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## Editorial

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RICHARD DESJARDINS

The science of well-being is an emerging field that seeks to create a better understanding of how individuals and societies develop in a progressive and positive sense and how this knowledge can be harnessed to meet these ends (Hupert, Baylis, & Keverne, 2005). Social scientists have long been concerned with human subjective well-being, but it is only since the 1990s that we can see a marked shift from a tendency to focus on the causes of suffering to the causes of well-being (Kahnemann, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999). Not least, education is one potentially prominent cause that is increasingly receiving due attention. For example, the *Well Being of Nations* (OECD, 2001) emphasised the potential role of embodied resources such as knowledge and skills in helping to secure economic as well as *social and personal well-being*. More recently, another book published by OECD entitled *Understanding the Social Outcomes of Learning* (2007) has gone further by exploring in greater depth the potential role of education in affecting a wide range of social outcomes, not just the positive ones. The first part of this issue of the Journal extends this line of inquiry by focusing on the theme of *education and well-being*.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in using the notion of well-being to measure societal progress. The first contribution in this issue by Jon Hall and Erica Matthews introduces some of the global views that are behind this growing interest. Essentially, they reveal that there is a growing consensus that aims to develop better measures of well-being which are commensurate with a more holistic view of societal progress, one that goes beyond the mere assessment of economic development as measured by the Gross Domestic Product. They also consider the role that measures of education do and should play in indicators that seek to assess societal well-being.

Well-being is a complex concept and has no set definition. But common sets of values that are jointly stated such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights can provide important reference points. In the second contribution of this issue, R. Desjardins includes a table (see Table 1, p. \*\*) taken from Gilomen (2003) which identified a number of dimensions of well-being. He suggests that this broad set of individual and societal outcomes serves as a useful guide to what constitutes economic, social and personal well-being, and hence for anchoring the objectives of educational systems in modern societies. Knowledge and capabilities that can lead to these are key proximate outcomes for education to achieve. But he also suggests that this is not straightforward because of the ill-defined nature of educational systems. Amongst other issues, this fact does not allow for adequate debate or solutions to educational problems. Accordingly, there are serious challenges and limitations to building up a robust evidence base within this area of research, including empirical issues as well as a general paucity and incoherence of theory. Still, there has been some progress in identifying some of the major alternative

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1 mechanisms that link education and well-being. He briefly reviews these and  
2 brings them together to help build a more complete picture.

3 Whereas the emphasis of the first two contributions are on the broad societal  
4 links between education and well-being, the third contribution by Asher Ben-Arieh  
5 narrows in on the concept of child well-being and how this is measured for policy  
6 purposes. The emphasis is on the potential and actual uses of child social indicators  
7 in the process of policy-making. This serves as a backdrop for the next three  
8 contributions which focus on the role of educational structures in nurturing  
9 students' well-being, and, in turn, the importance of well-being for learning.

10 There is growing interest in how subjective well-being affects how students  
11 learn and what they learn. Learning environments affect various aspects of young  
12 people's well-being which has many implications for educational systems, in  
13 particular the conditions for teaching and learning. The fourth contribution by  
14 Marwan Awartani, Cheryl Vince Whitman and Jean Gordon introduces ongoing  
15 efforts to develop research instruments that capture young people's perceptions of  
16 how the school as a learning environment affects their well-being. The approach  
17 prioritises the voice of the subjects, in this case school children. It also moves  
18 beyond an analysis of the findings to involving young people in taking data to  
19 policy-makers to discuss possible improvements. Initial findings from a pilot  
20 survey in Palestine which tests these instruments are reported. The conclusion is  
21 that learning environments can and do affect various aspects of young people's  
22 well-being.

23 The next contribution by Linda O'Toole suggests that knowing how you  
24 learn and having the capability to explore this have a direct influence on one's  
25 own sense of well-being. She introduces the notion of *individual patterns of learn-*  
26 *ing* which builds on the concepts of learning to learn, learning styles and learn-  
27 ing processes and suggests ways of implementing this approach to learning in the  
28 classroom.

29 A common theme that transcends the previous two contributions is the idea  
30 that individual emotions and states of being are an integral part of the learning  
31 process. Christina Hinton, Koji Miyamoto and Bruno della-Chiesa reinforce this  
32 notion in this last contribution of Part I. They review some key findings from the  
33 field of brain research and discuss some of the implications for teaching and the  
34 design of school environments. Drawing from this exciting trans-disciplinary  
35 approach to educational research, the contribution concludes that intellect and  
36 emotion are integrated and interdependent in the brain. Hence, ensuring the  
37 emotional and physical well-being of students is fundamental for the brain to reach  
38 its full learning potential.

39 Part II of this issue opens with an article by Diana Tavares, Orlanda Lopes, Elsa  
40 Justino and Alberto Amaral on *Students' Preferences and Needs in Portuguese Higher*  
41 *Education*. It presents the preliminary analysis of the results of a questionnaire filled  
42 by all students entering Portuguese higher education in the academic year 2004/  
43 05. This analysis was used to understand students' preferences for institutions and  
44 study programmes, as well as the rationales influencing these choices.

45 The second article, *A Comparative Approach to Lifelong Learning Policies in*  
46 *Europe: the cases of the UK, Sweden and Greece*, by Eleni Prokou examines lifelong  
47 learning policies following the expansion of continuing vocational education and  
48 training as from the end of the 1980s, associated with both economic and social  
49 demand in an internationally competitive context described as globalisation.

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