

# Well-Being and Post-Primary Schooling

A review of the literature and research

Dr. Maeve O'Brien

*St. Patrick's College*

with the Human Development Team



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**WELL-BEING AND  
POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLING**

**A REVIEW OF THE  
LITERATURE AND RESEARCH**

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*And why are you so firmly and triumphantly certain that only what is normal and positive - in short, only well-being - is good for man? Is reason mistaken about what is good? After all, perhaps prosperity isn't the only thing that pleases mankind, perhaps he is just attracted to suffering. Perhaps suffering is just as good for him as prosperity (Dostoyevsky, 1983: 41).*

## Context

Despite the current nervousness and fears for an economic slow down, in the last decade we have experienced unprecedented economic growth in Ireland and our standard of living has substantially increased. Our unemployment rates are still among the lowest in Europe and Irish people seem to be one of the happiest nations according to European Quality of Life Surveys (2006); yet, antisocial behaviour and increases in crime are reported regularly in national media. There is also a sense of cultural approbation about perceived leisure/life styles among young people in relation to consumption of alcohol, drug use and sexual activity. Concerns over ill-health and obesity, increasing suicide rates and mental health issues are also reflected in policy documents (Health Service Executive, 2007; Verma and Larson, 2003). With respect to education, research suggests drop out from second-level schooling and alienation from the system persists among particular social groups (Clancy 2001; Lynch and Lodge, 2002; O'Brien, 2003). Moreover, young people are coming to Ireland from many parts of the globe (some unaccompanied, see Vekic, 2004) in the hope of leading a good life and acquiring an education. These young people face considerable challenges, some arising from Ireland's reluctance to move from a largely mono-cultural towards an inter-cultural society.

In times of rapid social change and ensuing moral panics about cultural and behavioural shifts, educators are often charged with

responsibility for preparing students for changing societal contexts and solving 'perceived' problems in their social behaviour. Furthermore, traditional functionalist perspectives within sociology have supported this perception and have constructed schooling institutions as keepers of order and continuity. On the other hand, critical perspectives which emerged in the later half of the twentieth century and continue to offer alternative understandings of the relation between schooling and society (Young, 1971; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis 1977, Freire, 1998; Apple, 2001; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1996), suggest that schools, school systems, and the meritocratic ideologies that often underpin them have themselves become part of the problem of social inequality (Lynch, 1999) and illbeing (Grob, 1991).

Indeed, for some time scholars have questioned the aims and purposes of mass schooling and suggested that education should not only be concerned with the functioning of society but with other purposes (Noddings, 2003; Baker, Lynch and Cantillon, 2004; Dunne and Hogan, 2004). From earliest times, philosophers have suggested that a worthwhile aim of education is to enable individuals to flourish and develop for their own sake. In post-modern, post-capitalist societies, where processes of individualisation and fragmentation have challenged our very perceptions and experiences of self (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001), we need greater understandings of the relationship between schooling, well-being and happiness (see Michalos, 2007).

Neo-liberal agendas, which increasingly impact on education and which are concerned more with economic growth than well-being in its broadest sense, place ever increasing demands for performance and measurement on students and schools, particularly at second level. Counteracting agendas which create divisions among social groups and marginalise and alienate the less successful, requires

deeper insights into what happiness means for young people, and how schooling can facilitate a meaningful life for individuals and social groups.

## **INTRODUCTION**

As far back as Aristotle well-being has been understood from a variety of perspectives. The body of literature and research that continues to develop in this area reflects the diversity of views and the complexity of the problem of human happiness and flourishing. This review of the literature on well-being seeks to capture the richness of these varying perspectives. As far as possible, this report will map the breadth of work on well-being in order to inform a more specific analysis and discussion of well-being scholarship and research, and its relation to young people and to their experiences in post-primary education.

The review was undertaken from an interdisciplinary perspective and includes theories and research on well-being from philosophical, psychological, sociological, economic, social policy, egalitarian, feminist and educational discourses. Given the growth, and some would say, explosion of research and scholarship in this area (Cohen, 2006), the report largely confines its focus to major influences and key ideas associated with western international approaches to wellness. Moreover, given the unevenness of the empirical research work on happiness and second-level schooling, and on well-being programmes and practices in schools internationally, it is possible only to discuss exemplars of the most salient research in this initial exploration.

The review is organised into three major sections, which move from philosophical understandings and other disciplinary perspectives on well-being generally, to conceptions of wellness with particular salience for adolescents in today's society, and finally, to theoretical

work, empirical research and educational programmes concerned with well-being within the specific context of post-primary schooling. The organisation and content of the review also reflects the cultural politics of knowledge and the major influences of some disciplines and schools of thought on happiness, such as the conceptualisation of happiness in positive psychology as ‘subjective well-being’ (SWB).

The first chapter of the report considers and explores our understandings of well-being relative to three major traditions in well-being research:

- classical understandings of well-being and happiness drawing on the Aristotelian legacy, the work of White (2006), the utilitarian influence, and more contemporary philosophical approaches
- the newer tradition and construct of Subjective Well-being (SWB) and its empirical measurement (the work of Campell, Converse and Rogers, 1976; Brickman and Campell 1971; Diener 1999, 2005). This is a perspective that has dominated a great deal of social scientific scholarship on wellness and happiness across the disciplines, and in relation to wellness and schooling (in the US in particular)
- the work of economists and social scientists which has also sought to counterbalance subjective measures of happiness with objective indicators of welfare. Combinations of these approaches have been used, for example, to assess the well-being of nations internally and across national boundaries (Easterlin, 2001; Helliwell, 2003). The relationship between income and happiness, for example, has been a major issue for debate using this subjective/objective definition of well-being (Layard, 2005; Srivastava, Locke and Bartol, 2001). Evidence of relationships between poverty, social status, and well-being or lack of well-being are considered but as

the literature in this area is extensive, only a selection of significant works are discussed and signposted (the work of the OECD, and findings from other large-scale quantitative data sets, such as the work carried out at European level by teams from Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)). Some of the substantive and methodological/measurement problems associated with this are also outlined.

While a large section of Chapter One focuses on the operationalisation of happiness as subjective well-being relative to objective indicators, the latter sections of the chapter draw on a number of exemplary and influential formulations across various disciplinary and political perspectives. The work of economist Amartya Sen (1993, 1995) on human flourishing and the capabilities approach to well-being, and Erik Allardt's (1993) Scandinavian welfare model are considered. The work of Irish radical egalitarians, who along with international egalitarian scholars, have argued that equality is critical to human flourishing is also discussed (Baker et al. 2004), most particularly the arguments they have made with respect to education and equality.

In Chapter Two, the review focuses on well-being and its particular relevance for adolescents today. Indeed, a great deal of research literature in this tradition has focused on illbeing (Grob, 1991). Issues of adolescent mental health, physical health and participation in society are considered across a number of cultures, statuses and social positionings. The issue of meaning seeking and existential survival and struggle, relative to norms, values and societal contexts is also discussed. Studies of subjective well-being among adolescents, and large-scale quantitative data derived from these in the United States and Europe, in particular the large body of research in Finland are discussed.

Chapter Three is specifically concerned with adolescents, well-being and schooling. The body of empirical studies both qualitative and quantitative that have been explicitly concerned with the relationship between the happiness of adolescents and their schooling are explored. In addition, there is a body of research and scholarship that relates to students' well-being, though not using the term explicitly. Inequalities associated with resources, misrecognition of identities, power and care relations all impact on the lives of students and their capacities to flourish in and out of school. The importance of relationships and positive, democratic and caring school climates are reviewed.

Ongoing international debates on well-being, and health promotion in schools and wider society which increasingly dominate the literature on well-being and schooling are discussed and critiqued. Particular consideration is paid to efforts in Finland that use Allardt's (1993) theoretical welfare model of well-being to explore and audit school factors and processes. Research and theoretical work developed in the United States on the relation between well-being, democracy, and the processes and curricula that enable that, are discussed in the context of adolescent schooling. Moreover, the growing interdisciplinary scholarship on the reality of care and emotions to student mental and emotional health and to educational processes and to learning are debated.

The final section of Chapter Three outlines selected mainstream and alternative educational practices and programmes that express a primary concern with the happiness and well-being of young people. While an analysis of this literature could be the subject of a large research project, it can only be summarily considered here but may suggest practices relevant to the Irish educational context.





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**CHAPTER ONE**

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What do we mean by  
‘happiness’, ‘well-being’,  
‘quality of life’?

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

It is not possible comprehensively and systematically to answer the question of what we mean by happiness and the concepts of well-being and quality of life; this is a complex process that demands more consideration that can be done here. Nevertheless, it is important in an exploration of wellness and well-being in post-primary schooling to give some space to a more general consideration of an issue that has stimulated debate since the time of the Greeks (in western society) and has been explored in ancient eastern civilisations and religions. In her review of the literature on well-being, Hird (2003) suggests that although theoretical definitions of happiness, life satisfaction, well-being, the ‘good life’, and quality of life have attracted much attention from scholars over time, and across disciplines, there is no general agreement on a universal definition of well-being (Hird, 2003: 4).

The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/well-being/>, 5/12/2006) comments that the concept of well-being in common usage tends to refer to the health of an individual, but that philosophical understandings are broader and refer to what is good for one, which could include good health among other ‘goods’ (see also Veenhoven, 2000). While health is certainly pertinent to the issue of wellness among students, this exploration will adopt and explore a broader conception but one that includes health. Veenhoven (2007) comments that the terms well-being, happiness, and often quality of life can be and are often used interchangeably although they also tend to have different sets of referents.

Sointu’s (2005) analysis of the rise of the ‘ideal’ of well-being from the 1980’s to the early 2000’s in media (specifically *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail*, national newspapers in the UK) traces a shift from well-being as associated with the ‘body politic’ and the health and

wealth of nations, to an individualised ideal of well-being, that carries an imperative for individuals to seek out and take responsibility themselves for their individual well-being.

*...conceptualisations and experiences of wellbeing are produced in and through wider social perceptions and practices...indeed, the increasing popularity of the ideal of well-being appears to reflect shifts in perceptions and experiences of individual agency and responsibility...in a consumer society, wellbeing emerges as a normative obligation chosen and sought after by individual agents (Sointu, 2005: 255).*

Her analysis suggests that individualisation and the rise of consumer culture has been associated with growing expert discourses available to self-reflexive individuals to carry out the project of identity creation and a self-directed life (ibid: 262). Sointu concludes that contemporary well-being practices chosen by individual consumers are meaningful, as they enable people to reproduce their identities in line with dominant norms and values. Nonetheless, the imperative for this individualised well-being can also be seen as a burden rather than a responsibility for those groups and individuals who experience marginalisation and resource challenges in their lives.

In the context of life satisfaction, well-being has been understood as the happiness of an individual over a life-time, as opposed to changing moods at particular moments in time (as has been the case with some measures of subjective well-being). As is often referred to in discussions of Aristotle's conception of eudaimonia, the evaluation of happiness of an individual's life is not necessarily possible until that life has reached completion. Sophocles concurs and writes in the classic Greek drama Oedipus Rex:

*Then learn that mortal man must always look to his ending,  
And none can be called happy until that day when he carries,*

*His happiness down to the grave in peace* (Oedipus Rex,  
Final Chorus: 68).

A further idea that can help to clarify what is meant by well-being in philosophic terms is that of value. Philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum (1995) theorise well-being or human flourishing as functions of particular capabilities we possess and value as human beings, or in the case of Sen (1995), well-being is the various functionings we are able to achieve in our lives, although combinations of valued functionings may vary from person to person. These scholars indicate that various ‘well-beings’ and human happiness involve *processes* of becoming as well as *achieved ends*.

From a humanitarian perspective, social transformers and reformers and political scientists and activists, including educationalists, have for generations been interested in and have reflected different understandings of well-being in their rhetoric and research. The major movements or schools that inform this review also draw on hedonic conceptions of well-being, which are concerned with people’s capacity to experience and access happiness and pleasurable activities and feelings. The Utilitarian philosophers of the nineteenth century were influential in their arguments for social reform and suggested that a good life should be lived according to the pleasure principle. J. S. Mill suggested that ‘(B)y happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain’ (*On Liberty and Utilitarianism* 1993; 144). These philosophers found it morally acceptable to maximise pleasure, and this should involve distributing this ‘good’ across society. The formula for distribution of pleasure would be guided by the principle that the misery of a few was preferred over the misery of many. Mill’s understanding of pleasure, however, is not of abandonment to merely base pleasures, animal appetites and the pleasures of swine, but an embracing of intellectual life and civilised social interaction.

A *moral* conceptualisation of human happiness arises from the question ‘what is a good life’, posed long ago by ancient Greek philosophers. This was a life lived in the exercise of virtue, and this virtuous practice would not just be in one’s own interest but also in the interest of others. Today, equality theorists and care theorists across disciplines work with ideas of other-interest<sup>1</sup> connection and interdependency to argue for particular visions of well-being and happiness. They share the view that the conception of the individual as a detached rational actor is inaccurate and argue that we are inevitably interdependent throughout our lives (Kittay, 1999; Nussbaum, 1995; Jaggard, 1995). The moral life is thus constituted through care for the well-being of self and others.

While there are many other theorisations and conceptualisations of happiness that are significant only major paradigmatic perspectives can be signposted and included in this short exploration. Newer disciplines including psychoanalytic theory and practice, for example, provide evidence that our past psychic experiences, the unconscious and our desires, are central to our capacity to flourish as adults (Chodorow, 1999), and that early affectionate and consistent attachment is key to subsequent emotional connection, satisfaction and well-being (Bowlby, 1988; Heard and Lake, 1997).

Cohen (2006) remarks in his article on well-being and education that we cannot teach children to be happy, but in research (Seligman, 2002) in positive psychology, there are three pathways to happiness: positive emotion, pleasure and engagement. The happiest people are those who orient themselves towards all three dimensions of happiness, and this has implications for education and schooling. Moreover, happiness research (Peterson, 2005) also suggests that of these three pathways, pleasure seeking is the least significant to leading a happy and satisfied life, a point which certainly echoes

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<sup>1</sup> Jaggard among others discusses this in terms of ‘heteronomy’ – a going out to the other (1995).

Aristotle's and others' conceptions of the relation between happiness, pleasure seeking and overall well-being. Moreover, there are those within the psychoanalytic perspective and postmodern philosophers who would question the very notion of a universal definition and conception of well-being, an issue that will be dealt with later.

## **1.2 HAPPINESS, WELL-BEING AND THE PROBLEM OF COMPETING AIMS**

The problem of definitions of happiness and well-being are considered here from a philosophical perspective, specifically the work of Nicholas White. White's work is chosen as it is a very recent publication which considers happiness and well-being from a philosophical perspective. In *A Brief History of Happiness*, White (2006) sets out to chart the history of a philosophical concept to which the English words 'happiness' and 'well-being' give expression, as does the Greek word *eudaimonia*. White is committed to the view that:

*[t]he best kind of history of such a philosophical concept is one that concentrates on and confronts interesting and important philosophical problems in which the idea figures. (White, 2006: 7).*

Because White wants his book to be a history in this vein, he openly eschews the chronological and contextual considerations associated with alternative historiographies. White tries to justify this problems-centred – some would say, relatively *ahistorical* – approach by claiming that one has to understand the concept in the abstract before 'one can begin to know what its history or contexts might tell one about it' (ibid: 8).

Following an introduction to the concept of happiness, White's problems-centred history of happiness goes on to explore several

distinct periods of the history of philosophy, although it has to be said that he devotes more time to ancient Greek philosophy than to any other period. Here is how he explains the significance of ancient Greek philosophy for his 'brief history of happiness':

*Most of the important ideas about happiness, and the difficulties that arise from them, were already present in the thinking of the ancient Greeks. Most philosophical questions about happiness that were investigated subsequently - though certainly not all of them - concerned which of those ideas to develop and refine and try to apply, and how to make sense of the obdurately problematic concept itself. That means that the history of happiness, especially when it's brief, has to be to a large extent the ancient history of happiness (though not, for that, the history only of ancient happiness (ibid: ix-x).*

White goes on to say that both non-philosophers and philosophers have the ability to understand and indeed to deploy the concept of happiness; yet both groups find that 'articulating the concept isn't easy' (ibid: 2). But where those who have not been trained in philosophy give up, convinced that they are simply not up to the task of specifying what happiness is, '[p]hilosophers and other thinkers' try hard to provide such a specification. He indicates this drawing on an overheard coffee-shop conversation:

*'Are you happy?,' one woman asked another in a coffee house not long ago. 'Well...,' the second began, 'Well, yes, but certain things bother me'; then she was unfortunately interrupted and didn't finish, and when she spoke again it was about something else (ibid: 1).*

White devotes Chapters 2-6 to an examination of a number of these attempts to clearly state what happiness is. Then in the concluding chapter, he makes the following somewhat perplexing statement.

*If having a concept of happiness requires that it meets a high standard of clarity, then you might well say that we don't really have a concept of happiness, or at least that it certainly doesn't show itself in the history of philosophy (ibid: 162).*

From the outset White has maintained two things: (1) *there is such a thing as a concept of happiness* (as we have already seen, it is said to be understood and deployed by philosophers and non-philosophers alike when they use words like 'happiness', 'well-being' and 'eudaimonia'.); and (2) *a problems-centred history of philosophy is the best kind of history of the concept of happiness*. But in issuing this statement what he is doing is effectively conceding that he cannot continue to hold these views if 'having a concept of happiness requires that it meets a high standard of clarity'. In other words, the validity of claims 1 and 2 above has been brought into question by what he is now obliged to recognize as the relative lack of clarity in what his selective history of philosophy has identified as the concept of happiness.

There is nothing controversial, however, in the starting point for White's inquiry into the meaning of happiness. Following Aristotle, he holds that all human beings have a plurality of conflicting aims. When he talks of a plurality of aims he means, that one 'wants' this and that and the other. One believes that such-and-such and so-and-so would be 'worthwhile' to do and experience. One knows that one would 'enjoy' or 'welcome' certain things and not others. In each such category a number of things come to mind. All of them are eligible for figuring in one's plans and choices (ibid: 3).

When he says that these various aims are in conflict with one another, he means that at the very least they compete 'for the resources and time necessary to gain them or, in the case of projects, to carry them out' (ibid.). Now, as White understands it, the condition of having conflicting aims is not a comfortable one for



human beings to be in. As such, it cannot be termed, 'a good condition'. When human beings imagine what would be a good condition for them, they think of 'the condition of happiness'. But what is it to be happy? White believes that this question must always be understood with reference to the 'fact' of our original condition. He says that a person who asks what it is to be happy

*expects the answer to guide her in dealing with her various aims, etc. She thinks that it will show her which of them should be retained, and how those that should be retained fit together (ibid: 162).*

In short, finding happiness is one and the same thing as finding the solution to the problem of having conflicting aims.

White admits that no such 'guiding concept' has emerged from his version of the history of philosophy. Bentham and Mill, for instance, claim that by identifying happiness as pleasure, though in different ways, they were helping to provide a criterion for right action. Epicurus had said the same thing, although his notion of pleasure had been yet another one. Plato made the same claim for his identification of the best human condition as harmony of the personality. Hobbes and Kant, though, had denied that there is any such guiding concept. Nietzsche seemed to agree that there is not one, and also asserted that a person's better off if he doesn't have one (ibid: 163).

The wide variation in the proposed solution to the problem of managing our conflicting aims prompts White to suggest that, whilst all philosophers are working with the same *problem*, their solutions do not offer 'identifications of one and the same concept' (ibid: 164). He could have gone on to conclude that, throughout the history of philosophy, there have been a number of different interpretations of happiness. Instead, he concludes that the concept of happiness

consists only in

*the problem of how to take all of our multiple aims, etc., duly into consideration, in view of the fact that they can't all be fulfilled or even pursued at once, and to make of them an overall measure of a person's condition' (ibid: 164).*

And with this decision he appears to dismiss as largely irrelevant to the inquiry of Plato's carefully worked out formula both for the harmony of the soul and of society, Aristotle's famous definition of happiness, and many other thought-provoking ideas on enhancing our common humanity.

### **1.3 RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY AND HAPPINESS**

One of the positive developments that we can associate with social scientific research is that it has enabled the exploration and indeed problematisation of religion and religious practice in relation to human development and well-being. As contemporary societies appear to be increasingly secular (at least in the West), social science research can cast some light on the relation between modern/postmodern life and religious activity. The search for personal meaning of course, presumes a certain kind of subject and subjectivity and indeed self (Taylor, 1994) that is not always evident in positivistic social scientific research, albeit that this research may be focused on well-being. The conception of the human being as a rational and autonomous economic actor (Rawls, 1971) only indirectly allows for questions about the spiritual and its relation to human flourishing.

Notwithstanding these contradictions, it seems to be a generally accepted finding that religiosity is one of the factors positively correlated with well-being. 'Religiosity' here includes holding religious beliefs and engaging in religious practices, usually within

the context of membership of a faith community, and is seen to confer a measure of identity and shared purpose as well as of overall orientation. A survey of relevant research suggests, 'that a consistent positive relationship between happiness and religiosity emerges over a range of different populations' ('happiness' here is defined in terms of 'absence of negative feelings such as deprivation and anxiety, the frequency and degree of positive affect or joy, and significant average levels of satisfaction over a period of time') (Francis, Gilpin and Robbins, 2000). Of 100 studies referred to in *The Handbook of Religion and Health*, 79 report a positive correlation between religious involvement and well-being (Koenig, McCullough and Larson, 2002).

Referring to a range of studies, another recent work claims that they 'all point to a significant association between religiosity and the variables associated with well-being; such an association appears to hold good for both sexes and for all age-groups from adolescence through retirement' (Fontana, 2003: 215). The same work claims that this positive correlation holds in the case of individuals whose religiosity is 'intrinsic' (i.e. deeply experienced and personally meaningful rather than acquired as a function of external or internal pressures).

Apart from the findings of empirical studies, other conceptual and analytical work in the recently emergent field of 'positive psychology' values religious and spiritual dimensions of experience much more highly than standard approaches in psychology have traditionally done. Influential theorists (Seligman, 2002; Layard, 2003; Nussbaum, 1995) have moved beyond hedonistic conceptions of well-being (foregrounding immediate pleasure, gratification and self-interest) to incorporate attitudes and dispositions that have long been esteemed in world faiths as well as in ancient philosophical schools (e.g. altruism, justice, temperance, gratitude; see Seligman, 2002; Haidt, 2006). In accord with this trend, it is argued that spirituality is an

element or dimension of human experience that must be accommodated in any adequate conception of well-being. ‘Spirituality’ here includes aspects of belief and practice enshrined within specific religious traditions and doctrinally based institutions, but it also encompasses, outside the framework of any specific religious tradition, ways of understanding and dealing with limit situations related to human vulnerability (especially death), as well as aspects of experience that are both precious and in some significant respects beyond our control (e.g. experiences related to ‘letting go, mystery, transcendence, grace and transformation’) (Pargament and Mahoney, 2002; Leontiev, 2006).

Apart from their new profile in psychology, religious, spiritual, and indeed, philosophical traditions, have a long-established and more direct connection with well-being; they have offered conceptions of what constitutes a well-lived human life and indicated the kind of practices through which it can be accomplished. Thus in the Christian gospels, the Beatitudes (‘happy are those who...’) encapsulate the essentials of such a life; or in the Four Noble Truths, Buddhism offers a diagnosis of human suffering and a path leading to liberation from it and to the attainment of enlightenment and serenity. (For the Dalai Lama [1999], Buddhism is the ‘art of happiness’, and even a neo-utilitarian such as Richard Layard (2005) appeals to Buddhist practices as means to well-being).

In the western philosophical tradition, too, the good life has been equated with flourishing or happiness and not only elaborated conceptually (as in Aristotle’s *Ethics*) but operationalised in a set of practices (e.g. in Stoicism and Epicurianism) that have been called ‘spiritual exercises’ (Hadot, 1995). These conceptions and practices have attracted a good deal of attention from recent influential thinkers (e.g. Foucault, 2006; Nussbaum, 1996; see also De Botton, 2001) who are eager to steer philosophy away from a sterile academicism towards the understanding and practice of *wisdom* (‘the

most manifest sign of wisdom', Montaigne writes in his essay 'On the Education of Children', is 'a constant happiness').

Other recent philosophical work is highly critical of the strong tendency in contemporary society to equate the good life with a *successful* life, (i.e. high performance and achievement focused on 'positional goods' (those defined through comparison and competition yielding relative 'winners' and 'losers' within a distribution limited by ultimate scarcity). Some of this work is also deeply appreciative of the riches bequeathed by religious traditions, especially Christianity, while at the same time finding it impossible to embrace the particularity and givenness (through faith and revelation) of these traditions. This work envisages a new post-religious spirituality that, repudiating the reductive character of much modern thought, remains open to insights and perspectives articulated by great religious and spiritual teachers (Ferry, 2005; Comte-Sponville, 1999).

Concern with religious and spiritual reality is not of course limited to adults; if anything, there is heightened sensitivity to it among children and adolescents. A pioneering work exploring young people's spiritual intuitions in various Christian, Jewish and Muslim, as well as in avowedly secularist horizons is Robert Coles' *The Spiritual Life of Children* (for educational approaches in this regard, see Yust, 2006; and for data on the relationship between young people's religious and spiritual lives and their wellbeing, see Michalos, 1991).

Although this part of the review has included the religious and spiritual as significant to our understandings of well-being, and goes some way to challenge the perspective of the human in terms of 'autonomous rational economic man', subsequent sections do not explore this large question in relation to adolescence and schooling. That is not to say it is not an important question, but rather to suggest that in the Irish context, the magnitude of the 'religious' issue

requires an inclusive public debate. The traditional structures and institutional power of schools with respect to religious teaching and ethos has been a dominant force in the past and even today. Ongoing failure to recognise diversity and difference in the Irish educational system blocks equality and causes unhappiness to those whose religious identity is denied in a system that is managed and controlled in the main by the Catholic Church. Gilligan (2007) suggests that in order to celebrate diversity we must generate an analysis on differences in power and privilege within society more generally and within the educational system specifically.

#### **1.4 PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONING OF THE NORMATIVITY OF WELL-BEING**

The revival of interest in and respect for the concept of well-being in philosophy, can be traced from the growing influence of a specific group of neo-Aristotelian philosophers in the latter part of the twentieth century, most especially the works of Alasdair MacIntyre and Martha Nussbaum. (Mac Intyre, 1981; Nussbaum, 1986).

Nussbaum's work also shows the influence of the more therapeutic dimension of late Hellenistic thinking in the Stoics and Epicureans. In contrast, Mac Intyre's philosophy fuses the earlier thinking with Christian philosophy. In terms of their influential conceptions of well-being or *eudaimonia*, however, both can be seen as heavily infused with Aristotelianism.

Each of these thinkers constructed their vision of philosophy and well-being through a critique of what they saw as the deficit of well-being and happiness in the philosophies stemming from the late nineteenth century thinker Friedrich Nietzsche, (Nietzsche, 1998) whose descendants became known as the postmodernist school within philosophy (Drolet, 2004). Mac Intyre went so far as to see it as an either/or choice, in his famous text *After Virtue* (Mac Intyre, 1981).

In this section, the reasons for the divergence between these two paradigms of philosophy, specifically with regard to the conception of well-being will be considered briefly. In *The Ethics*, Aristotle puts forward a view of human life which sees well-being and virtue as interdependent. Although well-being is defined as the ultimate goal of human life, the supreme end for which all other minor ends are sought, nonetheless, there is an impossibility of imagining some individual being happy without also being virtuous. This assumption of the connection between virtue and well-being is rooted in the Aristotelian principle that ‘all things tend toward the good’, elaborated in Book 1 of the *Ethics* (Aristotle, 1976). It also demonstrates Aristotle’s debt to his mentor Plato, who had argued in *The Republic* (and elsewhere) for the interdependence of social justice, well-being and individual virtue (Plato, 1970). In short, both Plato and Aristotle were arguing that in order to be happy one had to be good, and through this deployment of good, social justice would become a reality (at least ‘social justice’ as understood by Plato and Aristotle).

The appeal of such a philosophy is clear in the contemporary context. If ‘happiness’ or well-being has come to be defined more as an individual psychological state, whose obsessive pursuance evinces the paradigm contemporary ideal as narcissism above all else, then Platonism and Aristotelianism sound an important warning. The detachment of well-being as an ideal from its interdependence with virtue runs two huge risks. In the first case, it runs the risk of evolving a society incapable of caring about the justice or well-being of others; in short, it runs the risk of leading to *a society which can no longer care*. In effect, it can lead to the dissolution of the societal as such.

The second risk, and perhaps more to the point in our narcissistic age, is it foregrounds the price to be paid for this very narcissism if it

follows this route – without virtue, there can be no society, but *there can also be no individual happiness*. That is, the narcissist also has a lot to lose from the dissolution of society and the unravelling of the umbilical cord which links well-being and virtue. The reinvocation of such an Aristotelian perspective by figures such as Mac Intyre and Nussbaum is directed at both what they see as the current deterioration of contemporary society and also at the kind of philosophies which reject such an Aristotelian perspective and which can thus be held (at least theoretically) responsible for the current moral malaise.

Such anti-Aristotelian philosophies are myriad, covering much of modern and postmodern thought (Drolet, 2004). For the purposes of this review, it seems best to concentrate on a specific strand of this anti-Aristotelianism, what has come to be termed as ‘neo-Nietzscheanism’, or more broadly, post-modernism (Nietzsche, 1996/ Derrida 1972). The reasons for concentrating on this specific strand are, first, because of the extreme contrast may be more revealing and because many of the designated problems of youth culture are often said to have derived from the supposed ‘nihilism’ of neo-Nietzscheanism, which is said to be a paradigm which rejects the normativity of well-being in favour of ‘ill-being’ or what Freire has termed ‘necrophily’ (Freire, 1972).

A detailed analysis of the philosophy of ‘ill-being’ is beyond the scope of this project; however, it is instructive to look at some of the main reasons for the divergence between the neo-Aristotelians and the postmoderns with regard to the issue of well-being. Here, we can delineate at least three main disagreements between the two ideologies. First, while neo-Aristotelianism moves from the particular to the general, postmodernism tends to focus on *the particular as particular*. This is exemplified in Jean-Francois Lyotard’s famous definition of postmodernism as an ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’



(Lyotard, 1990). From the point of view of a general concept of well-being, consequently, the postmoderns would argue that there is no well-being as such; a generalised concept of well-being is a myth.

Second, postmodernism critiques the very idealisation of well-being or happiness *as such*. Why should well-being be the ultimate goal of human life? There is nothing self-evident about this and many postmodern thinkers opt for a different ultimate goal or, more commonly, no ultimate goal at all. Derrida rejects the concept of teleology in his essay 'The End(s) of Man', (Derrida, 1977) through pluralising both the idea of 'man' as such, and in turn affirming a plurality of 'ends' rather than one 'end'. Instead of a grand narrative of well-being, we then have a whole series of micro-narratives concerning the goals of human existence.

This view also looks back to Nietzsche's advocacy of perspectivism, (Nietzsche, 1996) the idea that there is no ultimate perspective on life's meaning, but only endless perspectives. It also looks across to the disavowal of well-being as an ultimate goal even in psychoanalytic therapy, at least of the Lacanian type: As Zizek has observed of Lacanian psychoanalysis:

*the goal of psychoanalytic treatment is not the patient's well-being, successful social life or personal fulfilment, but to bring the patient to confront the elementary coordinates and deadlocks of his or her desire. (Zizek, 2006).*

The example of Lacanianism also shows up differences within postmodern thought. Whereas Derrida is keen to deconstruct any ultimate telos, Lacan seems more inclined to replace the Aristotelian *telos* of well-being with the Lacanian *telos* of desire: 'the only thing of which one can be guilty is of having given ground relative to one's desire'. Indeed it is here that we perhaps get closest to what might be termed *the idealisation of ill-being* contra well-being. Slavoj Zizek

develops the enigmatic conception of the 'Real', which was originally introduced by Lacan, as a way of foregrounding what amounts to the impossibility in principle of well-being. As Terry Eagleton has observed:

*the Real is a psychoanalytic version of original sin...the primordial wound we incurred by our fall from the pre-Oedipal Eden, the gash in our being where we are torn loose from Nature, and from which desire flows unstaunchably. Though we repress this trauma, it persists within us as the hard core of the self* (Eagleton, 2003).

Other related examples of postmodern 'ill-being' can be found in Virilio's (Virilio, 2000) extreme pessimism and Georges Bataille's notion of a 'useless expenditure' (Bataille, 1988). These concepts can also be related to the emphasis on despair, anguish and abandonment in the existentialist philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Sartre (Kierkegaard, 1992; Mac Quarrie, 1972). Although out of fashion for several decades, the existentialists are currently more relevant than ever, with a recent surge of new publications re-evaluating their importance. This renaissance of concern with 'negativity', or what Hegel termed the 'unhappy consciousness' (Baugh, 2003), seems to mark a parallel, but contrary move, to the recent return of interest in well-being (Mac Intyre; Nussbaum).

A third difference between postmodernism and neo-Aristotelianism is that postmodernism attacks the emphasis on virtue. Nietzsche's critique of morality and virtue as a social construction with negative psychological effects for individuals in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche, 1996) is set up in opposition to the contrary assumption, in Aristotelianism, that 'being good' actually makes people happy. For Nietzsche, then, there is a need to move 'beyond good and evil'. This critique of morality is also a critique, according to the neo-Nietzscheans (Drolet, 2004) of the power structures which lie hidden

behind the veneer of altruism. Often, so-called ‘virtue’, can be a front for the maintenance of the status quo and a protection of vested interests. Paul Ricoeur refers to this aspect of Nietzsche’s work as emblematic of his being a ‘master of suspicion’.

This last point pushes us towards a more positive possibility within the postmodernist philosophy. Rather than such a philosophy being a recipe for nihilism, it may also be seen as offering the possibility of a critique of the blind spots within the discourse of neo-Aristotelianism or the more generalised discourse of well-being. It is this dimension of postmodernism, which has led to its importance for figures such as Giroux and Mc Laren, as critical thinkers on culture and politics. To this extent, postmodernism may be used as an argument less for an end to well-being than for the advent of a more authentic well-being (Irwin, 2007).

## **1.5 THE NORMATIVE: HAPPINESS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING**

This work explores the concept of a person’s well-being from the perspective of their perceived happiness. Helliwell (2003) notes that previously, psychological illness had been more frequently explored, and that since 1887, there are many more abstracts mentioning illness in mental health over life satisfaction. Moving from philosophical enquiry into the meaning of happiness to the field of psychology and particularly positive psychology, there is a surge of activity and research into happiness from the nineteen sixties onwards.

The scholarship and research that developed on well-being in the United States in the nineteen sixties were based on measures of subjective assessments of life satisfaction. Instruments were designed around questions, which inquired into how happy and how much fun people ‘felt’ they were having at a particular point in time. Commentators suggest that the interest in measures for accounting

for happiness goes back to Bauer (1966) at NASA, the space race, and concerns about how satisfied Americans were with their own lives, and moreover, a desire to design a system of national accounts for social change. In the United States, Wilson (1967) explored the attributes of a happy person and claimed he or she was typically young, well-paid extrovert, religious, optimistic and of a wide range of intelligence. The work of Campbell, Converse and Rodgers (1976) on *The Quality of American Life: Perceptions, Evaluations and Satisfactions* is also an example of this move to measure well-being according to an individual's experiences of life rather than the objective social conditions in which they lived.

Noll (2004) and Veenhoven (2007) suggest that this interest in social trends was born out of a political and economic optimism of that period in history and a desire to ensure continued growth and welfare relative to public costs. The approach in the US represents a strong association between the concept of well-being and subjective happiness, in contrast to a Northern European focus on welfare, measured on objective social indicators.

The subjective well-being movement gained currency and momentum on evidence from psychological studies that showed that large numbers of people have comparable concerns in respect of happiness despite variation in what is understood by happiness (remember White's conflicting and diverse aims). Cantril's seminal work (1965) studied well-being across 14 countries with diverse cultures and at widely different stages of economic development, asking the question what people want in life. He found that material circumstances, especially level of living, were mentioned most often, followed by family concerns, and health, and followed by concern about work. There have been many studies since which both support and challenge this view.

Early but influential work by Campbell et al. (1976) and also Andrews and Withey (1976) were based on sample surveys of how people defined their happiness and satisfaction with respect to the day-to-day conditions of social life. This research suggests that broader questions of politics and war are not as significant as people's everyday life and those aspects they feel they can control.

Diener (1984, 1994) and Diener et al's. (1999, 2000 (a), 2000 (b), 2004, 2006) extensive work within positive psychology has both developed and critiqued models and understandings of subjective well-being (SWB). This body of work suggests that the construct of well-being is comprised of three separable components, pleasant and unpleasant affect, and life satisfaction, the former being more time related, the latter more usable for assessing overall well-being. Data from this body of work suggest that at different times in our lives our perception of these *components* of happiness can be moving in different directions.

In a recent article, *Beyond the Hedonic Treadmill*, Diener et al. (2006) revise earlier models of SWB, particularly the work of Brickman and Campbell (1971) that suggested that people become habituated or adapt over time to changes in life circumstances, and that the effects of good or bad events on perceived happiness are temporary. The theory of adaptation is also based on the work of Carver and Scheir (1990), which maintains that emotions depend on the rate of change of important circumstances rather than on the circumstances themselves.

Diener et al. (2006) argue that adaptation theory had been accepted by psychologists because evidence of correlates between external circumstances and overall well-being are weak, and a body of longitudinal studies have shown that SWB does not change in relation to events over time. Having reviewed a large body of well-being research and critiqued it from the perspective of design and

appropriateness of measures used, they suggest five significant revisions in respect of adaptation theory and well-being:

1. People are not hedonically neutral and there is ample evidence of non-neutral set points from various samples, diverse cultural samples and world values research data. People report affect above neutral both positively and negatively. What is significant is that people who experience more frequent positive emotions create a more positive base line or set point.
2. People do have set points (Brickman and Campell, 1971) and these vary considerably across individuals. Set points are indicators of where individuals feel they are most of the time in respect of positive and negative affect. Most people's set points are not affectively neutral and the majority are usually positively above neutral, regardless of cultural differences. Diener et al. (2006) cite research which suggests this difference in set point is due to differences in personality and genes, and add that self-report personality measures also correlate strongly with well-being.
3. Individuals have multiple set points; SWB is not a single entity with a single base line. Positive and negative emotions and satisfaction may move in different directions at different times and at the same time. They suggest that there is no constant global happiness set point over time (evidence found in data from quality of life panel studies). Indeed, it is interesting that stable base lines are more characteristic of negative than positive affect.
4. Happiness *can* change. This is key to the revised understanding of hedonic approaches to happiness. The evidence is derived from examining life events relative to well-being differences across nations. There are strong differences in national well-being, which can be predicted from life circumstances. They underline the significance of economy (see Fujita and Diener, 2005). Over a 17

year period, considerable changes are found in overall well-being; 9% of a population altered by more than two standard deviations. Other variables like *health* were significant over time (see Lucas, 2005). Lucas found *group* differences in happiness were substantial for people who had a disability or were injured.

5. Individual differences occur in both the rate and extent of adaptation, even for the same event. Satisfied individuals benefit less than those with lower base lines from marriage for example! If an individual has many positive experiences then the gain from one more is less, and similarly for many negative events, one more may not have a large effect. It is deviation from typical life events that creates a change in well-being. The implication is that we need to pay attention to specifics of circumstances in individuals' lives.

Some research has highlighted the usefulness and reliability of SWB measures, and others its limitations:

- measures of SWB capture different underlying concepts (Diener and Seligman, 2004)
- measures of SWB are vulnerable to transient influences (Schwarz and Strack, 1999)
- SWB measures are affected by linguistic and cultural norms (Duncan, 2005).

The SWB movement has strongly influenced the direction of research and policy perspectives on happiness in that aggregates of measures of individual subjective well-being have been taken as valid evidence of the overall well-being of the American nation. There have been moves more recently in the United States to construct measures and indices of happiness for different populations for example the construction of composite child well-being indices

(Land, Lamb, Meadows and Taylor, 2005). Moreover, Huebner (1991) has suggested we need to explore life satisfaction as a whole over and above individual aspects of life. Cummins (1996, 1997) suggests the construction of a well-being index should take account of differences in how individuals rate key elements, that certain domains of SWB reoccur, that there exists a high degree of similarity on ratings of domains, and most importantly, there is similarity between ratings on domains and consensus of expert panels.

In Ireland, the Department of Health and Children in association with the Department of Family Affairs commissioned a major longitudinal research study on children's well-being, *Growing Up In Ireland*. This is a shift in Irish policy and the first study of its kind in the country. A key step in gathering this data was to develop agreed indicators of child well-being. The *Report on the Development of a National Set of Child Well-Being Indicators* (Hanafin and Brooks, 2005) describes the rigorous staged approach that was necessary to draw up an agreed set of indicators. This process aimed to include the voices of children, expert panels and a review of indices used internationally. The resulting set of indicators has nine dimensions which reflect the complexity of understandings around children's well-being and include an holistic perspective on the lives of children. The dimensions in the Irish indicator set are

- physical and mental well-being
- emotional and behavioural well-being
- intellectual capacity
- spiritual and moral well-being
- identity
- self-care



- family relationships
- social and peer relationships
- social presentation (Hanafin and Brooks: 5).

The dimensions identified in the report are broadly based but do not highlight the issue of material well-being which is an indicator used in international conceptions (see Allardt 1993, for example).

## **1.6 WELL-BEING, SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-ESTEEM**

Modern conceptualisations of self-esteem and self-efficacy are linked to the philosophical debates on the nature of virtue and related matters discussed above. The traditional view of *self-esteem* is that it involves having a positive evaluation of the self, and can thus be said to have narcissistic overtones. Some recent research (e.g. Crocker & Park, 2004) has shown that some ways of pursuing self-esteem appear to have more substantial costs. This is especially the case when the pursuit of self-esteem involves devaluing others so that the self looks good in comparison (what is referred to as downward comparison) and in self-serving perceptual biases which involve seeing things not as they are but in line with ways that maintain our self-esteem. This research has resulted in a serious questioning of traditional ideas of self-esteem and in favouring conceptions of self-esteem that do not rely on external contingencies which require external validation from others, but where the self comes to be judged in terms of other standards including the inherent nature of the contribution that the person makes to others.

Thus, the criticism is that if self-esteem is the central goal in people's lives, they will be preoccupied with what the behaviour means in relation to themselves, rather than be focused on what others need, even when the motivation is to 'do good'. Rather than being a fundamental motivational force, it has been suggested that the pursuit

of self-esteem is a particularly American phenomenon born of the nation's founding ideologies.

Alternatively, Bandura (1997) defined *self-efficacy* as an individual's confidence in their ability to organise a given course of action, to solve a problem or to accomplish a task. In his definition, efficacy beliefs vary in strength, in generality and level. Thus, some people have efficacy beliefs that encompass many situations, others have narrow efficacy beliefs; some perceive themselves to be efficacious on very difficult tasks while others only on easy tasks.

Proponents of the concept of self-efficacy emphasise its differences from self-esteem. A major factor is around the emphasis on the capacity to DO. Secondly, there is considerable evidence that measures of self-efficacy are better predictors of achievement and motivation, especially when comparisons are made with measures of global self-esteem (Bandura, 1997).

While the links between self-esteem and various philosophical/political viewpoints are relatively easy to make, self-efficacy has not been subject to the same analysis in terms of historical/philosophical linkages. Nevertheless, the resemblance of self-efficacy with ideas of human 'flourishing' is striking and may reflect the origin of the concept in clinical work, especially the treatment of fears and phobias.

### **1.6.1 Self-esteem, self-efficacy and resilience**

In recent research, self-esteem has not fared well as a predictor of social behaviour. Traditionally, it was thought that low self-esteem was an important cause of violence but the opposite had turned out to be the case (Baumeister, 1999). The conclusion of that review is that violence appears to be most commonly the result of threatened egotism, that is, highly favourable views of the self that are disputed by some circumstance or person. What emerges particularly strongly

is the finding that unstable or tentative beliefs in the superiority of the self may be especially prone to encountering such threats and consequently to result in violence. While it is beyond the scope of this exploration to go much beyond this finding, high self-esteem has not fared especially well in relation to any aspects of social behaviour or indeed achievement.

In contrast, studies of self-efficacy show that there are at least three important consequences of self-efficacy that have been demonstrated across a variety of studies (summarised by Schunk, 2004). The first positive outcome is in the selection of challenging activities; if someone feels that a new and potentially difficult task is beyond what they can do (low self-efficacy), they will not try, because avoidance prevents the frustration or embarrassment to self. This in turn results in restriction in the range of activities that people will try. The second consequence is on effort and persistence; people with low self-efficacy give up earlier. It is not that self-doubt disappears with high self-efficacy, but rather that the people with high self-efficacy make a quicker recovery and are therefore more resilient. The third consequence is the quality of thinking. Low self-efficacy induces the self-doubt, this in turn results in intrusions, leading to a higher anxiety level and in tension with positive affect and well-being.

## **1.7 EXTERNAL INDICATORS, SWB AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

Alongside the growth of the SWB research movement in the United States, an alternative tradition grew out of the European, often policy driven, work on welfare<sup>2</sup> and quality of life. In contrast to the subjective assessment of well-being, this tradition suggests that an individual's quality of life can be assessed against objective, social evidence based on indicators *and* individuals' perceptions of satisfaction. This approach raises numerous questions as to which

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2 Numerous authors have drawn attention to Allardt's (1993) work in which he explains that the word for welfare and well-being are indeed the same in all Scandanavian languages (Swedish, Danish and Norwegian) as well as in Finnish.

social conditions should be included as most significant to well-being, if they vary across populations, and if they change over time, and whether some conditions are more necessary than others.<sup>3</sup>

Veenhoven's (2000, 2007) contribution to conceptualisation of models of quality of life or well-being draws a useful distinction between qualities that are preconditions for a good life, and qualities that are outcomes of a good quality of life. She also distinguishes between sociological environmental qualities and psychological or internal capitals<sup>4</sup>, and suggests that even when environmental and external conditions are conducive to well-being, individuals vary in their internal or psychological capacities to exploit these conditions. This approach attempts to suggest how external/objective and internal/subjective experiences of well-being are interrelated. In developing her 'liveability model' she draws on Glatzer and Zapf's four-fold classification of welfare (1984) as an exemplar of models for assessment of quality of life using both objective and subjective measures.

In Glatzer and Zapf's model, a good objective and subjective life score denotes well-being, two negative scores on both scales are understood as deprivation, dissonance is used as a term to describe situations when external factors are good but subjective ratings are poor, and the combination of poor conditions with positive subjective appraisal is termed adaptation. Veenhoven (2000) developed this model further to create a 'liveability theory', which includes the *resources required*, and the *outcomes expected* for a good life. The criteria for assessing quality of life should include liveability of the environment, life-ability of the individual, external utility of life, and inner appreciation of life (ibid: 1).

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3 See Sen (1993) for example on basic and complex human functionings. All human beings have requirements for basic functionings that must be met for minimal living and beyond that basic level the sets of capabilities vary across individuals

4 Reay (1998), Lynch (2007) and O'Brien (2008 forthcoming) discuss the capacity of women to access emotional and nurturing capitals in order to care for others.

### **1.6.2 External indicators, material resources and happiness**

In recent decades, in the European context, many scholars have been involved in research that has critiqued the SWB model, and argued that welfare/well-being should be based principally on objective criteria of welfare. There are variations as with Veenhoven (2007) above who draws on composite approaches in measuring within and across nation well-being. Researchers who use objective factors, along with those who advocate composite approaches, tend to agree that simple econometric measures of external conditions such as GNP or GDP are not sufficient to suggest the quality of life of a nation (Layard 1993, Mathews, Statistical Directorate OECD, 2006). The OECD suggests that GDP alone was never intended to be used as a measure of well-being, and we need to bear in mind distinctions between quality and quantity of growth (Kuznets, 1962). Nevertheless, GDP is still typically used to show how well a country is doing! OECD (2006) cites a US article in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1995) 'If GDP is up, why is America down?' (1995). This perspective is criticised as it only takes into account interactions in which money changes hands, and moreover, such aggregate measures do not take the distribution of capital across the population or group inequalities into account.

Moreover, Boarini (OECD, 2006) highlights the weaknesses between aggregate economic measures and well-being, and argues that although there is a correlation between GDP and other social indicators of well-being, there is no relationship between GDP *per capita* and various social outcomes that reflect well-being and quality of life. There is for example a negative correlation between suicide, relative poverty and changes in GDP. Moreover, there is low cross-country correlation between SWB and social indicators (Boarini, 2006).

Evidence from economics and social science has been somewhat contradictory and difficult to interpret with respect to income effects on well-being without specific interrogation of the measurement methods and instruments used. Lane (2000's) influential work, *The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies*, suggests that on average, the increase in wealth in developed countries, in income, and education, has not made us any happier. Some studies of SWB have also suggested a weak link between income and happiness, and others report that the correlation only holds at the lower income ranges. Easterlin (2001) an economist suggests that despite ambivalent evidence from measures of income and SWB, we cannot discount the testimonies of individuals across countries, as it is most frequently mentioned as a source of happiness.

Helliwell (2003) conducted an examination of differences and trends in well-being internationally and nationally over the last two decades of the twentieth century. He suggests that evidence from unemployment studies shows that well-being is not just affected only by the income/material effects of unemployment but that the loss of work constitutes a greater social and personal loss, such as loss of meaning (Seligman, 2005). Helliwell also cites a study by Frey and Stutzer (2002) in Switzerland, which reports that in the Swiss cantons, accountable government was most associated with higher well-being implying the individual's sense of participation in a truly democratic society creates well-being (see also Cohen, 2006 on democracy and well-being).

The work of Fahey, Nolan and Whelan (2003) emphasises the significance of GDP for well-being. Data from the European Values Survey (1999-2000) states that across 33 countries, national GDP per capita explains up to 85% of the variance in average life satisfaction. Fahey, Whelan, and Maitre (2005) in the *First European Quality of Life Survey* found a clear relation between income at household and

national level, and quality of life across EU countries using both objective and subjective indicators. Moreover, patterns of disadvantage on objective indicators showed similar trends to those on subjective indicators. They say

*taking all the indicators together and keeping in mind that it represents a generalised picture, the EU 28 displays strong and robust patterns of relative deprivation, insofar as those who are disadvantaged tend to also 'feel' disadvantaged (Fahey, Whelan, and Maitre, 2005: 3).*

Research conducted by Fahey and Smyth (2004) within thirty-three European societies also identifies linkages between socioeconomic conditions and subjective well-being. They found that populations in the rich parts of Europe had equally high life satisfactions while those in the poorer societies had low and unequal life satisfaction. Social inequalities within rich European countries had little effect on life satisfaction while they had significant effects in poor countries. Moreover, inequalities *between* European societies had strong effects on well-being.

In his review of quality of life literature, Anderson (2004) cites German longitudinal panel data research (Fijters, Haisken-DeNew et al., 2002) that shows an increase in life satisfaction for East Germans after reunification. This is associated with improved services and an increase in household income, the latter only accounting for 12% of the increase in satisfaction. Helliwell's arguments on well-being also draw on this type of evidence. In his review of economic relations and SWB, he posits that what matters is the income *decile* in which one finds oneself, and that beyond a certain relativity, there is no effect. Layard (1993) and World Values Survey suggest that beyond a certain income there is a negative effect on well-being because of the breakdown of other important aspects of social life such as participation and trust in relation to increasing wealth.

Nonetheless, lack of access to economic capital results in deprivation of goods and services that the majority of the population consider necessary for life in that society (see measures of relative poverty ESRI 2001 for example). Exclusions including economic exclusion that marginalises social groups denies them access to the goods that are considered necessary for functioning and flourishing (Lynch, 1999).

### **1.7.2 Health, wellness and income**

Notwithstanding the mixed effects of income on well-being, Wilkinson (2002) has argued that there is a significant relationship between health and income, an issue that directly affects our well-being. He suggests that '(A) politics of health that is substantially a politics of social relations, relating our psychological needs as human beings to the social structure in which we live' impacts on our wellness and quality of life (Wilkinson, 2002: 540). His data indicate that the health of the poor appears more sensitive to changes in income than the health of the rich, and that societies where there are narrower income inequalities across the population are healthier.

Outside of income per se, social status is also associated with health and has been seen as a psychological risk factor (see also Charlesworth, Gilfillan and Wilkinson, 2004). Feeling subordinate is a serious risk factor in the work-space and research has indicated (Marmot, Bosma et al., 1997) that individuals need to feel they have control over work and stress, not to feel subordinate, or that someone else has control. In Charlesworth et al's. (2004) work, they suggest that social status has been associated with risks of suicide and depression.

Economically unequal societies are also more violent, and they are also more male dominated (Wilkinson in Kawachi, Kennedy and Wilkinson, 1999) and thus, women's status tends to be lower which



impacts on mental health. This work points to the relation between power and social and economic capitals. Wilkinson concludes we need to take a more careful look at social capital and the 'basic grammar of social power' (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). There has been an increasing interest in the issue of social capital as conceptualised by Putnam (1993) as societies appear to lack cohesion and individuals experience increased isolation from community, family and intimate relations under a global social order (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001).

## **1.8 WELL-BEING MODELS COMBINING OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE APPROACHES**

The significance of social, economic and cultural resources to the agency of individuals and groups has been elaborated in Bourdieu's (1986) thesis of social reproduction and domination. Bourdieu refers to these resources as 'capitals'. Researchers using social/objective indicators on well-being and quality of life have built upon this work; however, Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus as a set of learned unconscious and conscious dispositions, that are acquired and shaped by the social structure, more closely approximates the composite approach to well-being, as a relation between objective external and subjective internal factors. Many shades of social reformers from the liberal to the radical have since theorised relations between these capitals and developed measures of capitals that are essential to human participation and flourishing in society.

As it is not possible to discuss fully the volumes of research that has been gathered with respect to capitals and well-being, three models/approaches that are inclusive of the idea of subjective and objective factors and that have applicability to the context of schooling are outlined; the work of Sen (1995) on human capabilities, Allardt's model of welfare as 'having, loving and being' (1993) and the equality framework (Baker et al., 2004).

### **1.8.1 Sen and the capability model of well-being**

Although Sen's scholarship has been in the field of economics, his approach to well-being is not a purely economic model. The capability approach draws on the notion of individual agency, choice and utility. Capability is the term adopted to represent the alternative combination of things a person *is able to do or be* (the various functionings he or she can achieve). A capability approach to a person's advantage or well-being is concerned with evaluating it in terms of his or her ability to *achieve valuable functionings* as a part of living.

The capability of a person reflects the various combinations of functionings the person can achieve. Basic and complex functionings are distinguished in this model (e.g. being well nourished, being in good health are basic to achieving well-being). While Sen does specify some basic functionings, the complex functionings are contestable across individuals (as there are differing perspectives across individuals on what well-being is). The context we live in shapes how far we get with certain functionings. For individuals living in poverty, for example, the functionings may focus around feeding, health and shelter; in more developed economic situations, the functionings will be more diverse. Sen acknowledges the problem of values within a substantive model of quality of life. He argues that we cannot escape issues of choice and value in the specific context in which we function, so there is a need for discrimination and selection.

The capability approach is concerned with identifying the value objects and sees the evaluative space for well-being in terms of functionings and capabilities to function. Moreover, this approach does not attach direct importance to the *means of living* or freedom (e.g. wealth, primary goods, real income); these are means to functionings not functionings per se. This is the essence of Sen's

model. Sen does not prescribe values and sees the advantage of his non-prescriptive approach lies in the freedom of individuals to lead different kinds of lives. The issue of freedom raises further problems however, as the number of available alternatives in a given context do not necessarily represent degrees of freedom. We might have the choice of ten things to do but may not value any of them.

Sen makes a distinction between a person's overall goals and well-being. Overall goals may not be about the pursuit of well-being. Examining freedom to achieve is also distinct as one can have the freedom and not achieve. Sen makes categorical distinctions between the following: the promotion of the person's well-being, the pursuit of a person's overall agency goals, achievement and freedom to achieve.

#### 1.8.1.1 Well-being, agency and living standards

Well-being achievement is the evaluation by a person of their overall well-being. Well-being is seen from the perspective of his or her personal welfare, the functionings that contribute to overall welfare. Sen brings in the concept of interdependency and recognises that well-being can also be other-regarding. Doing good can be seen as a functioning achievement contributing to overall well-being. Indeed, feminist interdisciplinary scholarship has explored the issue of other-centredness and care, and suggested that women's ethical practices and their sense of identity and well-being have become deeply bound to care practices (Bubeck, 2001) although some aspects of quality of life are severely compromised. An assessment of agency achievement would be to evaluate the functionings relative to goals. Sen distinguishes between standard of living and well-being, in the former the concern is only with one's own functionings, while well-being may include concern and functioning with respect to the well-being of another, for example, a misfortune that befalls friends may affect our well-being but not our standard of living.

With respect to issues of equality and well-being, Sen suggests it would be useful to identify a subset of capabilities that are seen to be basic needs, which he defines as needs that fulfil well-recognised *urgent* claims. He argues for the identification of acceptable levels of basic capabilities below which a person should not have to live. This approach he believes would yield a fuller way of thinking about poverty than confining it to basic income. Moreover, Sen suggests that there is a need to see basic income levels as variable with respect to different groups or communities.

Although Sen's model has been critiqued as too general and non-specific about valued functionings, he sees this as the very usefulness of the capability approach. He suggests that other specific theories of value might be consistent with the capability approach. The capability approach agrees the space of value objects but allows for varying methods in how these are weighted. The strength of the capability approach rests on the very fact that particular valued objects do not have to be specified as in happiness or desire fulfilment approaches. (This is an interesting approach when applied to the field of education and formal schooling!). Sen's capability approach also avoids naming primary goods or resources as constituents of well-being, and rather views them in terms of their impact on capabilities, while Baker (2007) distinguishes the equality model (Baker et al., 2004) from the capabilities model, by arguing for the very significance of certain primary goods and resources as means to well-being.

Sen says it may be a mistake to keep pressing to be more specific until one arrives at one mechanism for assessing a metaphysics of value and suggests we agree on the evaluative space and that the capabilities approach in its incompleteness or generality offers a space for the doing a 'social calculus' with respect to well-being achievement and well-being freedom (Sen 1993: 50).

### **1.8.2 Welfare and well-being; having, loving and being**

Allardt's (1993) model for a comparative assessment of welfare (well-being) across Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland was developed and adapted from an earlier Swedish welfare model, which was based solely on objective indicators of well-being. Allardt suggests that use of objective indicators may capture level of living, but does not capture individuals' satisfactions or dissatisfactions with those aspects of their lives. He suggested a revised composite model of well-being using both subjective and objective measures. He also departs from the earlier Swedish model, which focused principally on resources available as indicators of basic need fulfilment. Allardt suggests that resources are only one component of welfare and that a more inclusive approach is required. In order to consider the conditions required for the flourishing or development of human beings, a move was made from a materialistic model to one that included the context of human relationships, and also the capacity of people to participate in society politically, and in terms of leisure and a meaningful work life.

In this model (see Table 1 below), 'having' refers to having health and education, as well as economic resources, housing and work. It also includes the mental and physical work environment. 'Loving', as the term suggests, refers to social relations in intimate and less intimate contexts, including attachments to community, extended kin, work attachments and organisational affiliations. The 'being' aspect on the positive side is characterised by personal growth and by alienation on the negative side. The 'being' indicators measure participation in political life, participation in leisure activities, opportunities for meaningful work, and the opportunity to enjoy nature and activities in nature.

The strengths of this approach are that the subjective and objective

indicators can be cross tabulated across these various dimensions of well-being and individuals' happiness or unhappiness, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, with various aspects of life can be analysed. This model has had increasing influence on wellness research in the field of education across Scandinavia and Finland.

*Table 1. Use of different indicators for research into living conditions*  
(Taken from Allardt (1993) in Nussbaum and Sen (1993) p. 93)

	Objective indicators	Subjective indicators
Having (material and personal needs)	1. Objective measures of level of living and environmental conditions	4. Subjective feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with level of living and environmental conditions
Loving (social needs)	2. Objective measures of relationships to other people	5. Unhappiness/ happiness subjective feelings about social relations
Being (needs for personal growth)	3. Objective measures of people's relation to (a) society, and (b) nature	6. Subjective feelings of alienation/personal growth

### 1.8.3 An equality framework for well-being

The theoretical framework for Baker et al's. (2004) Equality Model for Well-Being is located in interdisciplinary egalitarian scholarship and represents a radical egalitarian position. This model sees equality as a key aspect of human well-being and flourishing. As other commentators have often suggested, human flourishing can be evaluated and described according to the values of liberty, equality and 'fraternity', or the latter more recently understood as the more gender friendly term of solidarity. The issue of value and capability as well-being has already been discussed and this conceptualisation argues that equality is a central value to well-being. Moreover, radical egalitarianism is not in conflict with the values of solidarity or freedom or other widely held democratic values (Baker et al. 2004). Indeed solidarity and freedom are fundamentally related to equality.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Baker et al. (2004) Chapter Two pp. 46-63 for a full discussion of this issue.

It is difficult, for example, to be free when one does not have the means to participate in a society. The question of course that is significant for well-being is what kind of equality we are talking about. The formulation of a framework by the centre at University College Dublin is useful in answering this question. The framework suggests that there are a variety of societal contexts in which inequalities are generated:

- the economic-inequalities of distribution
- the cultural-inequalities of recognition
- the political-inequalities of power
- the affective-inequalities of love, care and solidarity
- and most recently the context of working and learning.

While each context is generative of particular types of inequalities, the contexts are also interrelated. The economic context, for example, may also structure the political in ways to exclude low-income groups from participation. Likewise, and what is significant to this report, systemic inequalities between individuals or groups in respect of learning and schooling will often preclude other forms of cultural and social participation and impact on current or future well-being.

A second key element in the framework addresses the notion of levels of equality with respect to human flourishing. These are categorised along a continuum from basic equality to formal basic equality, to liberal and radical perspectives. Radical equality of condition is what the authors argue for, but they acknowledge that this is a visionary or utopian ideal given current increasing divisions in the economic and other contexts of life. For some people on the globe even basic equality of resources, food, water and shelter remain problematic while others face prejudicial treatment and exclusions

from society on the basis of legal and political systems that have traditionally favoured culturally dominant groups and practices.

### 1.8.3.1 Affective equality and well-being

While some of the contexts for equality reflect similar concerns as other models, the aspect of this framework that has not been as fully explored in other models, is that of an affective context and the issues of love, care and solidarity that are fundamental to human flourishing. Where social capital models or criteria have been elaborated, social relations, the issue of solidarity is usually addressed without much reference to the realities of love and emotion. Although these are signposted in Allard's model, they are not theorised to the same extent. Lynch in particular has argued for a number of decades for the recognition of caring and love relations as fundamental to well-being (Lynch, 1989; Lynch and McLoughlin, 1997; Lynch, 2007), and as significant forms of labour that impact on the well-being of the carer, an issue that is not explored in the welfare model.<sup>6</sup>

Effects of the absence of relations of love and care have been documented in psychoanalytic and attachment theories (Bowlby, 1984; Chodorow, 1999), and the impact of conflictual caring relations on adolescent girls has been researched by Gilligan, Rogers and Tollman (1991). More recently, drawing on the work of Lynch (1989) and Baker et al. (2004) the issue of inequalities of care in institutional settings and their impact on learning literacy has been documented by Feeley (2007, a). Drawing on the equality framework (2004), O'Brien (2005, 2007, 2008) has argued that inequalities in capitals in the cultural, economic and social contexts shape the capacity of mothers to exploit emotional capital to support children's schooling (see also Reay, 1998). O'Brien and Flynn (2007) and

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<sup>6</sup> There is a large body of feminist interdisciplinary scholarship, which addresses inequalities experienced by carers, particularly in the context of mothering and care (Jaggar, 1995; Kittay 1999, Held, 1995; Fineman, 2001. This is discussed in depth later).



Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon (2007) suggest that schooling is a context where some individuals and groups of children experience inequalities of care. Methods of streaming and categorising children, overemphasis on academic assessment, and a lack of recognition for multiple intelligences all contribute to a lack of care in schooling (see also Cohen, 2006).

In their book, *Equality from Theory to Action*, Baker et al. (2004) devote a chapter to exploring inequalities in respect of education and echo Lynch and Lodge's (2002) exploration of equality and power in schooling. In Baker et al.'s (2004) analysis, they describe systemic processes within schooling that consistently disadvantage individuals and social groups; these are: streaming and ability grouping, the narrowly focused academic curriculum in most Irish second-level schools, the disciplinary procedures and surveillances of students, the power inequalities inherent in our society between adult and adolescent, timetabling and organisational practices that place burdens on students and their families. These authors argue that well-being is not possible in education without equality.

*In a global order where advanced skills in literacy and numeracy are required for economic, political and social participation, one is confined to a state of powerlessness, dependence and lack of control if one is deprived of education: education is necessary for the exercise of global citizenship. Equality in education matters therefore for the full exercise of people's capabilities, choices and freedom's in an information-driven age* (Baker et al. 2004: 141).

The key issues in relation to schooling, well-being and equality will be explored in-depth in Chapter Three.

## Summary and Conclusions: What do we mean by ‘happiness’, ‘well-being’, ‘quality of life’?

This first chapter has tried to address the definitional or substantive question of what is understood by well-being, happiness and the associated, and often interchangeably used term, quality of life. The exploration of the literature in Chapter One has been broadly based, including philosophical understandings of well-being and happiness, and a questioning of the normativity of happiness. It has reviewed research and scholarship on subjective well-being (SWB) located mostly within the field of positive psychology, and the related issues of self-esteem, self-efficacy and well-being. The influence of social indicators and welfare approaches to well-being cannot be underestimated and have been used extensively at national and international levels to inform policy on the well-being of nations. Finally, this chapter considered some substantive models for well-being developed from interdisciplinary work, and which would appear to hold potential for arguing for particular perspectives on well-being and its measurement.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this section of the review is that there are a number of approaches to understanding well-being, and that these have developed in accordance with historical, cultural and philosophical positions, relative to disciplinary traditions and their dominance in research and the academy.<sup>7</sup> While earlier philosophical thinking on happiness was captured by Aristotle in the term *eudaimonia*, the emergence of the social sciences, especially

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<sup>7</sup> Foucault (1991) suggests the historical dominance of particular traditions and disciplines is a form of power-disciplinary power which operates to marginalise those outside dominant practices.

psychology, has broadened the idea to include subjective insights on happiness that have given currency to this more modern conception of well-being. It would seem that a postmodern position, which posits that there is no grand narrative but rather many diverse ones, captures the problem of defining and modelling well-being. Nonetheless, there is certainly some agreement across disciplinary fields on key aspects of well-being and similarities in patterns of conceptualisation, and in attempts to measure the concept or reality;

- There is an ongoing philosophical argument that well-being is about human flourishing over time and not just about hedonistic happiness in the present moment.
- Our cognitive, emotional and embodied capacities and dispositions, and our individuality mean not only that well-being varies across individuals in similar circumstances, but also that our choices for various aspects of well-being will differ, so well-being ends cannot be specified universally.
- It should also be borne in mind that the difficulties involved in measuring well-being or aspects of well-being have been well documented in the literature, and that it is important to recognise that measures of well-being may not be accurate in different contexts, and across varying populations; aggregate measures of populations only tell us about average or typical cases with respect to aspects of well-being.
- Subjective well-being is about how satisfied we feel and how happy or unhappy we perceive ourselves to be at various points in time. Our perceptions and feelings matter, and if we are unhappy a great deal then our sense of well-being is at risk.

- It is not only our subjective accounts of well-being that contribute to our flourishing but external factors across various contexts of life deeply impact on our capacities to lead a ‘good life’; resources matter to a certain point—money, health, education, environment are related to quality of life.
- While well-being ends cannot be specified universally, the means to achieve basic levels of well-being could and, some would argue, should be specified from an equality perspective.
- As with all measurement and indicators that act as a proxy for a slippery concept, it is important that conceptual and theoretical work on aspects of well-being continue to deepen so we do not lose sight of the various ideas behind the measures and empirical data.

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**CHAPTER TWO**

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Adolescents and  
well-being

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter One explored various perspectives and understandings of human well-being and wellness generally. Chapter Two considers research and discourse particular to the time of adolescence and salient issues that have emerged with respect to the happiness and wellness of young people. This chapter also draws upon and discusses scholarship in social science that has specifically set out to gather data and measure wellness in adolescents using measures discussed in the previous chapter.

Chapter Two draws on the most recent major international report on children and adolescent well-being, launched by UNICEF in February 2007. This is a seminal report in the Irish context as research carried out in Ireland has been limited (it is only recently that a national longitudinal study of children and their quality of life has been undertaken, first announced in 2002 and currently at the pilot stages by the National Children's Office). This chapter also discusses an important development in the national context, the recent development of child and adolescent well-being indicators with children and young people themselves (Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith, 2005).

Once again, it is important to flag the breadth of research and scholarship that could inform such an exploration and to state that what is presented here is a summary, albeit an interdisciplinary view of key issues for young people's well-being in today's society. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the period of adolescence itself is one constructed primarily through discourses within developmental psychology, and discourses of youth in sociology, and our understandings and investigations are shaped by these constructions.

Wyn and White (1997) among other youth writers in sociology have suggested that it is impossible to talk about adolescents and their

development as if they were a homogenous group. Their lived experiences are situated in specific cultural and national contexts and are relative to the recognitions of their particular ethnic, gendered, racial and classed identities. Indeed the UNICEF report from twenty-one OECD wealthy nations suggests that this is a serious limitation of large-scale international reports. Notwithstanding the significance of these particularistic identities and experiences, there is however a sense that young people do share particular struggles in developed western societies. The literature can be contradictory however. The work of Rutter and Smith (1995) and Collinshaw, Maughan, Goodman and Pickles (2004) have suggested a significant rise in adolescent mental health problems in the later half of the twentieth century across nearly all developed countries, while data from the US and the Netherlands has suggested no significant increase in mental health issues. This chapter will try and strike a balance drawing on findings from research that universalise key issues in adolescent well-being, and work that explores well-being and wellness of adolescents in particular contexts.

The chapter will explore the six key areas of well-being pertaining to adolescent and child well-being that are used in the UNICEF international report: material well-being, health and safety, family and peer relationships, behaviours and risks, feelings and subjective assessments of well-being and indeed educational well-being. While Chapter Three considers the issue of wellness and second-level education in depth, it is important to discuss at a general level the relationship between education and wellness within the overall context presented in the Child Well-being Report Card (2007).

The purpose of the well-being report card is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the lives of young people in line with the conceptualisation of well-being and sentiments expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, while the

framework for reporting patterns in the international report is very useful, it may not capture particular aspects of adolescent well-being that have been recently explored in disciplinary scholarship. As stated earlier, research based on aggregate data does not reflect the conditions experienced by particular groups of children within countries. The authors of the UNICEF child well-being report also indicate that these data are based on the lives of children who tend to be living at home and are in mainstream education, and those who are marginalised, who are in institutions, refugees, and those from immigrant backgrounds are not represented adequately by this type of data.

## **2.2 MATERIAL WEALTH AND ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING**

In the Irish context, what is highly significant in the UNICEF report card is that despite unprecedented economic growth in Ireland and the fact that many young people today have access to greater economic capital than their parents did, Ireland ranks very poorly with respect to adolescent material well-being, being positioned nineteenth out of twenty-one wealthy countries. The question of how inequalities in economic capital impact on young people is significant, and is considered using both data from the international report and other sources of qualitative research on child and adolescent poverty (Combat Poverty Agency, 2001). Notwithstanding the low ranking of Ireland on this measure, Ireland still ranks in ninth place overall, across all six measures, and the authors of the report advise that no one domain of well-being can act as a proxy for overall well-being<sup>1</sup>.

As discussed earlier, international data from economics and SWB research have suggested a relationship between income and well-being. The UNICEF report card draws on three sets of indicators to

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<sup>1</sup> Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith also found this was an issue in the development of indicators through dialogue with a sample of Irish children and adolescents (2005).



assess international trends with respect to material well-being among adolescents and children in wealthy countries – relative income poverty, households without jobs, and reported deprivation. Ireland's poor record with respect to this indicator set is a cause for serious concern, with child poverty still above 15% in Ireland, along with the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. This international data does not tell us who the relatively poor are, and it is pointed out that within-nation data can only fill out this picture. One worrying finding is that children who are poor are also likely to be poor as adults (Nolan, 2000; Nolan, Layte, Whelan and Maitre, 2006).

One interesting aspect to the reported findings is the inclusion of educational/cultural wealth indicators in the assessment of wealth and income effects. Groups of fifteen year-olds were asked whether they possessed the following educational items in their homes; a study desk, a quiet place to work, a computer for schoolwork, educational software, an internet connection, a calculator, a dictionary and textbooks. Over 30% of children in Ireland reported not having access to these items, which is above the mean percentage of 27% over all countries in the study.

In the national context, data from ESRI reports have indicated that working class families, families with more than four children, and single headed households are more likely to suffer relative income poverty and deprivation (Layte, Maitre, Nolan, Watson, Whelan, Williams and Casey, 2001). Moreover, Vekic (2003) has documented the poverty and deprivation experienced by young unaccompanied minors into Ireland over the last decade, and Daly and Leonard's work (2001) paints a worrying picture of the quality of life of a carefully drawn sample of children living in Ireland's poorest families, in both rural and urban settings.

In Daly and Leonard's study, the authors draw attention to the exclusions and distinctions experienced by the young people by virtue of not being able to afford clothes and labelled goods that were commonly worn in their peer groups. The data suggest that having the right clothes is essential for social acceptance and that being different leads to children being subjected to bullying at school. While school uniform policies minimised the effects of brand expectations, the focus of distinction then shifted to footwear brands and schoolbags (see Lynch and Lodge, 2002; O'Brien, 2003). In addition, Daly and Leonard (2001) among others have suggested that young people's leisure opportunities outside and inside school are shaped by their access to material wealth (Lynch, 1989; O'Brien, 2004; Plummer, 2000; Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001).

In a review such as this, it would be foolish to ignore the large body of research over the last few decades in Ireland with respect to family economic status and social mobility. The work of Pat Clancy (1988, 1995, 2001) has repeatedly shown that children from lower social class groupings are under-represented at third level, particularly in the university sector, and especially in the more prestigious disciplines such as law and medicine. It would appear that material wealth, cultural status and credentials are inextricably related. Bourdieu has argued that economic, cultural and social capitals may be interchangeable and the possession of various quantities of these resources or capitals enable individuals and groups to participate in society or the social game. As was seen in Daly and Leonard's research, scarce economic capital is not just about the inability of families and young people to purchase goods for their own sake, but most importantly, is about social distinctions and exclusions from the 'game'. The absence of material wealth correlates with cultural disadvantage and particularly in the context of the cultural field of education (an issue which will be elaborated more fully in Chapter Three).

The National Children's Office (Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith, 2005) set out to develop child and adolescent well-being indicators that included young people's own understandings of well-being. Their work suggests that young people perceive money to be important for well-being for a variety of reasons, for clothes to look and feel good, to have a comfortable and nice house, to be able to socialise and to purchase goods that others have. Although money was not included in the final combined schema of needs for well-being, at initial levels in the categorisation process, money was prioritised as significant by young people in both urban and rural contexts. This research suggests that young people see money as instrumental in obtaining goods and activities that facilitate well-being although not directly producing well-being.

### **2.2.1 Income and adolescent part-time work**

An issue associated with low-income and belonging to a working class family is the increased likelihood of young people being engaged in part-time work while still at second-level school. Daly and Leonard's (2001) research suggested that adolescents from very impoverished families who engaged in part-time work used the income for necessities in terms of clothing and footwear, or for family presents that it would not otherwise be possible to exchange, rather than as additional spending money that would fund an extravagant youth life style. Daly and Leonard's (2001) research on young people in poverty and part-time work counteracts a view that young people only engage in part-time work for self-serving ends.

Nonetheless, one of the obvious negative aspects of part-time work for young people who are still attending second-level school is the impact it has on their schoolwork. Long hours in paid work take time and energy away from schoolwork. In a study of part-time work among adolescents in North Dublin, Morgan (2000) found that significantly greater proportions of young people from designated

disadvantaged schools worked more part-time hours than those in schools serving more privileged communities. Twenty percent of students from most disadvantaged schools worked more than twenty hours per week, and 10% worked more hours than they were in school.

### **2.3 FAMILIES, RELATIONSHIPS AND ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING**

International research both in Europe and the United States flags the importance of family relationships and family environment to adolescents' feelings of well-being and health behaviours (Aufseeser, Jekielek and Brown, 2006; Brown, 2006; Mc Keown and Sweeney, 2001; Amato and Booth, 1995; Seltzer, 1994; McKeown, Pratschke and Haase, 2003). The recent research for the Children's Office in Ireland (2005) finds that when children and adolescents are involved in a rigorous process of developing indicators for well-being, every category of young people in the sample across age, gender and rural/urban location, named families as most significant to their well-being. Given international trends in marriage breakdown and increasing proportions of single parent, reconstituted, and blended families there has been a plethora of research into the issue of family type and well-being of children.

The National Adolescent Health and Information Centre in the US suggests that despite moral panic about lack of connection and experiences of alienation, that over three quarters of all parents in the National Health study (2003) reported feelings of closeness with children aged 12-17 years; however, the data are based principally on mothers' reports and there is no break down across mothers and fathers. This research differentiates between family type, reporting lowest feelings of closeness where there was a biological parent and a step-parent (National Survey of Children's Health, Child Trends Analysis, 2003).

In Canada, the national Health Behaviour in School Aged Children Study (HBSC) has been carried out every four years since 1990 sponsored by the World Health Organisation and includes research teams from thirty-five countries in Europe and North America. More than 7,000 children ages 11, 13 and 15 years have been surveyed to examine patterns of health behaviours and attitudes. Those students with middle to high levels of affluence reported higher degrees of satisfaction with the support they got from their parents. There were noticeable gender differences, however, with respect to relationship satisfaction. Girls reported more strains than boys, older girls in particular reported difficulties relating to fathers and a greater desire to leave home than boys.

The work of Anyan and Pryor (2002) in New Zealand suggests that adolescents themselves see the love and affection between family members as the critical element in defining a family, not family type. There was however a suggestion that where a parent was non-resident with a family that they were not considered as part of the family. Mc Keown et al.'s (2003) research in Ireland on family well-being indicates that family type is not crucial to well-being but may have an indirect influence with respect to the availability of resources within the family, for example lone parents tend to occupy a weaker socio-economic position and are more at risk of poverty. Likewise, the UNICEF (2007) report card on child well-being suggests that although they use family structure as a component in measuring children's quality of relationships that this is a sensitive issue. They do note however, the relationship between growing up in a single-headed family and economic risk, but they are nonetheless cautious about UK and US data that link family type per se to school drop out, poor health and early home leaving.

The Child Trends Data in the United States (Aufseeser, Jekielek and Brown, 2006) suggest that parental example has a strong impact on

teenagers' behaviour with respect to exercise, smoking and drinking. The data indicate that parental smoking drinking, and exercise behaviours are linked to parental level of education. In the Canadian HBSC study (2001–2002) students reported relationships between family members were important to health behaviours and emotional health. Close relationships were related to protection against smoking, getting drunk, and use of marijuana. The Child Trends analysis suggests that targeting at risk families and teaching better parenting will be sufficient to create changes in life style. This seems over simplistic as the work of Mc Keown et al. (2003) in Ireland concludes that skills in parenting are often not sufficient to bring about lifestyle changes. Some families will require additional material supports in order to move towards more healthy lifestyles. Moreover, their research indicates that promoting the well-being of mothers in particular is important (as they are the most usually the primary care givers) as this can have a knock on effect on children's well-being (Mc Keown et al., 2003: 59).

### **2.3.1 Time for relationships**

The UNICEF (2007) study emphasises the difficulty of trying to measure the quality of children's relationships. The study draws on three key components to be included in assessing relationship quality: family structure, family relationships and peer relations. Overall, on these three components Irish children and young people ranked seventh out of twenty-one rich countries. In an attempt to assess quality of family relations, the indicator used by UNICEF was time spent relating – at the family meal, and time spent together during the week. The findings on this indicator were interesting as even in the lowest ranked countries, just 66% of children regularly eat the main family meal together, while the pattern for 15 year olds talking with parents is more worrying. The proportion reporting this kind of relating falls towards just 50% in Germany, Iceland and Canada. The

results reported for the United States in the UNICEF survey reflect what was found in the Child trends data on family closeness (Aufseeser et al., 2006).

Other sociological research on time-use and quality of life point to the problem of finding time for relating in developed countries, given the reality of increasing levels of dual earner families, long hours commuting to and from work (particularly in Ireland, Fine-Davis, 2002) and the expectations of 'greedy institutions' that their workers will socialise and be with work colleagues outside normal working hours (Hochschild, 1995). Schor (1991) argued that Americans were working an extra month a year in comparison to two decades previously, took less holidays and worked longer hours and took fewer paid and unpaid days off work. Given the dramatic increase in the proportion of married women with children in the labour force in Ireland, and the double shift that mothers are expected to perform, we need to take seriously the findings of McKeown et al's. (2003) study on the knock-on-effects of mothers' well-being on children. Moreover, a variety of research currently carried out at the Centre for Equality Studies at UCD suggests that time for care is highly problematic (Lynch, 2007; O'Brien, 2005).

In Finland, research carried out from a health policy perspective used a qualitative research approach to SWB to explore adolescents' own understandings of family contribution to well-being (Joronen and Asdedt-Kurki, 2005). Using semi-structured interviews with nineteen 'non-clinical' adolescents, they found six major themes (some that echo UNICEF and research discussed above) had significance for these young people's understandings of family and their contribution to SWB. These were: a comfortable home, emotionally warm atmosphere, open communication, familial involvement, possibilities for external relations (relationships with people outside the family) and a sense of personal significance within the family. Young people

described three major areas of ill-being in relation to family: family hostility, the death of a family member and excessive dependency. Clearly, the well-being issues in relation to communication, warm atmosphere and personal significance can only be achieved in a context where there is sufficient time for families to relate. Indeed, in the family involvement theme in the Finnish research, the mere presence of other family members in the home was considered essential to well-being.

Parental supervision and monitoring was also considered an important aspect of caring by the interviewees in the Finnish study, a theme that also was strongly suggested in the US Child Trends data analysis (2003). The national data from the US and the data from the qualitative study suggest that in contexts where parents are out of the home for considerable periods of the day, or are unable to be at home for work reasons or for other reasons to provide time for relating and supervising children, there are negative consequences to SWB and future well-being. Interestingly, however, and in line with ethnographic feminist studies of adolescent girls in the UK, the Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005) report for the National Children's Office in Ireland suggests that being outside the home and having the freedom that is associated with that is seen as significant to the well-being of adolescent girls, as well as having their own space, their own bedrooms in their own homes (also Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001; Mc Robbie, 1991).

### **2.3.2 Family processes and adolescent well-being**

There is a considerable body of psychological, psychoanalytic and therapeutic literature and scholarship that emphasises the importance of family processes and dynamics to child and adolescent development. This literature includes research and studies of power relations within families and the abuse of power (Gilligan, Rogers and Tolman 1991, Rogers, 1995), issues of attachment and security



(Bowlby, 1988; Winnicott, 1988), the power of emotions in relationship formation and socialisation (Chodorow, 1978, 1999) and the significance of family relational life to well-being at particular stages of development.

Following her seminal work on gender relations and moral behaviour, Gilligan (1982) suggests that women and men interpret the moral world differently; women focus on relationships and the well-being of others while men tended overall to apply rules of justice and fairness rather than relationally specific approaches. Gilligan's later work with colleagues (Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Rogers, and Tolman, 1991) focuses on the developmental challenges, disassociations and 'traumas' experienced by girls entering their teens under a patriarchal order. These authors explore how young women's voices are subjugated in line with norms of femininity, and how anger and resistance are experienced between adolescent girls and their families relative to gender, class and race. The socialisation of young girls into adolescence for example means that the 'honesty' of expression that was permitted in childhood is now defined as 'rude, selfish or mean' (Brown and Gilligan, 1992: 217). These strains between daughters and parents are also reported in HBSC data (2000–2001) in Canada.

In Britain, interesting qualitative work has been carried out by Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) on the psychological and social journeys of teenage girls into adulthood. These authors explored the relationships between daughters, parents and class with respect to schooling and leisure activities. Their findings suggest that the 'bourgeois subject' is made feminine through socialisation practices which transmit cultural capital, and create successful female students through ideologies of excellence. These practices work well in general for the middle classes but create emotional problems in successful girls from working class backgrounds with respect to their

identities. This is highly problematic for those working in the field of education as the loss of class identification, and the costs of class transition can alienate young people from their families and communities (see also Archer, Hutchings and Ross, 2003). The authors also comment on the growing contribution of psychoanalytic discourse and understandings of the inner world to scholarship on young people's identity and life experiences in the social and educational fields.

## **2.4 RISK BEHAVIOURS, HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH IN ADOLESCENCE**

As part of the Time Trends in Adolescent Well-being research series, The Nuffield Foundation in Britain released a report (2004) suggesting a link between adolescent mental health and well-being. The Nuffield research team at the Institute of Psychiatry: Collinshaw, Maughan, Goodman and Pickles (2004) explored the assertion that that there was a substantial rise in psychosocial disorders affecting young people in the UK over the past twenty-five years. Using questionnaires sent to national samples of adolescents and comparable questionnaires to their parents, they examined the extent to which conduct, hyperactivity and emotional problems had increased in the adolescent population.

They found that there had been a substantial increase in conduct and emotional difficulties for both males and females, and for all social classes, family types and ethnic groups. The greatest increases in behaviours were in lying, stealing and disobedience. The results with respect to hyperactivity were more mixed in that very high hyperactivity scores fell between 1974 and 1986 and then rose again between 1986 and 1999.

The adult outcomes of these behaviours were explored and the data suggested a correlation between parent reports, and police arrests and

court convictions. High poor conduct scores were linked to homelessness, alcohol abuse, poor health and poor mental health in adulthood. In trying to explain these changes over time, they conclude that increasing divorce rates, for example, (an explanation often used in studies of adolescent behaviour) cannot offer sufficient explanation and that it is broad societal changes in media, youth culture and social cohesion that offer better explanatory factors. They suggest, however, that further research needs to be carried out. The authors argue that interrupting poor mental health as soon as possible is necessary for positive living during adolescence, and for future outcomes for the individuals themselves, and to the fiscal costs of poor mental health in the population.

Edwards (2003) cites research indicating that one in five children and young people in the UK will suffer from a clinically defined mental health problem in the course of their school career. Currie and Todd (2003) in a survey carried out with 4,404 Scottish students from 11–15 years, found that mental health, in terms of self-reported happiness declines significantly with age, with 55% of 11 year olds saying they were very happy, and just 44% of 13 year olds and 38% of 15 year olds. At all stages, boys report being happier than do girls. Moreover, boys reported that they always felt confident more than did girls (28% and 15% respectively). In a survey of 1,634 students aged 13 and 14 in Glasgow (Gordon and Grant, 1997) on barriers to feeling good in school, students perceived these as: boredom, monotony, stress of too much work, teachers' attitudes and doing badly. Barriers to feeling good 'generally' were around 'being put down' and difficulties with peers, not doing well at school, not doing well at sport, physical appearance, not being 'good' and not being in control. Research in Canada, Hong Kong and UK (Bagley and Mallick, 2005) indicated abuse at home was the most stressful area for young people in Canada while higher education and career were seen as more problematic in the UK.

### **2.4.1 Consumption patterns, lifestyles and risk**

#### *Drugs and alcohol*

Given the findings of Collinshaw et al. (2004) it is not surprising that the UNICEF (2007) report card for the UK shows a high level of risk behaviours. These include alcohol consumption, cannabis usage and sexual relations. Canada's figures are startling as they report over 40% use of cannabis in fifteen year olds. The HSBC Canadian (2001-2002) data suggests that those who take marijuana are also more likely to drink and smoke, engage in sexual risk taking and have poor relationships with parents and negative feelings towards school. Reports on risk behaviours among Australian young people suggest an increase in binge drinking (consumption of 5 or more drinks in a row) despite targeting by school-based programmes (Commonwealth Department of Human Resources, 1992).

In the Irish context, Sweeney and Dunne's (2003) report on *Youth in a Changing Ireland* comments that the figures for youth consumption of alcohol in Ireland are worrying compared with other European countries (see the European School Survey Report on Alcohol and other Drugs, 1999). Moreover, 32% of boys and girls stated that they had engaged in binge drinking three or more times during the previous 30 days. Citing the Youth Development Study, (Queen's University) they suggest that use of drugs or alcohol is seen almost as a rite of passage in terms of becoming a teenager in Ireland. Despite the availability and use of drugs and alcohol by Irish teenagers, Sweeney and Dunne argue that although Irish teenagers may be more hedonistic than their predecessors, that it is not necessarily the case that they are less moral than previous generations of young people. The conclusion they reach is that the environment of the Celtic Tiger society creates more risks and while experimentation in the teen years is socially adaptive it has serious consequences for some.

### *Sexual behaviours*

With respect to teenage sexual activity, 15 of the 17 OECD countries with available data report that between 15–28% of young people have had sexual intercourse by the age of fifteen and this proportion rises to 40% in the UK. It is reported that teenage fertility rates vary considerably for the developed nations in this report, but it is commented that teenage pregnancy is often associated with life conditions that are not positive for well-being and are related to early school leaving, poor employment opportunities, poverty and poor health.

There are *no* figures for Ireland on the sexual activity dimension of risk behaviour for Irish young people on the UNICEF comparative report, although the fertility figures are available. In this report, Ireland is ranked twelfth out of twenty-four OECD countries for teen fertility. Studies conducted on young women's attitudes to pregnancy show that many young women who became pregnant believed that they could not become pregnant and were not able to assess the risk properly (Greene, Joy, Nugent and O'Mahony, 1989; Richardsdon, 1991, Hyde, 1996). This type of data has implications for the education of young women with respect to health and well-being (see also Crisis Pregnancy Agency Report no 9, Hyde and Howlett, 2004).

The issue of sexual health is significant particularly in a context where we do not appear to have official statistics on young people's sexual behaviours. The Crisis Pregnancy Agency Report on teenage sexuality (Report no. 9, 2004) suggests that although sexually transmitted infections decreased over the period of the 1980's and early 1990's, there has been a continuous rise in the infection rate since 1995. This is true for Ireland over the last decade; indeed, the incidence of reported cases has increased by 86% from 1995 to the year 2000, and by 298% when we take in the period 1989 to 2000

(National Disease Surveillance Centre, 2004). This increase in sexually transmitted infection is attributed to an increase in unsafe sexual behaviour, particularly among young heterosexuals and male-to-male sexual activity. It is suggested that as young people are increasingly engaging in sexual activity that they are not educated sufficiently in the use of condoms and the risks of non-penetrative sexual activity.

Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Paikoff (1997) note the importance for adolescents in becoming comfortable with their own changing bodies, their learning to make decisions about what, if any, sexual activities they wish to engage in, and how to be safe in the process. These authors further highlight that engaging in 'safer' sexual activity, has been linked to psychosocial maturity and sexual well-being (Brooks-Gunn and Paikoff, 1997).

### *Diet and health*

An issue that has only more recently gained attention in the public domain in Ireland relates to food intake and diet, low levels of physical activity and increasing levels of obesity in Irish children and teenagers. In 1998, the National Health and Lifestyle Study reported that estimates indicated over 32% of adults were overweight and 10% were obese. While being overweight presents health risks in the adult population, a worrying feature in the youth and child population is an over-concern with weight and body image. In the Canadian HBSC study, more girls reported eating nutritious foods than boys but also stated that they skipped breakfast, dieted and did something else to lose weight especially in the older teen cohort.

The rise in eating disorders and eating distress among young people, particularly among young girls in developed countries (Mennell, 1992; Rutter and Smith, 1995) highlights the bombardment of young people with culturally defined images of femininity and masculinity

that are backed by multi-million dollar diet and fashion industries (Bordo, 1993). A number of writers have found that eating disorders most often manifest themselves at times of transition in the young person's life, for example, coinciding with the move to post-primary school and to college or work (Fombonne, 1995). Eating disorders are an issue in terms of well-being as they can have significant long term health consequences.

### *Suicide*

Statistics on suicide are notoriously difficult to validate given under-reporting due to the sensitivity of the issue. However, countries like New Zealand have expressed a growing concern at what are perceived increases in the proportions of the population suffering from mental health problems and who may be at risk of suicide. In New Zealand, suicide is the second most common cause of death among those under twenty five and appeared to have doubled in the decade 1985-1995 (Ministry of Health, 2001). Figures recorded in the National Review of Suicide Report in Ireland (2001) show that the national suicide rate has doubled since the late 1970's, but that the rise in male suicide is most pronounced, seven male suicides for every female suicide (Kelleher, 1998). An international conference on alcohol consumption suggested that Ireland has the second highest suicide rate among young males next to New Zealand. Suicides were linked to alcohol consumption and binge drinking. A longitudinal study carried out in New Zealand (Fergusson and Horwood, 2001) reported correlations between family style and stressors and incidents of mental illness. Children who by the age of fifteen had developed major mental illnesses had

*childhoods marked by multiple social and family disadvantages that spanned economic disadvantage, family dysfunction, impaired parenting and limited life opportunities (Fergusson and Horwood, 2001: 292).*

## **2.5 RELATIONSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE**

It is well documented that one of the central processes characterising adolescence is the widening of the social group; wherein relationships outside the family, with members of the peer group tend to increase in salience for the young person. As independence is negotiated, however, caregivers/care contexts continue to be significant sources of socialization for young people. The shifting and changing dynamic of the adolescent's relationships with others is part of growing up.

According to the World Health Organisation's survey of *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children* 'being liked and accepted by peers' is 'crucial to young people's health and development and those who are not socially integrated are far more likely to exhibit difficulties with their physical and emotional health' (UNICEF, 2007: 25). UNICEF's inclusion of a category of 'relationships with friends and contemporaries' in their overview of child well-being makes an initial and somewhat tentative step towards monitoring this dimension of well-being in childhood and adolescence.

Further research findings indicate a significant relationship between the qualities of the young person's friendships and individual well-being (Hartup, 1996; Collins and Laursen, 1999; Giordano, 2003). A particularly defining feature of adolescent relationships with their peers is the notion that adolescents can be 'themselves' with friends, arguably contrasting with more 'selective or guarded' communication with non-friend peers, caregivers and other adults (Giordano, 2003; Call and Mortimer, 2001). Drawing on data collated in the US National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, respondents who lack attachment to peers were more likely than others to have thought of or actually attempted suicide (Bearman and Moody, 2003).

Alongside the changing dynamic of the peer group with increased mixed-sex socialising, the desire for intimate connection with



another also seems to become increasingly central for teenagers. While the formation of close, mutual relationships is generally perceived as a normative developmental task of adolescence, the actual experience and meaning of these relationships for adolescents or their significance in the general context of development during adolescence has received little theoretical or empirical attention. Indeed, research on adolescent romantic relationships has been described as both 'primitive' and sparse (Brown, 1994; Brown, et al., 1999). What distinguishes romantic relationships from peer relationships and friendships is the sexual dimension – either actual or anticipated.

According to Downey, Bonica and Rincon (1999) a key function of romantic relationships is the promotion of well-being – through engendering such feelings as being loved and accepted. An important feature of adolescent relationships is the heightened emotionality involved. This is a point which John Bowlby makes reference to when he states that '...many of the most intense of all human emotions arise during the formation, the maintenance, the disruption and the renewal of affectional bonds' (1979: 69). While romantic relationships are a new and exciting dimension to adolescence they are, nonetheless, complex and multifaceted. Romantic relationships can impact adversely on young people's mental health and well-being. Joyner and Udry (2000), also relying on data from the US National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, examined the effects of dating on adolescents' reports of well-being and found evidence consistent with the point of view held by researchers who have emphasised the potential downside of these relationships.

From a developmental perspective, Collins and Sroufe (1999) contend that romantic relationships are, in essence, 'embedded in fundamental human motivations to form and maintain close relationships and in meaningful progression of relationships across the

life-span' (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Furman and Wehner, 1994: 125). These authors thus suggest that there exists a normative continuum of relationship from early caregiver-child relationships onto peer relationships and mutual friendships through to close intimate relationships. Of course, gender role socialisation can also impact on how relationships are understood (Giordano, 2003). Global statements about different interests (boys want sex, girls love) to differential investment in relationships all posit differences in meaning(s) for males and females (Thompson, 1994, 1995). With respect to cross-cultural understandings/meanings of relationships, these have been minimally explored in psychology with respect to well-being (for example Magen's, 1998 study with American and Israeli youth made very poor reference to young people's experience of relationship).

The dominant developmental paradigm that specifies normative relationship progressions does not address the challenges and experiences of young people whose relationship history does not neatly fit the normative pattern. There have been very few studies of gay, lesbian or bisexual adolescents who challenged the heterosexual norms or of young people or of those who first experienced sex within a context of abuse or coercion.

Meier and colleagues note that while adolescent romantic experiences should not be considered deterministic of adult relationships, they should be understood as an important influence on the young person's future relational well-being (Meier et al. 2005: 28).

### **2.5.1 Sexual relationships and well-being**

While the onset of sexual activity is characterised as a key developmental event in an individual's life, the general view held is that of the problematic nature of teenage relationships and sexual

behaviour which, in turn, directs attention from the positive developmental aspects relating to adolescent sexual health and well-being. The literature which does exist in relation to adolescent sexuality/sexual behaviour predominantly examines sexual activity as a risk behaviour to be avoided. Any examination of sexual development/sexual health in adolescence has thus to a large extent been tied into the reduction of risk. Absent in this investigation of adolescent sexualisation is any discourse around pleasure, desire, intimacy (Ingham, 2005). As a consequence, scant attention has been paid to sexual well-being in adolescence or of processes which might, for example, influence adolescents' sense of their own emerging sexuality as well as that of others.

From an international perspective, research suggests that the majority of young people have begun to have sexual intercourse before they leave their teens (UNAIDS, 1997). Mayock, Kitching and Morgan note that 'available Irish studies suggest that up to one-third of 16-year-old school-goers may be sexually active, with young men considerably more likely than young women to be initiated into sex by the age of 17' (Mayock, Kitching and Morgan, 2007: 9). Very little research to date has yet been undertaken in Ireland in relation to young people's understanding of sex and sexual relationships. Even though dominant discourses in health and sex education emphasise the empowerment of young people through their being facilitated to meet their own needs in these areas (Hyde, Howlett, Drennan and Brady, 2005), these authors highlight that little is known as to the actual needs of young people in terms of this aspect of their lives.

Some data on sexual behaviour in adolescence may be elicited from studies of the adult population. The first national study of adult sexual health and relationships, *Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships* (ISSHR) was commissioned by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and the Department of Health and Children. It was

completed in 2006 by the Royal College of Surgeons and the ESRI. The study of almost 7,500 Irish adults reports that close to 90% of respondents in the 18-to-24 age group surveyed, indicated that they had received some school-based sex education. Respondents noted receiving basic biological information on sexual intercourse, with little if any education about *sexual feelings, relationships and emotions*. Furthermore, only one-third of those surveyed received sex education regarding contraception, safer sex and sexually transmitted infections (STI's).

The ISSHR study also reported that men and women with lower levels of education are less likely to have received sex education, are less likely to use contraception and more likely to have become sexually active before the age of 17. While nine in every ten adults surveyed in the study reported that sex education should be provided at school, little cognisance is drawn to those who are disengaged from school and/or those who have left school early.

It is evident that school-based sex and relationship education cannot fully meet the needs of those at risk of early school leaving as these young people in essence will have left school before such education effectively commences. Thus, locating sex and relationship education programmes exclusively in school settings means that those most at risk (as identified in the ISSHR study) will not be reached. It is thus recommended that programmes on sex and relationship education should be designed and delivered both in and out of school / community-based settings. Community-based programmes have been documented as effective and having potential to feedback positively into the design and implementation of school-based programmes specifically in the domain of relationship and sex education (Rogow and Haberland, 2005).

## **2.6 PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**

Edwards (2003) review of mental health suggests that young people 'are generally adept at coping well with the daily stressors and specific, difficult life events' (ibid: 11). Young people stated that talking with someone who cared was a coping strategy for mental health, but 16 –21 year olds suggested that they would not talk to a teacher particularly about self-harming behaviours (Haydock, 2001). Edwards (2001) found students with 'special educational needs' and social and behavioural problems would talk to guidance teachers. The Public Health Institute of Scotland's (2002) survey found that young people reported coping with angry feelings by taking them out on inanimate objects, siblings and less commonly on other people. When sad or depressed they were more likely to internalise these feelings and tended to want to be alone to work through the problem or by engaging in physical activity. Sellen's (2002) work explores gender differences among black and minority ethnic young people in respect of coping strategies. Girls reported spending money was a way to feel good (34%), and for boys, sexual activity (26%) followed by spending (21%). These activities were said by young people to calm them down.

An interesting study carried out in Germany examined the relationship between religious practices and risk behaviours (Martin, Kirkaldy and Siefen, 2003). Among 1,000, 14 to 18 year olds who answered a series of questionnaires on health and religious practices, 57% of the adolescents did not attend church at all; the highest attendance was among Muslims followed by Catholics. Males were more likely not to attend church. Those young people who regularly attended church were found to adopt more healthy life-styles, exercising more regularly, not smoking or drinking and had higher verbal performance at school. Yet, conversely those who scored higher on the social problems scale were more likely to be church attenders. Moreover, there was no relationship between lower levels

of anxiety and less suicidal thinking among either church attenders and non-attenders. One explanation for the significantly higher negative affect among church attenders is that it reflects more authoritarian parenting styles, which have been correlated with mental health issues and risk behaviours in adolescence (Resnick, Ireland and Borowski, 2004; Fergusson and Horwood, 2001). As was discussed in Chapter One there have been a number of studies that suggest a link between SWB and spirituality and this may warrant further attention in Ireland in educational policy and practice given the changing cultural context and a more pluralistic population.

## **2.7 CHILDREN'S AND ADOLESCENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF WELL-BEING IN IRELAND**

Under the National Children's Strategy (2000) there has been a commitment to developing a set of national Child Well-Being Indicators. In tandem with the development of indicators by experts, there was agreement that children's and young people's voices should be included in this process in order to ensure that children's lives could be better understood. Building on international research (Diener, 1984; Huebner, 1991; Wilkinson and Walford, 1998; WHO; 1946) and recent Irish research studies on children's well-being (O'Higgins, 2002; Kelleher et al., 2003), the researchers (Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith, 2005) set out to develop understandings of well-being drawing on a sample of children in upper primary school to 4th year in second level, and reflecting categories of gender, urban/rural locations and school gender types.

The methodology reflected sensitivity to children's stages of development and used a photographic method asking children to use cameras to take photographs of things, people and places that 'made them well' or 'keep them well'. The design of the research involved children taking photographs individually, and then being involved in

a group-level analysis, to categorise areas named from the photographs and then to prioritise them with respect to their significance for well-being. The final level of analysis involved constructing an overall group-level schematic from the specific categories named by boys and girls, rural and urban children and older and younger young people. The authors suggest that the findings are not generalisable but can be considered transferable to similar groups of children in similar settings (Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith, 2005: 65). Nonetheless, the creative methodological approach, which enabled young people's own voices to be heard in this research, and the debate and activity it stimulated on the issue of well-being, in themselves are of real value. The findings of this research are highly informative, and as the authors note, reflect the complexity of children's understandings of well-being and the multiple perspectives held by children across rural/urban settings at primary and post-primary levels.

The findings of this research validate the kinds of indicators used in the UNICEF Child Well-Being report which used categories of friends, family and relationships and material wealth. Interpersonal relationships with family and friends were seen to be of central importance to well-being by all groups of young people in the Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005) study. It also corroborates the data in the UNICEF (2007) report where children reported that schools impacted on well-being. In the Irish child indicator research, school and teachers were mentioned as significant with respect to the importance of getting an education and a good job and teachers being people you could look up to. In the urban boys post-primary sample, school was associated negatively with well-being except as a location where one meets friends and can do sport. School was a significant place or environment with respect to the relational aspect of young people's lives as they stated it was a place where you met people to hang out with (O'Brien, 2004.)

As mentioned earlier, adolescence is particularly characterised by the development of romantic and sexual interests and this is reflected in this study. Irish young people at post-primary level added categories to the well-being indicators that included relations with the 'opposite sex' (clearly reflecting hegemonic heterosexual relations), using terms like 'guys you like' or 'girls' in the schema).

Celebrities were another category that emerged for well-being on the basis of providing role models young people could look up to. As media figures now have an increasing significance in the lives of young people, the importance of providing young people with critical tools to discuss and understand the impact of media and culture cannot be underestimated. Moreover, a great deal of work remains to be done to understand the power and possibilities of media and virtual networks in creating new ways of being and participating for young people in the social world (Schostak, 1995; Rheingold, 2006). The significance of global and virtual media is discussed in brief in chapter three.

Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005) acknowledge that many of the categories that emerged in the Irish research to establish child well-being indices are predictable on the basis of earlier research they reviewed, but that new categories were relatively unexpected. These were the categories of pets and animals and social/physical environment and are seen to be valid as they were named by the different groups of children at each of the three stages in the study, and also integrated into the overall schema even when their overall importance could have been reduced. The authors state:

*These categories illustrate the extent to which children interact with the natural world around them, as well as the interpersonal environment in which they are located. These factors certainly deserve attention from researchers, policy makers and practitioners (ibid: 64).*



This is a significant finding and further reinforces arguments and perspectives considered in this chapter, which advocated the importance of caring environments and the centrality of interpersonal relations (Allardt's 1993 work on having, loving and being). Moreover, it is of significance for education in emphasizing the importance of animals and the environment for well-being, and raises the question as to the extent to which this is given consideration in terms of school environments and the processes of schooling.

## Summary and Conclusions: Adolescents and well-being

Chapter Two has focused on adolescents and issues related to their well-being. The chapter has tried to highlight issues that appear to have universal significance for adolescents, and issues that arise relative to particular groups or individual contexts. General international trends with respect to adolescent mental health have been outlined. Issues of material well-being, quality of family relationships, peer relationships and caring relations, sexuality, risk behaviours, physical health, and cultural and economic exclusion have been discussed. The following conclusions can be drawn from the material reviewed.

- With respect to mental health, there appears to be an increase in mental health challenges faced by young people. Depression and suicide, as well as aggressive and anti-social behaviours affect the lives of many young people. International research suggests a widespread malaise in society that is expressed in the mental health and risk behaviours of adolescents, particularly groups who suffer from social exclusion and forms of ethnic and cultural discrimination. Moreover, research indicates patterns of gender differences in relation to how teenage boys and girls experience mental health challenges, reflecting inequalities in gender relations and the dominance of hegemonic masculinities in the wider society.
- Material wealth is related to well-being, and despite our flourishing economy, some groups of Irish young people are at a greater risk of income poverty and relative cultural deprivation than young people living in poorer countries. These young people are significantly at risk of multiple exclusions as a consequence of relative poverty.

- Relationships are fundamental to well-being and this significance takes a particular form in the period of adolescence. Family relationships are still important, and good communication with parents is seen to be linked to well-being. International research suggests that time for relating in families is problematic but that many young people still sit with their families at mealtimes. UNICEF research may overestimate this, as its sample does not include socially excluded young people. Peer relations become increasingly salient and sexual and romantic relations are characteristic of development in the teens. Once again dominant norms around masculinity, femininity and sexuality shape young people's experiences of relationships and possibilities for well-being and indeed illbeing.
- There is a gap in research internationally with respect to exploring the meaning of emotional and sexual relations between peers. Ireland is also lagging behind other developed countries with respect to gathering quantitative data on sexual behaviour of young people. Given the increase in sexually transmitted diseases among young people in Ireland this is problematic.
- The large body of research on young people and risk taking behaviours needs to be critiqued and considered with respect to the politics that operate within research at international levels and within the academy. If we construct young people's behaviour as problematic and define well-being entirely in relation to pro-social normative criteria, it leaves little room for the exploration of individual's authentic identities in relation to a conception of well-being that goes beyond conformist notions of happiness.



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**CHAPTER THREE**

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Well-being and  
post-primary schooling

*Well-being at school (of pupils in secondary education) expresses a positive emotional life which is the result of harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand and personal needs and expectations of pupils vis-a-vis the school on the other (Engels, Aelterman, Petegem and Schepens, 2004:128).*

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The first two chapters have explored the broad conceptual and empirical territory of well-being per se, and of well-being with specific reference to the period of adolescence. Chapter Three explores the relationship between well-being and second-level schooling and draws on a growing body of literature in the area. Although health perspectives and health promotion policies and programmes have dominated the schooling and well-being literature, this chapter tries to integrate broader conceptualisations of well-being with the schooling and educational literature as is found, for example, in the work of Noddings (2003) or in the work of cultural and critical theorists. A considerable body of the health promotion and wellness literature tends to be policy and research driven rather than located in theoretical understandings of well-being and this is reflected in the review. Nonetheless, there is an attempt to critique this theoretical gap and to suggest theoretical perspectives that could inform research on well-being at second-level education.

This chapter firstly considers the work of Nell Noddings (1992, 2003) with respect to happiness and the aims of education. Noddings' work has gained increasing influence not just in the field of education and schooling, but also it has been seen as contentious and significant in feminist scholarship. The report then focuses on Cohen's (2006) review of scholarship on well-being and social, emotional and academic education and democracy. This piece has

been selected as it spans both philosophical and educational literature providing a rationale for ‘careful’<sup>1</sup> education across the various dimensions of schooling.

Following this brief exploration of some contemporary thinking on well-being and education, the ‘wellness’ literature at second-level schooling is explored. This literature has been principally driven by health research and health policy in a context of growing concern for adolescent mental, emotional and physical health. Schools have been seen as optimum sites for targeting adolescent health, by virtue of the fact that they offer access to a large proportion of the adolescent population in developed countries. The literature discussed offers an understanding of well-being and wellness, principally shaped by the World Health Organisation and the movement for Health Promoting Schools.

Despite the largely atheoretical perspective on wellness and well-being<sup>2</sup>, the research associated with Health Promoting Schools and well-being has yielded a body of useful data about learning environments, school climate and academic outcomes, student/teacher relationships, teacher/teacher relationships, student-to-student relationships, parent/community/school relationships, curricular focus on well being, and the relationship between academic outcomes and subjective well-being. These findings are considered under a series of headings, which reflect the breadth of the research.

A body of conceptual work and research on schooling and well-being has developed in Finland based on Allardt’s Welfare Model of Well-being: Having, Loving and Being (1993) which was discussed in Chapter One. This work offers some promise with respect to broader understandings of well-being at second-level schooling, as health is

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1 Noddings suggests that a ‘careful’ education should be a preparation for care and citizenship and moreover, that students should be cared for through their learning and the relationships they experience in the school environment.

2 Allardt’s welfare model is an exception to this.

conceptualised as just *one aspect* of well-being and other factors pertinent to human well-being are given recognition. The strengths of educational approaches and programmes based on Allardt's model are that they are grounded in a theoretical understanding of well-being rather than just driven by policy responses.

It is possible that other models such as the egalitarian approach to well-being (Baker et al., 2004) could be used to implement well-being policies and evaluate their effectiveness for students, and this is discussed here. The work of philosophers like Noddings suggest that values of care, and care practices in the home, school and community offer educational possibilities for well-being that have not been pursued systematically by policy makers.

Independent of large international research and policy programmes such as those under the aegis of the WHO and UNICEF, research on second-level educational programmes and student well-being in the broadest sense, though not specifically articulated as 'well-being', is so enormous as to be beyond the scope of analysis in this project. Moreover, besides the breadth of the literature, there is also a problematic of specificity of context with respect to well-being and schooling. The kinds of programmes and processes that may facilitate wellness at second level of course vary according to students' identities, their classed, gendered and cultural backgrounds and experiences, and this needs exploration and consideration. This issue is tackled in some measure in the review. Large-scale interventions to combat educational disadvantage that have been evaluated and researched over recent decades, for example, often have well-being as an aim, although that has not always been made explicit or reflected in the language. Nonetheless, major themes and research that have been found to be significant to students' well-being in the holistic sense will be signposted.



Issues of transition from first to second-level schooling have been of concern in the Irish and international context. These will be discussed with respect to challenges to student well-being. Finally, reference is made to selected alternative education programmes and interventions that emphasise well-being and the holistic development of adolescent students.

### **3.2 WELL-BEING, HAPPINESS AS AN AIM OF EDUCATION**

Noddings' work (2003) opens with the statement that most human beings are concerned with and want happiness, that the search for happiness is a universal condition of being human. In *Happiness and Education*, Noddings considers the relationship between education and various understandings of happiness. She comments that many people she has conversed with in undertaking an exploration of happiness and education did not see any connection between the two. Noddings suggests that perhaps education has been, and continues to be, deeply mired in a form of puritanism that excludes the pursuit of happiness. She does mention some current educationalists that have prioritised happiness as an aim of education, the founder of Summerhill progressive school, A.S. Neill, and the Japanese educator, Makiguchi; however, she argues that school systems in the west are currently so caught up in assessment of performance and raising standards of achievement that they have little to do with well-being.

Indeed, following Noddings' argument, it could be suggested that, throughout history the role of mass education systems has reflected a functional response to changing societal contexts, responding to needs of industry in providing basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Critical thinkers suggest that the function of schools has been to provide workers that know their position in the economic order (Bowles and Gintis, 1976), or that schooling acts to reproduce the

dominant social order through power (Foucault, 1980) and the transmission of elite skills and forms of knowledge (Bourdieu, 1996). Thus, the purposes of education have not been concerned primarily with individual happiness but have been about control, cohesion and economics.

An alternative suggestion Noddings offers for the neglect of happiness as an aim of education, is that it is doubtful that one can pursue happiness directly and therefore it tends not to qualify as an aim. Moreover, Noddings argues that an 'outcomes-focused' and instrumentally driven education system precludes 'aims talk' and this kind of deliberation is not part of everyday discourse in education. Noddings poses the question as to why particular outcomes are valued and suggests that they have more to do with links to the economic growth of nations than to fostering substantive skills and dispositions that enable a person to lead a happy life. She comments that the current trend in education is to 'do' and 'to do effectively' to produce an outcome without asking why (2003: 77), a position that seems problematic in terms of meaning seeking which is core to well-being. Noddings argues that outcomes should be discussed relative to those more embracing aims of education, whether those aims are for justice, equity or happiness of individuals and a society.

Noddings sees the focus on narrow sets of outcomes as highly problematic for society as well as for individual students. She points out that the political vision of a nation is reflected in the aims of the education it offers. Within a democracy the aims should reflect the freedom of individuals to make choices about how they will participate in society, and live their lives and flourish. According to Noddings, and indeed many others, the current trend is to prescribe curricula to be followed by all students, and for these curricula to preserve traditional divisions and hierarchies of knowledge. She suggests that the lack of choices that students experience in

education and their categorisation and labelling relative to their capacity to acquire elite knowledge runs contrary to a democratic vision of education and of society (Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon, 2007).<sup>3</sup>

In *Happiness and Education*, Noddings traces the relationship between current educational vision and the legacy from classical and historical views of happiness and well-being. She discusses Aristotle's conception of happiness as *eudaimonia*, generally understood as 'human flourishing'. This comprehensive view of happiness allows for consideration of the components of a happy life, which would include, health, wealth, relationships among other resources and conditions. Noddings suggests that these components of happiness continue to be taken as indicators of subjective happiness and objective standards of well-being in social science research today. The 'good life' that Aristotle lays out in the *Nichomean Ethics* is not hedonistic as it requires the practice of virtues, and the importance of pleasures and access to external goods are not viewed as 'ends' in themselves. The implications of this perspective are that young people learn virtue through education and that happiness will accompany such virtuous practice. To educate, *educare* means not only to lead out along a moral path that will create happiness, but also to care about (Lynch et al., 2007).

The other influential view that comes from Aristotle to educational practices and thinking is the 'intellectualist' view of happiness. This approach suggests that rational thought is the highest form of human endeavour and practice, and superior to other forms of human activity. Engagement in contemplative thought was the activity that would bring us into closest connection with the transcendent or Divine and thus bring about flourishing or happiness. More recently,

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3 See also Baker et al. (2004) who discuss the barriers to equality in education, particularly the emphasis on specific abilities and dominance of traditional curricula.

the work of Nussbaum (1995, 2001), draws on Aristotle's conception of virtues to describe the capabilities necessary to human flourishing and emphasises the significance of emotions to rationality. Nussbaum suggests that feelings such as empathy enable us to act morally, where 'blunt reason' and cold rationality may inhibit moral action.

Likewise, Noddings is critical of an overly rational and intellectualist view of well-being and argues that it has had a negative impact on educational thinking and practices. She suggests that this view has dominated what should be taught in schools, and the processes that are employed to teach students. The intellectualist biases that prevail in schooling and the legitimisation of academic knowledge (see also Bourdieu, 1996) have resulted in a hierarchical system, the devaluing of practical knowledge and subjects in favour of more academic curricula. Noddings reminds us that the work of the philosopher John Dewey (1916) highlights the 'pernicious effects' of an over-academic and elitist view of education. Moreover, she argues that creating a hierarchy in relation to forms of knowledge and human activity increases pressure on students to proceed through that hierarchy even when that is not appropriate for them, and leads to the devaluing of students who do not succeed in this academic system.<sup>4</sup>

Nodding's critique of education and society more generally is also founded on the absence or lack of recognition of care as an ethic and significant practice in education (1992). The overemphasis on the acquisition of academic forms of knowledge over the practical, and the bias towards cognition and the marginalisation of emotional responsiveness are further problems associated with the intellectualist view (see also Goleman, 1995; Gardner, 1987). Noddings has consistently argued that good education should provide experiences and learning that will at least indirectly, if not directly, provide

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<sup>4</sup> This is discussed in more depth later in this chapter in relation to theories of multiple intelligences and personal intelligences, in particular.

possibilities for the happiness of individuals. An ethic of care applied to the education of all students would include education for both public and private life, the capacity to participate in the economy and public life, and the skills to create and sustain a home and caring relationships. Such a view of education necessarily includes a far broader, more practical and egalitarian approach<sup>5</sup> than is currently valued or practiced in most developed western countries.

The idea that if happiness eludes us in this life that eternal happiness is possible in the next is recognisable within the Judeo-Christian tradition and has had a formative influence on western experience and development. Right living has been seen as the path to happiness; the life well-lived is finally rewarded. Although suffering has often been seen as central to a good life, Noddings argues strongly that pain and suffering should not be valorised for their own sake. It is almost inevitable that life, and indeed a good life, will involve struggles and that meaning can be found through these difficult experiences. Meaningfulness is significant to happiness (Peterson and Seligman, 2005) and cannot be achieved in the avoidance of pain. Noddings avoids a puritanical stance in her exploration of happiness and education, and holds that unnecessary pain should not be experienced or inflicted on others in this life. Noddings suggests that educators need to be concerned with the quality of students' experiences in the present.

*Happiness in the present is not incompatible with future happiness and it may even be instrumental for future happiness. Educators should therefore give attention to the quality of students' experience (ibid: 240).*

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5 There are of course different perspectives on equality; the view suggested here is not typically liberal equality of opportunity with respect to educational participation but a more radical and non-hierarchical equality with respect to forms of knowledge, types of work and the economic rewards for participation in society. This will be elaborated later drawing on the work of Baker, Lynch, Walsh and Cantillon (2004).

In consideration of well-being and a life well-lived, Noddings agrees with the Aristotelian perspective that living a good life will hopefully be accompanied by happiness. She argues that in adopting this perspective it is difficult to evaluate well-being until the end of one's life and the evaluation will be made overall rather than solely in relation to particular incidences or at particular points in time. Does this mean that the experience of schooling, though it may be increasingly painful for some students, can be justified in the long term?

This is not what Noddings is suggesting with respect to education. She argues for meaning and relevance in education, and for curricula that are appropriate to the lives of students within their specific contexts and relative to their own individuality. She states:

*We are faced with several problems, not just one, and one solution is not satisfactory for a variety of problems. The quality of present experience matters, and not everyone thrives in a given situation. One might say that present happiness, in addition to being valued for itself, is instrumental for future happiness. We know that people are often unhappy in schools or classes that are not fitted to their needs and interests (ibid: 249).*

Her concern is primarily with care for young people so that they can find meaning in learning. This learning needs to be enabling not just for success in a hierarchically structured labour market, but also for success, or rather happiness, in relationships with others, in the home, the public and communal context and with nature and the environment.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Although the links or differences cannot be fully interrogated here, Noddings advocacy for care and connection through education is reminiscent of Nussbaum's (1995) arguments about human, particularly women's development.

### **3.3 SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, ETHICAL AND ACADEMIC EDUCATION FOR WELL-BEING AND PARTICIPATION IN A DEMOCRACY**

Cohen's (2006) review of the literature and best practices with respect to social, emotional, ethical and academic education (SEEA) raises some of the same issues we find in Noddings in relation to the aims of education and well-being. Like Noddings, Cohen argues that education for happiness necessitates a much broader conceptualisation of educational aims than is common today among educators and policy makers. He suggests that there is currently an unbalanced and harmful overemphasis on academic measurable outcomes to the neglect of the other elements that are necessary to participation in a humane and democratic society. He contends that the aims of education need to reflect that education is not only for personal development, but for the collective good (what he calls national well-being). While philosophers of education have expressed varying views with respect to the aims of education, Cohen states that parents are more consistent about what they want their children to have gained by the time they leave school. He states that parents want not just academic success and job market success, but also that their children develop good friendships and relationships.

In his review, Cohen suggests that there have been two major ways that educators have sought to incorporate emotional, social and ethical education into a largely academic system. Traditionally, educators have developed processes for character education, which includes the development of virtues such as responsibility, honesty, respect and so on (although he does remark that there has been too little focus on the underlying skills required for social and emotional competency). The second major approach has been through the creation of caring school climates where these virtues can be developed. Cohen concurs with Noddings regarding the problems

facing educators with respect to creation of a 'careful' climate and curricula in an increasingly performance and assessment driven educational system. He comments that programmatic attempts to incorporate social, emotional and ethical aspects of education are often reduced to those underlying skills that can be most easily operationalised (see Boler, 1999).

Like Noddings, Cohen also refers to the work of Dewey, naming him as the grandfather of social, emotional and ethical education. Dewey emphasised the necessity of developing broad ranging relational skills, emotional capacities and practical education in order to foster responsible, caring and happy citizens.

One of the movements that Cohen signals in contemporary education for well-being and democracy, is the alliance between educators and the mental health sector. He traces the evolution between schooling and mental health back to Freud and his daughter Anna who was a teacher. Cohen comments that this partnership with the mental health sector is an important one, as children who have emotional and mental health difficulties need to be supported in education and teachers need training to be able to do this. Although Cohen does not discuss the Health Promoting School movement *per se*, what he advocates in relation to current practice between mental health and education is also explored in the Health Promotion and school literature.

In his article, Cohen outlines in detail the best practices in current SEEA and suggests that there are five key steps in this practice:

- Initial planning and discovery. Community building involving all significant members of the child's world to ensure the child gets the same message, with a common vocabulary and goals, having a collaborative plan that is evidence based.



- Creating a climate for learning or systemic interventions designed to foster safe, caring participatory and responsive schools, homes and communities.
- Creating long-term home/school partnerships—this is a complicated and serious challenge (the Irish Home/school/community scheme might provide an exemplar here).
- Pedagogic practice—SEEA curriculum can vary from a prescribed curriculum to a point of view about relationships, teaching and learning. Listening to students has been shown to be of key importance in good teacher-student relationships. Providing opportunities for children to learn to listen in this way is important to SEEA. Social and emotional literacy needs to be developed and there are many opportunities within the academic curriculum to do this in the arts and literature. Tagged on programmes alone may not work. Social and emotional education can also happen in the home and the community. (This echoes a great deal of Noddings).
- Evaluation—What counts in education has been too far influenced by what we can measure. We need to ask serious questions about what and how we measure and evaluate; however, it is important to use data in improving school practice but we have to ask what kind of data.

### **3.4 DEVELOPING INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCES: EMOTIONS, AFFECT, WELL-BEING AND SCHOOLING**

Baker, Lynch et al. (2004) comment that education is for liberation rather than domestication and so it is a profoundly emotional activity. Furthermore, students learn best when they are in positive relationships with their teachers. They suggest that failure of education to recognise the importance of the emotions in learning is

‘a denial of the educational needs of both teachers and students as emotional beings’ (Baker, Lynch et al., 2004: 164). Indeed they echo the work of many research studies in asserting that students do not engage with schooling just intellectually, but also emotionally. They point out that traditionally education has been based on the assumption that its primary goal was the development of the intellect.

Noddings and Cohen’s work on care, happiness and education also challenges the narrow view of academic intellectual education, advocating the need to teach about relationships and the skills to lead a meaningful life. The binary oppositions between emotion and intellect have been challenged and it is now recognised that emotions have a rationality, and are significant in judgement and moral decision-making (Nussbaum 2001; Goleman, 1995). Moreover, feminist moral philosophers have argued that we are interdependent affective beings who are vulnerable and dependent at specific times in our lives (Nussbaum, 1995, 2001; Kittay, 1999, Kittay and Feder, 2001). In terms of well-being, this necessarily implies a need for the giving and receiving of care. Thus, the possibilities for well-being and development, including educational possibilities within the institutions of schooling, necessitate that emotional care be carried out and received (Bubeck, 2001; Tronto, 1998; Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Reay, 2000; O’Brien, 2005; Griffith and Smith, 2005).

Goleman’s (1995) book on emotional intelligence underlines the importance of understanding one’s own emotions and those of others as an essential part of modern living. Integral to one’s emotional intelligence are

*abilities such as being able to motivate oneself, and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope*  
(Goleman, 1995: 34).

He argues that individuals who score highly on conventional IQ tests may not succeed in achieving their full potential if they lack emotional intelligence and that ‘emotional intelligence adds far more to the qualities that make us more fully human’ (Goleman, 1993: 45). He emphasises the importance of emotional literacy for men and women and locates much of societies’ contemporary social ills (unemployment, depression, drug abuse) in a vacuum of emotional intelligence.

Weare (1998) writing about health promotion in second-level schools says that emotional literacy is required for health literacy and for wellness. Emotional literacy is defined as the ability to understand ourselves and others and to be aware of, understand and to use information about the emotional states of others with competence. It includes the ability to understand, express and manage our own emotions, and respond to the emotions of others, in ways that are helpful to ourselves and others. In her work, *Developing the Emotionally Literate School* (2004), Weare states that there is a need for a balance between participation, warm relationships, clarity and autonomy.

### **3.4.1 Developing personal intelligences**

Gardner’s (1993) theory of multiple intelligences also highlights the importance of emotional and relationship capacities in everyday life, particularly in the workplace. ‘Job success depends on many variables, such as motivation and the ability to interact well with others, which standardized intelligence tests do not explore’ (Gardner, Kornhaber and Wake 1996: 83–84). Gardner’s naming and recognition of intelligence in the personal domain is of particular relevance to this discussion of care, emotions and schooling. According to his theory, interpersonal intelligence is the ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, feelings and motivations of other people and to act accordingly. Intrapersonal intelligence is

understood as the capacity that enables individuals to know their own abilities, and to perceive how best to use them. These emotional capacities that moderate and direct our feelings and indeed direct our actions can be used for either good or ill, but clearly the denial or marginalisation of such intelligences in education is reductive and irresponsible in terms of young people's development and well-being (Goleman, 1995; Gardner, 1993).

### **3.4.2 Marginalisation of personal intelligences**

School is an environment where only a limited number of intelligences are recognised and valued. Traditionally, intelligence has been seen as a single unitary capacity, measurable by an IQ test. IQ tests focus on two intelligences, the logical-mathematical and the verbal-linguistic. This conception of intelligence underpins the education system and consequently disables many learners. For learners whose intelligence strengths lie outside the logical-mathematical and verbal-linguistic realm, the consequences are profound and disabling. They create inequality in relation to access to particular subjects, to institutions and courses of study and the capacity to participate and benefit from schooling across the levels of the system (Lynch, 1999; Baker et al., 2004). This dominant and flawed construct of intelligence shapes school organisational practices, curriculum content, teaching method, assessment modes and techniques and the hidden curriculum (Hanafin, Shevlin, Flynn, 2002). The general failure of the education system 'to provide for, let alone capitalize on, different kinds of intelligence and styles of learning resulted in clearly prejudicial practices' (Goodlad and Oakes, 1988: 18). These prejudices manifest themselves most visibly and cogently in the form of streaming and ability grouping practices.

Much of the formal curriculum mediated through subject syllabi and textbooks privileges linguistic and mathematical ways of knowing.

Rather than adapting the curriculum to students' needs, the predominant institutional response is to view those who have difficulty understanding the unaltered curriculum as 'slow' or 'disabled' (Brooks and Grennon-Brooks 1993). Notwithstanding the inclusion of oral, aural and practical components across subject syllabi, students are assessed in most subject areas through written examinations. There are few subjects which draw on musical, spatial and kinaesthetic intelligences and fewer still that draw on intelligences in the personal realm (Hanafin, Shevlin, Flynn, 2002).

In more recent times, the plurality of intelligence has been recognised (Gardner, 1983; Ceci, 1990; Sternberg, 1990). Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences focuses on the ability to solve problems and create products that are of value in a given culture. He argues that a human intellectual competence

*must entail a set of skills of problem solving—enabling that individual to resolve genuine problems or difficulties that he or she encounters and, when appropriate, to create an effective product' (Gardner, 1983: 60).*

Such products enable an individual to show their intelligence in practical, not just academic ways. The products range from scientific theories to musical compositions to successful political campaigns (Gardner, 1983). Gardner (1993) argues that the naming of mathematical or linguistic skills as intelligences reflects the Western tradition, where certain cultural values dating back to Socrates are put on a pedestal. 'Logical thinking, for example, is important; rationality is important; but they are not the only virtues' (ibid., 12). Gardner (1983) proposes a minimum of eight separate, but interrelated intelligences: Verbal-Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, naturalist, interpersonal and intrapersonal.

Irish education has tended to subordinate personal intelligences and place cognition and competition above caring relations. Knowledge about how to develop emotionally rewarding and supportive personal relationships is not a subject for analysis in most schools (Lynch, 1999). Jobs involving liaison or contact with other people demand that one have both interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. This applies across a very broad range of occupations, advertising, shop assisting, medicine, public relations, social work etc.

Such neglect of emotions and care in the educational field is a function of the low economic value placed on activities such as caring for others in the wider society. What Ungerson (1990) calls 'caring about' and 'caring for', and what Lynch has elaborated as 'love labour' (1989, 2007), is often invisible and taken for granted and not categorised or understood as work. Even care that is more visible and commodifiable is often seen as low status and rewarded with low pay (see also Lynch and Mc Loughlin, 1995). Noddings (1992), in her critique of liberal education draws attention to 'the persistent undervaluing of skills, attitudes, and capacities traditionally associated with women' (ibid: pxiii).

### **3.4.3 Supporting and fostering personal intelligences in the school**

People learn emotional responses and responsiveness (Gilligan, 1982; Bubeck, 2001) through acculturation into society, through their parents and other family members, the mass media and the education system (Chodorow, 1999). It is crucial therefore, that emotional literacy or intelligences in the personal domain are also recognised within education. These intelligences have traditionally been developed in the home context but they can also be fostered in formal education settings (Lynch, 1999). Some subjects such as the Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) programme at second level, do acknowledge the importance of care and emotional relations in

the field of education; however, such programmes have not been unproblematic. Lynch (1999) argues that there has never been serious consideration given to the development of the personal intelligences, except through 'ad hoc personal development courses or through some modules within the home economics programmes' (Lynch, 1999: 277). Relationship Sexuality Education (RSE) programmes have focussed on sexual relationships as opposed to the 'more generic task of developing all-round personal intelligences' (ibid: 277).

While the importance of recognising and valuing the emotions in the field of education has been underlined, the ways in which this is done are critical. More emotion is not necessarily better, as Hargreaves (2000) emphasises. He cautions against overly indulging the personal, emotional and spiritual aspects of teaching. It is particularly pertinent in relation to groups considered educationally disadvantaged as such over-indulgence can condemn poor and marginalized students

*to a warm yet 'welfarist' culture, where immediate comfort that makes school a haven for children can easily occlude the long-term achievement goals and expectations that are essential if children are to make their escape permanent (Hargreaves, 2000: 812).*

Hargreaves suggests that care and emotions are integral to educational processes but that we must take care to unravel simplistic solutions to complex issues of educational inequalities. To suggest that school should provide emotional care for students in ways that assuage our consciences, by keeping them happy and contained, while not tackling systematic discriminations within curricula and modes of assessment, is not real care. Recognising the significance of care and emotions is not about sidestepping the realities of poverty, racist policies, cultural misrecognition, and heterosexist and patriarchal processes within the educational system.

### **3.5 WELLNESS AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES: HEALTH PROMOTION IN SCHOOLS**

Moving away from philosophical perspectives on well-being and happiness in education, over the last two decades there has been a growing impetus to research wellness of young people at post-primary school from a health perspective. Worries about illbeing among adolescents have been a major concern (Navaratte, 1999); and consequently, The World Health Organisation has targeted first and second-level schools globally in an attempt to improve health and health behaviours in students. The school was selected as an optimum site for health promotion as it provides access to the majority of young people through compulsory schooling. Moreover, much of the health research and literature suggests that in the past schools have not been very successful or perhaps not particularly concerned about health outcomes. Clearly, health is an important aspect of well-being and the discussion below outlines the significance of this perspective not only for the health of students but also for other aspects of their more general well-being.

The World Health Organisation's Ottawa Charter (1986) states that health promotion enables people to increase their control over their physical health and well-being. Health promotion is:

*(T)he process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realise aspirations, to satisfy needs and to change and to cope with the environment (ibid: 1).*

Subsequent to the Ottawa Charter and the *Education for All* health conference (WHO, 1990), the Health Promoting Schools programmes were conceived. As a significant movement, facilitated through the World Health Organisation, the Health Promoting



Schools have enshrined the basic tenets of the WHO approach to health and wellness. This includes definitions of wellness that go beyond physical well-being, and also encompass psychological, social and emotional well-being of young people. The HBSC study 2000/2001 of young people's health in Canada, funded by the WHO, for example, emphasises the broadest context of young people's health and explores health in the context of well-being among peers, in school, at home and in relation to the socio-economic environment of young people.

Parsons, Stears and Thomas (1996) comment that there are two particular definitions of health that underpin the movement of health promoting schools, one emphasising the various aspects of well-being that should be facilitated for flourishing in daily life, the other focusing on health promotion for whole populations. The focus on health in schools is to promote knowledge and skills that will inform students' decision-making on health and lifestyles. The school as an institution should reflect this holistic focus on health and wellness in its curricula and climate.<sup>7</sup> The health promoting schools movement also sees inter-sectoral collaboration as necessary to health promotion and wellness. Schools are expected to work with communities, and policy makers at all levels need to work cross-sectorally.<sup>8</sup>

In 1991, The European Network of Health Promoting Schools (ENHPS) was established and by the spring of 1996 there were 37 countries, 5000 schools and about 400,000 students involved in this network, including Ireland. It was funded through the WHO and the Commission of European Communities. The definition of Health Promoting School used by the WHO European regional office states:

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7 These are issues which Noddings has raised in *Education and Happiness* with respect to the curriculum and education for life and in line with students' interests.

8 This approach has been piloted with respect to educational disadvantage in Ireland through integrated service programmes and is an approach advocated by Cohen (2006) re SEEA education.

*The health promoting school aims at achieving healthy life styles for the total school population by developing supportive environments conducive to the promotion of health. It offers opportunities for, and requires commitments to, the provision of a safe and health enhancing environment (WHO1995, cited in Parsons et al., 1996: 313).*

Schools in the network are expected to work to a set of 12 criteria, which Parsons et al. (1996) suggest emphasise provision and process, rather than stated outcome objectives. They state that the features of European Health Promoting Schools can be categorised into three principal areas, the school context, the health promotion process, and the product.

Lynagh, Schofield and Sanson (1997) conducted a review of the literature on Health Promoting Schools. They found that out of 600 citations from computer databases there was no evidence that any of the schools adhered to the principles of Health Promotion. The five principles they outline for successful health promotion in schools in line with the Health Promoting Schools movement are a school health policy, a supportive environment, school community partnership and action, developing personal skills, and reorienting services.

In 86 schools doing health promotion programmes, generally only one principle of health promotion was implemented—the health related knowledge and skills of students. They report that many schools implemented models of health promotion in the curriculum, even though there was no evidence of the long-term effects of these packages. Of the 86 schools they analysed, only 24 schools had integrated just two principles of health promotion—use of a curriculum pack, and efforts at parental involvement. Moreover, none of the 86 school programmes incorporated ways of making the school environment a healthier one.

Research suggests that the school environment is key to successful promotion of wellness among students (Anderson and Ronson, 2004; Engels, Aelterman, Van Petegem and Schepens, 2004). Anderson and Ronson (2004) draw attention to the school environment in the US and the glaring contradiction between health promotion and the sale of junk food in vending machines. The work of Engels et al. (2004) in Flemish second-level schools suggest some significant directions and findings for educators in relation to school climate and various aspects of well-being and will be discussed in greater detail later in the section on school climate.

### **3.5.1 Health, wellness and democratic schooling approaches**

Anderson and Ronson's (2004) work in Canada suggests that health promotion at school is not, and should not be confined to aims of improving young people's health alone, but it is significant to the creation of a just and healthy civil society. Indeed, they see the healthy schools movement as leading a project for school reform. They cite ten principles for health promotion and wellness based on democracy, equity, empowerment, teacher development, collaboration, community development, curriculum, sustainability, school environment and measuring success (similar to Cohen's (2006) five steps for SEEA education for democracy). They are interested in the issue of democracy and well-being as research shows that connectedness, respect, having a voice, and feelings of safety are shown to enhance well-being. They define democracy in the context of schooling as

- a stance or disposition towards learning and an openness and respect for the learning process and the time it takes
- a way of being in the classroom or the world-creating opportunities and safety for everyone

- a way of belonging that involves relating learning to citizenry and to the betterment of society
- an organisational model—how people and programmes relate and interrelate and work together for common values (Cohen, 2006: 27).

They suggest moreover, that schools, which operate in accordance with these principles of democracy, create safety for their students. This feeling of safety has been shown as necessary in creating opportunities for critical thinking, to challenge the status quo, and to challenge power relations. Anderson and Ronson cite some major thinkers on democratic schooling including, Giroux, Freire and Fenstermacher and Glickman and advocate critical debate on the goals and nature of schooling from a democratic perspective.

Anderson and Ronson (2004) suggest that Giroux's work (2000, 2003) has significance for democratic schooling as he views learning as a cultural and political process. For Giroux, ideas and content of curricula are political and never neutral, so it is important that students are given opportunities to explore and discuss how ideas and knowledge are constructed, packaged and presented in schools. In order to do this, students need to have tools of critical literacy (see also Nutbeam, 2000). This means students need to have the critical tools to be able to unpack and recognise the ideologies that underpin knowledge, and moreover, to be able to do so in a safe and respectful environment where their voices count and are heard.

This resembles the revolutionary position of Freire (1973, 1998) with respect to schooling, and his attack on the banking model of education so prevalent in the developed world. Freire's ideas about education are about a democratic praxis where the needs and most urgent issues of the community define what gets taught and learnt. His view of education is deeply political and concerned with social transformation through critical learning, as opposed to the

continuation of models of schooling and practices that only reinforce a dominant oppressive social order. From a Freirean perspective, education in the transformative sense is essential for justice and associated well-being of individuals and the society or community.

### **3.5.2 Critical literacy and health education**

In the field of health education, Nutbeam's (2000) work advocates a similar position to Giroux's and Freire's with respect to critical literacy. Individuals who are critically literate are not only concerned with individual health outcomes and health knowledge, but also they are concerned with social justice and health for all people and how that can be tackled globally. In terms of equality, they are concerned about the health challenges experienced by specific groups on the basis of cross cutting inequalities.

In the same vein as the democratic approach advocated by Ronson and Anderson, research on health education conducted by Wright and Burrows (2004) in New Zealand found there is a real need for students at both first and second levels to have a socially informed understanding of health knowledge. In other words, schools need to go beyond the mere teaching of content and help students to contextualise their health knowledge within their specific circumstances. Their findings also suggest that health promotion in schools was conducted in a climate of certainty that was unhelpful to children in trying to contextualise knowledge. Their findings show that young people need to be encouraged to be more enquiring and critical in order to have choices about health and life styles. Natvig, Albrektsen and Qvarnstrom's (2003) research also suggests that sex education can only be effectively delivered to students in democratic participatory classrooms.

In an Irish context, there is little if any data available relating to health/sex education which pertains to the emotional dimensions

and/or positive aspects of sex and relationships including, intimacy, empathy, respect and reciprocity. Recent findings of a community-based study of the education and health needs of young people showed a need for increased availability of a more holistic approach to sex education in local schools. Focus groups of young people aged 10-18, school personnel and local service providers all perceived the need for empowering students with strategies to mediate social and peer pressure. Addressing the emotional and intimacy aspects of sex and sexual relationships alongside the physical/biological elements was recommended as well as developing students' critical thinking and decision-making skills (Downes & Maunsell, 2007). These findings reiterate many of the issues raised in studies of the adequacy of formal relationships and sex education programmes both in Ireland and the U.K. (Inglis, 1998; Rolston, Schubotz and Simpson, 2005; Mayock, Kitching & Morgan, 2007).

### **3.6 INTELLECTUAL ANALYSIS AND YOUTH CULTURE; CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATIONAL WELL-BEING**

Moving between the personal and the political and emphasizing the connection between the two, this section reviews seminal thinking with respect to the teaching of Cultural Studies and its relation to student well-being. In his influential essay '*Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies*', Hall (1996) delineates the specific development of Cultural Studies as an academic discipline within Britain in the 1970s, with special reference to the Birmingham Cultural Studies school. The importance of this evolution of Cultural Studies for Education can be seen in the continuing influence of Hall's approach on the Critical Pedagogy movement in the US. We can thus trace a direct lineage from Hall through to thinkers such as Giroux, Mc Laren and Aaronwitz, all of whom address directly the problem of youth and education in a more contemporary setting.

Hall's essay is important in this context because it is one of the clearest statements of the rationale behind the connection between Cultural Studies and Education from the 1970s onwards. Initially, this stemmed from the origins of the Cultural Studies movement in the Adult Education movement in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. Figures such as Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart explored the issue of 'culture and education' from the perspective of those groups or individuals who had been marginalised by the centralised education system and mainstream culture.

Alternative versions of culture, especially working class culture, and education, especially adult education, were explored as a means of questioning the assumed principles of the centralised education system. Evolving out of this work in the 1970s, the Birmingham Cultural Studies Centre extended this new focus of attention to so-called 'youth culture'. According to theorists such as Hall, Cohen and Mc Robbie, the explosive changes being wrought in society were creating an acute gap between two sets of groups, adult and youth culture, each understood in a general sense. Second, within youth culture, there was a gap between more mainstream youth and more marginalised, disaffected youth, who expressed their alienation through the formation of subcultures. The pedagogical significance of these subcultures and the relationship between youth alienation and education or schooling was a central concern of the Birmingham group from the beginning (Hall, 1993).

The importance of Cultural Studies can be seen as a refinement of a Left Marxist perspective into the eighties and nineties, through a new emphasis on the interconnectedness of race, gender, sexuality and youth issues. It is possible to argue that it is precisely this ideological dimension of the work of the Birmingham school which has had the greatest impact on the rise of Critical Pedagogy (Giroux, 2000). Critical Pedagogy is an attempt to analyse this same problematic in a

more contemporary setting with specific reference not simply to youth culture, but to youth in educational and school settings. Nevertheless, as central figures in Critical Pedagogy continue to emphasise (Giroux, 2000), we must not lose sight of the genealogy of these issues in discourse and in the evolution of culture and society; otherwise, we risk tackling the present in an historical vacuum.

Just as the Birmingham school looked back to figures, such as Gramsci, to develop their conception of the 'organic intellectual' who sought to connect academic research with the 'real world', so too the more recent work looks back to the example of Hall et al. as paradigms of what intellectual work can achieve when it maintains a strong link to political and educational practice. This is intellectual work 'as a practice which always thinks about its intervention in a world in which it would make some difference, in which it would have some effect..' (Hall, 1996: 275).

The work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) bequeathed a number of important unresolved questions to the analysts who followed (Hall, 1993). To what extent is 'youth culture' a symptom of underlying inter-generational tension and difficulties? Can we distinguish between better and worse versions of youth culture or youth subcultures (i.e. ones more or less attuned to their participants' well-being)? What is the relation between this well-being of youth, or its lack, and the institutional educational contexts in which youth find themselves day-to-day (i.e. how does school and education impact on the well-being or otherwise of youth)?

These issues were indicated and developed by the earlier CCCS but never resolved. The development of Critical Pedagogy in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s was an attempt to address these issues more directly and this movement was especially concerned with addressing what it saw as the intrinsic connection between education



and the well-being of youth (Giroux, 2000). Critical Pedagogy, therefore, as its name suggests, was concerned to focus the insights of Cultural Studies on the school and the youth of the school. Alongside the influence of the CCCS, the work of Freire was crucial in the evolution of Critical Pedagogy. Freire was convinced of the interconnectedness of school and culture, education and society. Moreover, in a manner similar to the feminists' work in the CCCS, Freire worked out from the fundamental principle that the political is the personal – or the pedagogical is the personal.

Developing insights from earlier existentialist thinkers such as Sartre, Freire focused on how the evolution of contemporary society and education produced a culture of 'sadism', (Freire, 1972) where the individual self becomes enculturated into treating all others as objects for its own use. The corollary of this sadism, however is an underlying 'masochism', (Freire, 1972) a failure of the self to understand him/herself and to relate properly to others in an authentic manner. Inter-personal relations become stultified in what Freire refers to powerfully as a culture of 'necrophily' or death.

At the root of this problem, for Freire, is a system of education which has developed into a pure instrumentalism – what he refers to as a 'banking system'. Education, far from being a process of self-realisation or ethical development, becomes an industry for points scoring and career development exclusively. Education becomes objectified and the individual students (and teachers) become objectified in turn. Although Freire's work is initially in literacy education with adults, his later work turns its attention to education as such, and here it has significant similarity to the work which we have seen as central to the research of the CCCS.

Both Freire and the CCCS are working out of a broadly defined neo-Marxist perspective, sensitive to cultural change and youth, and critical of the negative impact of an instrumental educational and

societal system which seems to alienate youth and subtract from their well-being. At the same time, the vision of both schools of thought is fundamentally optimistic and transformative, arguing for the responsibility and potential of each individual to enact change and progress in their particular situation. While cognisant of the macro-dimension and its restrictions on individual agency, both Freire and the CCCS ultimately theorise from the micro-level of individual practices and individual temporalities or ‘history from below’ (Hall, 1993).

### **3.6.1 Critical pedagogy**

It is in this spirit that the more recent work of critical pedagogy has also developed. Here, the work of Giroux can be seen as paradigmatic although reference could also be made to thinkers such as Mc Laren, Aaronwitz or Hooks. Giroux’s work focuses on youth and well-being with regard to schooling while also looking at how the wider socio-cultural context impacts on both youth and education. He follows Freire in extending the analysis of ‘banking education’ to a more contemporary setting. Rather than being an outdated system of education, Giroux reads the banking ideology as increasingly influential in contemporary education. Increasing emphasis on testing, on discipline (the ‘zero tolerance’ of educational policies) and on the ‘performativity’ of teaching means that, according to Giroux, Freire’s diagnosis of a sadistic banking system of education is more relevant than ever (Giroux, 2000). Giroux’s concerns here are educational but they are also existential or person-centred. Education as a process has become a means-end technicism, where schooling feeds the needs of industry and business. The impact of this on the young people experiencing the ethos of such a system can be immense.

Giroux focuses on increased alienation amongst youth in relation to school drop out rates, suicide, self-harming, depression and increasing

psychological problems, increasing youth-on-youth violence as well as a whole host of attitudinal problems which stem from the failure of an education system to question established prejudice (Giroux, 2000). For Giroux, the instrumentalism of the education system is not simply producing dysfunctional relationships and identities; it is also producing and reinforcing racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. Along with Freire, Giroux laments the lack of a critical moral education, which would allow students to interrogate received values and ‘easy answers’ to complex human situations. In an Irish context, it seems that Giroux’s concerns are very relevant to a younger Irish generation who no longer receive their moral education through religion and have little alternative sources of ethical or critical modelling except perhaps through the ‘value-free’ machinations of the contemporary economic and consumer market.

### **3.6.2 Media and education**

The influence of the earlier CCCS model can be seen in Giroux’s work, not simply through the neo-Marxist perspective, but also through his focus on popular youth culture and subcultural youth formation as objects of critical analysis. Like the CCCS, Giroux believes that we must acknowledge how youth identity and selfhood is increasingly being constructed through the media, whether film, television or internet. In his book, *Breaking In To The Movies*, (Giroux, 2000) Giroux puts forward a counter-cultural critique of several examples of contemporary film and media. He castigates film directors such as Quentin Tarantino (‘Pulp Fiction’), Gus Van Sant (‘My Own Private Idaho’) and Richard Linklater (‘Slacker’) for their failure to provide a moral vision to counter what he sees as an increasingly indulgent and self-destructive youth subculture. He reserves his special ire for the work of controversial photographer and film-maker Larry Clark (the photographic work ‘Tulsa’ and the film ‘Kids’) whom Giroux accuses of voyeurism and the exploitation of youth. Whatever about the merits of Giroux’s readings here, they

point to an interesting and highly significant zone of contestation in terms of the issues of youth identity and the well-being or otherwise of contemporary youth.

For Giroux, as indeed for the main other critical pedagogy theorists, film is itself a 'teaching machine' (i.e. education as a discipline must look beyond the school for the sources and constructors of meaning for youth today). Moreover, he is arguing that there is a strong complicity between, on the one side, the continuing evolution of instrumental methods in education and, on the other side, an increasing instrumentalism in identity formation amongst youth. In a very Freirean key, Giroux is arguing that the objectification of individuality and difference, which takes place in our education system through increasing standardisation and performance management, is exactly mirrored in the objectification and sadism of youth culture, where media representations of hyper-violence find their correlates in increasing youth-on-youth violence alongside a growing tendency towards self-destruction.

Needless to say, Giroux's reading of youth culture runs the risk of feeding the 'moral panic' his work is set up to address. On his own reading, *Critical Pedagogy* is less about condemning youth culture and more about delineating specific patterns of negativity which seem to have developed both in education and in society (Giroux, 2000). For artists such as Tarantino or Clark, however, the *Critical Pedagogy* response is too 'moralising'. It seeks to adapt and normalise the expressiveness of youth culture to a pre-ordained emancipatory ideal. As Tarantino says, if you don't like his film, 'don't watch it, man' (Giroux, 2000). Similarly, Clark is unabashed in his confidence that his representation of youth culture is a truer and more authentic version than any moral critique from Giroux or his like (Clark, 2007). For Clark, there is also a clear sense that any genuine transformation of youth can only come from within youth culture

itself. Critical Pedagogy runs the risk, on this reading, of imposing a solution from without, an external panacea. To paraphrase Freire, transformation must be by youth, with youth but not for youth (Freire, 1972).

Whichever perspective one takes, it is clear that the Giroux/Clark debate foregrounds the importance of contemporary media and film in the construction of youth identity and youth ethics. At present, there is a real gap in this kind of research into youth culture, media and pedagogy in an Irish context. The critical pedagogy perspective, alongside its detractors, serves as an interesting model to begin, or at least to continue to extend, this debate with regard to Irish education and Irish youth.

While these major critical theorists have written quite extensively on the role of media in education, they have not debated to any major extent the use of electronic media. This of course may be a function of academic interests and cultural norms in the academy. It is also perhaps an indicator of the explosion in growth in the area of electronic media and of the challenge this poses for human and social scientists working in the field of education.

A cursory review of a growing literature in electronic media and its impact on young people and children reveals a tendency to emphasise its negative impact in terms of time spent in sedentary activity and the effects on physical health and sexual health (American Academy of Paediatrics, 1999, 2001) and the relationship between violence in computer games, DVDs and young people's mental health (Ziegler, 2007; Sylwester, 1997). Over a decade ago in Canada, the Vanier Institute of the Family raised concerns in relation to the impact of electronic media on family life and development of young people. In Muscovitch's (1998) paper for the Vanier Institute, she summarises statistical data showing a relationship between

internet and electronic communication usage in the home and level of income (similar to the current UNICEF findings 2007). The concerns raised suggest that those without access to electronic media are disadvantaged in the job market adding to the probability of income poverty.

With respect to access and use of internet technology and its impact on young people's well-being, there is a growing movement among educators, and other professionals, volunteer groups and development organisations that work with young people that suggests that internet and virtual media can also have positive effects. Electronic media and networks can and have been used to increase participation in education, enhance social connectivity, break down isolation and increase participation in civil society (Zigurus, 2001; Bajally, 1999; OECD, 2003; Lea, 2002; Kahin and Keller, 1995). While the negative effects of access to net technologies are often widely publicised, it would appear that there is a need to raise awareness among educators of the potential and possibilities of virtual networking and distributed learning (Kahin and Keller, 1995). This is an area for future research in the Irish context. The recent launch of a suicide awareness campaign *Spunout* on YouTube ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gy7iHVBnmC4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gy7iHVBnmC4)) endorsed by the Irish National Suicide Prevention Agency highlights the potential of this technology for creating well-being.

### **3.7 SCHOOL CLIMATE, ACADEMIC OUTCOMES AND WELL-BEING**

As the previous sections have suggested, the climate of a school can enable students to participate in a thoughtful and engaged way in learning and in the relational life of the school. Alternatively, the school environment can discourage active student participation and stultify real learning. Moreover, the issues that are significant in

relation to health promotion and wellness in schools are similar to those raised in the literature on school organisation, school effectiveness and the more general well-being of students. Although a considerable body of school improvement and effectiveness research in the past did not explicitly focus on well-being, but rather on academic achievement or on achievement and social impacts of schooling, that has changed recently. One of the key questions to be addressed in research is whether, or how, academic achievement among students is related to their general well-being, and how school characteristics, and different types of schools, foster academic achievement or/and well-being. Interest and research in health promotion in schools have helped to foster this shift to a broader exploration of educational outcomes.

### **3.7.1 Health research and cross national comparisons of student satisfaction**

As part of the WHO study of health and school age children, Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold and Kannas (1998) explored students' satisfaction with school and the impact of school climate on satisfaction among 11, 13 and 15 year olds in Latvia, Norway, Finland and Slovakia. They explored satisfaction across three variables: 'I like school', 'school is a nice place to be', 'school is boring'. School climate, which has been shown to be significant to learning, was measured relative to organisational and relational processes in these schools. Student support, which has also been seen to be an important environmental factor in schools was measured on the variable: students enjoy being together. Informed by research on workplace satisfaction (Wright et al., 2002) they also explored perceptions of unreasonable job demands on students on an item: 'teachers expect too much of me at school'.

One concern in this research was that items measuring different variables were more meaningfully related for the North European

students. Overall, the data indicated that older students are less satisfied with school.<sup>9</sup> As one might anticipate, less satisfied students tend to be more alienated from school. Nonetheless, the majority of students in all four countries seemed satisfied with their schools. There is a gender difference for self-reported satisfaction with schooling as noted in other research (Engels et al., 2004; Opendakker and Van Damme, 2000). In the two youngest age groups, boys showed lower satisfaction than girls. This is explained in terms of gender roles and that boys react to the expectation of being quiet and orderly in class whereas girls may already have been socialised to this norm.

Eastern European students also appeared to be more satisfied with school and the authors suggest that in the past, the tradition in Eastern European countries had been not to question teachers and the organisation of schooling, and that this might still prevail. Perceptions of 'justice at school' were most highly related to satisfaction in all countries, followed by feeling safe at school and feelings of support from teachers. Perceptions of justice were based on whether students felt that they could influence rules, and their contributions to organisation and regulations gave students a sense of ownership.

Teacher support was measured as practical and emotional support, and both were seen to be important; nevertheless, the school environment rather than teacher support comes out higher in the Eastern European countries. Relationships with teachers were also seen as important to a sense of belonging and safety in school.

The research suggests that to promote health in school, attention needs to be given to the quality of a student's school experience and the quality of the relationship with teachers. School can be both a

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<sup>9</sup> O'Brien's (2004) research on transfer to second-level in Ireland and Gutman and Midgely's (2000) research on transfer in the US both find a drop in 'liking school' at the end of the first year at second level.



risk and a source of development for student health. Students who dislike school are also likely to be failing academically (Fraser, 1994; Mortimore, 1995). Health promotion and positive behaviours are achieved not just through knowledge and skills that are taught, but also through a supportive atmosphere (Rudd and Walsh, 1993; Hurrelman, K., Leppin, A. and Nordlohne, E., 1995). The authors suggest that it is clear from previous research that schools have competing priorities and find it challenging to make time for promoting health goals with academic achievement and maintaining discipline. Satisfaction with school is linked to the construct of quality of life. It reflects the affective component of this construct and is indicated by immediate responses such as happiness and enjoyment and a sense of well-being at school. Samdal et al. (1998) state that research on the determinants of students' satisfaction with school is still scarce and has usually been seen as dependent on students' personal characteristics and family, peer and school environments (Perry, Kelder and Komro, 1993).

### **3.8 RELATION BETWEEN SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND CLIMATE, TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

Rutter et als. (1979) Fifteen Thousand Hours was a classic piece of research which suggested that secondary schools vary hugely across a wide range of academic and social outcomes. One of the key findings of their research was the significance of school ethos and climate to students' ability to flourish in school.

There have been many research studies on climate and its impact since. A recent study undertaken in Belgium by Opdenakker and Van Damme (2000) explored the relationship of school and class effects, and teaching staff on students who had completed their first year of second-level schooling. The research examined the effects of these

variables on both achievement and well-being of students. With respect to school type, the region of Flanders organises post-primary schooling into three cycles of two years each. In the first cycle, stress is placed on basic education (27 out of 32 periods of instruction). From the second cycle onwards, students are required to choose a type of school and a particular focus of study from among four categories, general academic education, technical education, vocational education and arts and humanities education.

At school level, the researchers were interested in addressing the question of whether the school factors worked for both well-being and achievement. School achievement tests were used to measure students' academic achievement and self-report questionnaires were used to measure well-being. A self-report questionnaire based on school effectiveness research was used to ascertain teachers' perceptions of the school on a number of dimensions including teacher co-operation, focus on discipline, attention to students' differences, and orderly learning environment.

The findings are thought provoking for educators and policy makers. The influence of school type and class effects are much higher on achievement than on student well-being and in accordance with the findings of earlier Flemish and French studies (Verhoeven, Clement, Maetens and Vergauwen, 1992; Grisay, 1996). This is the case even when students' 'prior intelligence' is accounted for. The most significant finding in this study suggests that 'teaching staff co-operation' is the variable that has significant impact on both achievement and well-being. The authors state:

*This study reveals an overwhelming positive effect of teaching staff co-operation on teaching methods and student counselling on both achievement and several well-being indicators'*  
(Opdenakker et al., 2000: 185).

They go on to say that staff co-operation involves frequent discussion among teachers about teaching methods and pupil counselling. They surmise that high levels of staff co-operation are evidence of a highly functioning professional organisation, which creates a stimulating learning environment and a warm and agreeable school culture. Moreover, less effective teachers may become more effective when they co-operate with more effective teachers.

Recent research in Flemish secondary schools carried out by Engels, Aelterman, Van Petegem and Schepens (2004) supports these findings with respect to the significance of teachers and good staff relations. Their conceptualisation of well-being draws a distinction between long term or sustainable well-being and current well-being. They believe that sustainable well-being can only be affected in a minor way by schools as other personal factors play a larger role. How one feels in the here and now in school is more likely to be influenced by what is happening at school academically and socially, where school is seen as a 'living, learning environment' (ibid: 129).

The results of this study show significant differences for the well-being of pupils across schools, although in general, girls show higher levels of well-being than boys. The type of school which students attend is a factor for wellbeing although earlier work by Opdenakker and Van Damme (2000) suggest that school type is not a factor. In Engels et al. (2004) the students who reported the highest well-being scores were those who had selected to focus on arts and the humanities at school.

With respect to satisfaction in the classroom, students suggested that classroom involvement is important in line with earlier research, and that in the classroom the teacher is a crucial figure (Samdal et al., 1998). Respect and encouragement from the teacher contributes significantly to well-being. Teachers' methods are also important,

particularly activity-based teaching and use of different media. Students feel good when teachers display competence, expertise and commitment.

A range of studies which focused on middle schooling (junior second-level schools) also indicates that teachers were significant for students' achievement and well-being. They also suggest a need to focus on the socio-emotional outcomes of schooling not just the academic (Roeser and Eccles, 2003). Their research identified overall satisfaction with school as related to perceived school climate and teacher support, as well as intelligence and academic ability grouping, and objective and perceived academic achievement.

### **3.8.1 School organisation, academic outcomes and well-being**

The effects of school organisation on academic outcomes and well-being are explored by Opdenakker and Van Damme (2000). With respect to the variable, 'orderly learning environment', they observed that students in schools with a high average on this variable learned more than in schools with a low average for 'orderly learning environment'. Orderliness has different effects on both well-being and academic outcomes relative to student ability and motivation. While highly motivated students benefited from this characteristic, students with low achievement-motivation suffered with respect to motivation and interest in the learning task.

The authors propose that the orderly environment makes them dislike school more, and they do not feel good at school because they are aware of the discrepancy between their interests and those of the highly motivated students. They suggest that for all students, particularly those with low motivation, there is a need to focus on personality development, moral and social education to increase interest in task motivation. Moreover, with respect to school type,

schools that focus on creativity and arts education are more likely to have a positive effect on the interests of highly motivated students but not on those with low motivation.

This study found that ‘attention to student differences’, differentiating teaching at the class level on the basis of students’ perceived abilities, had a negative effect on achievement of high ability students.

Furthermore, the positive effect that was expected for lower ability students was not visible. In addition, it had a negative effect on low ability students’ attention to homework and interest. The authors conclude that traditional style teaching and narrow focus on curriculum is not effective for these students for either well-being or learning.

They suggest that the most significant finding of their study is that schools and classes have relatively more influence on achievement than well-being, and that these can be considered as distinctive outcomes of schooling at the level of schools and classes. They conclude that academic and communitarian climates have different impacts on differently motivated students, with high achievement motivated students benefiting from an academic climate, and those with low motivation benefiting from a more communitarian atmosphere. The implications of such a differentiated approach in practice warrants consideration given the arguments above from critical theorists about democracy and the aims of education, and the reality of the link between labour market and academic credentials. Moreover, the opposition of academic and communitarian climates as mutually exclusive is not necessarily helpful given that schools may aim to provide opportunities for academic learning and social and collectivist projects. This is an issue that warrants greater interrogation.

The research of Engels et al. (2004) explored well-being of students in Flemish secondary schools from an emancipatory, person-oriented

perspective (ibid: 127). In attempting to address the question of which school characteristics had the greatest impact on student well-being, they found that those in the humanities and art education schools had the highest sense of satisfaction overall, and that atmosphere at school was the best predictor of well-being. In relation to organisational practices, 'pupil oriented regulations' were the second most important factor at the level of the classroom. In line with earlier research, it appears that democratically drawn rules that are consistently applied promote well-being. Notwithstanding that student participation and involvement in schooling is important, the panel discussions with students indicated that the level of awareness of the existence of student councils was very low.

With respect to organisation of learning and schoolwork, students on average gave a low score to the items 'pressure of learning' and 'the curriculum'. The lack of an even distribution of tasks and unclear expectations led to students feeling overburdened. The marking systems used in the school were seen as a significant contributor to pressure, and the research suggests that *learning* rather than *achievement-oriented* goals are more appropriate to the fostering of well-being.

This research also found a connection between student behaviour and well-being. They note that although there is considerable variation among schools and students, they note that high behaviour scores are often reported and conclude that students want to create a good impression. They do not investigate school practices or particular characteristics of organisations that foster good behaviour but comment that it does have a positive effect on school atmosphere.

Suldo, Riley and Shaffer (2006) explored the academic correlates of children's and adolescents' life satisfaction in the United States in their review of research. These authors also point to the lack of

research around studies of children's life satisfaction and schooling, and quality of life, despite the significant focus on schooling today. They assert that the relationship between school climate and global life satisfaction (rather than school satisfaction) has not been determined yet. In addition, there has been no relationship found between IQ and global happiness.<sup>10</sup> Their analysis explores the relationship between school climate, intelligence, ability grouping, academic achievement, and students' overall appraisal of happiness in school. They suggest that if the relationship between school processes and student satisfaction could be established, it would lead to viewing students as more than just learners. Knowledge of which aspects of school functioning are most significant to well-being would make a difference to how programmes are taught and targeted.

These authors base their hypothesis on Wright et al's. (2002) work on occupational satisfaction which suggested that workers needed a relatively high degree of autonomy and control at work, reasonable levels of demands, and good social support from management and colleagues. In the school context, this would mean autonomy and control over learning by students, good peer and teacher support, along with fair and reasonable demands for schoolwork. Suldo et al. (2006) suggest that students' association with teachers might be the most powerful element in this model, if students feel that they are cared for and allowed to participate in discussions and planning of the classroom programme, then poor academic performance may not affect them as much in terms of how they feel about school (Calabrese, 1987).

Indeed, they go as far as to suggest: 'low IQ scores while possibly predictive of academic struggles, are not associated with diminished personal happiness' (Suldo et al., 2006: 577). They conclude that

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to say that the notion of IQ is contested on numerous grounds and its dominance in education as a measure of students' capabilities has been challenged by the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983).

educators need to be wary of initiatives to improve academic achievement and must simultaneously take into account the bigger picture and the impact of initiatives on student subjective well-being. They cite the work of Eccles and Gootman (2002), which recommends that community youth programmes should foster personal and social development particularly. They suggest too that the teacher is a central figure, and the care and warmth shown by teachers is significant to students' perceptions of themselves and their adjustment.

The work of Guttman and Midgely (2000) explored protective factors supporting the academic achievement of African American students from 62 impoverished families during the transition to middle school.<sup>11</sup> One of the issues they wished to investigate was the respective influence of school and home factors on academic well-being. While the majority of students in their sample experienced a drop in their grade point average post-transfer, those students who had higher academic self-efficacy maintained a higher grade point average than their peers. Moreover, they found significant interactions between home and school factors. They draw attention to the role of teachers who are concerned and caring (Comer, 1980; Rutter, 1979). They comment on the need for students to feel accepted in order to avoid alienation, but suggest this is rather difficult where students' values and beliefs seem incompatible with those of teachers and school. Students who experienced parental support and teacher support during this time of change had higher grade point averages than their peers who had just one of these support factors or none. This points to the limitations of the school effectiveness literature and the need to take the whole context and environment of students into account in relation to achievement and well-being.

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11 A more in-depth discussion of transfer from first to second-level schooling and its relation to students' well-being will be carried out later. Middle school caters for children aged 10 to 14 years, so this work has implications for the upper end of primary schooling and for the lower end of second level in the Irish context.



### **3.8.2 School climate, organisation and positive/negative attitudes at second level**

In the Irish context, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) commissioned a piece of research to explore the experiences of second year, second -level students. The findings of this research indicate that school climate is of significance to students' attitudes to school and contributes to what the authors call 'second year drift' (Smyth, Dunne, McCoy and Dermody, 2006). The authors found that many students who had previously been positive about second level became disenchanted as they moved into their second year. The factor that prevented this disenchantment and isolation and anxiety among second years was a positive climate characterised by good teacher/student relations. Students who experienced positive feedback and praise from teachers were more engaged and less anxious. Informal contact with teachers through extracurricular activities, sport and student councils were all viewed as important aspects of positive climate. Students reported on characteristics of good teachers as those who explained material clearly, who taught at an appropriate pace, who were approachable and who used a variety of teaching methods outside the traditional talk and chalk of class teaching.

Moreover, and in concurrence with the international literature, students allocated to lower streams found the pace too slow, spent less time on homework and were more likely to disengage from schooling, which the authors suggest has long term as well as immediate consequences for well-being. The Irish study concurs with the Flemish research of Opdenakker and Van Damme (2000) with respect to the effects of streaming and classroom differentiation and the use of traditional teaching styles.

### **3.9 ADAPTATION OF ALLARDT'S WELFARE MODEL OF WELL-BEING TO SCHOOLING**

There is a significant research literature in Finland on well-being and schooling based on Allardt's model of welfare and well-being discussed earlier (having, loving and being welfare model). Konu and Rimpela (2002) suggest that the emphasis on health promotion in schools while broad and encompassing of health in the most holistic sense is not grounded in a theoretical model of well-being. They claim that there is a need for a sociological model of well-being to inform school health promotion. In reviewing the literature on health promotion they draw on St Leger's (1995) work and suggest that health promotion programmes rest too narrowly on content and topic based interventions. They also cite Lynagh et al. (1997) who found that health promoting schools focused on a narrow range of materials and did not implement programmes holistically. They suggest there is a need to use indicators based on a broad model of well-being.

Allardt's welfare model is suggested as a model for implementing school programmes and interventions to enhance student well-being. Well-being is understood as a state in which it is possible for a human being to satisfy his or her basic needs, and the indicator system takes account of both material and non-material conditions of well-being. The categories of having, loving and being are as follows.

*'Having' refers to the material conditions and impersonal needs in a wide perspective. 'Loving' stands for the needs to relate to other people and to form social identities. 'Being' denotes the needs for personal growth i.e. integration into society and living in harmony with nature (Allardt, 1993: 82).*

These categories are measured on the basis of both objective and subjective indicators as discussed earlier (see Table 1). Allardt assigns

health to the having category; health is seen as a resource necessary for living and well-being.

In the model of well-being adapted for schooling, well-being is defined under four categories:

- school conditions are categorised under having
- social relationships under loving
- being is operationalised as means for self-fulfilment
- health is seen as another category which is a variation on the general welfare model.

Well-being is set within an educational context and shaped by teaching and education and learning in the school. The home and the surrounding community are a larger context within which schooling and well-being are situated. This is indicated in Figure 1 below reproduced from Konu and Rimpela (2002: 83). Table 1 illustrates Allardt's more general welfare model while Figure 1 applies this to the school setting.

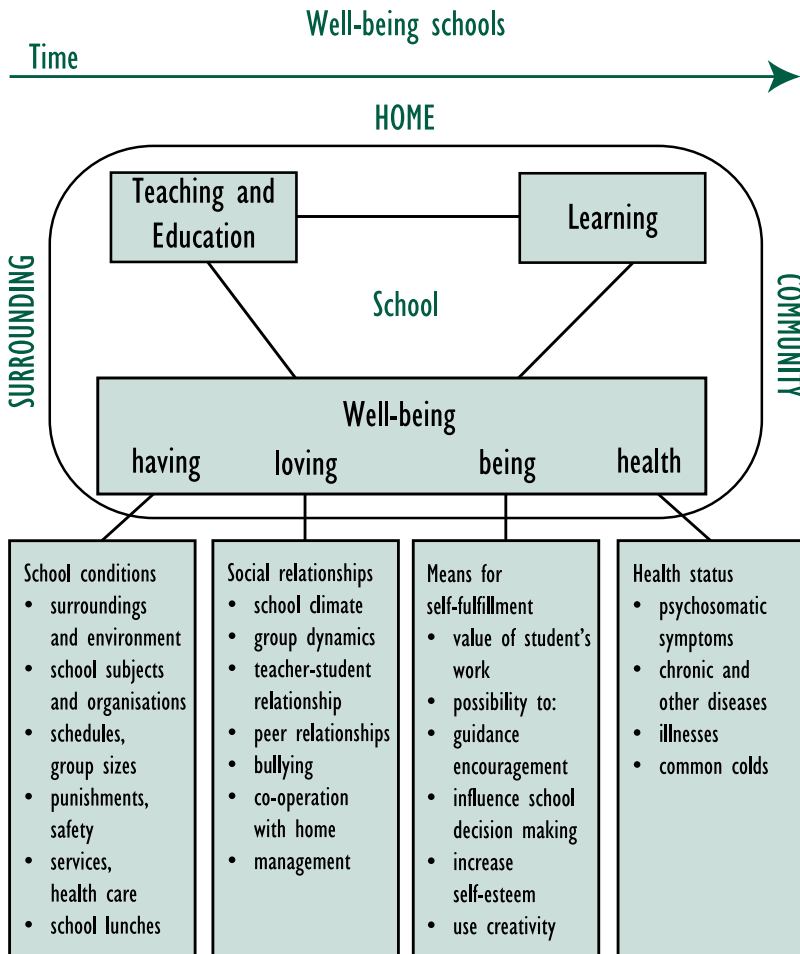
In this model, it is evident that teaching and education are seen as crucial to the development of well-being and learning. Teaching affects every aspect of well-being and learning achievements. School conditions are also significant and these include the physical environment surrounding and inside the school. The learning environment is also seen as an aspect of school conditions and includes the curriculum and school organisation (e.g. ability grouping). The third aspect of school conditions are facilities (not seen as strongly associated with well-being Opdenakker et al., 2000).

The social relationship aspect of well-being is broken down into student/teacher relations, peer relations, bullying, parent/school

Table 1. Allardt's (Allardt, 1989) cross tabulation of 'having, loving and being' with the objective and subjective indicators of well-being

	Objective indicators	Subjective indicators
Having (material and impersonal needs)	Objective measures of the level of living and environmental conditions	Dissatisfaction-satisfaction; subjective feelings of dissatisfaction-satisfaction with living conditions
Loving (social needs)	Objective measures of relationships to other people	Unhappiness-happiness, subjective feelings about social relations
Being (needs for personal growth)	Objective measures of people's relation to (a) society and (b) nature	Subjective feelings of alienation-personal growth

Figure 1. Konu and Rimpela (2002) adapted model



relations and school climate in general. The literature has already indicated that these impact on student well-being. Relationships with the surrounding community and local services is one of the principles of health promotion and is also included here (Nutbeam et al., 2000). Engels et al. (2004) has shown that co-operation and good relations between teachers themselves strongly influence students' well-being at school. Of course bullying is a negative aspect of social relations and there is a considerable literature citing the negative impact of bullying on students (Rigby, 2000; Olweus, 1993; O'Moore and Hillery, 1991).

Konu and Rimpela suggest that Allardt sees 'being' as each person being respected as a valuable part of society. Within the school context, the authors state that being can be seen as the opportunities the school offers for self-fulfilment. It has some similarities with egalitarian frameworks as it outlines equal treatment and respect, equal chances for participation and decision-making (see discussion on democratic schooling above), opportunities for improving one's own knowledge and skills (see Noddings, 2003) and moving at one's own pace. Respect is crucial to this and teachers', peers' and parents' contributions impact on the experience of respect (the issue of respect will be discussed further in relation to equality models and schooling).

The additional dimension of health status that has been added to this model of well-being for schools is seen in a narrow sense as the absence of disease or illness. Health status refers to mental and physical symptoms and is regarded as a dimension through which other aspects of well-being can be achieved. Health is therefore a resource and it is included as a separate category in the adapted model as health may also be a personal state, although it is affected by external conditions (Konu and Rimpela, 2002: 85).

The authors state that the well-being model of schooling demonstrates the much wider aims of education than school health programmes in the health promotion literature. They further suggest that the having, loving, being and health status model is a useful one for school evaluation and what almost resembles a school audit of well-being. They propose that evaluations can be carried out with reference to both objective and subjective indicators (this is in line with current international welfare research methods discussed in Chapter One). Clearly, these are advancements on the health promotion models but as with the measurement of subjective well-being and social indicator research, the concept becomes confined by the measures available. Moreover, equal weights are given to each dimension in this school well-being model and there may be good reason why some aspects should be weighted differently for different individuals (as Sen suggests in relation to relative importance of functionings for individuals in the Capabilities Model discussed in Chapter One).

### **3.9.1 Well-being model and young people's subjective well-being**

Based on their conceptual model of well-being as welfare, Konu, Lintonen and Rimpela (2002) have conducted an empirical study to explore which factors in schooling are most associated with subjective well-being among students in eight and ninth grades in Finland (14.3–16.2 years). They examined the effects of background (SES, social cohesion, recreation and health behaviours) and school context (school conditions, social relationships, means for self-fulfilment and health status). The findings of this study suggest that the greatest influence on young people's general subjective well-being, regardless of gender, were

- frequent talks with parents

- no weekly health symptoms
- has not been bullied in school
- has at least one intimate friend (the last two were concerns most frequently raised as issues by students making the transfer from first to second-level schooling in O'Brien's (2004) study in Ireland).

With respect to the means of fulfilment category, strong correlations were found with

- future educational plans
- no problem with tasks that require personal activity.

This study shows that *no one aspect or item of well-being is more powerful than the collection or category that it belongs to*. The authors were surprised that socioeconomic status did not have more impact on SWB but then suggest that these young people are going through a transitional phase and parental economic status may not be so influential (this was also observed in relation to stress among students in Hong Kong, Shek, 2002). Despite the emphasis on health promotion and health behaviours in recent decades the findings of this study show that smoking and alcohol use are not significantly related to well-being but frequent drunkenness is.

The educational aspect that relates most strongly with well-being falls into the means of self-fulfilment category and like the work of Opendakker and Van Damme (2000) shows teacher support and relationships are important to students.

One of the problems in identifying stronger relationships between schooling and well-being in this study was that the variables used in the health promotion study on which this was based did not

correspond closely with the well-being model. They suggest that future research should explore relationships between various categories of school well-being and inter-relationships between the variables within these categories.

A multi-level analysis of SWB was carried out by Konu, Lintonen and Autio (2002) to explore the variation in well-being at individual and school levels. This analysis shows that most of the variation in SWB occurred at the individual level as was found by Opdenakker and Van Damme (2000) where schools and classes had a greater impact on achievement than on SWB of students. There was little variation between schools but the authors point out that there was some variation and that it appears small relative to the level of variation between pupils. They also suggest that if schools saw general well-being rather than achievement as a significant aim then the variation between schools would possibly be much greater.

The recent overview of child well-being in the twenty-five richest countries (UNICEF, 2007) shows that Finland has the lowest average score for the variable 'liking school a lot' in the subjective well-being dimension of this study. The authors of this report draw attention to the relationship that commonly exists between liking school and educational achievement. It seems problematic that Finland scores very high on achievement although not many children like school a lot. Perhaps as Konu et al. (2002) suggest, schools tend to have academic achievement rather than general well-being as an aim, and this may be reflected in the Finnish statistics for low subjective well-being and high achievement levels (Noddings, 2003 also suggests this contradiction with respect to young people's schooling).



### **3.10 ORGANISATION OF SCHOOLING AND TRANSFER FROM PRIMARY TO POST-PRIMARY LEVELS**

Research conducted by Gutman and Midgely (1999) on school and home effects on student achievement at transition to middle-school in the US highlights some of the problems associated with movement from junior grades to a school for 10-14 year olds. A body of international research has explored the effects of transfer from primary to second-level schooling on students' academic achievement and social experiences and development (Nesbitt and Entwistle, 1969; Jackson and Warin, 2000). In Ireland, there has been increased research interest on transfer to second level and its impact on students (Naughton, 1998; O'Brien, 2004; Smyth, Mc Coy and Dermody, 2004; Smyth, Dunne, McCoy and Dermody, 2006).

Although the term well-being is not used explicitly in these studies, they are concerned with aspects of student welfare or well-being. As the Irish educational system among many others requires students to make a transition across levels around the time of entry to adolescence, it is necessary to include at least a cursory review of this issue. In Britain, Measor and Wood's (1984) ethnographic study of students as they moved from primary school to a comprehensive school highlights the significance of school transfer as a 'status passage'. Students make a triple transition: they are moving from childhood into adolescence, from their own school institution to a new school with its own culture and from one social context with particular friends into another. Students experience changes in the nature of their relationships at transfer; they have been the senior students in their old school and become the youngest and 'lowliest' in the new school. At one level, the status of a student is increased by their passage into adolescence, and at the same time status is decreased as a consequence of being the youngest and newest in the new school with unfamiliar people, rules and practices.

### **3.10.1 Transfer anxieties**

The literature also indicates that school transfer and the challenges it poses can create anxiety in students. Anxiety is not seen as positive with respect to subjective well-being. The anxieties students express before they enter second-level school and in the first few weeks immediately after transfer, relate to various areas of school life: the social, institutional and academic arenas of schooling. In relation to changes that occur in the social area, students are concerned about dealing with older children, bullying and issues of safety (Brown and Armstrong, 1987; Mertin, Haebich and Lokan, 1989; Lucey and Reay, 1998; Naughton, 1998; Smyth, McCoy and Dermody, 2004; O'Brien, 2004).

Students are also fearful in relation to student 'myths' (Mesor and Woods, 1984). Student 'myths' refer to the stories told by second level students to pre-transfer or transferring students about having their heads put down toilets, being beaten by older students and having to watch gruesome dissections of animals in science class.

Evidence of student concerns about institutional aspects of school life are found in Murdoch (1986), Cotterell (1987), and Armstrong and Brown (1987). Students were afraid of getting lost due to the size of the building, having to cope with a longer day and having to move from class to class. Research also shows that these types of concerns are short lived and decrease after a short time at second level (Power and Cotterell, 1981).

Students express concerns in relation to their ability to cope with school subjects, homework and examinations (Nisbet and Entwistle, 1969; Mertin et al., 1989; Naughton 1998, Smyth, et al., 2004; O'Brien, 2004). Student concerns in relation to the academic aspects of school life are not so easily mitigated or as short lived as those issues relating to their new environment (Galton and Wilcocks, 1983; O'Brien, 2001). Rogers, Galloway, Armstrong, Jackson and Leo

(1996) found that student achievement and motivation seriously deteriorated in the first year at second level and that students enjoyed school less.

A study of student anxiety after transfer to second-level (Karagiannopolou, 1999) indicates that there is a strong relationship between student stress after school transfer and what are construed in that study as individual personality traits. Students who have already experienced stressful life events are also more likely to experience stress on transfer to second level. In particular, family characteristics categorised as family cohesion and adaptability were perceived to be related to student stress or ability to adapt to school transfer.

### **3.10.2 'School selection' at transfer to second-level: issues of assessment**

In the past, research in Britain and Northern Ireland on transfer to second-level schooling focused on school selection procedures for the allocation of students to a tri-partite, hierarchical education system. These studies indicated that ability rather than social class was the main predictor of school performance, and that allocation to school type at transfer was conducted on the basis of academic ability (Nesbit and Entwistle, 1969; Youngman, 1986; Spelman, 1987). However, arguments in relation to multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1987) and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) suggest that the type of testing used in school selection procedures are class biased, and that the dispositions required for successful test taking and preparation, favour middle-class students. The forms of assessment commonly used in selection only tested particular types of abilities, abilities that have been legitimated by the educational system and that do not take into account other forms of knowledge and ability.

A study in Northern Ireland (Gallagher and Smith, 2001) demonstrated that school selection practices in Northern Ireland still

favoured those from the higher social class groups. The use of this type of assessment at transfer to second level means that students from working-class backgrounds continue to be over-represented in secondary modern schools and under-represented in the selective grammar schools. Furthermore, this study also found that a large proportion of students (and their parents) across social classes did not even wish to participate in the testing for school selection at transfer, and alternatively 'chose' open-entry, non-selective schooling.

Longitudinal evidence from Gallagher and Smith's study (2001) demonstrates the emotional trauma associated with the use of the Eleven Plus Examination as a selection procedure. Many years after taking the Eleven Plus Examination, individuals in this study recalled the period of time leading up to the examination. They described the intense pressures on teachers, students and their families. They vividly remembered the examination day and the period of relief after the examination, and the time before the announcement of the results. Individuals recalled feelings of isolation and failure on achieving low grades on the tests and their embarrassment at the public announcement of these grades and the comparisons made with successful peers. The work of Gallagher and Smith shows the damaging and biased nature of these selection procedures and the social and emotional consequences of this type of selection.

In Ireland, issues in relation to school selection at transfer to second level are little documented. The second-level, state sponsored school system is perceived as non-selective and it is taken for granted that students choose to attend particular types of school that suit their needs. Notwithstanding this view, there has been no major study of school selection procedures to date and no debate in education in relation to school choice and issues of equality. Although allocation of students to particular types of schools on the basis of 'academic ability' is not considered a 'legitimate' practice in the Irish system,

evidence suggests that students demonstrating lower academic performance and from lower social class groupings are over-represented in the Vocational School sector (Drudy and Lynch, 1993; Baker et al., 2004).

### **3.10.3 Transfer as a transition between school cultures**

There is also an extensive body of literature that describes and explores school cultures and how they impact on students as they move between school cultures. As the literature on wellness shows climate is related to well-being, this will be considered briefly here. The work of Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan (1996) provides a review and analysis of research relating to the contrasting culture of ‘elementary’ and ‘secondary’ schools. They contrast the ‘culture of care’ of the elementary school with the more ‘formal academic culture’ of second-level schooling. They recognise that care is central to elementary school partly due to structural characteristics (e.g. size and one teacher per class) but also due to the gender composition of the teaching force (i.e. predominantly female).

Hargreaves et al. (1996) also suggest that there are three dominant, interrelated factors that contribute to secondary school culture: ‘academic orientation, student polarisation and fragmented individualism’ (ibid: 26). They argue that student polarisation is related to the ‘narrow view of academic achievement’ embraced by secondary schools and the high value that is put on the high achieving students (to the detriment of others) and the subsequent polarising of students into the achievers and non-achievers. Students at secondary school also experience a culture of individual competitiveness and an artificially divided day in moving from one subject specialisation to the next every forty minutes or so. The authors argue that the impact of competition and fragmentation is detrimental to the all-round development of students.

Such aspects of secondary school culture can affect particular groups of students adversely, particularly those with special learning needs, and those from more marginalized social groups. The authors advocate careful planning and intervention to support the students as they undergo the transfer process in order to lessen the negative impact of cultural discontinuity between first and second-level schooling.

### **3.10.4 Organisation of learning at second level**

Hargreaves et al. (1996) point out that there is often an assumption that schools at first and second levels are entirely different on many dimensions, and that second-level schools and teachers are often seen to be 'the villains of the piece'. It is also assumed that students leaving first level have mainly experienced their schooling in groups of mixed-ability, but this is not necessarily true (O'Brien, 2001).

Little attention has been given to the issue of ability grouping at primary school level in Ireland although major international studies carried out at first level have shown that it is practiced elsewhere (Hallinan and Sorenson, 1985; Eder, 1981). Research in Ireland (Carr, 1988) found that over eighty percent of primary teachers in the North West region of Ireland practiced ability grouping and of those who did group in this way, the vast majority did so for English reading. Carr's study suggested that middle-class children were over-represented in the higher ability groups, as were children whose parents demonstrated a high level of interest in school.

At second-level, attempts to organise learning according to ability groupings are well documented. This practice has been much debated in the literature internationally and in Ireland (Hargreaves, 1967; Lunn, 1970; Lacey, 1970; Ball, 1981; Hannan and Boyle, 1987; Lynch and Lodge, 2002). These studies indicate that the practice of streaming (i.e. the allocation of students to class groupings on the

basis of their ability as measured on tests or teacher reports) was common practice. The research suggests that this practice has serious implications for student learning and social development.

The research on ability grouping is significant in terms of school transfer for a number of reasons. Students who are allocated to lower streams experience feelings of low-self esteem, develop a more negative attitude towards school, have higher rates of absenteeism, are more likely to truant, are less likely to complete homework and display stress behaviours such as crying and feeling sick before class (Lacey, 1970; O'Kelly, 1986).

The recent work of the ESRI team Smyth, Dunne, McCoy and Dermody (2006) suggests that streaming is a highly problematic practice in Irish second-level schools. Of the 12 case study schools in their research, they found that 6 streamed students, and while the other 6 schools maintained mixed ability bases, the students were set according to ability into higher and lower level classes for mathematics, Irish and to a lesser extent English. They raise serious concerns about the impact of streaming in working-class and disadvantaged schools where students are 'cemented' into particular positions in the class and rarely moved streams. In line with the international literature they found that in the lower streams the students were offered fewer subjects, the teaching was more didactic and amounts of homework and time spent on homework were less.

Friendships are also affected by the practice of streaming (Lacey, 1970; Hargreaves, 1967; O'Kelly, 1986). Children allocated to the same streams continued existing friendships, whereas children allocated to different streams to their friends discontinued friendships. Where original friendship bonds were strong, children placed in higher streams made considerable efforts to maintain these friendships (Devine, 1991). Fear of losing friends and desire to be with friends is one of the most common anxieties experienced by

children at transfer (Measor and Woods, 1984; O'Brien, 2001).

A further concern with regard to the organisation of learning according to ability grouping is that it tends to create an anti-school or counter culture among children in the lower streams (Lacey, 1970; Willis, 1977; Smyth, 1999). The lower social class groups also tend to be over-represented in the lower streams.

Studies have indicated (Lacey, 1970; Lunn, 1970; Ball, 1981) that once children are allocated to streams they were likely to stay there. This has implications for how children experience the transfer from first to second-level schooling, and their opportunities to participate academically and socially at second level. In choosing a second-level school, middle-class parents tend to favour schools that have streamed and set groups and believe that their children would benefit from this type of classroom organisation (Ball et al., 1996; Reay and Ball, 1998). It appears that the aim of education in the minds of many parents with cultural capital is to promote academic achievement. The broader aim of education as fostering general well-being does not appear to be uppermost in an increasingly marketised and performance driven school system.

### **3.10.5 Belonging and sense of membership**

Though not focused on school transitions per se, the work of Smerdon (2002) on school membership among American high school students suggests that a sense of belonging is significant to school participation. The research explores how school characteristics can promote participation. Similar to other studies of subjective well-being 'belonging' was measured relative to an item 'feeling listened to by teachers, feeling accepted by other students' and whether individuals felt it was easier or harder to make friends at high school. School characteristics were measured along a range of variables under school organisation and school composition. The organisation



variables included learning groups, teachers' co-operativeness with each other, support of students, authority over academic work and use of home-room systems and teachers' academic press.

The results of a multi-level analysis suggest that most of the variation in 'sense of belonging' is within rather than between schools (95%). The within school results show that the variable 'teacher relationships' is not significantly related to a sense of belonging but that 'student say' or 'authority over their work' is, as is the use of a home-room system. While teacher relationships did not seem strongly related to belonging, the fact that use of home-rooms was related may be evidence of the significance of caring teacher/student relationships. Moreover, students' characteristics, which included their achievement at middle school and sense of belonging at middle school, were related to high school belonging. What is significant in the findings of this study is that students who most need to belong on the basis of poor achievement and middle-school experiences are the one's who feel they least belong at high school. The treatment of students within schools rather than the type of school they attend has a greater impact on their sense of belonging.

The ESRI (2006) research suggests that second year at second level is particularly challenging for students, and that schools do not generally provide integrated support structures for their students. While student councils for example were in operation in all twelve case schools, only one specifically focused on second year issues. Their research suggests that isolated support structures are of limited value and that a more integrated approach to second years is necessary to prevent students disengaging at this stage in their schooling. They emphasise the significance of overall school climate to students' sense of belonging and engagement in second year.

### **3.11 WELL-BEING, EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND DISADVANTAGE**

The UNICEF Innocenti Report Card (2007) which reports on child well-being in the 25 richest OECD countries, measures and conceives of educational well-being as a dimension of overall child well-being. It reports findings with respect to educational well-being on just three indicators, school achievement, percentage of students remaining in education aged 15–19 and percentages of students in education, training and employment. This is a large-scale quantitative project that is ongoing across OECD countries so the volume of data gathered is of course rather large, and there are issues of comparison and comparability across educational systems that complicate the measurement and the emergent picture.

Nevertheless, it is still rather disappointing that the only indicators of educational well-being that are used reflect traditional meritocratic and achievement oriented paradigms, and do not include the kinds of indicators in the well-being literature with respect to social and affective aspects of education. It is a given that literacy and numeracy are basic skills, and that students need rather more than these to survive in post-industrial societies; nonetheless, educational aims and indeed the curricula of second-level schools are increasingly orienting towards a wider conceptualisation of educational well-being.

Despite the narrowness of the definition of educational well-being, the findings and comparisons in this report are interesting. The academic achievement indicator was measured using tests of achievements in reading, maths and scientific literacy. The tests reflect the capacity to apply these basic skills in everyday life. The results are averaged for each country and are combined into a league table for overall academic achievement. The leaders in overall achievement are Finland, Canada, Australia and Japan with Greece, Italy, Spain and

Portugal at the very bottom. Norway and Denmark ranked much lower than would be anticipated given their usually high rankings in tables of social indicators. The report notes the position of the Czech Republic well above many of the wealthier European nations.

A further omission in the report however is the lack of data on within nation spreads of achievement and relative educational disadvantage. This information is of significance from a policy and social justice perspective within countries. Although rates of overall achievement are important for cross-national comparison, it is of the utmost importance that countries have data on relative disadvantage within and implement policy to tackle this. This information is available in the UNICEF Innocenti report card 4 (2002).

The UNICEF (2002) report is undertaken from an equality perspective on well-being and at the outset suggests that ‘schools can serve to reduce or challenge existing social inequality’. Key findings of this research were based on the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), TIMSS (Trends in International Maths and Science Study, and IALS (International Adult Literacy Study). Notwithstanding the problems of measurement and criticisms that have been levelled at these measures from radical equality perspectives,<sup>12</sup> the results indicate that certain countries are consistent leaders in tackling both absolute and relative educational disadvantage (Canada, Finland and Korea) and others demonstrate consistently high levels of both kinds of disadvantage (Hungary, Portugal, Greece, USA and Germany). These latter countries have the greatest proportions of the population scoring below the minimum levels on these tests, and also have the greatest inequalities between those who do well and those who are left behind.

What is important in the findings on relative and absolute disadvantage is the pattern that high expectations in achievement are

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<sup>12</sup> Feeley, M. (2007) PhD thesis in Equality Studies at UCD, Equality Studies.

not incompatible with low levels of relative disadvantage. Ireland does reasonably well on both counts, ranking better in terms of lowest levels of absolute disadvantage but finding itself in the middle grouping of countries with respect to relative disadvantage. This suggests Ireland still has a considerable way to go in limiting the effects of educational disadvantage in terms of academic achievement.

The authors of the (2002) report try to explain the factors that contribute to the success of Finland and Korea in relation to high achievement scores and low levels of relative disadvantage. They suggest that Korea's longer academic year of 220 days, longer pre-service teacher education, and 'passionate attitudes of both students and parents toward education'<sup>13</sup> may be contributory factors. They explain Finland's success in terms of long winter evenings spent on academic work and reading, and ease of learning the Finnish language as making reading and writing more easily acquired by children.<sup>14</sup>

The researchers analyse relationships between achievement and some obvious variables at national level, for example educational spending per pupil, but find it impossible to come up with robust explanations on the basis of cross national data. They draw attention to the fact that Korea with the best ranking spends the same per capita on pupils as the lowest ranking countries of Greece and Portugal. The relationship between relative educational disadvantage and income inequality is not apparent either, citing Germany, which rates one of the best countries in terms of equitable income dispersion, and one of the worst on relative educational disadvantage.

Teachers are considered as a potentially significant variable in respect of achievement standards but no consistent relationship is found between pupil/teacher ratios and achievement. Quality of teachers

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13 The Report Card cites this in their footnote 9 as quoted in Times Educational Supplement, 14th December, 2001.

14 Also attributed to the Times Educational Supplement 14th December, 2001.

was seen as such an indefinable term across countries that it cannot be used as a variable in this analysis. An issue that is raised and has serious equality and justice implications for young people is selectivity of education within countries. The researchers pose the question whether comprehensive educational systems foster less relative disadvantage than highly selective ones. Again there are problems of definition because schools may declare themselves as non-selective, but in practice be highly selective, through geographical positioning or parental choices in increasingly marketised educational systems (Lynch and Moran, 2006; Ball and Reay, 1998; O'Brien, 2004).

Germany is taken as an example of a country which has a highly selective educational system where children as young as ten are sorted and allocated to three kinds of second-level schools, the academic gymnasium, the less academic and vocational realschule and the least academic and least prestigious hauptschule. Nonetheless, although Germany is high on relative disadvantage it is no more so than some countries with non-selective school systems. Clearly, cultural capital plays a significant role in the school selection process, and parents with higher levels of education are more likely to have children recommended for the gymnasium, and to have aspirations that their children will attend there. Parents who attended the other less academic types of school are likely to have similar aspirations for their children. Ireland has a system which purports to be less selective than the German system, but as discussed earlier, cultural capital of parents also plays a highly significant role in school selection at transfer to second level (Lynch and Moran, 2006; O'Brien, 2004).

### **3.11.1 Staying in education, transition to work and well-being**

The second indicator that is used to assess countries with respect to educational well-being is whether young people remain in school

after 15 and until 19 years. The relationship of this indicator to overall well-being could be debated, as Boldt's (1994) work with early school leavers in Dublin suggests that for second-level students who are not happy at school, the decision to leave is often a positive one for them. It is difficult to balance this of course with the view that educational qualifications are vital to educational well-being, and later on, to well-being in the economic context. The values that drive the economy are linked to the educational system and young people who leave early are at risk of poor pay and poor levels of employment.

Moreover, UNICEF report card 7 indicates that there are high proportions of young people even in the rich OECD countries that have low aspirations for employment. In response to the question 'what kinds of work do you expect to have when you are 30 years old?' France, Germany and United Kingdom over 30% of young people responded that they expected to be in low skilled work, in contrast to just 15% in the United States. Perhaps this also reflects cultural values about types of work and status accruing to particular forms of work in different parts of the world, or an awareness of the reality that not everyone can fill the higher paid and status positions, but the report does not dwell on issues of values and norms at all.

In the report, an indicator 'liking' or 'not liking school' is included to measure the contribution of liking school to subjective well-being. This is a subjective measure of affect in relation to school and is certainly relevant to overall well-being given the amount of time that young people spend in school over the course of childhood and adolescence (Katja, Astedt-Kurki, Marja-Terttu and Pekka, 2002). There is no attempt in the report, however, to use objective measures of school relations and climate, which have been shown to have a significant relation to wellness overall and to wellness at school (Ramsey and Clarke, 1990).

### **3.12 RESOURCING WELLBEING AND EQUALITY IN EDUCATION**

While much of the discussion of well-being and wellness in this section has focused on the social science and health promotion literature and research, it is clear that there are diverse perspectives constituting how to understand and promote well-being for students at second-level schools. A recent Irish publication by Baker et al. (2004) *Equality from Theory to Action* includes a chapter on the significance of equality in education to individual well-being, and to the well-being of particular groups in society. While some of the research and conceptual work already discussed certainly can be included in the equality paradigm, this radical equality model provides a comprehensive system for the analysis of barriers to equality and thus to well-being. It is suggested that there are four major equality problems in education, which act as barriers to well-being. These are understood within a radical egalitarian perspective. These challenges are identified as

- inequality of resources and economically generated inequalities
- inequality of respect and recognition for diversity
- inequality of power, democratising education
- inequality of love, care and solidarity, the emotional dimensions of education.

In the *equality of resources* problem, there are a number of key issues to be addressed within the educational system. The crux of this seems to lie in the fact that in a society where education is increasingly commodified, those with greatest economic advantages can purchase educational advantages for their children. The research cited in the previous section and often throughout this report understands educational disadvantage from a liberal egalitarian perspective (see *Equality from theory to action*, Chapter Two). While interventions are

recommended to tackle this disadvantage from an educational perspective, radical egalitarians would argue that these will always fail as within capitalist societies those with economic advantages can always adapt to changes in the redistribution of educational resources through their purchasing power. Baker et al. go even further and suggest how schools themselves are implicated in reproduction of inequality in education through selectiveness and admission policies, the organisation of learning by ability grouping and tracking, and the bias towards logical/linguistic intelligences in curriculum and assessment. The research discussed in previous sections has attempted to offer some resolutions to these problems. What is noticeably different in this radical perspective is that education cannot provide an ‘internal settlement’ (Baker et al., 2004: 151) for the problem of social class inequalities because the problem lies outside the educational frame.

The second major barrier to well-being at school are *issues of respect and recognition*. These are understood as status-related inequalities in respect of age, sexuality, religious beliefs, ability, language, gender, class, race and ethnicity. Baker et al. suggest that these barriers have to be challenged through status related interventions. The authors suggest that these inequalities are expressed in the education system through degrees of inclusion and exclusion, both between and within schools and within and between texts, syllabi and subjects. Groups who are marginalised may internalise this ‘othering’ and experience their identities negatively. The silencing and devaluing of students on the basis of their classed, gendered and sexual identities has been researched and has been shown to have negative impact on their well-being (Lynch and Lodge, 2002; Cole, 2000; Mac and Ghail, 1994; Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001).

The authors suggest that the silencing around classed identity and the ‘othering’ of working class students is a major issue as ‘class’ has been



eliminated to a large extent from the politics of education. This is serious not only because these class inequalities act as obstacles to educational participation but also as these will be reproduced in the larger society and be associated with health, income and the psychological injuries of class as discussed earlier.

*The subordination of the feminine and of caring and emotions* has been discussed at some length and Baker et al. argue that this is a systematic form of oppression and misrecognition. These authors are not however suggesting that the feminine is essentially emotional but are making the link between the subordination and marginalisation of the feminine through history, with the subordination of emotion in favour of intellect and the development of cognitive capacities in the educational field. Traditionally, education of the emotions and for relationships has been marginalised although the capacity to maintain relationships and to recognise emotions are highly significant not just for the well-being of students but also for the well-being of society (see Mc Clave, 2005).

The authors suggest that in order to promote egalitarian perspectives in schools and colleges, staff, students and teachers need to be educated about equality specific issues, in relation to class, gender, ability, race, ethnicity, religion and other differences. They advocate that equality studies should be made part of the curricula of schools so that students have the opportunity to explore differences. Teacher educators, lecturers, researchers and educational decision-makers would also benefit from such an education so that they could in reality respect and recognise students relative to their diverse and cross cutting identities.

The issue of *power and democracy* in education has already been raised with respect to the work of Giroux (2000, 2003) and Freire (1998). Baker et al. (2004) see these as key issues, which enable or constrain

students in the educational context. They refer to the inequalities that occur in the exercise of decision-making and authority not just in the organisation of schooling, but also in what Giroux and Freire have discussed with respect to the curriculum, the kinds of subjects taught and the modes of pedagogy and assessment. They refer also to the work of Foucault (1977, 1980, 1991) and suggest his work on power has significance for educational research.

The research of Lynch and Lodge (2002) *Equality and Power in Schools* provides an in-depth analysis of power relations at second level in Ireland. The findings of this research suggest that schools are not generally democratic and that research needs to focus not only on vertical power relations between students and teachers but also on the power relation between teachers themselves (as discussed with respect to school climate studies).

Baker et al. conclude that democratising education is not a simple matter of democratising schools but a wider issue that involves the sets of relations between the school and other services and the larger society (the Health Promoting Schools have understood dialogue and participation to be central to effective health promotion and wellness). Baker et al. suggest that those groups who have been most marginalised need to be facilitated and supported so they can be heard and involved in processes of day-to-day decision-making in education. Moreover, as Lynch and Lodge (2002) point out, students themselves wish to be included and have a say in schooling and the recent requirement that second-level schools have students represented on a student council is a welcome initiative.

While little research has yet been conducted on student councils in promoting democracy in Ireland (see *Second-Level Student Councils in Ireland*, 2005), research on health promotion and well-being in Finland has questioned the power of such councils as many students

reported not knowing of their existence. The publication on *Guidelines for Developing Codes of Behaviour in Schools* (2007) by the National Educational Welfare Board is a welcome development in the Irish context as these promote a relational philosophy with respect to school discipline and organisation and challenge teachers and students to develop the school as a community of mutual respect.

### **3.13 ALTERNATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMMES/ SCHOOLING TO PROMOTE WELL-BEING**

In Ireland, the National Education and Welfare Act (2000) has raised the school leaving age for young people to 16 years stating that all children and young people have a right to an education that is flexible enough to meet their needs within the formal recognised system of education, and that it should be funded, resourced and professionally equipped by the State. Notwithstanding the Act, alternative educational places for young people do not receive this state support which in terms of equality appears unjust and problematic. There is nonetheless a clause in the NEW Act (2000) that allows the Minister for Education to prescribe certain Centres of Education that are deemed suitable. The Education and Welfare Board have for a number of years been working to produce a set of clear criteria for the funding of such centres but there has been no clear agreement from the minister on this to date. The formalisation of resourcing, funding and payment to workers in alternative centres for education has not been achieved and suggests a reluctance to recognise the value of alternative education programmes.

In the international context, Edwards (2003)'s review of literature and research on mental health of young people and the variety of programmes and interventions designed and implemented to enhance mental well-being in the UK (which is defined as including the abilities of a young person to develop psychologically, emotionally,

socially, intellectually and spiritually) belong to a 'grey literature' which is not based on rigorous research or follow up. Similar comments have been made by researchers exploring health promotion and well-being in schools and they comment that when rigorous research and evaluation is applied, that schools appear to be ineffective with respect to holistic promotion of wellness.

Nonetheless, there are numerous programmes in operation in the area of social, personal, health and relationship education worldwide which operate with various levels of commitment and interest by schools. One of the difficulties of assessing the value of these programmes in relation to well-being is that we are still working with a variety of perspectives on what this means, and a variety of operational definitions. What remains to be considered in terms of a literature on schooling that promotes well-being is at least a signposting of such schools and some international alternatives to traditional approaches. These will be considered briefly in this final section.

### **3.13.1 Alternative education for the under 15's: international perspectives**

This study commissioned by the Department of Education and Science (Boldt, 2004) is a useful guide to alternative schooling for young teenagers who cannot be catered for in mainstream schools. The research documents practices in France, Spain, the US, Australia and Northern Ireland. Boldt draws on Reva Klein's work (1999) who comments that successful initiatives to combat disaffection and the methodologies they use are often not known outside the corner of the world in which they operate. Boldt's book aims to bring initiatives, which have been successful in promoting educational priorities of groups of disaffected young people out of this isolation. Boldt explains that on reviewing the literature on such initiatives contact was made with projects in informal ways and often by

chance. The initiatives range from rural schooling on ranches in the US (Majestic Ranch Academy) and farming regions in France (Maisons Familiales Rurales), to an outreach mobile education programme for 'at risk' children in Victoria, Australia (the Education Mobile Youth Programme) and Big Picture Schools which have spread across and outside the US funded through the Gates Foundation.

Boldt suggests that what the initiatives he presents have in common is flexibility, adaptability, willingness to be evaluated and to respond to evaluations by modifying and developing aspects of their programmes. Moreover, he notes that what the initiatives have in common is their pragmatic nature and appear to follow the principles of the American philosopher John Dewey in maintaining a focus on learning and emphasizing 'learning by doing'. They are also characterised by active and interactive approaches corresponding to Freirean approaches. Boldt lists the basics of these programmes as typified by the following characteristics:

- Needs focused, responding to the needs of young people.
- Flexible in approach, methodology and timetabling.
- A core set of principles or values define the programme that are clear and explicit.
- The programmes provide recognised qualifications although they offer alternative routes.
- Respect—the young people tended to describe respect as being treated like an adult.
- Open Relationships—as well as quality relationships between staff and students there is an openness to parents and the community.

- Practical focus and leisure means that there are opportunities for practical application of learning and experiences with the world of work. There are opportunities to participate in sporting and leisure activities as part of the curriculum.
- Staff Commitment—that all the personnel who work in the initiatives have a strong commitment to the young people in their care and express this in their dedication and the work they do with the young people often outside of work hours.

Boldt's outline of the characteristics of successful interventions to combat disaffection echo and overlap with the basic principles outlined in the Health Promoting Schools and democratic schooling approaches and indeed the Allardt well-being model adapted for schooling. The aim of this section is not to compare and evaluate these approaches in any great depth but in line with Klein's (1999) thinking, we need not reinvent the wheel but need to do something constructive with the data we already have. It would seem a logical step to see what aspects or principles applied in successful alternative programmes could be adapted in mainstream schooling.

The recent publication by The Educational Disadvantage Centre at St. Patrick's College also highlights the need to use what we already know in order to develop school services in a holistic and integrated manner (Downes, Maunsell and Ivers, 2006). This report recommends building on 'good practices' in schools with respect to bullying, extracurricular activities, providing meals to supplement needs of some students, targeting marginalised groups within schools, like Travellers for after school supports, investing in school supports in order to improve school climate, alternative discipline strategies that do not exclude students, exploring ways of working with students in relation to their pull towards part-time work, and developing models of best practice with respect to the education of the immigrant

community. In other words, education needs to be for well-being of all children in the community and that requires treatments and equality of condition (Baker et al, 2004) to promote well-being for all children.

Baker et al. use the term equality of condition to argue for the differential treatment and resourcing of groups and individuals on the basis of need. Those with greater needs will require more resources to promote this radical equality. Moreover, drawing on Nussbaum (1999), Gilligan (2007) suggests that the development of our capabilities is significantly influenced by our environment and the resources within it. Gilligan argues that education and schooling must address these inequalities in ways that are sensitive to what she calls the dilemma of difference.

### **3.13.2 Gatehouse project**

Another intervention programme aimed at promoting a sustainable approach to mental health at second level is the Australian Gatehouse Project. This is a project that is aimed at young people in mainstream schooling. The Gatehouse Project differs from many projects in mental health in schools in that it has a well defined conceptual framework located in theory and research across psychology, sociology and school effectiveness literature. Patton, Glover, Butler, Godfrey, Di Pietro and Bowes (2000) describe how the Project draws on Bowlby's attachment theory as a basis for suggesting that emotional relationships and interpersonal attachments are essential to mental health and the well-being of students. From this perspective the researchers argue that schools as environments in which young people spend a considerable amount of time need to foster the kinds of belonging and engagement that nurture students' self esteem and mental health. These authors further suggest that social relationships are of primary importance to learning and to belonging and participation in school. The Project avoids the 'added on package' or

piecemeal approach to mental health and well-being that has been seen so often in Health Promotion.

In order to enhance learning environments for students, the Gatehouse Project brings together a multi-disciplinary team with backgrounds across education, psychology, psychiatry, welfare, and public health alongside school based teams in 12 secondary schools in Victoria. The aim is to prevent onset of depression in young people through a positive school environment. The creation of a positive environment is addressed through a whole school strategy across social and learning environments and through skill development and curricular opportunities.

The steps in this strategy, similar to the steps in Cohen's, 2006 SEEA model, involve 1. the development of a school social climate profile, 2. the establishment and support of a school-based adolescent health team, and 3. the identification and implementation of feasible effective strategies (Patton et al. 2000: 589).

With respect to the development of a school social climate profile, the project enables individual schools to develop this within their own unique context and is based on the data from a questionnaire targeted at 13-14 year old students, exploring aspects of social interaction (i.e. security, social connectedness and gaining positive regard through valued participation). Each school was provided with the responses of their students in each of the three key areas explored. School-based adolescent health teams then used these profiles to decide on priorities for action. The researchers note that there have been multiple starting points and 'no quick fixes but rather planned processes of change with each school choosing and adapting strategies which are appropriate to its own context' (ibid: 289).



The researchers state that the major challenge of this project is to integrate mental health promotion into school policies, curricula, pre-existing programmes and practices, structures and time-tabling within schools. In order to achieve this end, a school-based adolescent health team needs to be established as a formal structure within the school, drawing on interested staff from all sectors and sometimes parents. The team can act as co-ordinator and motivator with respect to mental health issues in the school supported by the Gatehouse Staff at the Centre for Adolescent Health at Royal Children's Hospital Victoria.

The school-based teams primarily focused on promoting positive school climate at school and classroom levels. The authors suggest that school teams have been particularly focused on various forms of bullying and have provided teachers with opportunities for training and discussing conflicts with young people. They have provided students with opportunities for participation and ways of understanding issues of exclusion, and have also undertaken school-wide age appropriate means for rewarding various achievements of students in different areas. At classroom level, common rules, positive management climates and more interactive teaching styles have been developed.

The mental health curriculum has been developed with an emphasis on fostering critical and reflective skills, problem solving and collaborative work. Appropriate materials have been developed in consideration of issues of relevance, integration with mainstream teaching, the professional development of teachers and the integration of materials at multiple-year levels.

Linkages with the local community are recognised as significant in the lives of students, especially as the authors state: 'that young people today adopt relationships, lifestyles and behaviours that in the past

have been associated more with young adults' (ibid., 592). For students with particular needs that 'cannot be met', the health teams have strengthened links with relevant agencies within the community and with education and training settings outside of school. The latter, it is suggested, is of importance especially in schools with high drop out rates.

The researchers conclude that the Gatehouse Project can provide unique information on the social environment and the emotional well-being of young people, as well as outlining a process for schools to develop their capacities for mental health promotion. As these authors point out, whatever the aspects of health promotion adopted by individual schools, the focus on these is complimentary to educational achievement as well as promoting well-being.

# Summary and Conclusions:

## Schooling and adolescent well-being

The literature and research on adolescent well-being and second-level schooling reviewed in this chapter falls into a number of major categories:

- Philosophical literature critiquing contemporary mechanistic and banking type and performance driven education, and careless education.
- School health promoting literature and research concerned ultimately with health, learning and well-being.
- The literature on care and education and the significance of emotions and emotional literacy and the personal intelligences for individual well-being and the cohesion and well-being of society at large.
- Critical and cultural analyses arguing for the teaching of critical literacy to develop students' understandings of educational processes and curricula, and the politics of wider society, in order to learn and flourish.
- School climate and well-being research which highlights issues of school organisation, relationships, including the provision of universal and specific curricula, how these are facilitated and how student learning is evaluated.
- Particular theoretical models of well-being that have informed research and evaluation of well-being of students at second-level.

- Exemplars of school mainstream/alternative programmes that emphasise well-being for students in a variety of contexts.

Without underplaying the significant tensions that exist between the multiplicity of perspectives on well-being and education for adolescents, and the variation in disciplinary foci and methodologies, there are some common threads that can be drawn together in respect of young people's well-being in the context of education and schooling.

One of the most important insights that this section of the review provides is that right across the disciplines, there is strong evidence and argument to support the view that *schooling should be concerned with a broad conception* of the well-being of a young person. Research and theory suggest that the academic component of education is only as important as emotional and mental health to general well-being, both in terms of SWB and broader understandings of happiness. Moreover, over-emphasis on the academic and on achievement has an illbeing effect for individuals and groups of young people. Research suggests that the interests of young people and their particular strengths and talents should be central to educational programmes that aim at fostering well-being, and highlights that tightly prescribed curricula do not meet the well-being and educational needs of many students.

Taking this issue seriously means that *the climate and cultures of schools, what they teach, and how they organise and assess, and the sets of relations between students and staff need to be problematised*. A great deal of this work has already been done as is clear from the extensive literature available. The issue for scrutiny is how this can be put into practice, and the kind of policies that need to be developed to ensure the realisation of student well-being.

‘Add’ on or programmatic approaches to health, wellness and well-being have little positive impact on the well-being experiences of young people at school. *Holistic approaches* that involve students in their own learning, and that have relevance and are respectful of students’ own interests and strengths have a much greater possibility of fostering well-being, not just in the short but also in the long term.

*Resources are not to be ignored.* Although these are often first in lines of argument made by practitioners, it is also apparent, given the complexity and diversity of the literature on well-being, that resources can be seen as preconditions for educational processes to happen, whether in the form of human resources and in the persons of teachers (who have time and support for dialogue and reflection on educational matters and well-being). It may also be around environmental resources in the shape of schools that in their very physical structure respect the needs of students. Moreover, there is clearly a need for the redistribution of resources of various kinds, so that students who are most in need of learning supports, or to be included in the learning space, or in need of supports from other agencies in the community, have access to these resources as necessary and basic aspects of educational provision.

In highlighting happiness or well-being as an aim of education, *issues of respect, care, relationships, and love and emotions become part of the vocabulary of second-level education* in a way that has not been usual within educational discourses of performativity and success. If we agree that happiness is an appropriate aim of education, then we will have to recalibrate the balance between competing aims, preparing students for the labour market and higher education, and educating students for a ‘good life’. These should not be mutually exclusive but the literature certainly indicates that the pendulum has swung too far in the direction of ‘human capital’ education in the narrow sense. The

conflation of academic success or even the wider notion of school success with student well-being has had its day, the new discourses of well-being recognise the limits of schooling and yet the possibilities for schooling to make a significant contribution to the happiness of young people and the health of our society.

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**CONCLUSION**

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Well-being, adolescence  
and schooling

The major issues arising from this review of wellness and well-being are discussed in this section with reference to the specific aspects of well-being that were considered: What do we mean by 'happiness', 'well-being', 'quality of life'?, adolescents and well-being, and well-being and post-primary schooling. The table below brings together in summary form major findings from each chapter for ease of reference. This table is not exhaustive and reflects only in a general way some of the major positions discussed in the review. A much bigger job awaits in an analysis of the more specific oppositions, tensions and commonalities between these major positions. The discussion below suggests broad areas for future research, educational debate and action. Given the breadth of the review and the contested perspectives on well-being, it does not prescribe particular actions or research programmes in education, as to do so would be to close down a debate on well-being, which has not yet widely occurred in the Irish educational context and indeed in wider society.



Table 2. Summary of main findings of review

Contested and multiple perspectives on well-being	Adolescence and well-being, the universal and the particular	Well-being and second-level schooling-current thinking and problematics
Happiness as Eudaimonia-the good life or Hedonistic happiness and Subjective well-being. Defining or prescribing norms of well-being as problematic for individual meaning seeking.	Current association between the period of adolescence and illbeing -mental and physical health risks? Need for young people to explore and experience -construction of risk?	Happiness as an aim of education (Noddings, 2003) and/or education for a competitive market and the need for public dialogue around this
The tensions and overlaps between SWB and social indicator perspectives-need for subjective and objective perspectives	The reality of objective environmental and resource limitations on the wellness of certain groups and individuals, poverty, marginalisation and illbeing	The need for education for self- development and for participation in democracy and for citizenship, social solidarity
Equality and well-being-care and love (Baker et al. 2004)	Need for resources, recognition, power, love and care, learning and meaningful work	Need for well-being and equality across all contexts of life including intimate and social spaces
Capabilities and well-being (Sen, 1993)	Discovering our own valued functionings and being enabled to realise those	For our unique sets of functionings and for flourishing within our societal context
Having, loving and being (Allardt, 1993) As part of the Allardt model: health promotion and the WHO agenda, having health in Allardt's model	Having resources conditions and environments that are enabling, giving and receiving love and being in relationship, the opportunity to be ourselves The specificity of resources to particular environments and groups of young people and individuals	To have skills, resources to participate in society, for relationships and for being in our unique ways Achieving health of populations through critical literacy The problem for teachers and students of acquiring the cultural power and tools of analysis to define our reality and to contest imposed versions that are oppressive

## **WELL-BEING AS AN EDUCATIONAL THEME**

One of the important findings to emerge from the review is the significance of well-being as a theme for social improvement and personal growth in an international context where individualisation, intensification of work, and rapid cultural change is ubiquitous in the West. The review raises questions that can shape an agenda for future research enquiry on well-being and adolescence more generally, as well as for research specific to education and schooling. It also suggests a number of policy implications for adolescent well-being within schooling and the larger society. Given the emphasis on health promotion, mental and emotional health, and more recently, the issue of care with respect to well-being research in education, there are a number of curricular, pedagogic and school organisational issues that can be named as an agenda for well-being development. Alternative educational provision, which espouses principles for the promotion of well-being and happiness of young people also need to be included in any programme for well-being promotion and research that may be undertaken. The well-being research and literature also poses important questions with respect to the initial education of teachers and their ongoing professional development.

## **WELL-BEING AS A PUBLIC ISSUE**

It might appear that there is nothing very new or revolutionary to say about the schooling of young people at second level, but what is apparent from this review of well-being, is that valuing happiness and well-being (in whatever shape they may be understood) does count and make a difference. Indeed, exploring the tension between the multiplicity of perspectives on well-being, while at the same time recognising some common challenges and seemingly universal functionings (Sen, 1993) or resources for human flourishing (Baker et al., 2004) is an important exercise, and hopefully continues to build on significant well-being work internationally and in Ireland.

Moreover, well-being is not just an individual and private matter; our unavoidable interdependency (Nussbaum, 1995) means that the well-being of the individual is related to the well-being of others. With respect to education this perspective acts as a powerful antidote to the neo-liberal individualistic, rationalistic and performance driven agenda that is increasingly dominant in the educational field today. It is hoped that at the very least this review will provide food for thought, and that the contested terrain of well-being will become a public welfare and educational issue.

### **RELATIONSHIPS, CARE AND SOCIETY**

It has been suggested that realities of relationship, relating and feeling cared for, are central to general well-being across the life span and particularly in adolescence. The school context must be a 'careful' and respectful one for all students if they are to be able to participate and to feel they are valued. While academic success does not necessarily correlate highly with young people's overall SWB, feeling socially valued and included does. The balance between the academic achievements of students and their other strengths and capacities needs urgent attention in a performance driven system where talent and achievement are so narrowly defined. Students need to have the skills and cultural tools to participate in society, but the current drive for higher standards of achievement and performance without genuine commitment to holistic development and equality of condition for all, is seriously problematic for the well-being of many young people, and for society more generally. If care is not a central agenda for schools, or if it occupies a token or marginal position, then a rationalistic, technicist model will continue to narrow students' learning and impact on their well-being.

## **HOLISTIC APPROACHES IN EDUCATION**

This report indicates that the development of educational policy through consultation and partnership can make a difference, and a review of curricula, of assessment, types of school organisation, and current policy relative to broad conceptualisations of happiness, could lead to a critical questioning of current reductive educational processes. Dialogue on well-being could create an impetus for an holistic approach to education at second level that is more attuned to fostering overall well-being and happiness of young people in the now, (as Noddings suggests), and additionally, build future well-being. Alternative education programmes and institutions can offer this space for young people in which to develop and flourish where the mainstream system may not fit well with the needs of the young person. Nonetheless, given that we live in a society that increasingly requires high levels of skills and credentials in order to participate in the labour market, it is important that programmes and institutions outside of the 'mainstream' ensure that young people are equipped with these requirements as a part of their education for well-being.

It might also be worthwhile for mainstream schooling to explore and adopt approaches that are currently offered under the rubric of alternative educational programmes. Programmes that are developed to some extent around students' own interests, for example, might inhibit the phenomenon of what Smyth et al. (2006) have termed 'student drift' in second year of second level.

## **TEACHERS, TEACHING AND WELL-BEING**

Taking well-being seriously in the educational space has implications for teachers, their teaching, and the kinds of initial and ongoing professional education that is made available to them. Moreover, engaging in the careful education of students, respecting individuality, and providing relevant and meaningful educational experiences is

challenging work. Recognition for the demanding and extensive nature of teachers' work as holistic educators is necessary, so that teachers can do this critical and transformative work without too high a cost to themselves. Without this recognition for the relational nature of teachers' work in the context of well-being, there is little space for experimentation and real enquiry, for the critical literacy discussed by Nutbeam or the critical cultural analysis of Giroux and Freire. In the absence of recognition for the complexity of educating young people for well-being, the processes of social reproduction of legitimated technical knowledge continue (Bourdieu, 1996) and many teachers become constrained by the limits of the educational field and its relation to other fields.

## **THE CURRICULUM AND WELL-BEING**

Research and scholarship on well-being and schooling suggests that how the curriculum is understood and offered in second-level schools impacts on students' well-being in a variety of ways. From an equality and social justice perspective, narrowly focused academic curricula reproduce hierarchies within the social order and the labour market. In addition, an overemphasis in western education on intellectualist and academic approaches (Noddings, 2003) maintains the traditional divide between rational and emotional aspects of life. Fostering well-being in schools necessitates an holistic approach to the development of students' competencies and to their learning. Traditional subject areas can offer opportunities for learning particularly to more academically inclined students and to those with access to resources and dominant forms of cultural capital. Students with high levels of intelligences in non-traditional areas should also have the opportunities to develop these strengths. While in Ireland the focus has been on offering broad curricula with little specialisation, research in other countries has shown that opportunities to specialise in the arts and humanities at second level

has positive benefits for students. Moreover, Allardt's welfare model applied to schooling suggests that 'choice over learning' is significant for young people's well-being.

It is not just the content of curricula and subjects that are significant to well-being in school. Students' happiness in school is related to how these are implemented. It is clear that a sense of belonging and good relationships within the school community foster feelings of well-being. Thus, educators, school leaders and policy makers need to ensure that the ways in which the formal and informal curricula of schools are implemented enable the development of good relationships. The Health Promoting Schools' programmes and research emphasise the significance of holistic educational experiences for students, so that it is not sufficient to teach 'about' good relationships and respect; this needs to be modelled and experienced in the school community. Much of the research suggests that there is a need to develop critical thinking and critical skills in students and that these cannot be taught through traditional didactic methods. The conditions that enable the development of critical literacy and analysis include respect, involvement and trust between students and between students and school staff. Although it is possible to create these conditions, it does require work and commitment by the whole school community.

### **SPECIFICITY, PARTICULARITY AND WELL-BEING**

How well-being is conceptualised or understood by teachers in schools, and their commitment to fostering this ideal will shape the operation of policies and programmes and the climate of the school. The question of well-being as an aim or value in education, therefore should be considered relative to current debates, the multiple discourses around well-being, and most importantly, relative to the communities in which the school is located. This review

highlights the need for greater dialogue at local level and at the level of the political with a big 'p'. It also suggests the need for context specific research on well-being of students in schools in particular communities and locales, so that the realities of their named needs for well-being, and their understandings can be included (such as the model of research adopted for the Lives of Children Research by the Irish National Children's Office (Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith, 2005).

### **INCLUDING THE VOICES OF STUDENTS**

The issue of how to include students' own reflections and articulations around well-being is an equality issue and is thus one of well-being (Baker et al., 2004). It is problematic if we hear the voices of researchers, educators and policy makers on well-being without recourse to those of young people themselves in this significant yet contested terrain in the educational field. Students have not traditionally been given the power to name their world or the kinds of education that they think would facilitate well-being in their particular context and relative to their own individuality.

There is general agreement in much of the well-being literature on the significance of meaning-seeking to well-being, of the perceived importance of connection to others, and to the environment young people find themselves in. To foster well-being, schools need to become meaningful places for the diversity of young people they purport to serve. This can only be realised if young people have opportunities to engage in challenging themselves and the institutional settings they are required to attend for education. Well-being in the context of second-level education requires an openness to a critical dialogue by all partners, and a commitment to a public debate on the relation between well-being in society, and well-being in the context of education.

## **OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS, RESOURCES AND WELL-BEING**

The relationship between poverty, marginalisation and education has been extensively researched internationally. It is well established that it is difficult for students to participate and remain in education when they experience poverty and marginalisation, and in the long term this impacts on income, health and well-being. Education can be a process for well-being and for individual and social transformation, but it would seem that conditions outside the school context (the economic, social and cultural) also have to be ameliorated alongside the school initiatives, so that vulnerable groups and individuals are genuinely included in the education process. Radical perspectives on social justice and equality suggest that there can be 'no internal settlement' for inequalities within the educational system (Baker et al, 2004: 151). To put it another way, the question might be posed, to what extent can we promote well-being within an educational system that reflects and often reproduces the inequalities that exist within the larger society without tackling those societal injustices themselves?



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