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THE UNDERSTANDING OF WELL-BEING AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Abstract:

The presentation outlines the results of fieldwork in Latvia that has been done in the EU FP7 project „Measuring Youth Well Being” (MYWEB, grant agreement no.613368) which takes a balanced approach to assessing the feasibility of a European Longitudinal Study for Children and Young People through prioritising both scientific and policy imperatives. The fieldwork was undertaken with the goal of finding out the meaning and significance that children and young people allocate to well-being. Individual and focus group interviews provided an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the method for obtaining the data and to find out potential difficulties in undertaking longitudinal research. To develop the instruments to measure children’s and young people’s well-being, their own views and opinions about what they’d like the researchers to ask them had to be taken into account, as well as the way in which the survey should be conducted. The presentation will discuss the main domains of well-being and how they are related to happiness, life-satisfaction and psychological well-being of children and young people. The results of the fieldwork undertaken in three months (October - December 2014) show that the respondents’ general understanding of well-being was to a large degree very specific. Children tend to have problems understanding the concept and for all ages, respondents are more comfortable with experience-centred questions. For children, these were connected with certain elements of their lives and the degree to which their parents, other family members and their teachers felt good. In defining the term well-being, the majority of the young people associated this with external and internal conditions. In their opinions, the main elements which create external well-being are connected with good living conditions, evidence of which is clothing, one’s appearance and behaviour. The fieldwork highlighted that the borders between satisfaction, happiness and psychological well-being are not always clear for the respondents. Research on young people’s well-being was recognized as one of the most effective methods, which could help young people to express their opinion and to be heard in society. According to the thinking of the respondents, such research should include in-depth interviews and questionnaires and observation of what should happen, not only at school, but also on the streets, in interest groups and NGOs.

Keywords:

Fieldwork, well-being, children and young people.

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