

Voice of Children Initiative

Organizing Principles and Design Considerations for the Surveys

The questionnaire for the quantitative survey and the materials for the qualitative survey will be developed according to the following set of guiding principles:

- a. The design of indicators should take into consideration:
 - i. Aspects of the learning environments that have an impact on well being
 - ii. Indicators of well being
 - iii. Questions and methodologies that can most accurately examine the link between the aspects of the different learning environments and the indicators of well being.
- b. The quantitative survey questionnaire/s should contain three categories of indicators, one category for each of the three learning environments: ICT, media and schooling. The indicators need to be as simple, informative and measurable as possible, given the limitations imposed by the age parameter.
- c. Indicators need to include a set of core universal indicators, as well as country level indicators warranted by cultural or social specificities, or the specificities of the education system. Education, media and ICT partners are requested to suggest indicators that reflect their own needs and concerns as long as they remain within the general framework of the survey.

The indicators for each learning environment should capture students' perceptions and feelings, to the best extent possible, of the impact the respective learning environment has on their well being as defined in (a) above. Obviously each learning environment has somewhat different levels of impact on each of the five aspects of the child's personality. For example, the emotional aspect of the child may be more profoundly influenced by the school learning environment than the ICT learning environment. Additionally, different learning environments affect the same aspect differently and possibly in conflicting ways. For example, the school may be nurturing the social intelligence in ways which are not synergetic with the social mindset development fostered by media or the internet. The following points are important:

- a. The development of indicators needs to build on available resources, experiences and knowledge in related areas. Notably, UNICEF has done some interesting work in the area of Child Friendly Schools. It would be quite useful to conduct a literature review.
- b. The indicators for the quantitative survey should take into consideration the findings and insights provided by the qualitative pilots and surveys.
- c. Indicators need to be piloted before the full survey is launched.
- d. The questions related to the indicators should be simple enough and clear enough for a self administered survey.

The following section in this document is an attempt to provide

1. Organizing frameworks for thinking about aspects of the learning environments, the indicators of well being, and the links between them.
2. Initial, though not exclusive, check lists for each that can be completed and changed as UEF work progresses.
3. To provide an overall, accumulative resource and database that includes ongoing input. (*the lists below do not yet gather all existing input*)
4. No questionnaire or survey can/should cover all aspects. The lists and frameworks will hopefully serve in focusing and prioritizing and in being able to attend both to what is included in surveys and also to what is not included.

ELEMENTS OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS THAT MAY HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE WELL BEING OF CHILDREN

SCHOOL

- ❖ Teachers (the subjects they teach, their teaching styles, the quality of interaction with children, competence in subject, competence in conveying material, type of role model, values they impart)
- ❖ Grades (type, for what, messages that are given with the grades, the importance given to the grades etc.)
- ❖ Homework (types, length, subjects)
- ❖ Subjects – (language, mathematics, science, physics, geography, history, health studies, ICT, citizenship, religious studies, art, music, sports, home economics, for adolescents also need to look into content around alcohol and substance abuse and sex education etc.)
- ❖ Schedule of school day (length and content of lessons, structure of day)
- ❖ Headmaster/mistress (role in relation to the children, content and style of interaction, values, guidance)
- ❖ Counselors (availability, role, perception by children)
- ❖ Tests (nature of tests, place of tests within the system)
- ❖ Textbooks (quality, values, availability, date when created and relevance today etc.)
- ❖ ICT at school

- ❖ Discipline (methods, safety etc)
- ❖ Break times (activities, physical spaces, teachers presence or adult supervision)
- ❖ Cafeteria (comfort, accessibility, healthiness of food options, cost etc)
- ❖ After school activities
- ❖ Sports
- ❖ Outings
- ❖ School building(maintenance, lighting, cleanliness, aesthetics, comfort, safety, decorations, natural environment, sports facilities, etc.)
- ❖ Classrooms (maintenance, lighting, cleanliness, aesthetics, comfort, safety, comfort of desk and chair, visibility of blackboard etc, heating etc.
- ❖ Relationship with peers
- ❖ Relationship with teachers
- ❖ Involvement of parents
- ❖ Engagement with community
- ❖ Group activities
- ❖ Values

ICT & MEDIA

COMPUTERS

- ❖ Computer games (e.g. those for developing different types of skills and knowledge, violent games etc. vicarious and active experiences)
- ❖ Internet activities (searching for school related information, sites unrelated to school, trading, downloading, buying, meeting people, music, software and programs, online chatting, graphics, photography, e-mail)
- ❖ Time on computer (overall and for specific activities)
- ❖ Chat rooms
- ❖ Content and format of Web sites accessed independently (type, purpose, content)
- ❖ Interaction with others during use (different activities)
- ❖ Physical set up (seating position, distance from computer, ergonomics – secondary effects on body, eyes)

CELL PHONES

- ❖ Amount of use
- ❖ Purpose of use (contact with friends, family, voice conversations, sms, games, internet)

MP3 PLAYERS

- ❖ Amount of use
- ❖ Purpose of use

FILMS

- ❖ Setting (cinemas, videos and nature of environment)
- ❖ Types (comedies, thrillers, dramas, action movies, horror movies, love stories, adult movies)
- ❖ Celebrities (Favorite, least favorite)
- ❖ Movie characters (favorite, least favorite, most meaningful)

TELEVISION

- ❖ Programs (music, dance, news, nature, culture, sports, movies and type, talk shows, soap operas –as above, cartoons, reality tv) important to get actual names of favorite programs & the content, themes, values etc that they are exposed to and what they learn from it)
- ❖ Hours watching
- ❖ Social aspects of viewing (activities with friends/family)
- ❖ Eating habits when viewing
- ❖ Celebrities (type of role models of favorite and least favorite and most inspirational etc)
- ❖ Movie and Cartoon characters(types of role models of favorite and least favorite and most inspirational, etc)

RADIO

- ❖ Programs (types, themes, content)
- ❖ Hours listening
- ❖ Celebrities (type of role models favorite and least favorite and most inspirational etc)
- ❖ During what other activities (eg. during homework)

NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

- ❖ Types
- ❖ Amount of time spent
- ❖ Values
- ❖ Content

COMPONENTS OF WELL BEING

The following is a discussion of different aspects and components of well being that can serve as a basis for constructing measurable indicators. Initially some key aspects are proposed and thereafter they are explored further detail within a framework that looks at the physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual dimensions.

Some key aspects

1. Coherence between the way one's life is and the way in which one would like it to be.
2. A deep sense of being safe and supported by one's environment or even by God
3. A pervasive sense of self-esteem, joy, curiosity, awe, wonder and gratitude, with the capacity to navigate and cope with a full spectrum of emotions.
4. A satisfying sense of self awareness, self expression and self actualization, and meaningful and rewarding engagement in relationships, learning, work, creativity, leisure and play.

5. A pervasive sense of physical health and energy
6. A sense of belonging, interdependence and pleasure in contributing to one's communities and human and non-human environment
7. A confidence in one's ability to manage challenging situations and ambiguity with choice and flexibility.
8. A prevalent sense of acceptance, optimism, resourcefulness, resilience and capacity for growth in the face of life's challenges.

The following is an initial attempt to outline some of the physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual aspects of well being. The differentiation is somewhat artificial and there are overlaps between them. This is neither a comprehensive nor exhaustive list, and provides only one perspective of thinking about this highly complex subject that touches the essence of our lives. Well being is not dependent on any one component. Well being is in some ways a pervasive feeling about ones self, ones life and ones environment that is greater than the overall sum of different components. It is nevertheless important to explore the different aspects and conditions of well being in our endeavor to better serve our children and the health and sustainability of future generations.

It is important to keep in mind the subjective aspects of these components as well as the way in which they manifest in the persons real life experience. In constructing indicators from the list it will be important to take into account where it is relevant to address both and the alignment or discrepancies between them.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF WELL BEING

- ❖ Sense of physical safety and support: A sense of being in physically safe and comfortable environments and free of physical abuse or danger
- ❖ General Coherence between the way one body feels and the way one would like it to feel
- ❖ General coherence between the type of physical safety, affection and nurturance one feels one needs, and the experience one has.
- ❖ Age appropriate health literacy relating to healthy lifestyles, tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, personal/consumer health; nutrition and fitness; safety and injury prevention (including violence prevention); family life and human sexuality; and disease prevention and control.
- ❖ Knowledge and willingness to make choices that nurture healthy body-minds
- ❖ Pleasure in physical activity and developing the senses
- ❖ Interest, understanding and engagement with the natural environment and ecological issues
- ❖ Joyful participation in physical work that is essential to maintaining the environment in which they live and learn
- ❖ Participation in exercise or classes that nurture physical well being from sports to breathing and meditation techniques, dance, yoga tai-chi etc.

- ❖ Kinesthetic awareness
- ❖ Knowledge and ability of mind body techniques for dealing with stress and trauma.
- ❖ Feelings and attitudes related to the physical dimension
- ❖ Pervasive sense of health and vitality (Pain/symptoms/physical comfort/discomfort with body)
- ❖ Acceptance of body and positive body image
- ❖ Eating habits
- ❖ Sleeping habits

MENTAL ASPECTS OF WELL BEING

- ❖ Mental support and safety: A sense of being in environments that support ones ideas, thoughts and capacity to think, environments free of negative criticism and judgment
- ❖ Curiosity and respect for one's inner world and ideas and a willingness to explore them
- ❖ Coherence: A sense of satisfaction as to the nature of one and content of ones learning capacities and opportunities
- ❖ Source, extent and relevance of learning
- ❖ Sense of purpose
- ❖ Sense of relevance of one's learning to one's life
- ❖ General sense of pleasure in learning and motivation to learn
- ❖ Pleasure in discovering, exploring and creating with many different modalities and intelligences.
- ❖ Capacity to focus and concentrate
- ❖ Capacity for reflective and effective decision making abilities
- ❖ Sense of mastery/competence in dealing with age appropriate knowledge and skills
- ❖ Respect for diverse learning skills and needs of oneself and others
- ❖ Awareness of one's rights and responsibilities and the capacity to participate effectively and constructively in determining one's environment in age relevant ways.
- ❖ Health literacy
- ❖ Exposure to and choice in developing individually relevant intelligences. Recent studies have shown that the mind is not located only in the brain. The mind according to Pert a biochemist is "some kind of enlivening energy in the information realm throughout the brain and body that enables the cells to talk to each other, and the outside to talk to the whole organism" This expands also our concept of intelligence.

The eight intelligences according to Gardner are:

- Linguistic intelligence ("word smart")
- Logical-mathematical intelligence ("number/reasoning smart")
- Spatial intelligence ("picture smart")
- Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence ("body smart")
- Musical intelligence ("music smart")
- Interpersonal intelligence ("people smart")
- Intrapersonal intelligence ("self smart")
- Naturalist intelligence ("nature smart")

(http://www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple_intelligences.htm)

EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF WELL BEING

- ❖ Emotional safety and support: A sense of being in an emotionally supportive environment free and free of emotional abuse by others
- ❖ General sense of coherence between the way one feels and the way one would like to feel
- ❖ General sense of coherence between the quality and quantity of relationships one has and the way one would like it to be
- ❖ Rewarding and caring friendships
- ❖ Curiosity, respect and non-judgment in relation to one's own and others' differences
- ❖ Capacity to listen to inner voice even in the face of peer or adult pressure or judgments
- ❖ Ability to express feelings and needs in communicative and effective ways
- ❖ Ability to listen and respond appropriately and empathically to other's feelings and needs.
- ❖ Comfort and confidence in expressing feelings and attitudes that may be different from others
- ❖ Ability to engage with others in mutually respectful and rewarding way.
- ❖ Resilience: e.g. A sense of ability to manage and transform inner stress and conflict and unpleasant feelings such as anxiety, pain, fear, envy, aggression, despair, loneliness, etc.
- ❖ Positive self image
- ❖ Self acceptance
- ❖ Self esteem
- ❖ Age appropriate autonomy
- ❖ Self confidence
- ❖ Self awareness (awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, behaviors, values etc)
- ❖ Ability to evaluate social situations accurately
- ❖ Ability to respond to social situations in appropriate ways
- ❖ Leadership skills
- ❖ Followership skills
- ❖ Optimism

SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF WELL BEING

- ❖ Spiritual Safety and Support: A sense of being in an overall safe and supportive environment that nurtures a faith in the world, in mankind, in oneself and in the future
- ❖ Recognizing and accepting who one is: a sense of coherence of identity together with the possibility of growing and meaning making within it and serving ones environment with it
- ❖ A sense of meaning, belonging and purpose
- ❖ A sense of clarity in commitment to one's own and others well being
- ❖ An honoring of differences among people and cultures
- ❖ Age appropriate morality
- ❖ Joy in the well being of others
- ❖ Interior peace and non-violence
- ❖ Attitude of striving to be a better person in ways that actualize self in service of the environment

- ❖ Joy in service and in discovering the way in which one can contribute one's gifts to one's human and non human environment
- ❖ Compassionate action
- ❖ Ecologic sensibility and responsibility
- ❖ Desire and ability to influence one's surroundings in constructive ways,
- ❖ Compassion
- ❖ Sense of interconnectedness and sacredness of all things. This principle serves as a powerful moral guideline for behavior.
- ❖ Sense of awe and wonder in nature and the universe
- ❖ Sense of inner calm and inner guidance
- ❖ Pervasive feelings of warmth, humor (not at expense of others), gratitude, playfulness, spontaneity, wonder, joy, anticipation, optimism

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