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'Schooling for joy? Why international development partners should search for happiness in the processes and outcomes of education.' [Neil Thin, University of Edinburgh n.thin@ed.ac.uk][1]

Abstract

The global political consensus on the developmental importance of the drive for Universal Primary Education (UPE) has come to epitomize efforts to bring about a fairer world. Nearly as strong, however, is the growing consensus on the need for more cautious management of the inevitable trade-offs between quantity and quality of primary schooling in poorer countries. While progress towards UPE looks like progress towards poverty reduction and child rights, this is not necessarily progress towards well-being. If the quality of schooling is poor, or if prospects for translating learning outcomes into well-being are poor, chances of achieving well-being in childhood and adulthood can be better served by staying out of school. Surprisingly, the obvious fact that the whole point of education, like all of development, is to enhance well-being seems to be forgotten in much of the policy debate and research analysis on primary schooling, and particularly so in poorer countries.

This paper examines how this happens and considers the ways in which reminders about well-being might improve policies, practices, and evaluations of primary schooling. I pay here particular attention to *subjective* well-being, or happiness, and specifically to the fundamental issue of whether and how primary schooling contributes *directly* to children's happiness. The main conclusion for policy, practice, and research, is stated simply here: children worldwide should asked about their enjoyment of schooling, and the information gained should be used to develop quality-adjusted indicators of progress towards UPE. Putting this into practice and making it effective will require innovative approaches to ensuring complementarity between participatory and nonparticipatory, qualitative and quantitive research and to the challenges of facilitating comparability and translating research into policy. I offer this as one among many possible examples of how the rapid rise of

happiness studies could translate into significant shifts in development policy and practice.

Introduction: happiness policy and the means and ends of education

> And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
> And shining morning face, creeping like snail
> Unwillingly to school.
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> (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 11, vii)

The United Kingdom Department for Education and Skills wants people to think about English primary schools in terms not only of their academic learning outcomes but also in terms of children's happiness: its key policy document published in 2003 was entitled *Excellence and Enjoyment: A Strategy for Primary Schools.* Enjoyment even appears to be raised to the status of a human right, as we are told in the Foreword that "Enjoyment is the birthright of every child." Admittedly the substance of the 75-page strategy is more about 'excellence' than 'enjoyment'. There is a lot in here about promoting and testing for literacy and numeracy, yet few suggestions on how to promote enjoyment and none on how to assess it. The children's author Philip Pullman (2003) pointed out acerbically that the word "enjoy" didn't appear once in the national literacy strategy, and launched a campaign against the over-testing of pupils. Still, it is an intriguing sign of the times that a key government text on primary schooling puts joy so prominently in the shop window, and it may not be long before private-school experiments in 'happiness classes' are being mainstreamed in state schools.

In poorer countries and in strategy documents drafted by international development agencies, by contrast, joy takes a back seat in the policy discourse on education. Indeed, so fervent has become the drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE) that many assessors of aid-funded educational programmes have been forced to admit that even the basic qualities of educational provision receive pitifully little systematic attention, let alone the joyfulness of school experiences or the influences of education on happiness or well-being. The global 'Education For All' (EFA) agenda, agreed and refined in the UN world education conferences in 1990 (Jomtien) and 2000 (Dakar), put considerable emphasis on the quality of education, yet this aspect becomes all but forgotten when EFA is reduced to UPE.[2] It often seems as if in operational terms the 'birthright of every child' in poorer countries is schooling *per se,* not the enjoyment of schooling or the enjoyment of the well-being that schooling is expected to contribute towards. Even the 428-page UNESCO *Global Monitoring Report 2005*, all about the theme of

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2 The target for UPE is simply '2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.' Nothing is said here about quality. By contrast, quality is one of the EFA targets.

'quality', manages to omit any reference to children's enjoyment of schooling or to questions about whether schooling actually enhances their potential to lead happy lives.

It is hard to imagine more fundamentally important and eternally interesting policy questions than those concerning the purposes of education, and about whether educational provision actually helps achieve those purposes. Obvious though this may seem, a remarkably small proportion of the policy discourse and research on education takes an explicit interest in educational purposes and outcomes at all. Similarly, though happiness must have a prominent if not paramount position in discourse on the meaning of life and on the purposes to which individual choices and collective policies and governance are directed, it is remarkable how little happiness has figured as a criterion in policy discourse for the past century.

Put these two enigmas together, and you find that although everyone wants their children to be happy and hopes that by becoming educated their children will enhance their opportunities for life-long happiness, educational policy and practice even in richer countries have all too rarely paid explicit heed to the prospects for pupils being happy in and beyond school. Educational inputs take centre stage rather than processes and outcomes. And when processes and outcomes are considered, it is knowledge, skills, employability, earnings, and perhaps citizenship that are foregrounded but not usually happiness.

In many parts of the world, however, happiness policies, and even generalised utilitarian policies, are rapidly rising to prominence in public and private sector policy discourse and at all levels from macro-policies such as statements of national priorities and national social assessments), to micro (such as policies and assessments relating to workers' or customers' well-being). By my definitions, *happiness policies*, which have in common some explicit emphasis on happiness as a goal of a organization or practice, are less ambitious than *utilitarian policies,* which view happiness as the ultimate criterion of judgments about the goodness of an organization or practice. You can have a happiness policy (e.g. to make classrooms happy places so that children will learn well) within an overall policy arena that is not at all utilitarian (e.g. within a schooling system which is mainly focused on maximizing academic attainment in a competitive environment). Happiness policies also differ from *harm reduction policies* in that the latter merely seek to minimize harm rather than positively optimize happiness. Thus most 'mental health' policies are not 'happiness policies' by my definition.

Having languished in considerable disfavour or neglect in most domains and in most countries for the past century, happiness as a policy theme is not going to suddenly rise to prominence without attracting skeptical criticisms. There are two main forces driving the happiness policy revolution in richer countries, neither of which yet pertains in poorer countries:

- Negatively, there are doubts about the merits of using economic growth (GDP) as the main indicator of national economic progress or well-being, given the diminishing value and often adverse effects of productivity increases.

- Positively, there is a new faith in the measurability of happiness based on a flourishing range of approaches including life satisfaction and domain satisfaction surveys and experience sampling.

At least with respect to rich countries, there is now a reasonable degree of consensus that GDP is not reliable as a national well-being indicator and that 'economic growth' as conventionally defined should increasingly be complemented by other policy targets. There is also increasing disquiet about whether individual and family well-being is well served by seeking to maximise income. There is less consensus, however, concerning the possibility of finding measures of happiness that could be sufficiently reliable and comparable across cultures and over time to serve as guidance on policy outcomes. Among academic exponents of happiness studies there is widespread optimism about the potential reliability and policy impact of happiness measures, yet even they disagree for example on comparative usefulness of various kinds of survey data (answers to global 'life satisfaction' questions, for example, versus 'domain satisfaction') and other methods such as observation and experience sampling.

There is also considerable room for debate as to the comparative relevance and content of happiness policies in rich and poor countries. Arguably, in middle and high-income countries where most people have secure livelihoods throughout their lives and have no trouble meeting their material needs, a swing towards happiness policies is a much higher priority than they ought to be in poorer countries where for most people the best route to well-being lies in securing livelihoods through individual income gains and national economic growth.

Both of these driving forces – doubts about the value of economic growth, and new faith in the assessability of happiness – are relevant to education policy. Among the various policy domains in which happiness is being introduced, education ought to be one of the least controversial. Since all parents worldwide want their children to be happy, and hope that they will develop in ways which will optimize their prospects of life-long happiness, it ought in theory to uncontroversial for educationalists in all countries, rich and poor, to make happiness a prominent theme in educational policy and planning. Yet as Nel Noddings (2003) has emphatically argued, this has not generally been the case even in rich countries. While many governments and schools in rich countries are increasingly paying some attention to children's happiness (and psychological well-being more generally) particularly in the younger years, this is still far from a dominant theme in educational evaluation. The 'emotional intelligence' movement (Goleman, 1995) may have spawned an admirable variety of

educational innovations, but these are not yet fully mainstreamed and the outcomes of these experiments not yet considered sufficiently important to be prominent in evaluation. There is much more policy talk nowadays of 'educating for the good life' and of learning 'life skills', but still not much empirical research into school effectiveness in these regards. In assessments of children and schools alike, children's enjoyment of school, their prospects for happiness, and their disposition to attend to other people's happiness, are greatly overshadowed by attention to their cognitive development, their knowledge, and their prospects for further academic achievement and for employment.

Analysis and assessments of well-being are essentially about ensuring that development practitioners, policy-makers and evaluators explore the intrinsically valuable *processes and outcomes* (health, relationships, creativity, enjoyment, and the quality of life) rather than getting stuck solely on *inputs* and *activities* (technology, infrastructure, GDP, and delivery of services). The 'human development' movement and the Millennium Development Goals have been associated with significant movements towards outcome-orientation. Nonetheless, efforts under these rubrics have remained largely in the middle ground between the means and the ultimate ends of development. Most emphasis has been on outputs and processes like income, schooling, and capabilities rather than on well-being. The inattention to well-being is not entirely due to mere forgetfulness: some key exponents such as Amartya Sen have even explicitly rejected 'happiness' as a policy rubric on moral grounds in the anti-utilitarian tradition. He has made this point repeatedly, arguing for a 'capability approach' which assesses people's capability to achieve good things, as opposed to a 'utility approach' which assesses how good people feel and may therefore lead to complacency when people get so used to bad things happening to them that they are able to feel good despite them (1992:53-54). Sen's work has undoubtedly been the single most important academic source of inspiration for the Human Development movement. It would be ironic if the UPE drive, so central to that movement, resulted in illbeing for millions of children due to neglect of crucial questions about whether they are happy at school, and whether schooling enhances their prospects of life-long happiness.

This paper explores evidence and analyses some of the potential for the deployment of happiness as a policy rubric in the domain of education, and specifically of primary schooling in poorer countries. This is intended as a contribution to a broader plea for stronger recognition of happiness in development discourse in three main ways:

• among *policy objectives* (even if some objections to utilitarianism are accepted it is perverse not to recognize happiness as a core policy objective, among others)

- as *instrumental means* for achieving development (people learn better, work better, and get along with other people better if they are well and happy)

- in the *evaluation and outcome monitoring* of development policies, programmes, and processes (we need to know how wealth and health and knowledge are enjoyed, not just how they are generated and distributed).

Three approaches to Universal Primary Education (UPE): rights-based, poverty reduction, and well-being

Whether or not the UK Department for Education and Science is sensible in trying to promote the idea of school enjoyment as a 'right', there are also debates to be had between human rights advocates, utilitarians, and welfarists concerning the outcomes of schooling. As Gutman puts it, if education is to be 'useful', 'Happiness is surely too indefinite an end (as utilitarians themselves admit) to guide an educational program' (1997:70). She argues that while both utilitarians and rights theorists hold 'consequentialist' positions concerning the relations between education and the good life, rights theorists promote the idea of education for 'freedom,' whereas by promoting the idea of education for 'happiness' utilitarians inevitably end up arguing for culture-bound non-neutral forms of education.

Moving closer to the world of educational policy and decision-making, it is worth distinguishing three ideal-typical approaches to justifying the global drive for UPE:

- A *rights-based* approach asserts that children have a universal human right to a minimum number of years of schooling, and that failure of states to deliver this right, and of international bodies to provide the financial and technical support needed to provide it, is a sanctionable offence. It was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that in 1948 put UPE on the world political map by declaring free and compulsory elementary education to be a universal human right. Logically, for the human rights activist, questions about the *quality* of schooling only arise insofar as some basic criteria and standards for the quality of inputs are available as benchmarks. The idea of children's enjoyment of schooling is irrelevant to the right to education, since no-one but the enjoyer can be held accountable for enjoyment. In practice, though promoters of the right to education press mainly for government action in making primary education compulsory and free, they do also tend to argue for better educational quality in ways that go well beyond anything that could be defended by sanctions based on minimum standards (Hammarberg 1997; UNICEF, nd; Tomesevski, 2004). Questions about the *effectiveness* of schooling need not in principle arise at all under a 'human rights' rubric. Since schooling is by definition part of the life which all humans have a right to expect, there is no logical need to enquire into whether in practice it makes

people's lives go better. Again, the enjoyment of the fruits of schooling is up to the rights-holder, not up to the duty-bearer who is bound to provide the schooling.

- A *poverty reduction* (or 'welfarist') approach asserts that lack of schooling is part of the definition of poverty and part of its cause. This justifies the provision of schooling as both a component and a means for poverty reduction. Seen as component of poverty reduction, quality again need not figure except in the basic minimum standards sense, and effectiveness again need not figure at all since the mere existence of schooling is self-justificatory. When schooling is seen instrumentally as a means of achieving poverty reduction at individual or social levels, there is more scope here for exploring both the quality and the effectiveness of schooling: evidently variable quality leads to variable poverty-relevant outcomes. But this is still a minimalist approach to understanding school effectiveness. The full potential for human flourishing lies well beyond the moral horizon of the poverty reduction agenda, which merely requires us to do what we can to minimize harm.

- A *well-being* approach steers the attention away from schooling as an end in itself, and sees it as an instrument for achieving better lives for everyone. Of the three approaches, only this one leaves any room for an unbiased, open approach to the utility of schooling for individuals or for society in general. Only a well-being approach compels us to ask cautious questions about school quality and effectiveness before herding all of the world's children into compulsory and 'free' schooling. And while a well-being approach might urge the state in poorer countries to pour more resources into providing or facilitating UPE, and might urge 'pro-poor' policies in so doing, it conceivably could be more pragmatic in shifting emphasis towards improving the quality and outcomes of existing schooling systems before asking or requiring poor families to risk their children's well-being and their own on a systems whose outcomes could more damaging to their interests than the alternatives. A well-being approach forces us to ask whether children are well enough to enjoy and to benefit from schooling, whether schools are good enough to make good contributions to children's and adults' enjoyment of life in and out of school, and whether social and physical environments are conducive to translating good schooling into good life outcomes.

Of course most agencies, schools, and individuals working to improve schooling wouldn't stand neatly under one of these three flags. The point is that the bulk of educational policy documents and investments of international development agencies appear to emphasise rights and/or poverty reduction as the main justification for education. In so doing, they perhaps unintentionally steer attention away from important questions concerning whether and how schooling actually does contribute to children's and adults' enjoyment of life.

A more specific sub-set of well-being approaches would be happiness policy approaches to schooling. Here, the main questions would be: for whom is schooling a good route to happiness, and how can schooling be delivered such as to give children a good chance of being happy in school and during and after their school years? A *happiness in education* approach would emphasise school quality, exploring the potential for enhancing the joy of learning and of school life in general. An *education and happiness* approach would emphasise school effectiveness, exploring a broad set of life outcomes rather than limiting the gaze to knowledge and employability. A *utilitarian* approach would explore the role of schooling in optimizing the happiness of everyone, including those in and out of school and those who never go to school.

Primary schooling, as an aspect of life and as a factor in development, has curiously divergent messages regarding the comparative well-being of humanity. Its apparently universalizing function is contradicted in often cruel ways by the colossal diversity in quality of provision. On the one hand, the drive towards universal UPE is one of the most pervasive and persuasive universalizing arguments of the modern development era. Despite the eloquent efforts of international deschoolers like Ivan Illich (1973), today there are remarkably few influential objectors to the idea that all the world's children need schooling in order to be well as children and in order to lead flourishing adult lives. This has resulted in an extraordinary degree of global homogenizing of some aspects of childhood experience. Although UPE is a long way from being achieved (77 million currently missing out on primary schooling according to UNESCO), a massively increased proportion of the world's children spend an ever-increasing portion of their childhood in schools. Even the lives of those who don't attend schools are increasingly influenced by the fact that so many other children do so: their childhood and lifelong impoverishment is increasingly defined by their lack of schooling.

On the other hand, comparing the quality and experience of schooling, despite some superficial similarities worldwide, offers some of the clearest insights into cultural contrasts across the world. The contrasts in educational experience, provision, and policy are so striking that they make a mockery of any pretence to 'universality' in the provision of education. This is not just a matter of global inequalities in class size and in the quality of teaching and educational infrastructure. Education policy itself is dramatically different in rich and poor countries. In rich countries people may legitimately complain that children's current and future well-being and happiness are inadequately featured in educational policies and strategies (Noddings 2003), but these issues are nonetheless substantially addressed in the planning and assessment of schools. They are all but absent in the plans and assessments of schools in poor countries, where the battle to get children into school at all leaves very little room for attention to the quality and outcomes of schooling. In policy debates in and

about poorer countries, there is extraordinarily little attention to the comparative well-being of children in or out of school, or to the influence that schooling may have on life-long well-being and happiness. It is as if the equation of school inattendance with ill-being were enough to sustain the naïve assumption that school attendance equates to well-being.

Overwhelmingly, the policy literature on education in poorer countries, dominated as it is by rights-based and poverty reduction approaches, is about inputs rather than about processes or outcomes. It is about the financial, organizational, and persuasional tasks of getting children into school and keeping them there, rather than about the quality of the education they receive and its effects on their lives and on that of their families. Even texts specifically claiming to be about educational quality tend to be about inputs such as school infrastructure, books, teacher qualifications, and teacher-pupil ratios, rather than about educational processes or outcomes.

In most other sectors of development, such an approach would be laughed at as simply absurd. Imagine how silly the FAO would look if most of their policy texts on agricultural systems and food security were about numbers of hectares cultivated and numbers of bags of fertilizer per hectare or tractors per farm, rather than about productivity, profit, and food security. Similarly, though the WHO and health ministries may be guilty of focusing too much on medical services and not enough on health, surely they would never get away with just counting doctors, nurses and expenditures on drugs?

Among the MDGs, the goal of UPE is the only one that is merely an input target in developmental terms. All the other MDGs refer to processes and outcomes. The key problem with education policy seems to lie in the widely accepted view that education, or more specifically schooling, and still more specifically 'basic' (largely primary) schooling is in itself a human right, an aspect of well-being rather than just a means of achieving it, and conversely that lack of it is not just a cause of poverty but an aspect of poverty. Were schooling viewed instrumentally, as a means to enable people to flourish just as agricultural systems and marketing are instrumental to food security and health services are instrumental to health, then the need to scrutinize carefully the outcomes of various approaches to schooling would be much more apparent. Numbers or proportions of children attending school would then never be accepted as a satisfactory proxy indicator of either poverty reduction or well-being.

The film Educating Rita tells a funny and moving story, a modern version of *Pygmalion,* about the difficulties involved in attempting to use tertiary education in the UK as an instrument for moving up the social ladder. Rita is working class and discovers that there are hidden class barriers to even completing a degree in English literature, let alone using it to achieve a better life. Rita was a poor girl in a rich country. The educational approach and trajectory in that story can usefully

be compared with two other fictional vignettes. Whereas Educating Rita was about the subtle links between education and cultural capital, Educating Gita, involving a poor girl in a poor country, would largely be about the challenges of getting her to school at all, and perhaps about whether or not the teacher attended and whether there was a functional school building. Educating Peter, involving a rich boy in a rich country, would have no need to explore questions of access to schooling or school quality or the use of schooling as a means for social advancement. Instead, it would be about the quality of his educational experiences, and about whether his education helped him flourish as a human being and to help other people flourish. In other words, Peter's questions about the links between schooling and quality of life arguably only become an issue once we have successfully addressed Gita's questions about access to basic education, and Rita's questions about education as a means for social mobility. The question I am asking is whether this implicit prioritizing system – get them all to school, then think about social mobility, then think about flourishing – is a sensible and fair approach to universalizing basic provision of opportunities for well-being. Wouldn't a fairer approach at least apply the same kind of precautionary principle to education that we would apply to medicine: don't entice children to school unless you can be reasonably sure that it won't harm them or their families? Or better still, a happiness principle that includes schooling among a range of potential instruments for optimizing children's chances of leading happy lives, and weighs its likely benefits against the alternatives?

Education and Happiness: research so far

Questioning the association between UPE and happiness is part of a broader set of challenges concerning the relevance to poorer countries of philosophical positions and policy trends that emerge from richer countries. Now that the Western academic boom in happiness studies has come to the attention of policy-makers there is a growing if still cautious interest among European and North American governments, businesses, and civil society leaders, in using the empirical findings and concepts of happiness studies to guide policies and evaluations. It remains to be seen whether these approaches might be extended further into international development studies and policy.

The dramatic rise and diversification of happiness studies since the 1970s has only recently been followed by some rather slow, cautious, and piecemeal responses by development policy analysts and development agencies. In rhetorical form, there is increasingly frequent and high-profile endorsement of the possibility that happiness (and well-being more generally) could be an important policy objective and that happiness studies might supply important information for monitoring and evaluation of policy processes and outcomes. In practice, however, there has been as yet very little systematic exploration of the

opportunities and pitfalls afforded by happiness studies for would-be reformers or evaluators of policy. Nor is there as yet, in the happiness studies community, a serious movement towards adapting and expanding happiness studies in ways that would make their findings more policy-relevant. Furthermore, both happiness studies and happiness policy analysis remain largely focused on the quantitative analysis of survey results, and could be greatly improved through the addition of ethnographic and qualitative research and cultural-philosophical analysis.

Ironically, while the UK government's policy on the 'enjoyment' of schooling was being developed, the educationalist Nel Noddings was preparing her book *Happiness and Education* in which she argues that 'we are unlikely to find any mention of happiness in current writing devoted to school reform and standards' (2003:3). Some of her critique is no doubt overdrawn: in richer countries many educationalists do discuss the links between education and happiness, if largely as a process issue at lower educational levels rather than as a process or outcome issue at higher levels. Still, she makes many valid critiques of the inadequacy of professional and public debate on the purposes of education and on whether those purposes are being well served by our schooling systems and their assessment regimes. She is particularly concerned about the narrow emphasis on schooling for employment to the detriment of schooling for other equally important life outcomes and processes such as parenting, home-making, leisure, and interactions with nature: 'At the beginning of the 21st century, educational discussion is dominated by talk of standards, and the reason given for this emphasis is almost always economic' (2003:84). She is also rightly troubled by the ideological misfiring of the gender equality movement, which effectively put an end to the useful function of schools in preparing girls for home-building, nursing, and parenting: if that system had to be queried on gender equity grounds, she argues, there was no good reason why the response shouldn't have been to encourage boys to take classes in those useful subjects rather than steering girls away from them and towards mathematics and science (2003:89).

Happiness in western education, both as a process and an objective, tends to be marginalized in two senses:

- *Within schools* it tends to be spatially and temporally marginalized, mainly confined to leisure activities like sport, drama, and music. Cheerfulness is expected outside the classroom and outside of learning time.

- *Within education systems,* it is largely kept out of achievement-oriented secondary schools and higher education, and confined to pre-school institutions and (to a lesser extent) primary schools.

In Sweden, Tordensen observes that 'in preschool the child is seen as a natural being, in school as a reproducer of culture and knowledge. Preschool has been more directed towards the social project and social competence, school more

towards the learning project and intellectual achievement' (2007:52). Since for adults the domains of work (serious and productive) and leisure (nonserious and fun) tend to be contrasted, schooling can be seen in part as a process of internalizing this very unrealistic and unhelpful cultural division between the domains of happiness-orientation and achievement-orientation. Happiness is more likely to be expected in after-school clubs than in schools. In an interesting discussion of the evolution of the scouting movement in the USA, Perry (1993) shows how a school-like emphasis on achievement in the early years was gradually replaced by a core emphasis on happiness as the movement grew I popularity, indicating perhaps a need for the happiness that had been displaced from formal schooling.

As for empirical research on children's well-being in schools, there is plenty of it to be found, but it is piecemeal and rarely figures prominently in national or international reviews of schooling. In the recent headline-grabbing UNICEF-ICDC (2007) review of 'Child Well-Being In Rich Countries', 'educational well-being' was one of the six main themes assessed. Strangely, however, the authors chose to assess this not by looking at well-being or satisfaction with schooling, but by looking at school attendance and academic test results! They did, however, under a separate "subjective well-being" heading, ask children how much they liked school. This is a clear example of the way in which the marginalizing of happiness as an educational theme can persuade even 'well-being' researchers into sidelining happiness as if it somehow didn't properly belong in a section on schooling.

Although there is a considerable literature which, like this paper, argues on a priori grounds for more attention to happiness in education, there is much less literature on practical ways of promoting happiness in and through education. Maxcy, for example, having emphasized how important it is to have a school 'climate' that is happiness-promoting, tells us nothing about how such a climate might be cultivated, and in fact suggests that we can't deliberately create an atmosphere of happiness in a school - 'school happiness like personal happiness tends to happen without artificial stimulants or incentives' (1988:432). Exceptions tend to be case studies of exceptionally innovative schools that have foregrounded happiness (Stradling, 2004) and which may offer inspiration but are not themselves part of a mainstreaming approach to school reform.

A crucial set of policy questions arising from the literature on happiness and education concern the relationship between what is good, educationally, for children and their families, and what is the net good for society of a given approach to education. Essentially these questions concern the relationship between education's contributions to the so-called 'human development' of individuals on the one hand, and 'social development' on the other (Thin 2002, ch.1; Thin 2006). While in general 'rates of return' studies have tended to find significant correlations between individuals' years of education and their

subsequent income, it is less clear the extent to which these correlations tell us something about the causality of education, and still less clear to what extent the benefits that individuals may gain actually scale up to a net social benefit. Like spectators standing up in a crowd, pupils may be learning to compete for positional goods in zero-sum games with no net social benefit. But at least individuals do in general appear to benefit from their educational efforts in terms of financial rewards. Evidence on education and happiness is much less reassuring: Veenhoven (1984) has noted that numerous studies in rich and poor countries have found no significant correlations between years of schooling and subsequent happiness. He notes that there is considerable evidence that schooling fosters discontent by instilling unrealistic ambitions.

Ill-being in school: indirect attention to well-being?

A core tenet of the positive psychology movement has been that while harm and harm reduction must continue to grab much of our attention, we can greatly enrich our understanding of humanity and our capabilities for progress by looking above the minimalist line below which aspects of our experience are deemed unacceptable. Most psychological research, like most development studies, has been directed below the line of acceptability. The argument of the positive psychology movement is not that we should stop looking below that line, but that we should also spend some of our time looking above it. Sufferers and people living in poverty, and those who would help them, have a lot to learn from people who flourish and enjoy their lives.

As in most life domains, even when we do explore schooling through a "well-being" filter our gaze tends to be directed first to ill-being, to those aspects of well-being that are most obviously in need of remedying. So it is that while information on school quality and on the quality of children's lives in school is generally rather scanty, such information that we do have is mainly about serious deficiencies in this, particularly bullying and violence. As is the case with well-being and enjoyment, illbeing as an aspect of school experience has received little *systematic* attention in general reviews of school effectiveness and quality in poorer countries. Such general studies have focused on the technicalities and organizational issues of pedagogical processes and learning outcomes.

Nonetheless, unlike well-being and enjoyment, suffering and harmful school experiences have been the subject of numerous special studies, most notably addressing violence, bullying, gender discrimination, and mental illness (under a 'mental health' euphemism, of course), hunger, malnutrition and bodily ill-health, as well as more directly educational issues such as boredom and underachievement. Were this range of issues to be systematically organized as a set of actual or potential detractors from pupils' well-being, and mainstreamed in school assessments and reviews of education systems, this would constitute a major step towards putting well-being on the educational agenda.

I emphasise the importance of doing this kind of work systematically because the ad hoc nature of reviews on relations between schooling and ill-being means that some issues grab all the attention whereas others rarely surface. There does seem to be an urgent need to prioritise among this catalogue of woes in terms of their intrinsic importance and in terms of how much potential there is for schooling tomake a difference. To take just one example, HIV/AIDS as an educational issue has been the focus of hundreds of global and national reviews and projects. This is hardly surprising in view of its importance, and of the potential for school-based awareness programmes to make a difference, and of the need for schools to recognize and respond to the problems facing people living with AIDS. Other health challenges of similar importance, however, seem to get much less attention. Malaria and lung diseases related to smoke in the kitchen, for example, are known to be massive-scale causes of death and suffering among children, much of which could be avoided through simple and cheap measures which schools could advocate and support. There has been negligible attention to these in the literature on education.

As well as prioritizing, a further benefit from a more systematic approach to schooling and ill-being would come from more careful identification of relationships among various sources of illbeing. There is little use in reviews and manuals on school bullying, for example, without systematic exploration of the various factors that make people particularly prone to bully or to be bullied. Some of these are partly external to schools (e.g. cultural dispositions to ethnic stereotyping and gender inequality), and many derive from aspects of school culture (inadequate playgrounds, age hierarchy, boredom, etc).

Factors that promote or inhibit well-being approaches

Rather than just telling educational funders, policy-makers, researchers and practitioners to be sensible and pay more attention to well-being, it would be wise to develop an appreciation of the various factors that can inhibit or promote recognition of well-being as an educational theme:

- **Prioritising**: quantity of provision generally takes priority over quality, and the removal of harm takes priority over the enhancement of goods. When a ranking order of educational priorities is drawn up, perhaps it is inevitable that educational access takes priority over educational quality or outcomes. Everyone agrees, of course, that educational quality matters, yet in practice in poorer countries it is nearly always going to be quality that comes out worse in trade-offs against quantity of schooling. If being out of school is seen as intrinsically bad for children, syllogistic reasoning suggests that being in school must be better than that. Common sense and empirical evidence might tell us that school quality often drops below a level at which some schooling is better than no schooling, but governments and donors are compelled to show progress towards UPE. And so the assumed badness of non-schooling

means that 'more schooling' trumps 'better schooling' in policy rhetoric and investments.

- **Specificity**: both well-being and happiness are far too general to serve as anything more than broad policy rubrics. Much more specific themes must be defined as guides for action. This is not to suggest that there is no place for global assessments of school satisfaction or school enjoyment. But to guide school reform or educational reform, researchers would need to give more precise indications of the kinds of well-being they refer to.

- **Measurability**: in politics, numbers matter, so attention is drawn towards measurable educational inputs (numbers of books, pupil-teacher ratios), processes (hours and days attended) and outcomes (drop-out and academic progression rates). The argument that policy-makers are guided mainly by 'hard' numerical evidence can sometimes be overdrawn: stories, qualitative analysis, and pictures are often much more persuasive than tables and equations. But particular for comparative and correlational work it will be essential to find ways in which important aspects of well-being can be assigned numerical values.

- **Objectivity**: modern policy and statecraft in general prefers to appear to be guided more by apparently 'objective' evidence than by 'subjective' viewpoints. This is closely linked to the issue of measurability but should not be confused with it. How children feel about their schooling may well be measurable, but to policy-makers these subjective views are unlikely to carry as much weight as the supposedly objective facts about school quality and effectiveness, such as test results and completion rates.

- **Age**: inevitably the views of adults carry more weight than those of children. Remarkably few studies of educational processes worldwide are substantially informed by the views of children and recent graduates. So even though it may matter more to children that they enjoy school than that they achieve good grades, this view wouldn't get a hearing.

- **Professionalism**: parents' views, which would nearly always foreground happiness as a crucial part of educational processes and outcomes, are trumped by the views of teachers, whose views in turn are trumped by school managers and educationalists.

- **Accountability**: while governments can be held accountable for the basic educational provisions that they have agreed to under global treaties, there is little or no scope for holding governments accountable for debatable aspects of school quality, nor can schools be held accountable for the subjective quality of children's experience of schooling.

When research is prioritized, the most obvious criterion to start with would be the relative importance of topics we might study. Taking the two main themes of

this article, schooling and well-being, let us consider their comparative importance both independently and in relation to one another. Well-being is obviously just about as important as a topic can get. Yet its sheer enormity and variety inhibit the use of "well-being" as a research label. Schooling, like education more generally, is increasingly becoming a crucial factor in the well-being of children. This effect operates both directly - with massive increases in the proportions of children attending school and in the number of years and amount of time they spend at school - and indirectly, in the effects of schooling on their lives and on everyone in society regardless of whether they attend school.

Having asserted the importance of a topic, we also need to justify research into it on two different grounds: *researchability*, and *applicability.* Researchability is determined by two factors: how much is already known (or the potential to understand something better); and how much more could be known as a result of research. Regarding educational research, we could construct these as a two-dimensional matrix and map themes from low to high current knowledge and from low to high potential for new knowledge. The current well-being of pupils would surely rank low on current knowledge: we know a lot more about numbers attending school, and about educational provision and educational performance than we do about pupils' well-being. It would rank high on knowability: it is surely a lot easier to find out about pupils' well-being than it is to learn about other topics that have been much more researched, such as "rates of return" and attitudinal outcomes of education.

Applicability refers to the potential for (new) knowledge to inform (new) practice. The challenge for educational well-being research is to discover new knowledge about aspects of children's well-being (in and out of school), and about school enjoyment, that lead clearly towards viable projects for change. Consequent interventions could be environmental (changing the ways schools interact with their cultural, sociopolitical, and biophysical environments), infrastructural (changing school archictecture and equipment), organizational (administration and rules), cultural (addressing aspects of the 'school climate'), or pedagogical (teaching methods and curricula).

Educational Quality, Relevance, and Outcomes

Overall, there is a clear pattern in the international development literature on education, particularly in international donor and global policy literature, whereby:

- educational inputs (including finance, policies, partnerships, training, etc) get far more attention than educational quality

- quality gets more attention than outcomes

- quality analysis pays little heed to questions of relevance, i.e. to the contexts through which good educational inputs may or may not lead to good educational processes and outcomes

- among outcomes it is learning outcomes (and particularly cognitive capabilities rather than emotional and social competence) rather than the ultimate value of life outcomes that are attended to.

The phenomenon of input-dominance is most striking in policy and evaluation literature relating to the achievement of the UPE target. Whereas the broader 'Education For All' (EFA) agenda and documents relating to the 'right to education' do put considerable emphasis on quality (albeit in restrictive and impractical ways), UPE-related documents put all the emphasis on the financial and logistical challenges of getting all the world's children to attend primary schools. For example, the recent *Guidelines for Appraisal of the Primary Education Component of an Education Sector Plan* (Education for All Fast Track Initiative [EFA-FTI], 2006) offer users no reminders (beyond basic logistical information about numbers of teachers and textbooks) about the need to plan for quality improvements and for ensuring basic quality standards.

The *Dakar Framework for EFA* includes a criterion (No.6 of six) on quality which essentially underpins all the others: 'improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.' (UNESCO et al, 2000). This single point carries two clear messages that are all too often missed even in literature on educational quality: quality is indicated by learning outcomes not just by inputs; and learning outcomes include life skills not just knowledge and cognitive capability. UNESCO's *Global Monitoring Report 2005* further specifies (in its Forward, and in various places in the main text) that quality means not only cognitive but also social and emotional aspects of children's school experience and capabilities, although it also recognizes (p.19) that social and emotional learning outcomes are more difficult to assess than cognitive ones. Yet even Bhutan, famed for its all-encompassing national policy on 'Gross National Happiness', seems to lack any system for reviewing pupils' enjoyment of schooling as part of its procedures for assessing quality (Bhutan Ministry of Education, 2006).

When aid-related literature does address educational outcomes, it tends to squeeze this under a 'quality' rubric and/or under a 'learning outcome' rubric. Quality itself, however, is more often than not addressed without any substantial attention to outcomes, the main indicators being pupil-teacher ratios and availability of books. This is like trying to assess the quality of a meal by looking at the ingredients rather than by looking at the enjoyment of the meal and the ensuing health benefits. Another commonly-used indicator of school quality is

drop-out rates, which is a bit like assessing the quality of a restaurant by counting the percentage of people who leave without eating their meal.

Even when focusing specifically on 'outcomes', however, it is striking how narrow and short-sighted the educational analyst's gaze can be. Boissiere, for example, a key World Bank advocate of outcome-oriented analysis of the effectiveness of educational programmes, defines the 'key outcomes' simply as 'completion, numeracy, and literacy' (2004:1). The first refers just to the process of getting through school. Internal to the process of schooling, this is not what his title calls a 'primary education outcome' (just as finishing a meal is not an 'outcome' of eating a meal). It is a *process* indicator, although an improvement in completion rates could be termed an 'outcome' of a school improvement project. Monitoring the processes of education is important, but must surely go well beyond completion to explore benefits enjoyed within the schooling system, including children's enjoyment of school. The other two are capability outcomes but in themselves they tell us nothing about how useful these capabilities are beyond the school domain. There are long and complex causal chains from numeracy and literacy to well-being, and those links are highly variable between different individuals and different contexts. Similarly, Ndoye's Foreword to a major collection of papers on the quality of basic education in Africa argues that 'educational quality must still be measured primarily in terms of learning outcomes …[i.e. whether children learn] how to read, write, calculate, solve problems and communicate' (Ndoye, 2005:21).

Another potential source of information on children's well-being in schools is the literature on pupil assessment regimes. This literature even in richer countries focuses mainly on the assessment of cognitive learning outcomes. A fairly typical review of assessment regimes is Kellaghan and Greaney's (2005) review of assessment in sub-Saharan African primary schooling, which explores deficiencies in assessment of student learning but says nothing about actual or potential assessments of children's enjoyment of school, or on assessing their development of non-cognitive capabilities, or on meta-assessment – exploring the effects of different assessment regimes on children's well-being.

No serious educationalist would claim that schools are meant to take full responsibility for everything that children learn. Nonetheless, the longer children are expected to remain in school, the greater the range and depth of learning needs we might reasonably expect schools to address. Yet worldwide there is a tendency for schooling to address a remarkably restricted range of learning needs, with the bulk of the emphasis being on a narrow range of knowledge required for citizenship and for employment. Noddings, for example, complains of the inadequate attention to home-making in school curricula in rich countries, this kind of learning implicitly being left to families. In poorer countries, and particularly among poor people in poorer countries for whom the prospects of formal sector employment are slim, it becomes harder to distinguish learning for

domestic responsibilities and learning for work. I have yet to find a policy document on education in poorer countries which seriously addresses the question of balancing education for employment with education for domestic responsibility.

Conclusions: towards a global warming of school climates

Of the 77 million children worldwide who ought, under the UPE agenda, to be enabled to attend primary school, many are actually able to do so but choose not to. Whether their reasons are to do with bad schooling or bad contexts for making use of schooling, their reasons for self-exclusion may often be quite valid. Yet promoters of UPE regularly trot out bombastic claims about specific benefits of schooling for poor people (income, health, empowerment, agricultural productivity, etc) with no apparent heed to the context-dependency and uncertainty of those claims.

'Education is good for development' and 'education is good for well-being' slogans are true only in a very loose sense, and fall foul of two important mistakes. First, it is wrong to equate education with schooling. Schooling is a culture-bound set of institutional approaches which have been very rapidly globalised and have no doubt done a lot of good, but have also done a lot of harm. Other educational approaches are essential as both complements and alternatives to schooling, so the contribution of schools to well-being must be evaluated alongside a broader set of educational approaches. Second, it is wrong to neglect the qualities and contexts in which schooling may or may not improve people's lives. Just as food is only good for us if a)the food is good and if b)our bodies and environments allow us to make good use of the food, so it is with schooling. It is simply irresponsible to promote schooling without strong and ongoing attention to the quality of schooling and to the contexts which may or may not enable people to benefit from good schooling.

These two issues, quality and relevance, need to be reviewed together. Both require substantial attention to enjoyment: the enjoyment of schooling, and the enjoyment of good lives. As we all know from our personal lives, most of our challenging decisions from one moment to the next and throughout the course of our lives have something to do with maintaining a sensible balance between enjoyment and fulfillment, or between quick and slow gratification. Sometimes these appear as trade-offs, and many key policy debates are about whether a particular approach is likely to result in synergies or trade-offs between enjoyment and fulfillment. In schooling, there are critical debates on how much pressure to test children's capabilities and knowledge, and what kind of testing, is needed and permissible in order to stimulate rather than spoil children's enjoyment of schooling. In the controversy noted at the start of this paper, the UK School Standards Minister David Miliband's feisty defence of rigorous school testing regimes argued that 'enjoyment is closely related to fulfilment, and

fulfilment is beyond reach without an entitlement to techniques of successful reading' (2003). This being plausible, the onus is then surely on all serious schooling systems to assess children's (and probably also teachers') enjoyment of schooling. But what does the UK system assess? Reading capabilities, yes. Enjoyment, no.

While the value of schooling lies largely in its impacts on well-being, hard evidence of the impacts of schooling on well-being beyond the school will always be elusive. But schools also have very direct impacts on children's well-being which are far less difficult to assess. Given the evident importance of children's enjoyment of schooling, both for the intrinsic value of that enjoyment and for the benign influence of school enjoyment on learning and subsequent life outcomes, it is nothing short of scandalous how few studies of education in developing countries have bothered to ask children whether they enjoy school or have even used nonparticipatory observations as proxies of pupils' wellbeing.

Since there is broad global consensus on the need for stronger attention to the quality of schooling, there is a strong case for enriching the assessment of progress towards UPE with a new basic measure: Quality-Adjusted Years of Schooling. Such a measure would not only be important in putting the quality of schooling much more firmly on policy and evaluation agendas, it would also render much more interesting and realistic the research on outcomes from education. To the extent that quality matters and varies, correlating quality-adjusted years of schooling with income or life outcomes would be much more revealing than the often disappointing (though often heroically over-trumpeted) attempts to correlate life outcomes with unqualified information on years of schooling. As Hanushek and Wößmann have recently argued (2007), even just looking at the influence of education on economic growth (let alone on quality of life or quality of society), the quality of education matters more than the quantity of education.

This recommendation leaves the difficult task of finding quality indicators that could reasonably be quantified and applied usefully in comparisons across time and space. Input indicators such as textbooks, teacher-pupil ratios, and teacher qualifications barely scratch the surface of school quality. Process indicators will be needed, and despite all the legitimate queries that may arise concerning the meaning and reliability of happiness indicators, some kind of numerical indicator of pupils' enjoyment of schooling and/or satisfaction with schooling would seem to offer potentially crucial information about the quality of educational experience.

This quality-adjustment will make statistical comparisons more meaningful, realistic, and useful. But we also need to put more effort into persuading and informing educational policy-makers and practitioners with qualitative analysis and stories rather than just numbers. Knowing what percentage of pupils give a

very high rating to their enjoyment of schooling may provide useful indications for comparative purposes, but stories about *how* children enjoy school, or how their enjoyment of school is adversely affected by factors in and out of school, is in the end bound to be far more instructive for teachers, educational managers and innovators, and policy-makers.

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