



# REFLECTIONS ON WELL-BEING FOR EDUCATION

*Internal Reference Document*

**Shelley Ostroff, Linda O'Toole and Daniel Kropf**

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# 1. Reflections on Well-Being for Education<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

How can we ensure the paradigm shifts and the necessary systemic changes whereby the education and health systems, supported by ICT and media, will work together for the well-being of children? What approach is required?

The Universal Education Foundation (UEF) is an advocacy foundation that works in co-creative partnerships towards Education by All for the Well-Being of Children.

Education of children occurs both within the school environment and in every aspect of a child's life. Education is thus the responsibility of all, and needs to be undertaken with greater awareness by the larger community. For the last 200 years, many prominent philosophers, writers and educators have criticized the form public schooling has taken, and insisted that education should be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the developing child.

We believe that children who experience a greater sense of holistic well-being (physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual) and understand its components are:

- more able to learn and assimilate information in effective ways;
- more likely to engage in healthy and fulfilling social behaviors;
- more likely to invest in their own and others' well being and in the sustainability of the planet, as they take up their social, professional and leadership roles in adulthood.

## The Principles of Universal Education Foundation

UEF and its partners have launched the Voice of Children as the first of three linked initiatives in order to engage young people in participating in reshaping their learning environments so that these formal and informal environments are more conducive to the holistic personal development and well-being of children and young people, and more responsive to their needs, as well as those of their communities.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an internal reference document, intended to raise questions, not to provide solutions.

UEF asserts the following basic principles as foundational to its work:

- Defining well-being as including the **dynamic interplay of** physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual **aspects** of life;
- Promoting **holistic education and development** of children and young people so that their uniqueness and innate joy of learning are supported;
- Embracing **diversity and self organization** as foundational to life with special emphasis that there is no single approach that is universally correct or adequate;
- Acknowledging that children are **learning from diverse environments** so that quality education and quality health are the responsibility of society as a whole;
- Focusing on **innovative, systemic change** in education, health, media, and ICT so that prevailing norms are reconsidered in favor of creative, multidisciplinary learning and healing approaches;
- Inspiring people to **listen more to children/young people and engage them** in the transformation of their learning environments.

### Systemic Changes Required in Education

Until now, the cognitive dimension has been the primary – although not exclusive – focus of education. Most educational endeavors have been directed towards transmitting information, and teaching styles largely encourage passive learning rather than experiential learning or learning by exploration. Evaluation has been primarily on *what* the children know and less on *how* they know, or how they learn or create new knowledge, or on their ability to apply this knowledge in their life. This has led to a standardization of curriculum content and assessment that often does not take into account individual or cultural differences or life needs.

Additionally, assessment processes have favored specific cultures and types of learners at the expense of others and have propagated many inequities. Teachers who are themselves evaluated on children's performances in standardized testing necessarily focus on the most effective ways to produce test results rather than on the well-being or real learning needs of children. The whole process creates anxiety for children and teachers alike and rather than cultivating well-being it cultivates high levels of stress, feelings of alienation from oneself, school and peers, low energy levels, severe self esteem issues and often feelings of helplessness and despair among the many who are not equipped to cope with the education system or this standardized approach to learning.

There is broad consensus among educators – theoreticians and classroom teachers, policy makers, and other stakeholders – that major changes need to be made within the educational field. Their recommendations focus on the following areas:

### ***Changes in how we conceptualize education:***

- Transitioning from simple knowledge transfer at a standardized pace to individualization and addressing the needs of the whole child;
- Using transdisciplinary approaches in which traditional barriers between disciplines and between environmental settings are reconceived;
- Acknowledging that changes in the skills and competencies people will need at different stages in their lives are accelerating and becoming more difficult to predict and so preparation to be lifelong learners is required;
- Recognizing therefore that learning how to learn is learnable, teachable and of fundamental importance;
- Understanding that education is the responsibility of all of society and that it occurs in all environments that impact children – including, schools, the health systems, media and ICT;
- Ensuring all elements of the different learning environments to contribute to the well-being of the child.

### ***Changes in the basic curriculum:***

- Finding ways of making the basic skills of literacy, basic arithmetic and information technology universally available, in ways that account for individual and cultural needs and styles;
- Finding systems for determining which content areas are most relevant for the current life needs and future aspirations of children given their individual and cultural contexts (rather than promoting a standardized curriculum);
- Introducing new areas of knowledge that focus on imparting theoretical and experiential knowledge about the physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual aspects in terms that take into account the individual, collective and planetary arenas.
- Acknowledging that learning is the capacity to make choices, requiring children to learn how to work effectively with all the information available, including that from their senses.

### ***Changes in the educational process:***

Both in terms of content as well as teaching methods, the formal education system caters to only a small percentage of the population. Certain types of interests, talents, and learning and communication processes are addressed almost exclusively. Children who differ from the teacher's expectations or from that of the mainstream education approach are often neglected and considered incompetent or problematic. Generally the problem is not with the children

themselves, but with the limited ways teachers have for addressing the diverse learning processes of children. Changes are needed in teaching approaches, including:

- Addressing the diversity of human experience in terms of individual human needs, talents, capacities and interests;
- Involving all the physical senses as well as the intuitive and imaginative senses;
- Including a full range of the physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual aspects in how learning opportunities are presented;
- Focusing on the process of learning as the major goal and not on the process of standardized assessment;
- Understanding well-being and how it is enhanced by changes to the content and process of education.

## 2. Education by All for the Well-Being of Children

Education of children occurs not only within the school environment but in every aspect of a child's life. Children generally are impacted by what they see adults doing and by what the media and ICT suggest as appropriate behaviors and attitudes. So education is the responsibility of all. It needs to be undertaken with greater awareness by the larger community because systemic investment in education for the well being of children is an investment in sustainability of society.

Understanding the needs of children, within any society, begins with the fundamental premise that children, just like every other living entity in the universe, are self-organizing systems. We hear a lot about "self-organization" from various sources -- the simplest definition of self organization is that the system (which could be an individual, a school, an organization, or the universe) organizes itself in response to its own internal needs and the forces and conditions in the environment. The structure and controls (which involve how and how fast) are therefore emergent within the system and not exogenous (that is, they are not derived from outside the system or organism.)

One of the major attributes of all self-organizing systems is that they learn. They do it all the time, and all by themselves. This is just what we see children do, innately and joyfully, when allowed to do so. The role of society and our communities and our schools, therefore, is to be a support to this process of learning, offering conditions under which children (self-organizing living beings) can thrive.

The major sciences of today all agree that being alive is a process in dynamic balance. It is a process that is not only self-organizing but follows basic flows of input – process – output. This is true of the simplest amoeba (taking in nutrients, processing those nutrients, and throwing them out) and equally true, of a complex organism such as a human being. Part of being *optimally* alive and able to participate *fully* in learning is that attention is paid to the entire process.

If we think of the educational process, we can see that we need to maintain awareness of every stage. Firstly, we need to make the best information (input) available to children and help them tune that information in the best possible way through a range of experiences. Then, we need to understand how this information is processed internally so as to help that process become progressively conscious and able to be used most effectively. Finally, we need to support the choice-making process by ensuring that the short and long term implications of each choice are properly understood.

If being alive is the flow of this process, then *well-being* is the expression of optimal vitality and awareness of the process in each of its stages. It is a

dynamic balance of wholeness and integration of body, mind, heart and spirit that infuses and nourishes internal development and external relationships.

The nurturing of this process, through allowing children to function as self-organizing systems and by providing circumstances which give attention to all phases of the process, is the mandate for societies that take responsibility for educating for the well-being of children.

## Defining Well-being

***The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole. J. Krishnamurti***

Mainstream research on well-being has tended to focus on external/objective factors, including family structure, economic security, access to health care, substance abuse, and so forth.

At UEF, our focus is primarily on the inner/subjective experience – the individual's own experience of well-being which necessarily takes into account the objective conditions as well.

UEF's current working definition is one that has meaning across cultures and yet is simple enough to be easily understood:

*Well-being is the generally pervasive experience of meaningful and rewarding physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual engagement and actualization of one's potential in contribution to the larger human or environmental systems of which one is part, according to one's unique qualities and life path.*

For communication purposes, it can be succinctly stated as:

*Well-being is the dynamic interplay and realization of one's unique physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual potential.*

Several ideas are enfolded in this definition of well-being when considered in conjunction with the principles of UEF and the definition of Education by All for the Well-being of Children. It's useful to make these ideas explicit as they form the basis for the initial approach of UEF to assessing and encouraging the well-being of children in educational environments.

- Every individual expresses all five aspects – physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual – within a dynamic whole system;
- While each individual represents a unique interplay of mental, emotional, social, physical and spiritual life, there are clusters of self-organizing patterns that are dominant in different people;
- These different patterns appear to be stable over time and represent legitimate and distinct internal needs of the individual.

- The dynamic balance of individuals is influenced by relationships with the many environments they inhabit, as well as the actualization, growth and development within the individuals themselves.
- Diversity – which results in the generation of new ideas, new forms, new possibilities and potential, and optimized choices – is an outgrowth of the interactions of uniquely functioning and interdependent individuals, within the larger contexts of which they are part.

## Defining the Mental, Emotional/Social, Physical and Spiritual Aspects

We can not hope to define these five aspects, exclusively or inclusively. First, they are so prevalent in our world that there are scores of meanings and connotations for each term. Second, the five aspects are interconnected – indeed, interwoven – so any attempt to maintain categorically that one part of life belongs in this or that aspect is necessarily doomed. For example, we may, and in fact do, describe “focusing” as related to the mental aspect. In doing so, however, we must acknowledge that how I **feel** about my capacity to focus may well be more usefully examined as a part of the emotional aspect of life; likewise, whether I can **use** my capacity to focus **to complete a task** may arguably be more linked to what we consider the physical aspect of life. Attempts to subdivide that which is whole will always lead to those kinds of dilemmas so it is important to acknowledge that the attempt to define the aspects here, and later within the proposed framework, is solely for the attempt at clarity in how we organize and interpret the parts.

In that cautionary spirit, we can say briefly:

By the term, “**mental**” we are referring to that part of life which is primarily related to cognition and the processes of the rational mind. Some of the descriptions that we would apply to this aspect of life include: thinking, planning, structuring, understanding specific purposes, objectivity, focusing, envisioning, seeing the overview or gaining a perspective, creating or deriving values or principles, reflection, evaluation.

As a way of accessing an experience of the mental aspect through movement, notice what happens naturally as you take a vertical posture, paying attention to the dimension of up-down, either sitting still or walking slowly<sup>2</sup>. Most of those who have experimented with this exercise, including thousands of Swedish public school children, report an increased sense of focus and perspective.<sup>3</sup> This agrees with the synthesis of brain physiology that Dr. Robert Cooper shares with

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<sup>2</sup> The movement experiences are courtesy of Dr Patricia Bracken Oleksy, [Metaphors](http://www.focusinginstitute.com), [www.focusinginstitute.com](http://www.focusinginstitute.com)

<sup>3</sup> Berit Bergstrom, [Every Child has Specific Needs](http://www.runa.se), Runa Forlag, Stockholm, 2004, [www.runa.se](http://www.runa.se)

corporate executives: sitting up straight does actually help the brain to focus more clearly.<sup>4</sup>

By using the term "**emotional/social**", we are linking the emotional and social aspects. In combination, they are referring to that part of life which is primarily related to the inner feeling aspects of life, including the relationship to oneself and to others. Some of the areas we would include in this description are the awareness and processing of feelings, subjectivity, relationships, the feeling dimension of communication, creative imagination, and self-expression. By "emotional" we mean primarily that aspect of our feeling lives that relates to our **intrapersonal** functioning; by "**social**" we mean those aspects of our lives that concern **interpersonal** relationships and interactions ... but these terms are inextricably linked and this link is reflected in the framework that we are proposing.

One can access an experience with the emotional/social aspect through movement by paying attention to the side to side posture. Try sitting and reaching out on either side in an almost horizontal plane and you may agree with hundreds of research participants who have found that they feel more relational and ready to connect, verbally and physically, with other people. This exercise has also been introduced into classrooms with similar results.

By the term "**physical**", we are referring to those parts of life which related to the physical senses and to sensory experience, to our bodies, and to the material and natural environments. We include in this description the actions and functions of doing, building, taking apart, detailing, producing, acting, and making practical.

Again, one can access an experience with the physical aspect through movement by taking a forward and back posture, sometimes referred to as the saggital plane. You can easily do this through sitting, then moving your body forward and back in a rocking motion. The most commonly reported experience of this exercise is one of wanting to take action, to move, to "get something done." These results have been supported by adult research subjects as well as school children.

By the term "**spiritual**" we are referring to the indivisible infinite life energy that is reflected in the diversity, uniqueness, and interconnectedness of all that exists. In describing this aspect we include the expression of deep meaning and life purpose, inspiration, peaceful presence, empathy and connection to and service to the whole.

One can access an experience with the spiritual aspect simply through following one's breath, putting your whole attention on the steady and slow *intake* of your breath and then the slow and steady *release* of your breath. As thoughts or

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Cooper, unpublished seminar material, [www.robertkcooper.com](http://www.robertkcooper.com)

feelings or sensations arise, you allow them to release and stay in attention with your breath. This experience invokes what Dr. Herbert Benson<sup>5</sup> calls the relaxation response and most people report as an experience of acute aliveness – a realization of themselves as vital beings and a profound sense of connection with all that is around one.

The physical, emotional/social, mental and spiritual aspects each play a role in well-being because they are part of our lives as human beings. However, well-being represents a *pervasive* feeling about oneself, one's life, and one's environment that is greater than the overall sum of different aspects, and more individual than aggregated data. We are invoking the uniqueness of the individual in our holistic approach to well-being by emphasizing the internal learning processes – both through attention to recent studies of brain functioning and to studies on individual ways of processing and interacting with the environment.

### Individual Patterns of Internal Processing

The learning environment that is most consistently present to the child or young person is his or her own **internal** "operating system." It is through the child's internal processes that thoughts, feelings, actions, and beliefs are filtered. Without taking these internal learning environments into account, we are diluting the ways in which we measure the impact of external environments on well-being (including, how the questions we ask are understood and how the results are reported), as well as the ways in which offer opportunities to enhance well-being.

In relation to our internal functioning there are ways in which, as human beings, we are all the same; ways in which each one of us is unique; and ways in which we are each like some people and unlike others. In other words, there's a human journey in which we all share; there's a unique journey of the individual that is distinct from every other human being's journey, and there are ways in which there are **patterns** of human functioning so that we can group people along the lines of those patterns. In our consideration of well-being, we are acknowledging all of these perspectives, as well as the critical importance of the internal experience of the child, in addition to outer behavior.

Part of the internal learning environment that is common to all humans is the functioning of the brain processes. OECD's "Learning Sciences and Brain Research" project has been working towards reaching a better understanding of how the brain processes information over the individual's life cycle.<sup>6</sup> The project has established an interesting and fruitful dialogue between the neuroscientific community and the education community bringing together, in transdisciplinary

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<sup>5</sup> Herbert Benson, *The Relaxation Response*, Harper Torch, 1976, [www.mbmi.org/benson](http://www.mbmi.org/benson)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.oecd.org/department/0,2688,en\\_2649\\_14935397\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/department/0,2688,en_2649_14935397_1_1_1_1_1,00.html)

teams, policy-makers, teachers, researchers, students, parents, etc. at international level in order to reply to questions of a technical and scientific nature, of a social and economic nature and of an ethical and political nature. The impact of brain imaging has been a tremendous breakthrough, providing research on learning with concrete evidence with many implications for education policy and practice.

The research is producing many interesting results, among others on the plasticity of the brain and hence the lifelong capacity for people to learn, and on brain periodicity which is identifying sensitive periods for learning specific things. Thus for language learning, it highlights differing sensitive periods for phonetics, grammar and semantics as well as the varying difficulties linked to languages with a deep or a shallow orthography. These results should have substantial significance for tackling, for example, dyslexia but also dyscalculia as the research demonstrates that deficits of number sense and phonemic awareness can be remediated. It is also bringing concrete evidence about the crucial role of emotions in the learning process and the fact that there is more than one cognitive style adopted through life. One conclusion drawn is that it has become essential to include some cognitive neuroscience awareness in teacher training. The understanding that people perceive, learn, and make sense of their environments in distinct ways is neither new nor exclusive to any one culture or system of thought. Indeed, looking at patterns in human thoughts, feelings and actions harkens back to the earliest ancient teachings (teachings such as the aryuvedic tradition of India still very much in contemporary use), and moves forward into modern research in brain biochemistry, the cognitive sciences, and complex systems theory.

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on, education as a whole has moved into a phase in which the goal has been to provide standardized, objective education – the same standards to be met for all has been the ideal. Increasingly, however, the convergence of cognitive sciences, brain physiology, and complexity theory has led to new understandings which point to the importance of acknowledging diversity and individual uniqueness in human functioning. The impact of this trans-disciplinary approach on how we view learning and education can be clearly illustrated by the shift in how we understand intelligence.

Prior to 1980, human intelligence was considered as primarily rational and localized in the left lobe of the brain. Roger Sperry's research on the distinctive functioning of each lobe of the brain pointing to the right lobe's contribution to non-rational intelligence was followed by work demonstrating the existence of a hierarchy of three "brains" with three distinctly separate functions, operating independently and as a whole.

More recently, considerable research has demonstrated that intelligence may exist in several body sites. Specifically, the heart has been revealed as a highly complex, self-organized information processing center in continual communication with the rest of the body and functioning, within its context, as a center of intelligence. The HeartMath Research Center, contributing to this

biomedical research on the heart-mind connection, maintains that “the messages the heart sends the brain not only affect physiological regulation, but can also profoundly influence perception, emotions, behaviors, performance, and health.”<sup>7</sup> Cognitive sciences have supported the evidence from brain physiology and biochemistry that there is diversity in many functions once thought to be singular. Notably, the work on Multiple Intelligences, pioneered by Howard Gardener, has indicated profound and real differences not just in how people are intelligent but by asserting that there are at least eight areas of intelligence. Gardener and numerous others have continued to develop this field of study. Daniel Goleman, in particular, has popularized research showing various kinds of emotional intelligences.

Independently, Elaine de Beauport has identified ten intelligences which she groups according to the mental intelligences of the neocortex, the emotional intelligences of the limbic brain, and the behavioral intelligences of the basic brain, building directly on research in brain functioning, and claims that individuals have natural tendencies towards one group of intelligences although they can learn to expand their range.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of research on “intelligence” or, more properly, the intelligences, is highly significant for the process of learning. First, if intelligence is not a singular entity, but a multiple of widely different capacities and gifts, we must account for this fact in nurturing the potential of children and seeing them in the fullness of their potential; second, the work synthesized by Daniel Goleman and researched through HeartMath suggest that what we are calling the emotional intelligences are particularly significant in the experience of happiness and subjective and objective measures of life effectiveness, and that there are numerous processes for helping these intelligences develop and integrate; and third, the work of Elaine deBeauport and others working along similar lines, have focused on the evolutionary aspects of the brain that can function independently and in concert. This research suggests real opportunity for children and young people to learn to work directly with integrating the diversity in the functioning of their own brains.

The focus on individual differences has also been examined from the perspective of patterned behavior and processing in the system of Human Dynamics, a 30 year investigation of how adults and children learn, communicate, problem-solve, develop, and interact with others.<sup>9</sup> The research, conducted in a variety of settings and cultures, focuses on understanding internal ways of processing through looking at individuals as self-organizing systems in which the physical, emotional, and mental aspects combine to form patterns of processing – in a sense, looking at the patterns of similarities and differences in how perceived reality is structured and processed within the individual. Longitudinal studies

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<sup>7</sup> Heartmath Research Center, [www.heartmath.org](http://www.heartmath.org)

<sup>8</sup> Elaine De Beauport, *The Three Faces of Mind*, Quest Books, 1996

<sup>9</sup> Sandra Seagal & David Horne, *Human Dynamics*, Pegasus Communications, 1997

have shown that, while styles may shift under changed circumstances, there is a consistency in the learning processes as children grow into adulthood.

Seemingly small differences in children – such as one child needing to talk aloud in order to think clearly while another child needs to silently review options to come to a conclusion before talking – is one small example, but it has an enormous impact on how children experience various learning environments and how those experiences impact the felt sense of well-being. In the first case, the child can be hushed or punished for talking – yet this is the very activity essential to the child's learning; in the second case, the child can never be heard because she or he isn't given the time to respond. In both cases, the children are labeled or label themselves in a negative fashion.

Different aspects are more or less at the center of the individual's implicit perceptions (and can also be developed) in a way that determines certain distinctive behaviors, which are actually related to the way individuals understand their inner reality.

For example, there are individuals who need to stand back for awhile, to get a sense of perspective and to know why they are being asked to engage in an activity. These children are not socially inept or shy or slow, but their learning process requires time to think through the situation and to link it to their own internal values. They need to do that without a lot of conversation or interaction with others – as they begin a new task – or their learning process is stalled.

There are other children who absolutely need to engage in conversations and activities with others in the first place and usually in the second and third place as well. Ongoing conversation not only helps them feel comfortable with the group and the activity – talking aloud literally contributes to their learning. Without conversation – even if it's not directly about the subject matter – it's virtually impossible for them to participate in the process of learning.

There are still other children who rely primarily on activity with all their senses to engage with the learning. To read about it or to listen to an explanation or to watch a demonstration means very little to them unless they can actively touch, manipulate, smell, even taste the experience. It's important to know that this is not a phase in the child's life. A child of ten who will read, see, smell, touch everything related to a specific topic that he possibly can and still does not feel he knows enough will grow into an adult who says: "Don't get rid of any of that information – now that I have it, I need it all!"

The above descriptions are certainly not the only patterns of internal learning processes, but they represent three distinct patterns that offer a view into what we are calling the internal functioning of the child in terms of patterned behavior. Understanding, feeling comfortable with, and being able to effectively utilize one's own internal process is fundamental to an individual's well-being – it's a matter of understanding and having opportunities to nurture one's internal capacities and the inner systems that are natural to you, which in turn allows you to further develop how you understands and uses your own internal process.

Independent research through Vital Differences has shown that children as young as seven years old can talk about the way they learn – not just the circumstances under which they learn best, but also that they are able to describe the basic pattern of **how** they learn.<sup>10</sup> Children this young can describe the basic needs for learning and communication of other children in their classroom and how these needs are different from their own. Perhaps most interestingly, in discussions about how their classmates learn, children tend not to talk using labels (e.g., “Sam’s a troublemaker” or “Sara’s a slow learner”), but instead, to describe the actual behavior: “Sam needs to keep busy” or “Sara likes to think awhile before she answers.”)

If children are given the opportunity at a young age to be taught that there are indeed different ways of thinking, processing their emotions, using their senses, contributing to the group, and different ways that each of them can grow and develop – they will recognize their own unique ways and those of others. Each boy and girl need to learn all of the above – about thinking, feelings, sensing senses, communicating and developing – but “how” they naturally approach each of those areas needs to be respected. We can ask children and young people and we can listen and we can respond as they need us to respond.

One goal of UEF is speak the language of children and young people. The specific contribution of the Voice of Children initiative is to monitor the perspectives of children and young people on the impact of their learning environments (education, health, media and ICT) on their well-being. The following sections address the challenges and propose a process for developing ways of monitoring those perspectives.

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<sup>10</sup> Linda O’Toole, Vital Differences (manuscript), [www.vitaldifferences.com](http://www.vitaldifferences.com)

### **3. Assessing the Well-Being of Children and Young People**

*"If our education is to shift from merely helping our students do well, to also helping them do good [and feel good], we need to rethink what needs to be learned. We also need to develop new tools for assessment ; to go beyond only valuing what is easily measured, and learn to measure what we really value" -- Dr. Scott H. Forbes*

The quote from Dr. Forbes is both a reminder and a challenge: a reminder that it is not easy to define a complex concept that is largely experienced within the individual and a challenge that we ought to find ways to measure it that reflect the principles of UEF: that is, that are diverse, innovative and systemic, recognize the dynamic interplay of various aspects of life, and encourage self-organization. Applying these principles to the challenges of assessing well-being involves:

- Creating simple and useful indicators (including definitions and methodologies) to measure well-being;
- Refining these indicators in an ongoing process in which we learn from our experiences, from our partners in the field, from children who participate in our assessments, and from new research;
- Reflecting, through what we measure, the diversity and self-organization of life so that the each boy and girl is addressed as a whole human being;
- Promoting innovative and systemic change in a wide range of environments and recognizing that the solutions and programs need to be as unique as each of the children they are designed to serve;
- Inspiring others to create more significant ways for children and young people to participate in determining what we emphasize in measuring well-being;
- Asking the questions that need to be asked, and listening deeply without expectation that we will learn anything less than hundreds of answers which need to be shared – and even more questions.

#### **A Framework for Considering the Mental, Emotional/Social, Physical and Spiritual Aspects and Holistic Functioning in the Well-Being of the Child**

The following framework offers a conceptual structure for defining indicators for assessing the well-being of children, related to the physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual aspects. It is important to recognize that it is only one way of helping us organize and think about a very complex situation, but it is designed to be flexible enough to incorporate emerging definitions of well-being and to generate new areas of research. By its organization, the proposed framework provides a way of ensuring that all aspects are addressed in the development of

indicators and questions. This last statement will become clearer as we proceed through examples of how the framework works.

The framework has five rows – these represent four rows for the aspects: the physical aspect, the combined emotional/social aspects, the mental aspect, and the spiritual aspect. Additionally, the bottom row represents an area we are calling “holistic experience and functioning.” Holistic functioning represents that which is indivisible and exists as a whole within the individual – examples range from the internal processes and patterns remaining stable over time and consisting of the individual’s unique signature, to the capacity to be present to the moment.

There are also three columns against which the five rows are cross-referenced. It is particularly important to note that **the first two columns both relate to the subjective perception of the child.** The distinction is that in the *first column* we are looking at the subjective perception of the child *in relation to self* and in the *second column* we are looking at the subjective perception of the child *in relation to the external environment*. By constructing the framework in this way, we are emphasizing that our interest lies in the inner subjective experience of the child. Children, like all humans, create their own perceived reality. As a way of thinking about it, children are the actors, the camera operators and the editors of their own inner reality.

Some educators, psychologists and philosophers, while agreeing that our inner subjective perceptions are our own creations, would argue against making the separation between the self and that which is external to the self. One reason to make this distinction is the issue of the locus of control. Arguably, children may perceive that they have more control over what is internal to themselves (coping with emotions, awareness of their senses, capacities to envision or think rationally) than with that which they perceive to be external to themselves (such as, the condition of the available physical learning resources; the relationship with the teachers and their skills in interacting with children; the rules and policies of the setting; the opportunities to serve or connect with a larger human or non-human community; and the influences of the world at large.) The perception of the locus of control for the individual is potentially a significant factor in the subjective experience of well-being.

The third column of Table 1 shows the external environment within which an individual is interacting at any given time.

A fuller description of the elements associated with each area and with the factors in the external learning environments is offered in Table 2.

**Table 1: A Proposed Framework**

<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Subjective</b> Experience of Self	<b>Subjective</b> Perception of the External Environment	Factors in the External Environment
<b>Physical</b>	One's body and the embodied processes (such as, the capacity to manifest, to build, to act.)	Relationship to physical aspects of one's environment, both natural and human-made	Physical aspects of one's human and non-human environment
<b>Emotional/ Social</b>	One's internal emotional processes	Relationship to others – to people and the human environment & culture	Emotional/social climate, relationships, behavior and culture
<b>Mental</b>	One's internal cognitive processes	Relationship to the cognitive processes that are part of the surrounding environment	Ideas, concepts, belief systems, information & thoughts in one's environment
<b>Spiritual</b>	One's unique evolving self and inspiration	Relationship to interconnectedness and interdependence of all, and the inherent meaning and purposes	Experiences that inspire and nurture uniqueness & interdependence and the meaning and purpose of all
<b>Holistic Experience and Functioning</b>	One's whole processes and patterns that are indivisible	Relationship to the totality of the human and non human factors that are around one	Totality of the environmental factors impacting one at any given time

As noted, we recognize that distinguishing between the physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual aspects (as well as between inner and outer environments) can be somewhat artificial. This conceptual framework is offered as a way to organize the indicators, and subsequent questions, in order to balance the development of our approach to assessing well-being. For example, as we place the elements of various aspects in the framework (Table 2) and then construct potential indicators (Table 3) and questions by using the framework, it will become clear if we are *unintentionally* giving greater weight to one aspect or another.

However, it is worth considering whether achieving balance may require *intentional* weighting of one or more aspects. As an instance of this, it is not obvious that all ten categories ought to be equally represented in all cases. There may be specific circumstances related to the age of the children or the culture or the learning environment that may suggest the balance is best achieved through giving more emphasis to one or more areas. The point is that the framework helps us make this an *intentional* weighting, rather than an unintentional one.

Table 2 shows a fuller description of the elements that we are associating with each aspect. The association stems from the definitions of the aspects that we provided earlier in this paper. They also agree with the way that many systems both ancient and contemporary have sorted various human behaviors and functioning to these five aspects.

The words in the table are intended to be generally descriptive of the category, but they are certainly **not** an exhaustive list of every possible element.

The third column in Table 2 is entitled “External Factors in the Learning Environments.” While the external environment refers to all elements of the environment which impact the child’s experience, UEF’s specific interest is the impact on the well-being of children and young people of the various learning environments: the education system, health system, media and ICT. In this table, the particular examples are largely from the school environment, and within this context we are giving special attention to the role of the educator.

There is inevitably a reciprocal relationship between the subjective experiences of the students and that of the educators. Educators respond to children differentially in ways that are highly dependent on their own personalities, interests, attitudes, and values. In turn, these responses impact their behavior and that of the students. Increased awareness of these responses and their impact allows educators to increase their capacity to support effectively a wider range of students. Every educational interaction has the potential of enhancing or damaging the emotional well-being of the students, and their attitude to themselves and to learning in general.

Much has been written on educational approaches, teaching styles and curricula, but it is also critical to attend to the inter-subjective meeting of educator and student in order to understand how everyday interactions can impact the foundational learning experiences of children. Teachers often bring to the classroom conscious/unconscious biases as well as constructive and destructive behaviors. Teachers are often experts in specific subject matters but not in the overall human skills necessary to create a climate of emotional safety and nurturance. Research regarding the impact of the subjective experience of educators and their well-being will contribute to developing awareness of this important realm and to a deeper understanding of the qualities required by an educator in the support the well-being of children.

In a related area, there is growing awareness for successful medical practitioners to develop certain qualities such as altruism, honor and integrity, caring and compassion, respect, responsibility, cultural sensitivity, and service and that training of medical personnel involves cultivating these qualities.<sup>11</sup> By researching the impact of the subjective world of the teacher on the well-being of the child we will increasingly be able to identify the qualities of successful

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<sup>11</sup> [www.nbme.org/PDF/NBME\\_AAMC\\_ProfessReport.pdf](http://www.nbme.org/PDF/NBME_AAMC_ProfessReport.pdf)

educators, and define processes for cultivating these qualities in teachers training programs.

**Table 2: Framework with Elements of the P, E/S, M. and S Aspects and Holistic Functioning**

<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Subjective</b> Experience of Self	<b>Subjective</b> Experience of the External Environment	External Factors in the Learning Environments
<b>Physical</b>	<p><i>Body state - sense of physical comfort and vitality;</i></p> <p><i>sensory awareness;</i></p> <p><i>body image; behavior, feelings and attitudes towards the body and the physical world;</i></p> <p><i>physical health and healing knowledge and habits;</i></p> <p><i>kinesthetic awareness and activity;</i></p> <p><i>physiological processes;</i></p> <p><i>capacity to manifest, act, build, sustain</i></p>	<p><i>The feelings, thoughts and sensations in relationship to the physical elements of the environment and ways of engaging with it (from the conditions in the classrooms to the condition of the planet)</i></p>	<p>From climate to geography and the physical conditions of immediate environment;</p> <p>socio economic conditions;</p> <p>conditions of the school buildings; availability of playground &amp; equipment;</p> <p>classroom equipment &amp; resources; quality of food;</p> <p>crowdedness of classrooms; physical behavior in the learning environment</p>
<b>Emotional/ Social</b>	<p><b>Intrapersonal</b> Awareness:</p> <p>One's emotions and thoughts, feelings, sensations in relation to one's emotions</p> <p><i>Sense of emotional safety;</i></p> <p><i>Feelings about oneself;</i></p> <p><i>Emotional intelligence including self awareness, mood management &amp; self</i></p>	<p>Social: <b>interpersonal</b> awareness</p> <p><i>The relationship to people, society and the human environment, including:</i></p> <p><i>Sense of emotional support; verbal communication; managing relationships; quality of engagement and relationships, capacity to accurately read social situations congruently; interactions with others; emotional "climate"; friends; family; teachers</i></p>	<p>Emotional &amp; social environment: e.g., culture, family and school dynamics.</p> <p>Attitudes &amp; perceptions of faculty and staff; Curriculum;</p> <p>Teaching styles; the emotional/social subjective world of the educators</p>

	<p><i>motivation; Resilience, empathy, Relatedness ( the way we feel about relationships);</i></p> <p><i>Emotional quality of communication</i></p>		
<b>Mental</b>	<p><i>Thoughts; curiosity; capacity for reflection and decision making, understanding purpose; attitude to learning and knowledge; cognitive, rational and logical capacities, ideas &amp; beliefs; capacities to focus, have perspective, think, envision, conceptualize; creating concepts and new knowledge</i></p>	<p><i>Relationship to the values, ideas and belief systems <u>around</u> the individual; ways of thinking, processing and communicating information; cultural or societal norms; rules &amp; policies</i></p>	<p>Ideas &amp; belief systems;</p> <p>knowledge &amp; communication systems;</p> <p>Attitudes &amp; belief systems of the educator;</p> <p>Ideas about discipline</p>
<b>Spiritual</b>	<p><i>Sense of meaning and purpose in life, inner peace and calmness, sense of uniqueness, interconnectedness of all things, sense of awe, wonder and inspiration; capacity to be in the present moment. a sense of life energy and flow, profound experiences of compassion, love, empathy, spontaneity</i></p>	<p><i>Relationship to interconnectedness of all; sense of the mystery of life in its fullness; contribution of one's inner resources to shared life; service to the whole</i></p>	<p>Recognition &amp; nurturing of uniqueness of each child;</p> <p>Behaviors encouraging peace and non-violence;</p> <p>Attitudes encouraging an awareness of interconnection;</p> <p>Expressions &amp; systems encouraging compassion and caring</p>
<b>Holistic Experience and Functioning</b>	<p><i>One's individual processes and patterns; Creating one's perceived reality; Subtle energies within self;</i></p> <p><i>Capacity for growth</i></p>	<p><i>Relationship to the interdependent way the world functions; subtle energetic fields; human and natural systems; synchronicity; the totality and interplay of the environmental factors that influence the subjective</i></p>	<p>Totality of all external factors impacting an individual at any given time;</p> <p>Expression of these factors in the</p>

	<i>and development of whole person; Dynamic interplay of all the aspects at any given moment</i>	<i>experience at any given time</i>	external environment, in the school environment, for example: school culture and "climate"
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## 4. Developing Key Indicators

The issue of well-being is highly complex one and touches on almost every aspect of a child's life. The integrative and holistic approach to understanding the well-being of children from their own perspective covers new ground and is an enormous undertaking in terms of developing substantial, relevant, and inclusive indicators. The challenges of developing the indicators stem from multiple sources, including the complexity of our definition of well-being, our emphasis on being aware of differences in learning processes, our desire to gather subjective responses from a wide range of ages and development, and on translating sophisticated concepts into age appropriate words and phrases. Thus, we will need to learn by experience and build and refine our studies in a gradual and systematic way.

We intend to proceed in using the most current methods and looking for areas in which we can pioneer innovative methods, and also listen carefully.

In the course of the surveys and qualitative research we need to constantly refine the following:

- Indicators of well-being;
- Elements of the learning environments that may impact well-being;
- Questions and methodologies that examine the link between the elements of the learning environments and the indicators of well-being.

Within the current version of this paper, our focus is the development of the indicators. However, we have also touched on the relationship between the indicators and the external factors of the learning environments that impact these indicators by adding a third column to our framework in Tables 1 and 2 and in our emphasis on the critical role of the educators.

The following points relate to underlying guidelines for developing these indicators. These guidelines align to the basic principles and objectives of UEF:

- Key indicators need to be universal – questions may vary depending on the learning environment and on agendas specific to a country or region, but the core indicators should be sufficiently simple and universal to be relevant to children the world over;
- Development of indicators needs to build on available resources, experiences and knowledge in related areas;
- Elements of any compound indicators must be carefully documented so as to not inadvertently mix or confuse measures;
- While the framework can be a guide to balancing indicators among the physical, emotional/social, mental, and spiritual aspects and holistic functioning, key indicators will not be specifically designated as belonging to only one of the aspects;

- Developing indicators ought to be a process of refining, clarifying, simplifying and making more essential – rather than continuously adding new variations;
- The process of development will rely heavily on the evidence from piloting and the initial surveys – particularly on multivariate analysis to reveal clustering among the proposed indicators and questions;
- Since our holistic approach with children is largely uncharted, we need to be willing to innovate and challenge our own thinking and assumptions in developing the indicators.

The following sections provide information important for establishing how we are developing the indicators of well-being.

### Objective and Subjective Components of Well-Being

Clearly, well-being can be defined as having objective components and/or subjective components. In reviewing indices such as the UNDP Human Development Index, Allardt's Welfare Index, and the WHO Quality of Life Scale, Ruut Veenhoven has examined the issues of developing indicators of well-being and his conclusions seem directly relevant to our own effort. He distinguishes between objective and subjective **assessments** as well as differences in the **nature of the substance** measured – that is, whether one is measuring perceptions (a subjective substance) or number of years (an objective substance.) His framing concept shows four categories of well-being: inner qualities of possibilities and results and outer qualities of possibilities and results. His primary caution is against trying to sum different kinds of categories, or combining objective and subjective measures as if they were similar. He asserts that the most viable measures of well-being come from using self reports to determine the subjective experience (inner qualities) of well-being and he points out that there is strong reliability and validity for such data.

These conclusions are in keeping with UEF's decision to assess the subjective perceptions and experiences of children and young people through subjective self-reports.

### "The Common Experience"

Our challenge is to create an innovative, inspiring and grounded way of measuring well-being, as we have defined it. In service to this objective, we can usefully turn to an article by Guy Claxton: "Mind Expanding: Scientific and Spiritual Foundations for the Schools we need." In it, Claxton relates a phenomenon known as "the Common Experience" which indeed appears to be common to approximately 80% of the population in a wide range of cultures. The experience is one of a qualitative shift of awareness – "an expansion of identity so that one feels more union or wholeness, both within and without, and this brings with it more kinship and more trust." There are four qualities that

seem to be recurrent in such experiences: “an unusually strong sense of aliveness; a quality of belonging – being at home, at ease in the world; an affinity with mystery, involving curiosity and a sense that all is right with the world; and an enhanced peace of mind.”

The four qualities that Claxton unfolds would make compelling indicators – aliveness and vitality; belonging and caring; mystery and adventure; peace and harmony – yet the more important point of his article is that the vast majority of us have had the experience that he refers to as “the common experience” and have shared in that feeling of expansion of oneself into a sense of union or wholeness. This information acts as an implicit call for the researchers of UEF and its partners to bring the fullness of experiences as human beings to the process of developing the indicators, creating questions and analyzing the data.

Often, as adults and in working as experts in our field, we attempt to separate ourselves from our own subjective reality and inner experiences, not using all of our “ways of knowing.” In the context of the Voice of Children Initiative, our affirmative mandate is to attend to our own well-being as whole human beings, suggesting that while we are using best practices in research methodology, we also need to use the dynamic interplay and realization of our physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual potential. We ought to bring to the research, our good hearts and finely-tuned senses as well as our good minds; and to include our own experiences *as children and with children* into what we offer the research process.

### **Accounting for Distinct Processes of Learning**

In a general sense, understanding one’s own unique way of functioning is included in the framework under the category of holistic functioning of the individual. In addition, however, a series of questions needs to be developed, to act as background variables, to point to the different learning processes of children. These questions can be used to identify any biases in the system towards one or more of the internal processing patterns. It will be important to identify and test these questions carefully, in a variety of cultures and within different age groups, and to not identify these questions with a specific system of understanding. It is also critical that this information never be used with individual children as a way of categorizing them and only be available at the aggregate group level.

Our strategy is to develop three or four questions that, collectively, could point to a significant description of the learning process for the child. Again, the questions would need to be thoroughly test for universality. It is challenging to identify such questions, with multiple choice options, that will be suitable for a written survey for children, and avoid the use of overly sophisticated terms and concepts. The questions we propose to use are currently in development.

## Overarching Elements and Expressions of Well-being

Like many of the qualities and states of being that are so critical to our lives (for example: love, beauty, harmony), it is difficult to describe well-being in the abstract. However, we know it experientially in many different guises. While we can not yet be certain how best to measure the following elements, we do know for certain that if we experience an individual – child, young person or adult – with most or all of the following qualities or states of being, we will be experiencing an expression of *the dynamic interplay and realization of one's unique physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual potential (in other words, according to UEF's definition: well-being.)*

The following list has been used as UEF's preliminary understanding of the indicators of well-being. Clearly, how these elements are **expressed** is aimed at more mature age level, but their essential universality makes them relevant for well-being at any age.

1. A pervasive sense of physical health and vitality
2. A deep sense of being safe and supported by one's environment or one's spiritual belief system
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 and self-expression
5. A sense of meaningful and rewarding engagement in relationships, learning, activity, creativity, leisure and play
6. A sense of self-actualization and possibilities of growth, meaning, purpose and potential in one's unique life path
7. A sense of belonging, interdependence and pleasure in contributing to one's communities and human and non-human environment
8. A confidence in one's ability to manage challenging situations and ambiguity, with competence, choice and flexibility
9. A prevalent sense of optimism, resourcefulness, resilience and capacity for growth and healing in the face of life's challenges
10. Coherence between the way one's life is and the way one would like it to be
11. A capacity to engage fully in the experience of the moment
12. A core of self-understanding allowing one to recognize and use all one's inner processes and unique ways of functioning

13. Mastering one's somatic and energetic information, releasing one's traumas and learning how to heal (as a return to wholeness)

14. A sense of joyful anticipation in relation to the mystery, adventure and possibilities of a fully-lived life

As you read through this list you can see that each one of these states of being – including the first one – involves a number of the physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual aspects. The list offers an *expression of the experience* of well-being as a pervasive and whole experience in which the various aspects are always interwoven. However, it is the wholeness of each of these expressions that make it difficult to develop simple indicators which are easily understood. Each phrase contains several components within it. For example: the second phrase: “A deep sense of being safe and supported by one's environment or one's spiritual belief system” relates to the safety within the physical environment as well as safety, or protection, involving other people; support implies a more proactive position of emotional caring and the feeling of being cared for; and the feeling of support from one's spiritual beliefs suggests being cared for in quite another way.

It may well be that we are able to eventually return to the compound factors of well-being that are contained in the expressions, but to begin to understand and to test what is contained within our indicators, we must break down the above expressions into more *singular* elements. Some richness will necessarily be lost in the process of simplifying or reducing them, but the hope is that the loss will be offset by the clarity achieved.

Another consideration, of course, is that the way we simplify the elements is necessarily subjective and quite dependent on the frame through which you are viewing them (for example, varying social, psychological, linguistic theories will lead you to different kinds of framing.) In this case, we will be using the definitions of the physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual aspects and the way we have descriptions of these aspects to the framework as a guide to assist in simplifying the elements and expressions of well-being.

### **Identification of provisional indicators**

Identification of provisional key indicators involves four steps which will continue as an iterative refinement process throughout the course of the surveys until we are satisfied that we have a set of simple and clear indicators that match our principles and that are relevant to our goals. The four steps are included as separate sections:

- 1. Simplifying Elements/Expressions of Well-being**
- 2. Grouping Elements According to the Framework**
- 3. Analysis of the Grouping**

## 4. Identification of Provisional Key Indicators

### 1 *Simplifying Elements/Expressions of Well-being into Components*

The first step in the process is to create a list of simplified elements from the list of overarching elements/expressions of well-being. The goal is to create a set of simplified phrases that are less compounded. As noted above, **initially** this is largely a subjective determination, but as the process of refinement continues, it will be guided by the clustering of certain questions and we can become more assured that what we are hoping to measure is in fact reasonably close to what we are measuring. For now, we are going to break our overarching elements and expressions into the following components.

The list we have composed includes the following components, with some comments on the *possible* interpretation of the component:

1. A pervasive sense of **physical health and vitality**

We could divide this into:

- Health: experience of the physiological processes functioning properly
- Vitality: including, a sense of vibrant energy

2. A deep sense of being **safe and supported by one's environment** or one's spiritual belief system

We could divide this into:

- Safety within the physical environment
- Absence of physical, emotional and mental abuse
- Absence of attacks on one's spiritual belief system
- Safety with and from other people
- Active mental, emotional and physical support (encouragement, nurturing, caring) by other people;
- Supported by one's spiritual beliefs

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**

We could divide this into:

- Self-esteem: related to self-worth, confidence in one's capacities, feeling good about oneself

- Joy
- Curiosity
- Wonder
- Gratitude
- Capacity to navigate a full spectrum of emotions: related to emotional self-management, includes knowing that feelings will pass, knowing how to make myself feel better, knowing that I can transform a feeling

4. A satisfying sense of **self-awareness** and **self-expression**

We could divide this into:

- Self-awareness: may be *similar* to self-knowledge;
- Self-expression: related to creativity; related to communication skills

5. A sense of **meaningful** and **rewarding engagement** in relationships, learning, work, creativity, leisure and play

We could divide this into:

- Satisfying engagement in relationships: having and enjoying relationships
- Satisfying engagement in learning: related to relevance of learning, inspiring learning experiences, sense of capacity to engage in school work; joy in learning; accomplishment
- Satisfying engagement in physical activity: accomplishment, contribution, learning
- Satisfying engagement in creativity: may be linked to self-expression; inspiration, what I can create that is unique to me; what I can offer to others
- Satisfying engagement in leisure and play: capacity to relax, joy, spontaneity, humor, playfulness, inspiration with self, arguably, considered as social, as well

6. A sense of **self-actualization** and possibilities of growth, meaning, purpose and potential in one's unique life path

We could divide this into:

- Trust in one's abilities

- Confidence
- Sense of autonomy
- Capacity for self-direction
- Self-motivation
- Capacity to manifest
- A sense of meaning and purpose in one's life
- Investment in one's personal growth
- Anticipation about what one can become
- Aspiration to be the best one can be

7. A sense of **belonging, interdependence** and **pleasure in contributing** to one's communities and human and non-human environment

We could divide this into:

- Belonging: a sense of caring and being cared for; shared values and destinies; commitment that is reassuring & inspirational
- Interdependence: sense of caring and being cared for extended beyond one's own immediate community
- Pleasure in contributing to one's community
- Pleasure in contributing to human and non-human environments

8. A **confidence** in one's ability **to manage challenging situations** and ambiguity, with competence, choice and flexibility

We could divide this into:

- Confidence in oneself
- Confidence in capacities to influence one's environment
- Capacities to cope; to manage; involves resourcefulness, resilience
- Feeling competent
- Feeling flexible
- Able to exercise choice

9. A prevalent sense of **optimism**, resourcefulness, **resilience** and **capacity for growth and healing** in the face of life's challenges

We could divide this into:

- Optimism: faith in one's present and future; capacity to cope; confidence
- Resourcefulness
- Resilience
- Capacity for growth
- Capacity for healing
- Sense of meaning and purpose in becoming all one can be
- Self-motivation

10. **Coherence** between the way one's life is and the way one would like it to be

We could divide this into:

- Overall feeling of satisfaction
- Inner peace
- Active engagement in the way one's life is

11. A capacity to **engage fully in the** experience of the **moment**

We could divide this into:

- A sense of flow and focus in the moment, free from anxiety
- Curiosity
- Motivation and pleasure in engagement with the activity at hand

12. A core of **self-understanding** allowing one to recognize and use all one's inner processes and **unique ways of functioning**

We could divide this into:

- Self-understanding: particularly related to one's unique learning, communication and developmental processes
- Recognizing uniqueness
- Recognizing one's ways of functioning

- Autonomy
- Self-direction

13. **Mastering one's somatic and energetic information**, releasing one's traumas and learning how to heal (as a return to wholeness)

We could divide this into:

- Sensory Awareness
- Refinement of senses
- Capacity to listen and use one's intuitive resources & inner guidance
- Capacity to attend to & influence one's subtle energetic field
- Releasing traumas
- Learning how to heal

14. A sense of joyful anticipation in relation to the **mystery, adventure and possibilities** of a fully-lived life

We could divide this into:

- Mystery: sense of a benevolent reality beyond what we can know or imagine
- Gratitude at the awe & wonder inspired by the mystery
- Possibilities of discovery & growth
- Adventure: play; curiosity
- Possibilities: faith in the future; confidence in one's capacities; personal growth; purpose & meaning

Again, these are not the **only** ways that the above can be understood, but they begin to give us an understanding of the elements and their components. From reviewing this initial breakdown we can see that we still have many components that are not defined as simple or singular constructs.

## **2     *Grouping Elements According to the Framework***

A second step in ascertaining provisional indicators is mapping the list of simplified elements of well-being within the proposed conceptual framework. Through the process, we can begin to see at least three factors: first, the elements that seem to repeat, or belong, in several categories; second, any

categories that are empty or not sufficiently full (that is, that the words or concepts don't seem to capture the fullness of what we have described as belonging to that category); and third, the areas in which concept feels compounded – that is, there are too many elements present in it so that it would need additional definition in order to have clear meaning.

**Table 3: Simplified Elements Mapped on the Framework**

**Note:** the words on the chart are derived from breaking the list of elements/expressions of well-being into simple components

<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Subjective</b> Experience of Self	<b>Subjective</b> Experience of the external environment
Physical	Physical vitality Physical health Learning how to heal Sensory awareness & refinement Releasing traumas Capacity to manifest Sensory motor mastery & pleasure Pleasure in body & its sensations	Safety (physical) Absence of physical abuse Satisfying physical activity Caring for natural environment Experience of physical support (including material resources) Experience of pleasurable physical contact & affection
Emotional/ Social	Self-esteem Managing one's emotions Self-awareness Self-expression & creativity Confidence Feeling competent Resilience Learning how to heal Releasing traumas Humor Capacity to listen to inner guidance Anticipation about what one can become	Absence of emotional abuse Protected by others Caring, encouragement from others Satisfying relationships Satisfying play Belonging within social context Sense of pleasure in belonging to one's communities Contributing to one's community Capacity to communicate effectively
Mental	Supported by one's beliefs Curiosity Relevance of learning Joy of learning Capacity to learn Feeling competent Focus Optimism Resilience Resourcefulness	Absence of mental abuse Absence of attack on one's beliefs Inspiring learning experiences Encouragement of one's ideas and learning processes

	Autonomy Learning how to heal Releasing traumas	
Spiritual	Joy, Gratitude, Wonder; Learning how to heal Recognizing uniqueness Being in present moment Awareness of the mystery of life	Sense of interdependence Supported by one's spiritual beliefs
Holistic Experience and Functioning	Capacity & possibilities for growth Aspiration to be the best I can be Capacity to relax fully Active engagement in life Knowing one's self Awareness of unique way of functioning; Awareness of energetic information Sense of flow & engagement Capacity for holistic choices	Contributing to human and natural systems

### **3 Analysis of the Grouping**

The preliminary analysis indicates that we need to sharpen our definitions on a number of the components; however, selecting some of the factors that do seem clear and grouping those factors into provisional indicators will facilitate the process. Once we have provisional indicators we can map them against the survey questions and analysis of the data will demonstrate how those questions cluster around the provisional indicators.

The following points could be selected as provisional indicators. Components mapped to Table 3 are added in brackets to indicate that they may be included in that specific provisional indicator. Again, this list is a first step in the development of indicators. Whether these have any relevancy will unfold through the questions and answers of children. Additionally, the items may cluster reasonably well, but the name of the indicator may shift to reflect another feature of the indicator.

1. Physical health & vitality [includes: pleasurable physical activity; pleasure in body and its sensations]
2. Physical safety & support [includes: feeling free from bullying or any form of physical abuse; experience of physical support, including material resources]

3. Emotional Self-Management [includes: self-awareness; knowing how I feel, being able to help myself feel better or express feelings in ways that are effective; releasing emotional traumas and healing]
4. Satisfying Relationships [includes; feeling good about one's relationships; pleasure in engaging with others in activities, play, learning and communication]
5. Self-Expression [includes feeling good about one's communication skills, pleasure in one's capacity to express; pleasure in one's creativity]
6. Support & Protection [actively encouraged and nurtured by others; absence of emotional abuse; *may* include one's support of one's spiritual beliefs]
7. Belonging [feeling part of community; caring and being cared for; contributing to one's community]
8. Confidence in Capabilities [includes: confidence, feeling competent, resilience, resourcefulness, focus, able to influence one's surroundings]
9. Joy of Learning [includes: curiosity, inspiring learning experiences, sense of encouragement of one's ideas and learning processes, relevance of learning, motivation and capacity to learn, pleasure in learning]
10. Capacity for Choice [includes: capacity for holistic choices; *may* include listening to inner guidance; *may* include optimism; sense of autonomy]
11. Inner Vitality and Flow [includes: overall active engagement with life; being in the present moment; inspiration; humor; capacity to relax fully; sense of flow and engagement; adventure; satisfying play]
12. Gratitude & Wonder [interpreting this as an inner state connected to one's state of awareness of the interdependence of all living beings; joy; gratitude in relation to the mystery of life; one's own innate uniqueness as a living being; inspiration *may* belong here]
13. Learning to Heal Oneself [includes: healing & releasing traumas - **all** aspects; awareness of energetic information]
14. Self-knowledge [includes: knowing self; awareness of unique ways of functioning]
15. Growth & Aspiration [includes: capacity and possibilities for growth; aspiration to be the best one can be]
16. Self-Esteem [feeling good about oneself; *may* relate to overall satisfaction with life]

There remain two components in Table 3 that are not included in the above list of 16 provisional indicators: caring for one's physical environment and contributing to natural systems and to human systems, outside of one's community.

There are also several factors that could be included in the above indicators that were not directly referenced in the list of components of the elements of well-being. For example, opportunities for self-direction might be included in "Capacity for Choice." As we map the survey questions against the provisional indicators, we will undoubtedly find other components to expand the description of these indicators.

Also, as the indicators shift and we know more about which elements are included, we will find more descriptive names for each indicator.

#### ***4 Provisional Key Indicators Related to External Factors in the Learning Environments***

From the above exercise, we are proposing the following indicators as reasonable provisional indicators to be evaluated according to the process suggested in the following section on "Next Steps." We have evaluated each of these indicators in relationship to the mental, social/emotional, physical and spiritual aspects and confirmed that each of these provisional indicators is multi-determined; that is, each indicator contains elements of the different aspects. In this way, we are assured that we are addressing well-being from a multidimensional perspective of the interplay of the five aspects.

Provisional Indicators:

1. Physical health and vitality
2. Physical safety and support
3. Emotional self-management
4. Satisfying relationships
5. Self Expression
6. Emotional safety and support
7. Belonging
8. Confidence in capabilities
9. Joy of learning
10. Capacity for choice
11. Inner vitality and flow
12. Gratitude and wonder

13. Learning to heal oneself
14. Self-knowledge
15. Growth and aspiration
16. Self-esteem

### Next Steps in the Process of Developing Indicators

1. Test provisional indicators against existing questionnaire developed for spring 2006 pilots. Determine which questions relate to the various provisional indicators and form hypotheses about how these questions may cluster in relation to the provisional indicators.
2. After statistical analysis, review how variables cluster and propose additions, deletions or clarifications of provisional indicators.
3. Cross-reference new set of indicators against existing survey questions and make any additions or changes to those questions. Form new hypotheses regarding the definitions of indicators and how the questions will cluster on these indicators.
4. Conduct additional survey and data analysis. Continue the above process (steps 1-3) with the indicators: testing the indicators against analysis of survey data, cross-referencing with survey questions, adjusting questions and indicators to reflect the new information from the surveys and from all other sources deemed relevant (for example: literature reviews, the ongoing work of UEF and our partners, ventures and initiatives undertaken in the various learning environments, and of course, the voices of children and young people.)

The continued refinement of the indicators, through a rigorous yet open process, will allow the emergence of a simple and robust set of indicators for monitoring the impact of various learning environments on the well-being of children. In doing so, UEF is creating a system in which the physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual aspects, both internal and external, are viewed *from the inner perspective of the child*. This is a vital and unique contribution to children and young people, the world over, and to those who are **responsible to and for them**.

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