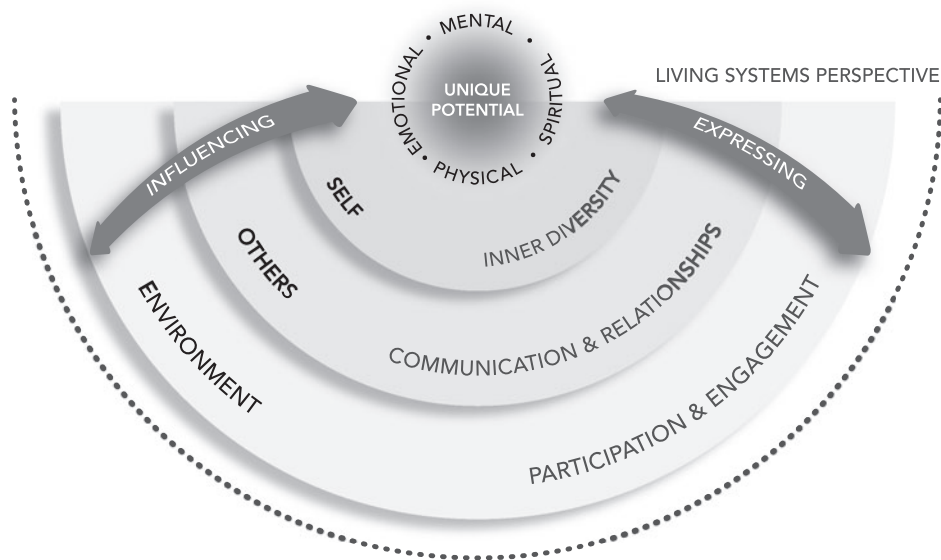


Figure 1. Learning for Well-being framework (www.learningforwellbeing.org).

- the unfolding of each person's unique potential;
- understanding our inner processes – our way of being in the world and how we learn and develop (inner diversity);
- cultivating the ways in which we communicate and express ourselves and hence our qualitative relationships with ourselves, with others, with the environment;
- engagement and participation – taking individual responsibility to build practices, make choices, and take action (O'Toole & Kropf, 2010, pp. 14–15).

In our early work in the mid-2000s, we found that frequently research into and policy focusing on children's well-being did not define the concept before establishing indicators, which moreover could lead to a primary focus on deficits.¹ This led us to investigate international sources and to take inspiration from the resolutions adopted by major international bodies. Hence, we are working with a definition of well-being framed as 'realizing one's unique potential through physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development in relationship to self, others, and the environment' (O'Toole & Kropf, 2010, p. 5). The World Health Organization describes a state to be achieved by defining health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (World Health Organization 1946). The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child emphasizes a child's right to achieve their full potential and participate in decisions that affect their lives (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>). The 'four pillars of learning', as defined in the 1996 report to UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, *Learning: The Treasure Within*: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together, underline learning as process (Delors, 1996). The Council of Europe

has described well-being as a universal human right, using 'Well-being for All' to encompass individual well-being as well as societal and global well-being, extending to future generations (Council of Europe, 2008). This type of holistic and developmental perception of well-being is found in the concepts of social pedagogy, though it is less common in concepts of mainstream school education (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011).

For this article, we have drawn predominantly on three aspects of the work initiated by UEF, and undertaken with a range of partners, that have informed the development of the above framework, as well as on other work by the two authors.

Participation and cooperation

Firstly, in 2006 UEF designed and piloted a first Voice of Children survey in Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine with the support of the Ministries of Education in each country and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Though the survey provided valuable information on how young people (15-year-olds) view their well-being (physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions), the results clearly indicated that schools and education systems could make considerable improvements to be more conducive to student well-being (Awartani, Vince Whitman, & Gordon, 2007, 2008). Following this, Elham Palestine was designed and has been implemented since 2008 as a nationwide programme in Gaza and the West Bank. Through identifying exemplary practices and initiatives in schools and at the local level, it aims to improve the well-being of Palestinian children through enhancing their education and community environments. It involves ministries, local authorities, schools, teachers, students, the media, the ICT community, and the business community. For this article, the most important aspect has been collecting information and valuable data from young people who have contributed to developing the above framework and a set of core capacities (see below.)

Peer involvement

Secondly, an important contribution has been the involvement of young adults (aged 18–30), most of whom either have considerable experience as peer trainers in the field of diversity and/or work with young people mainly through informal learning. A series of experiential workshops have been organized by UEF and a partner organization, the European Peer Training Organization (<http://www.epto.org/>) and the peer trainers are testing the framework and the materials developed in their own training programmes. This gives direct practitioner feedback from the experience of young adults from different European countries, reflecting on the usefulness of the above framework (and how to implement it) in assisting them in taking a broader perspective on diversity.

Policy to action

Thirdly, we draw on work undertaken between 2010 and 2012 supported by the Learning for Well-being Consortium of Foundations in Europe, which developed a policy perspectives document: *Learning for Well-being: A Policy Priority for Children and Youth in Europe: A Process for Change* (Kickbusch 2012, available at <http://www.learningforwellbeing.org/?q=consortium/learning-well-being-consortium>).

In the wake of the financial crisis, new stimulus has been given to the challenge of formulating policies that take us beyond the economic imperatives, and aim to increase Well-being for All (Council of Europe, 2008). This report represents a cross-sector perspective and for its development, in addition to literature and research analysis, professional panels involving a broad range of stakeholders and organizations were consulted (OECD, Council of Europe, the EU and many experts, foundations, youth organizations, government and non-government organizations across education, health, social affairs, children's rights, media, ICT, family, etc.). For this article, the most important aspect has been drawing on existing research and stakeholder consultation to identify principles for policy and action that support the holistic development of children and young people.

In parallel, one of the authors (Gordon), in her work until the end of 2013 with the European Institute of Education and Social Policy, has been for a number of years involved in pan-European studies and implementation networks analysing European-level and country policies on key competences and the gradual shift to learning outcomes in formal education systems (Gordon et al., 2009; Leney, Gordon, & Adam, 2009). The empirical evidence from the 32 countries covered by these studies has informed the understanding of current aims, policies, and gaps. One of the observations from this work is that few countries consciously address the issues of how to enable each and every child to develop his/her unique potential nor do they enable teachers and other education staff to recognise, understand, and comfortably work with children's diversity in their ways of communicating and learning, in addition to diversities such as gender, socio-economic situation, migration background, disability, etc. O'Toole worked for over 25 years developing a process of observation, as well as a framework and training tools, to help adults in their work settings to build effective teams strengthening group-working practices through a better understanding of their ways of communicating and functioning in their daily tasks and responsibilities. This practitioner approach was tested and refined in the world of work over a long period of carrying out training in multinationals, as well as in enterprises of different sizes in a range of sectors around the world. Working directly with teachers and school administrators, she also researched and applied these tools with students of all ages, beginning with preschoolers.

The first part of the article discusses in brief issues related to key competence development for lifelong learning for children and adolescents in schools systems in Europe (Gordon et al., 2009). The following sections then turn to the Learning for Well-being framework to explore what it means in practice to develop ways of observing and listening that allow a child's individual processes to emerge, and strategies for creating environments that support the unique ways of functioning of every child. These are foundational capacities for practitioners working with children, especially in collective settings. The focus throughout is on the links and intersections with the notion of creativity, discussed in more detail in a later section, and which includes the experience of sensing or intuiting new relationships from both internal and external stimuli, and manifesting them through the whole person with the implication that creativity is not an innate talent but a process that can be nurtured.

Key competences in the curriculum in European countries

Key competences are complex constructs that are composed at the very least of different elements of knowledge, skills, and attitudes representing the objectives of the

developers. This baseline is considerably expanded in the definition below of Hoskins and Deakin Crick who include values, desires, motivation, and agency always in context.

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 are 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 & Deakin Crick, 2010, p. 122, emphasis added)

Over the last 20 years, a range of terms such as key or core skills, key or core competences, objectives to be achieved, etc., have been used in European countries and, depending on the country and sub-sector of education and training, one or another may be favoured. For example, in school education, Ireland and the UK tend to use the notion of key or core skills, whereas France, Luxembourg, and French-speaking Belgium are each developing a '*socle*' (foundation) of competences. However, creativity is neither a specific competence in most national sets or frameworks, nor is it specifically identified as a 'skill', as defined by Chisholm (2005) as an ability, which is usually learned and acquired through training in order to perform actions that achieve a desired outcome. So is it more an attitude or frame of mind, a capacity to act in certain ways? Before addressing this question, it is useful to pursue briefly some links between competences and capacities and implications for teaching and learning.

In the 2008, the European Commission communication, *Improving Competences for the 21st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools*, stated:

Young people need a wider range of competences than ever before to flourish, in a globalised economy and in increasingly diverse societies. Many will work in jobs that do not yet exist. Many will need advanced linguistic, intercultural and entrepreneurial capacities. Technology will continue to change the world in ways we cannot imagine. Challenges such as climate change will require radical adaptation. In this increasingly complex world, creativity and the ability to continue to learn and to innovate will count as much as, if not more than, specific areas of knowledge liable to become obsolete. Lifelong learning should be the norm. (European Commission, 2008)

The challenge defined in this communication from the European Commission is to strengthen the reform of school systems so that *every* young person can develop his or her full potential through improved access and opportunities, to ensure that every citizen can become an active participant in the emerging knowledge economy, and to reinforce social solidarity. It situates curricular reform to improve competences within a holistic approach to the education of children and young people. It underlines the need to organize learning within and across subjects, to teach competences explicitly, to introduce new teacher training and didactic approaches and, vitally, the importance of fully involving teachers, learners, and other actors. It adds that schools should promote the health and well-being of pupils and staff and active citizenship, underlining the fact that every learner's needs differ and every classroom is a place of diversity. Aside from the fact that the recent crisis is tending to emphasize the labour market links with education (European Commission, 2012b), the question remains whether educators acquire through their education, training, and practice the tools to actually accomplish the aims expressed above.

The Hoskins and Deakin Crick definition of competence has many implicit consequences for lifelong learning that it is important to make explicit in terms of how learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom or formal learning centre, whether for children or adults. They range from an identification of a set of core or key competences to be developed by all students at different levels in formal education systems to the much more personal qualities and practices (or core capacities) to be nurtured through growing up and learning in the broad sense. For example, when we speak of ‘core capacities’, they relate to one end of the spectrum of personal qualities (or resources) which are necessary for the individual in any circumstance.

Thus, ‘listening’ or ‘empathy’ or ‘discerning patterns’ are equally applicable to most activities and necessary if key competences such as ‘sense of entrepreneurship’ and ‘learning to learn’ are to be successfully developed. This would be equally the case for specific skills such as ‘the ability to plan and manage projects’ insofar as a foundation of core capacities also contributes to the learning of the skill. In other words, one of the proposals of Learning for Well-being is that the successful achievement of specific skills and competences for lifelong learning depends ultimately on paying attention to the holistic development of the individual.

The range of key competences (or whatever term is used in each country) developed in the different European countries may reflect directly the eight key competences proposed by the European Commission or be closely founded on the history, education philosophy and research, overall approaches to formal education and pedagogy, etc., of the country. What they have in common is that they are designed to be ‘learnable’ by students, whether as skills (see above) or the broader notion of competence including ‘agency, action, and value’ (see above). Depending on which core capacities are considered essential for these skills and competences to be successfully nurtured, and if curricula integrate a notion of the ‘creative human being’ or thinking creatively, etc., this will influence where the focus and emphasis are placed in practice and, hence, the types of pedagogies and materials developed by and for teachers.

In the next section we turn to the intersections between creativity and learning for well-being, focusing on the core capacities that it considers essential for all children to develop through their learning (in the broadest sense).

The Learning for Well-being framework and creativity

For the purpose of this article, it is important to understand how these various elements – well-being, creativity, and inner diversity – are, firstly, being defined and, secondly, how they intersect. As mentioned earlier, Learning for Well-being considers well-being as ‘realizing one’s unique potential through physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development in relationship to self, others, and the environment’ (O’Toole & Kropf, 2010, p. 5). In this way, well-being is considered a systemic and dynamic state involving the whole of a person, and the world around him/her. The conceptual framework of Learning for Well-being focuses on several points that are related to the process of creativity and its manifestation.

Creativity has been analysed from a range of different epistemological standpoints (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999) and has many definitions, ranging from the perspective of the lay person to the artist, to the scientist, and to those in commerce.

Creativity is the process of bringing something new into being. Creativity requires passion and commitment. It brings to our awareness what was previously hidden and points to new life. The experience is one of heightened consciousness: ecstasy.

This is the way it was described by Rollo May in *The Courage to Create* (May 1994). More recently in 'Creativity at Work', Linda Naiman (2012) also focused on the notion of process defining creativity as

...the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality. Creativity involves two processes: thinking, then producing. Innovation is the production or implementation of an idea. If you have ideas, but don't act on them, you are imaginative but not creative.

Both definitions have in common the double-edged experience of sensing or intuiting new relationships from both internal and external stimuli, and manifesting them (generating innovations and producing them). Where creativity meets Learning for Well-being is that it involves the whole person: the ability to analyse (mental aspect); the ability to associate seemingly disparate items/events (emotional aspect); the ability to manifest (physical aspect); and intuition (related to subtle sensings).

In the same way as skills and competences are defined in education systems to be learnable, the issue here is how to support the development of what Creativity, Culture and Education identifies as 'habits of mind' (Spencer, Lucas, & Claxton, 2012):

- (1) Inquisitive: wondering and questioning; exploring and investigating; challenging assumptions.
- (2) Persistent: tolerating uncertainty; sticking with difficulty; daring to be different.
- (3) Imaginative: playing with possibilities; making connections; using intuition.
- (4) Disciplined: crafting and improving; developing techniques; reflecting critically.
- (5) Collaborative: cooperating appropriately; giving and receiving feedback; sharing the 'product' (<http://www.creativitycultureeducation.org/progression-in-creativity-developing-new-forms-of-assessment>).

Similarly, Sternberg and Williams (1996) suggest that creativity needs to combine three ways of thinking: generating new ideas and the connections between ideas; analytical or critical thinking, and practical ability. All of the above would be examples of personal qualities (or resources) that support learning. However, they are not static or identically expressed in every individual, combining in different ways and with varying emphasis.

Fundamental to the Learning for Well-being framework, depicted in Figure 1, is an understanding of the differences that can be noticed from infancy in how children interact with their environments (Bergström, 2004). In early childhood, especially when children enter collective settings such as day-care, kindergartens, or school, these ways of functioning are sometimes viewed as problems to be resolved rather than natural patterns of processing to be supported. For example, the child in the first year of compulsory education who takes longer to learn to read than some of his/her classmates may in some systems rapidly be labelled as a 'slow learner'. With awareness and simple guidelines, practitioners can nurture the multiple expressions that occur and set a course for children to understand their own particular learning processes, which is in fact a component of 'learning to learn' as defined the EU Key

Competence Framework. The argument is that for children to be able to function in creative, innovative, and generative ways that encourage a pervasive sense of well-being, they first need to develop this understanding of their own ways of processing and learning. Additionally, these inner differences need to be recognized by the adult world around them; in the case of education systems, especially by teachers and other education professionals.

Within the context of the Learning for Well-being framework, creativity can be understood through the arrows labelled 'influencing' and 'expressing'. One creates through being influenced by or sensing new information from the environment, other people, and one's inner processes, and manifests or expresses through new connections in ways that can be experienced through one's self, others, and/or the environment. The implication of this perspective is that creativity is not an innate talent along a single dimension; instead, it engages the whole person within the whole context of their lives in how and what and why they create a product with value to individuals and to society. In this sense, creativity and well-being are overlapping experiences.

Patterns of inner diversity, on the other hand, are unique expressions of individuals (O'Toole & Kropf, 2010) referring to the fundamental patterns through which we perceive, process, and integrate information into an individually organized, and highly personal, representation of the external world. It is through these foundational processes that thoughts, feelings, actions, and beliefs are filtered, organized, and given meaning. A simple example of the patterns of inner diversity is to consider your own natural rhythm and pacing, particularly when confronted with new information. At one end of the continuum is someone who responds rapidly without needing to deliberately place it in context; at the other end is someone who takes time to make meaning of the new information within a known context. These reflect natural differences in pacing, but problems emerge when one end of the continuum is considered more desirable, or the only acceptable way. In those cases, those who naturally relate more to the other end of the continuum may be deemed in normative systems to have difficulties or, in extreme cases, disabilities. Seemingly small differences in the way children learn – such as one child needing to talk aloud in order to reach a conclusion, whilst another needs to be silent, reach their conclusion, and then talk – can have an enormous impact on how they experience various learning environments as well as how those experiences affect the well-being of individuals and groups. Research indicates that, on average, teachers wait two to three seconds to receive responses from questions to pupils which would mean that the second child might never have an opportunity to respond to most questions in the classroom (Budd Rowe, 1986; Heinze & Erhard, 2006).

There are negative implications for well-being, and by extension for creativity, when individuals are not permitted to operate in ways that support their natural functioning or when because of this they feel that they are not capable of functioning effectively in a specific environment (Bergstrom, 2004). Several studies have shown that when experiences at school are viewed as boring and meaningless, it decreases happiness, creates tension, and isolates students from others in the classroom, and this, in turn, effects emotional, physical, and social well-being (Natvig, 2003). When individual differences in how one learns are considered, researchers claim that students will have higher achievement, a more positive attitude, and a better self-concept (Reiff, 1992). According to research with Finnish students, the ability to find a personal way of learning correlates strongly with subjective well-being

(Konu Lintonen, & Autio, 2002). This suggests that nurturing a whole range of core capacities respecting individual processes and functioning should contribute to maximizing children's and young people's engagement with creativity in their learning.

Individual differences in learning, communicating, and creating

In educational arenas, there has been increasing interest in individualized and personalized approaches for several decades (Battistich, Watson, Solomon, Lewis, & Schaps, 1999; Istance & Dumont, 2010; Keefe, 1991). This interest has been supported by theories about multiple intelligences, learning styles, and approaches to learning, as well as research in the neurosciences on the impact of social and emotional responses in brain functions and behaviour. Diversity viewed as a set of external factors (e.g. social-economic disadvantage, gender, migrant status, disability, etc.) is also increasingly taken into account in education systems, but still, consideration of inner differences is largely overlooked, including by researchers and policy makers concerned with children's well-being, possibly because of the perceived and real difficulties of structuring such research as well as developing the competences of staff to understand and work with these differences.

The notion that people perceive, learn, and make sense of their environments in distinct ways is neither new nor exclusive to any one culture or system of thought. Any teacher who has taught for more than a year or two can tell you the ways in which different patterns of learning play out in the classroom, for example, seeing some children stand back to watch for a while before they join an activity, or those who need more verbal interaction before they settle into their lessons, or others who give no sign of understanding the task until they excel at it. A problem for many teachers has been the difficulty in addressing these differences in meaningful and practical ways. Teachers know that children learn differently, but they often do not know how to teach students who have different ways of learning and all at the same time. Their difficulties are further compounded by the perceived challenge of developing child-centred pedagogy with 30 or more children in the classroom, a prescribed curriculum and external assessment systems, lack of support for new teachers, etc. Loris Malaguzzi, writing about an education based on relationships, emphasized this means creating an amiable school 'that is active, inventive, livable, documentable and communicative', where children, teachers, and families feel a sense of well-being (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 9). His image of the school refers to the living organism in which learning is not a process of linear progress and development but an 'uncertain, unpredictable and intensely creative activity with new understandings created unexpectedly and shooting off in new directions' (Moss, 2011, p. 166).

On the basis of its programmes and consultations, Learning for Well-being has sought to develop a framework and to propose a first set of core capacities that enable the unfolding of each person's unique potential and to support and strengthen learning. Since the 1990s, a number of educational researchers and practitioners have compiled various lists of skills and personal traits that contribute to effective learning, both in formal and informal settings. Examples include Costa's Habits of Mind (Costa & Kallick, 2000), Ruth Deakin Crick's Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (Deakin Crick et al., 2004) and Guy Claxton's Learning Power capacities (Claxton, 1999). There is considerable overlap in the lists, and most include a mixture of cognitive, social, and emotional elements. By focusing on core capacities as

practices, Learning for Well-being is stressing that these capacities relate to basic abilities that are foundational for all our life activities (including learning) and that they are individually expressed. Understanding how we learn and develop, cultivating the ways in which we communicate and how to nurture relationships are all essential. But realizing one's well-being also requires us to take individual responsibility, to make choices and to take action within society. In considering the connection between well-being and creativity, certain capacities will help the child understand how he/she frames his/her thinking, feels, imagines, and intuitively, and how he/she finds motivations, etc. At another layer of functioning (within society, in a classroom, in an occupation), these core capacities will underpin and support the development of key competences and skills for lifelong learning. In that perspective they can be seen/termed a key competence for living and functioning in society: personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion, and employment.

Some illustrative examples of the core capacities with which Learning for Well-being has been working in workshops and training are presented in Table 1.

Over the last two decades all have been the subject of research and studies though further empirical work is needed if they are to be operational for school curricula and for developing competence in young people. Some, such as empathy, are already the subject of evaluated programmes used in schools, such as the Canadian programme, Roots of Empathy (<http://www.rootsofempathy.org/>), that brings together for teachers the results of studies and research from different perspectives including in the neuroscience field. Empathy is generally considered as a component of social and emotional learning (Goleman, 1996) and includes understanding the feelings of others, ability to function in a team, increasing management of emotions, reducing aggressive behaviours, increasing feelings of security and support, etc. Other researchers such as Cloninger and Claxton both present the case for relaxation, a capacity that is frequently misunderstood and underestimated by education staff that tend to perceive it as a waste of limited classroom time. For Cloninger (2004), relaxation as it applies to body, mind, and feelings is the fundamental activity on which self-aware consciousness depends. In the body, relaxation allows one

Table 1. Examples of core capacities.

| Core capacity | Aspects |
|--|---|
| Paying attention | Keen, engaged, and consistent inner and outer observation |
| Reflection | Pondering: looking back, looking from other perspectives, offering feedback |
| Listening | Connecting to words, sounds, and spaces in oneself, others, and the environment |
| Inquiring | Asking questions to track an experience with openness and curiosity |
| Empathy | Active and deliberate resonance with others – thoughts, feelings, experiences |
| Discerning patterns and systemic processes | Recognizing interdependency and the relationship of the parts to the whole |
| Subtle sensing | Including intuition, imagination, and resonance |
| Enriching sensory awareness | Nurturing, stimulating, and expanding the capabilities of our five senses |
| Relaxation | Physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual relaxation |

to be more fully present to experience all of one's senses, as well as what is needed; in the mind, it allows stillness and clarity; in the feelings, relaxation is the first step in allowing one to listen to and be with one's emotions. Guy Claxton (1999) in *Wise-Up* cites a study demonstrating the value of relaxation on memory. In this study subjects were shown a picture and then, once it was removed, asked to draw the details of the picture. Following the first drawing, they were given a period of relaxation designed to calm and quiet the mind. Then, without being shown the drawing a second time, they were asked to draw the original picture again. The second drawings were rated by independent judges to be more accurate and detailed than the first drawings – even though a longer period of time had elapsed since the first drawing was made. As a specific example, in a Boston middle school in 2005 students participated in a Tai Chi and mindfulness-based stress-reduction programme for five weeks. Interviews with the students indicated that they experienced 'well-being, calmness, relaxation, improved sleep, less reactivity, increased self-care [and] self-awareness' as a result of the programme (Wall, 2005).

How does this affect teachers and creativity? There are practical ways to support teachers, head teachers, and schools inspectors/counsellors in addressing individual differences in the classroom. As we have argued above, in so doing, children are better able to fully express their unique potential in their learning, releasing their creative energy. Some areas to explore for practitioners in this regard include the following.

Increasing the awareness and appreciation for differences in how individuals learn and communicate in students, teachers, and in the educational system, as a whole

Of central importance in this effort is creating an environment in which learning differences are reframed as positive distinctions. Adults can create a receptive environment for children through modelling openness to differences, genuine curiosity about the ways children learn, and willingness to suspend judgement and notice what is happening, rather than focusing on what is not happening. Daniel Goleman (1996) shares the technique of using classroom dialogues to develop cognitive maps in the students around emotional literacy. Similar approaches can be used to help students discover their own way of processing, and that of others in their classroom. By asking questions about the process ('how does this happen?'), we are assuming sufficiency rather than deficiency. For example, if we ask *how* a child pays attention we may discover that it can be described as a direct focus; alternatively, we may see it as being aware of peripheral details or of shifting between an overview and a single detail (a macro/micro perspective). But we will never discover this information if we assume there is only *one* way of paying attention.

Inviting learners into the process

Often caregivers and teachers know that children learn in different ways, but they do not know how to work with groups of children with different ways of learning. The most direct strategy is to allow students to understand and share their learning process with teachers and other students. One can do this through relatively simple changes in a classroom setting:

- (1) Provide opportunities that give students a *choice* about how they undertake an activity, particularly how they choose to begin. Give them various options and be open and explicit about all options having value.
- (2) Allow space and time for *reflection* both before undertaking a task and when it is complete.
- (3) Encourage *self-assessment*, according to the learner's own criteria, and allow children to speak about this assessment.

Cultivating capacities for self-discovery

The younger children are when we engage them in exploring their own patterns of processing the easier it will be. When children are involved in discovering and working with their own learning processes, they can take responsibility for *how* they learn as well as what they learn. Being able to articulate for themselves, and others, how they learn strengthens their own sense of agency (and potentially of self-esteem) when their success can be achieved through following their natural ways of functioning. The outcomes/products of their diverse ways of processing may also contribute to the overall creative expressions of the group. While there is substantial evidence to indicate that cognitively diverse groups produce more novel insights and solutions than seemingly homogeneous groups (Nemeth, 1986), the critical factor for increased creativity in the group seems to be the extent to which participants are comfortable in revealing and expressing those diverse perceptions (Mannix & Neale, 2005).

Learning for well-being and creativity – bringing it together

Ensuring a holistic approach to a child's learning seems to be based on providing the child with the opportunities to develop a set of capacities that are core insofar as they support the child over his/her life course in the unfolding of his/her unique potential. Children are learning in all the environments in which they live, play, learn, and grow up, and so this means thinking not just in terms of how school can better support the development of core capacities but also through leisure activities, healthcare, the social services, etc. This is necessarily predicated on adults learning to understand and work with inner diversity and on children living, learning, and playing in environments in which relationships and communication, engagement, and participation are considered important. The proposal that we have developed briefly in this article is that creativity is not simply an additional competence or skill to be cultivated as such, but at the very heart of what it means for children to lead happy, healthy, and meaningful lives in which they feel recognised for who they are, and feel belonging and a sense of agency to express themselves.

Note

1. This discussion arose, for example, at the first OECD Child Well-being Expert Consultation organized jointly by the OECD, the European Commission and UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in May 2009.

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