HAPPY SCHOOLS!
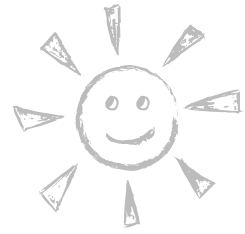
A Framework for Learner Well-being in the Asia-Pacific

HAPPY SCHOOLS!

A Framework for Learner Well-being in the Asia-Pacific

Table of contents

FIGURES

TABLES

ANNEX TABLES

BOXES

Foreword

When I was a little boy I was always curious to learn about everything around me and become acquainted with what I could see, touch or hear. Where I was born, and grew up, in a small rural town in the Republic of Korea, schools were at the very centre of the community. Children were happy to be in school, where they could learn and play with their friends, be surrounded by nature and develop important relationships with their teachers. As such school days were an important part of my life, and I believe that they are a crucial part of life in general and perhaps are the most influential factor in shaping our character and future path.

Decades later, schools are becoming increasingly complex as they mirror the current socio-economic landscape driven by rapid demographic and technological changes, as well as by changing family structures and demands. As a result, in many schools children now seem to be quite unhappy, perhaps due to too much pressure, high expectations, and an overemphasis on academics, tests and competition.

I believe that all children are entitled to be happy and enjoy their life in school, whether through a genuine love of learning, through building positive friendships and relationships, or through feeling a sense of belonging in the community and wider society. Moreover, we need all learners to be happy in order for future generations to contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous world. For me this is what happy schools is all about, and this is why I am delighted to present this report – *Happy Schools: A Framework for Learner Well-being in the Asia Pacific*.

This report, which is based on the findings from a series of activities conducted as part of the Happy Schools Project, recognizes the crucial relationship between happiness and the quality of education. It brings these two elements together and calls upon education systems to look beyond the traditional domains of learning to embrace a diversity of talents and intelligences by recognizing values, strengths and competencies that contribute both to enhancing happiness and well-being in learners but also enabling them to thrive and celebrate their achievements.

It also calls for a fundamental shift in education systems to embark upon what I call the 'New Frontiers' of knowledge and intellectual domains, encompassing aspects of learning that are equally important to academics. This relates to our work on Learning to Live Together, which is a very important basis for the concept of Happy Schools. It also relates to our work on 'transversal competencies', in prioritizing so called non-academic skills and competencies such as creativity, communication and teamwork among many others, which are all crucial to preparing learners for the increasingly transnational world of work and for our ever-changing global society.

I would like to express my thanks to my colleagues for their efforts in driving the Happy Schools Project forward and producing this unique report, which we believe is an initial and crucial contribution to expanding work in this area. Particular thanks are due to Gwang-Chol Chang for conceiving the initial idea for this project, to Min Bista for his continued support, to Ramya Vivekanandan for her leadership of the project and to Aliénor Salmon for her writing of this report and coordination of the project activities. It is my heartfelt wish that this report can be a source of inspiration for schools, policy makers, and experts, so that we can bring happiness back to schools to build a more peaceful and prosperous world.

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms

APCEIU	Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEART	Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel
CFS	Child-Friendly Schools
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
GNH	Gross National Happiness
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEN	International Positive Education Network
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LTLT	Learning to Live Together
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Japan)
MoE	Ministry of Education
MNCC	Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs (Vanuatu)
NEF	New Economics Foundation
NIST	New International School of Thailand
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PERMA	Positive Emotion, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RGOB	Royal Government of Bhutan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SUPW	Socially Useful and Productive Work (Bhutan)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNSDSN	United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network
VIA	Values in Action
VNIES	Viet Nam Institute of Educational Sciences

Executive Summary

All human beings aspire to be happy, and as the philosopher Aristotle is often cited to have said: 'Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence' (Crisp, 2000). Indeed, all human endeavours, starting from birth and throughout life, are pursued to this end, and require for happiness to be embedded within them. The schooling experience is perhaps the most influential of these endeavours in terms of shaping the course of our lives. Schools that can promote happiness, referred to in this report as 'happy schools', are key to ensuring better well-being, health, and achievement as well as success in future life and work. Education systems must also value the unique strengths and talents of learners by recognizing that there are 'multiple intelligences' that each deserve equal importance (Gardner, 1993). As such, promoting learner happiness and well-being in schools does not imply that learning be made easier or require less effort, but rather, that such approaches could help fuel a genuine love of learning in and of itself.

A number of external and internal factors are undermining learner happiness, which influence the way that we view not only the quality of life but also the quality of education. Firstly, external factors such as increasing inequality, growing intolerance and the rise of violent extremism are all creating unhappier societies. As a result, schools are also facing increased cases of bullying from within, while at the same time increasingly becoming a target of violent attacks from outside actors. Our fast-paced world driven by technological advancement has also become rife with competition and 'information overload', leading to an endless race where we increasingly focus on 'the numbers' – whether in terms of a country's economic development or in terms of educational outcomes. Secondly, internal factors within school systems such as poor learning environments, insensitivity of educators, obsolete curricula as well as an overemphasis on academic content and test scores, are all contributing to creating unhappier schools. Unfortunately, those elements that are recognized as contributing to enhancing happiness, whether in schools, life or work, are rarely counted as part of the equation.

In recent years, however, happiness has been recognized, both in global agenda-setting as well as in countries' development and education policies, as an important goal to be pursued. Notable examples include the 2011 United Nations General Assembly Resolution devoted to happiness, and the references to well-being throughout the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Growing efforts to measure happiness have also coincided with increased efforts to measure the quality of education, for instance through global indices and international student assessments.

In view of the important relationship between happiness and the quality of education, in June 2014 UNESCO Bangkok launched the Happy Schools Project. **This report presents the Happy Schools Framework and aims to bring these two elements together by calling for education systems to shift away from traditional measures and to instead embrace a diversity of talents and intelligences by recognizing values, strengths and competencies that contribute to enhancing happiness**. Or in other words, it calls on the need for education systems to 'measure what we treasure': 'If you treasure it, measure it. If schools do not measure the well-being of their

children but do measure their intellectual development, the latter will always take precedence' (Layard and Hagell, 2015). Aimed at influencing policymakers as well as engaging the school level, it is hoped that this report and the Happy Schools Framework therein will provide an integral reference in view of rethinking conceptions of the quality of learning so as to look beyond strictly academic domains.

This report presents the findings of a study based on several research methods, including a desk study, a survey, a seminar and a workshop with school-level stakeholders. It explores the global and regional context in terms of theories of happiness and global initiatives, and how happiness is reflected in the development and education policies of selected countries in the Asia-Pacific region. It then presents the main outcome of the study: the Happy Schools Framework, which consists of 22 criteria for a happy school, as well as examples of strategies for reaching each of the criteria in schools.

Global and Regional Context

Theories of Happiness

Dating back to ancient philosophers until today, happiness has always been a fascinating subject of enquiry. An examination of the various definitions of happiness among ancient thinkers such as the Buddha, Aristotle and Confucius, along with thinkers from the Enlightenment era until the present day, can identify a number of similarities that are at the heart of the concept of Happy Schools. Firstly, happiness is seen as something that is collective based on positive friendships and relationships. As outlined in *The Dhammapada,* or teachings of the Buddha, 'happiness is having friends when the need arises' (Fronsdal, 2005, p. 80). Secondly, they identify happiness as something that can be learnt, as well as learning being a source of happiness in and of itself, which is achieved through being virtuous and by enhancing relevant values and competencies (Beebe, 2003; Yao, 2003). Finally, they also recognize that education is something that is essentially multidimensional (Newman, 2010; Jowett, n.d.).

Thinkers of the Enlightenment such as John Locke and Johan Pestolazzi also examined the multidimensional nature of education noting that education should ensure learners' cognitive, emotional and physical development (Aldrich, 1994; Brühlmeier, 2010). The Positive Psychology movement which was founded in the 1990s and is often referred to as the 'science of happiness', recognizes a number of 'character strengths' that enhance happiness such as creativity, perseverance, kindness and teamwork among many others (Peterson and Seligman, 2004), and has also been a notable development. Based on Positive Psychology, Positive Education is defined by the International Positive Education Network as the 'double helix' of academics coupled with well-being and character (IPEN, 2016b), with evidence showing that 'more well-being is synergetic with better learning' (Seligman et. al., 2009).

Global Initiatives

Happiness is today at the top of the global policy agenda, with the United Nations General Assembly's 2011 Resolution recognizing 'the pursuit of happiness as a fundamental human goal' (United Nations General Assembly, 2011). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also promote well-being across the various goals and targets. SDG4, the goal dedicated to quality education, captures many aspects of great relevance to the concept of Happy Schools. In particular, Target 4.7 is dedicated to the acquisition of knowledge and skills that can promote sustainable development through education for global citizenship and a culture of peace. The emphasis on skills relating to human behaviours and characteristics such as creativity, empathy, teamwork and communication, mirror the 'character strengths' identified in Positive Psychology as those necessary for enhancing happiness and well-being. These are also reflected in UNESCO's concepts of Learning to Live Together and Learning to Be. While Learning to Live Together focuses on 'understanding of others', Learning to Be focuses on the 'richness' of the learners' personality and expression (Delors et. al., 1996; Faure et. al., 1972).

Other global initiatives have also sought to measure happiness and well-being. These include efforts to measure countries' levels of happiness and well-being through global indices such as the *World Happiness Report*, the Happy Planet Index, the World Values survey and the Better Life Index. Similarly, in an effort to measure student happiness and explore the link between happiness and learning outcomes, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), one of the main measures of international student learning achievement, included indicators on student happiness in its 2012 assessment, and will explore the link between well-being and learning outcomes in 2018 (OECD, 2015a).

Happiness in Policy

In recent years, various countries have made happiness either a specific goal of their development and education policies or have included elements relating to happiness in their policy frameworks. This report briefly examines the policies of five such countries: Bhutan, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Vanuatu, which each have a unique interpretation of happiness and well-being.

Bhutan is renowned for its policy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and in 2010 developed a GNH index, featuring indicators that measure various aspects of education and psychological well-being. Bhutan's 2011 policy of Educating for GNH seeks to use education as a means to achieve GNH and places importance on sustainability and protection of the environment while also promoting the concept of 'Green Schools for a Green Bhutan' (Drapka and Dorji, 2013).

In **Japan**, the Cabinet Office established the Commission on Measuring Well-being in 2010 and conducted its first Quality of Life Survey in 2012 in response to growing national concern over mental health issues and high levels of stress, including among children. According to results of the 2010 National Livelihood Survey, the main cause of stress among respondents aged 12-19 years old was reported as related to academic performance and examinations (Ministry of Health, Labor

and Welfare [Japan], 2010). In education, the 2007 Revision of the School Education Act had already represented a major shift in the focus of education with many aspects of great relevance to the concept of Happy Schools (MEXT, 2011). In particular, the principle of 'Zest for Living' – referring to balance between academic prowess, a well-rounded character and mental and physical health - is found in national curriculum guidelines (MEXT, n.d.).

Despite the **Republic of Korea** being one of the highest performing countries in PISA, the 2012 results also showed that Korean 15-year-olds report being the unhappiest among all participating countries (OECD, 2013). Experts believe that this stems from high student workloads in preparation for high-stakes exams, and also from pressure parents put on their children to obtain high grades (Korean Institution for Health and Social Affairs, 2013). The pressure to succeed is viewed as driven by an increasingly competitive society, which as a consequence, has led to a lack of importance placed on 'non-academic' skills that encourage students to develop 'healthy and moral personalities' both in school and at home (Lee, 2012). Recognizing these issues, the Government of the Republic of Korea developed the policy of 'Happy Education for All: Creative Talent Shapes the Future', which introduced initiatives such as the 'exam-free' semester, character building and violence-free schools, with the aim of increasing happiness and well-being among learners (Ministry of Education [Republic of Korea], 2013).

In **Singapore**, a similar concern over high levels of student stress in schools has been observed, with some commonly referring to the education system as a 'pressure cooker of stress' (Hill, 2010). In recognition of the issue, the Ministry of Education introduced Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) which is integrated as part of the Character and Citizenship Education Syllabus (Yeo, 2011; Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2012). Furthermore, a recent addendum to the 2016 President's address highlights the priorities for education, which include the need to develop 'a passion for learning' among children and to 'reduce the excessive focus on academic results' by providing a more holistic education that is inclusive of all needs and backgrounds (Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2016b).

In **Vanuatu** happiness and well-being appear to be reflected more in terms of peace and sustainability. Named as the world's happiest country in the 2006 Happy Planet Index, Vanuatu has developed a National Curriculum Statement that promotes happiness in schools and aims to develop a number of competencies that underlie the philosophy of Learning to Live Together (Ministry of Education [Vanuatu], 2010). Subsequently, in 2012, Vanuatu also piloted the Alternative Indicators of Well-being for Melanesia in 2012, in order to reflect Melanesian values based on factors such as resource access, cultural practice and community vitality (MNCC, 2012).

A comparison of the countries' policies reveals that while Bhutan and Vanuatu developed their policies so as to emphasize local cultural values and the importance of these in sustainably developing their countries, the other three countries, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore, developed their policies largely in response to national concerns regarding the excessive emphasis on academic domains and the consequent rising levels of stress among learners. Regardless of the motivation for the policies, however, all of the countries concluded that education should be 'holistic', such that it promotes a balance between the academic, social and emotional, and physical domains.

The Happy Schools Framework

The Happy Schools Framework was constructed based on the findings of the study, aiming to capture the voices and perspectives of school-level stakeholders regarding what constitutes a happy school. The framework is the heart of this report, and aims to inform policymaking from these school-level perspectives in a bid to revolutionizing education from the ground up (Robinson and Lou, 2015).

The Happy Schools Criteria

The results of the Happy School Survey provided the basis for identifying the 22 criteria for a happy school under three broad categories: People, Process and Place. The survey received over 650 responses from students, teachers, parents, school principals and support staff from across the Asia-Pacific region, who shared their views on what can make schools happy or unhappy places, what can make teaching and learning fun and enjoyable and what can be done in schools to make all students feel included. The criteria presented in Figure 1 provide a summary of the entire Happy Schools Framework. Many of these criteria overlap across the three categories of People, Process and Place, and mutually reinforce each other.

The feedback compiled through the Happy Schools Seminar highlighted many promising and innovative practices being implemented in schools, and provided examples of strategies that schools can use to reach each of the criteria. The following describes some of these examples under the three categories of People, Process and Place.

People

The first category of People refers to all human and social relationships among members of the school community. **Friendships and relationships in the school community** ranked as the most important factor among respondents in terms of what makes a happy school, with the findings identifying school practices that encourage parental involvement, foster interactions and friendships between students of different grades, and school activities that directly involve community members.

Another important criterion for happy schools in this category is **positive teacher attitudes and attributes**, which include characteristics such as kindness, enthusiasm and fairness, and the role of teachers in serving as inspiring, creative and happy role models for learners. Respondents saw a need for schools to take this criterion into account in teacher recruitment and evaluation, so as to place more emphasis on teacher personality, attitude and ethics when hiring and assessing teachers.

Respondents also ranked **positive and collaborative values and practices** as being a very important criterion in making schools happy. Such values and practices include love, compassion, acceptance and respect. Strategies for promoting these values and practices include visual reminders displayed as posters or illustrations; and 'dual-purpose learning', whereby various values, strengths and competencies are highlighted and promoted within the context of an academic topic or subject.

Figure 1. *The Happy Schools Criteria*

People

- Friendships and Relationships in the School Community
- Positive Teacher Attitudes and Attributes
- Respect for Diversity and Differences
- Positive and Collaborative Values and Practices
- Teacher Working Conditions and Well-being
- Teacher Skills and Competencies

Process

- Reasonable and Fair Workload
- Teamwork and Collaborative Spirit
- Fun and Engaging Teaching and Learning Approaches
- Learner Freedom, Creativity and Engagement
- Sense of Achievement and Accomplishment
- Extracurricular Activities and School Events
- Learning as a Team Between Students and Teachers
- Useful, Relevant and Engaging Learning Content
- Mental Well-being and Stress-Management

Place

- Warm and Friendly Learning Environment
- Secure Environment Free from Bullying
- Open and Green Learning and Playing Spaces
- School Vision and Leadership
- Positive Discipline
- Good Health, Sanitation and Nutrition
- Democratic School Management

Process

The second category of Process encompasses teaching and learning methodologies that can enhance learners' sense of well-being. The various criteria under this category, include creating a more **reasonable and fair workload** for students due to a growing imbalance between study and play which places an emphasis on memorization in order to prepare for exams.

Another important criterion under this category is **learner freedom, creativity and engagement**. Accordingly, a happy school should allow for learners to express their opinions and to learn freely without the fear of making mistakes, or as frequently cited by respondents to the survey, 'learning without worrying' so that mistakes are valued as part of the learning process.

This also relates to the criterion **useful, relevant and engaging learning content**, which calls for the content of curricula to reflect contemporary and relevant issues, with guidance for teachers on how to make these issues relevant to learners' lives. According to 14-year-old Nguyen Ngoc Van Thao from VNIES Experimental Secondary school (Viet Nam), who participated in the Happy Schools Seminar, there is stark contrast between the learning content that is assessed and learning content that is useful in everyday life. In her words:

What do you think about a student who gets ten out of ten on a civic education exam about honesty, but has actually cheated in the exam to get such high marks? Or we learn biology to protect our environment – some students get really good marks in biology exams, but they litter trash in the street! We must emphasize that the main purpose of studying is to improve our real life and to help our countries develop. We are not learning to be a genius or to make our brains bigger! We always say 'knowledge is power', but according to the American author Dale Carnegie, 'Knowledge isn't power until it is applied'.

Place

The third category of Place refers to contextual factors, both in terms of the physical environment and the school atmosphere. Among the criteria under this category, a **warm and friendly learning environment** ranked as the second most important factor for a happy school overall, with the findings indicating the need to place more emphasis on greetings and smiles, as well as introducing music, creating more open classrooms and colourful and meaningful displays, thereby creating a more positive school atmosphere.

A **secure environment free from bullying** was another criterion ranked as important by respondents, with findings identifying strategies such as the installing of a 'buddy bench' as well as enabling learners to interact and better understand one another through shared learning and playing activities.

The need for **school vision and leadership** was also highlighted, with examples from schools participating in the seminar showing how happiness can be prioritized through school visions, mottos or slogans to create more positive school atmospheres.

In terms of the physical environment, respondents also cited the need for more **open and green learning and playing spaces** to enhance learner happiness and well-being. Suggested strategies include establishing relaxing and creative spaces, having a school garden, as well as making use of outdoor spaces so that learners can connect with nature while also engaging in investigative or physical learning activities.

Reflections, Next Steps and Conclusions

Reflecting on the research findings presented throughout this report, various theories and policy efforts demonstrate that happiness is defined as a human purpose, with education and learning recognized as a fundamental vehicle to enhancing happiness and well-being. This calls on the need for education systems to embrace alternative forms of learning that allow for learners' unique talents and strengths to shine, while at the same time recognizing that happiness is something collective that can be promoted through learning experiences that foster friendships and relationships among the school community.

The report also tells us that all human beings can learn to be happy, but they can also be happy to learn through the fostering of a genuine love of learning which can also lead to a sense of achievement and accomplishment. Evidence presented in the report also shows that prioritizing happiness and well-being can result in higher academic achievement, which unfortunately, have tended to be undervalued by a continued predominant focus on 'numbers' or test scores as indicators of the quality of education. In addition, even if education systems were to focus their policies in purely economic terms, in view of technological advancement, the human 'competitive advantage' lies in the very values, strengths and competencies that are envisioned as enhancing happiness and well-being, and which cannot be replaced by machines.

This report therefore outlines two levels of intervention needed in order to make schools happier places: the policy level and the school level. Such interventions include considerations such as prioritizing happiness and learner well-being as part of education policies, introducing a new generation of 'positive teachers' as well as ensuring that the values, strengths and competencies which can develop and nurture happiness among learners are recognized and evaluated as part of assessment efforts.

A number of next steps can also be identified, with the findings presented in this report suggesting an important call for policy dialogue, whereby the findings could be scaled up and translated into succinct conclusions and recommendations at the policy level. With regard to the school level, a number of selected strategies for reaching the criteria in this report also provide a starting point for the collection and dissemination of strategies that can be accessed and used by schools.

At the same time, the over-focus on 'numbers' highlights the need for further advocacy to raise awareness and help change attitudes with regard to the meaning of a 'good quality' education, in order to give more public recognition to the importance of happiness and well-being in schools in

a world driven by quantitative measures, benchmarking and competition. The relevance of many of the issues examined in this report also indicates the potential of the Happy Schools Framework to be scaled up, adapted and applied in other regions beyond the Asia-Pacific. Given growing efforts to measure both happiness and educational quality, the Happy Schools Framework could also present the basis for an integral measure of the quality of education.

This report has highlighted the importance of learner happiness and well-being by outlining the concept of Happy Schools based on theoretical and policy perspectives, as well as based on the voices of school-level stakeholders collected through primary research methods.

Within the global and regional context, references to happiness and well-being are increasingly present, whether through the SDGs and Education 2030 (SDG 4), initiatives such as IPEN or through the policies of the five countries examined in this report. This indicates that educational quality and school happiness are inseparable, and that happiness and well-being should not only be considered an objective for education systems, but also as the means for higher educational outcomes and success in future life and work.

The Happy Schools Framework, with its 22 criteria under the three categories of People, Process and Place, and examples of strategies to reach each to the criteria, aims to provide insight as to what school-level stakeholders identify as important for enhancing happiness and well-being in schools.

Overall, the findings indicate that there is a clear need for more time and space in schools, whether in terms of time allocated for extracurricular activities or for the preparation of fun and engaging learning approaches, or in terms of space for learners to express themselves more freely or make use of more open and green spaces for learning.

This report, therefore, calls upon decision makers at both the policy level and the school level to create more time and space for a type of learning that can enhance learner happiness and well-being, in the hope of inspiring happier learners who can contribute to happier societies, and ultimately, to a happier world.

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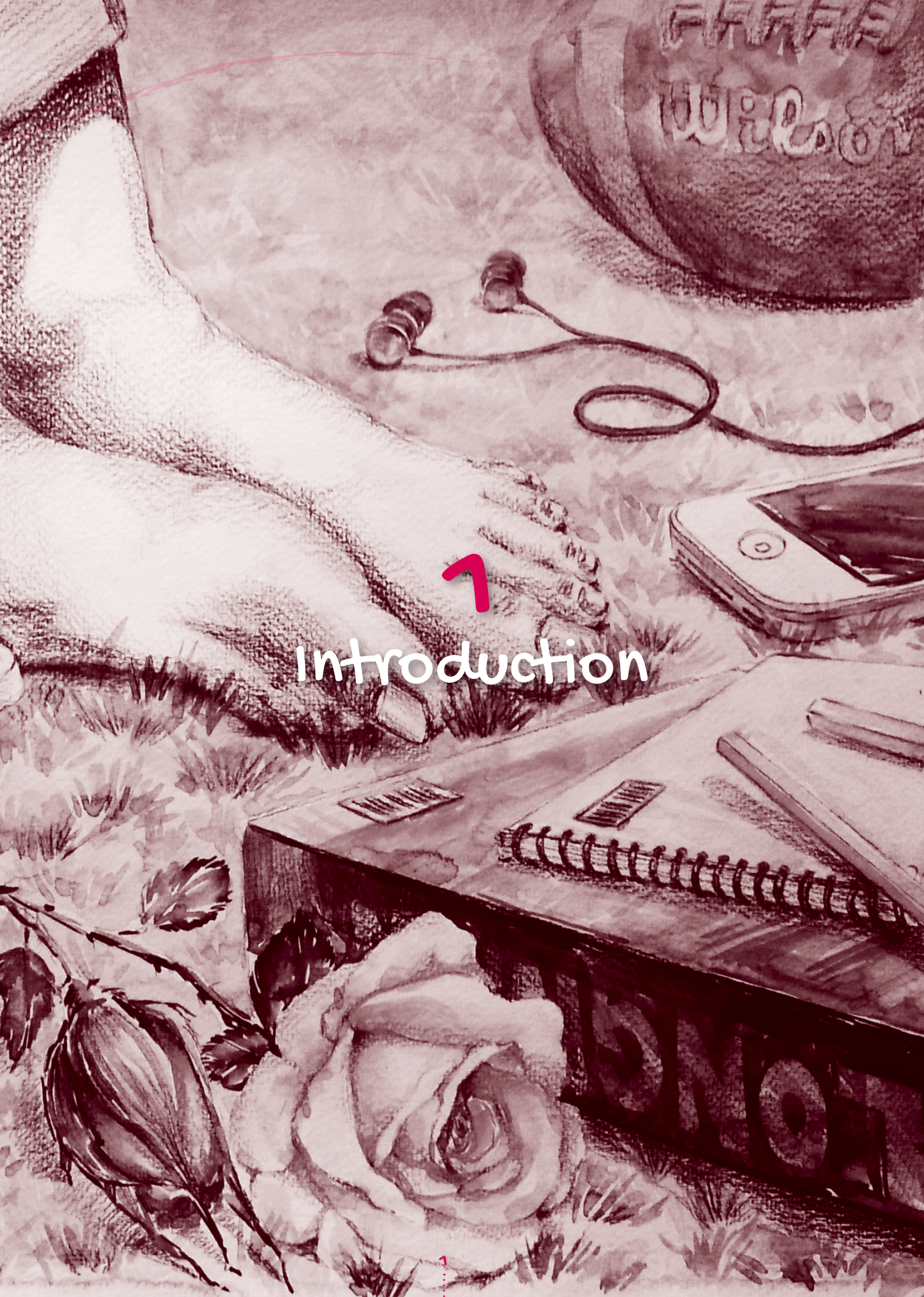
Introduction

All grown-ups were children once – although few of them remember it.

– ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY, The Little Prince

School systems are designed for children, by adults. But how happy are children within these systems? This question requires us to consider the important relationship between happiness and school quality. According to the 2015 *World Happiness Report* (Helliwell, et. al., 2015), schools that prioritize learner well-being have the potential to be more effective, with better learning outcomes and greater achievements in learners' lives (Layard and Hagell, 2015).

To enhance happiness and well-being, school systems need to value learners' unique strengths and talents, recognizing that there are 'multiple intelligences' and that each of these has equal importance (Gardner, 1993). Indeed, as stipulated in Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, education should ensure 'the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential' (United Nations General Assembly, 1949).

The pursuit of happiness is the aspiration of all living beings and 'as old as history itself' (McMahon, 2006, p. 1). Its history can be traced back over thousands of years to great philosophers from different parts of the world, ranging from Aristotle and Socrates in Ancient Greece, Confucius in China and Siddhārtha Gautama (the Buddha) in India. As Aristotle is so often quoted as saying: 'Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence' (Crisp, 2000). The fascination with happiness as part of human enquiry has endured until today, manifested in what is often referred to as the 'science of happiness', deriving from the Positive Psychology movement founded by Martin Seligman in the late 1990s (Haidt, 2006).

Happiness has now become a part of the global policy agenda. In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly recognized happiness as a fundamental human goal in Resolution 65/309 entitled 'Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development', and in 2012 a high-level meeting led by the Government of Bhutan entitled 'Happiness and Well-being: Defining a New Paradigm' was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. With the first edition commissioned for that meeting, the 2015 *World Happiness Report* noted that happiness is now increasingly considered as a 'proper measure of social progress and goal of public policy' (Helliwell et. al., 2015). As we embark on a new global development agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched in New York in September 2015 also reflect the notion of well-being within and across the various goals and targets (United Nations General Assembly, 2015a).

Not only have some countries begun to position happiness as an objective of their development policies, but happiness has also become increasingly prominent in education policies. Throughout the twentieth century, education discourse was commonly geared towards preparing learners for the world of work, especially in the context of growing economic development and competition.

Today, growing insecurity, inequality, mobility and life stress, along with poverty, conflict and environmental concerns mean that we should expect more from education systems. In particular, we require that education systems play a role in addressing these challenges in a world of such rapid and uncertain change.

Research shows that countries with high levels of inequality are more likely than countries with low inequality to have populations suffering from a range of social and emotional problems, and their populations are likely to be less happy than those that are more equal (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2011). At the same time, the threat posed by mounting violent extremism is leading to a world that is increasingly intolerant. Accordingly, the United Nations Secretary General's *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, highlights the need for education to develop 'the behavioural and socioemotional skills that can contribute to peaceful coexistence and tolerance' (United Nations General Assembly, 2015b, p. 18). All of these external factors have a great impact on schools as institutions that have a role as a support system for learners in enhancing their well-being and creating a sense of belonging, particularly at a time when traditional family structures and values are gradually being eroded (OECD, 2011).

Internal factors such as poor learning environments, educators' insensitivity, obsolete curricula and an overemphasis on academic content impact negatively on learner well-being and can make schools unhappy places. In addition, learners and educators both face increased pressure due to high emphasis on grades and exams as well as implicit pressure to outperform their counterparts in neighboring countries in international and regional assessments, which many countries use to benchmark educational performance against others. This pressure reflects the current emphasis on strictly academic outcomes. Increasing pressure to perform academically has resulted in alarming trends: growing mistrust among students, competition, bullying and school violence, as well as growing fears among learners of expressing their personalities and of making mistakes. These symptoms of 'unhappiness' reflect the need for education systems to reposition the school as being more than a means of providing educational instruction, but rather being an environment that allows for social and emotional growth and development.

Today, there is increasing recognition of the need for learning assessments to look beyond strictly academic outcomes and place importance on measuring the social and emotional domains of learning that are conducive to enhancing learner well-being. As argued by Layard and Hagell (2015, p. 118), 'If you treasure it, measure it. If schools do not measure the well-being of their children but do measure their intellectual development, the latter will always take precedence'. Indeed, education systems, including schools, must move away from the focus on standardized teaching and testing and instead define and measure quality beyond the primary academic subject areas, so as to value and nurture a diversity of unique talents, skills and competencies in learners (Zhao, 2015). Furthermore, by exploiting the potential of education to enhance learner happiness, learners will be better equipped and motivated to contribute to more peaceful, equitable, sustainable and ultimately happier societies. More than ever before, this signals the need for schools to become happier places.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has long recognized the importance of the social and emotional domains of learning as reflected in its mandate to promote peace through education. In 1972, the UNESCO report *Learning to Be* highlighted the importance of education in the complete fulfilment of human needs (Faure et. al., 1972) and in 1996, the report *Learning: The Treasure Within* identified four pillars of learning: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together and Learning to Be, placing a particular emphasis on Learning to Live Together as an overarching learning goal (Delors et. al., 1996). The importance placed on the social and emotional domains of learning is also reflected in UNESCO's commitment to Education for Sustainable Development, its expanding work on Global Citizenship Education and in the UN Secretary-General's 'Global Education First Initiative' launched in 2012, which identifies the fostering of global citizenship as one of its three global priorities. Moreover, the new global agenda for education – Education 2030, the fourth of the SDGs – includes a target focusing on the knowledge and skills required to promote sustainable development, a culture of peace and global citizenship.

Arguably, equipping learners with skills, attitudes and values pertaining to 'living together' and 'being' such as empathy, tolerance, communication and creativity, requires first ensuring well-being and holistic development within the school environment. Indeed, a regional study, *Learning to Live Together. Education Policies and Realities in the Asia-Pacific*, found that while the concept may be reflected in national policies and curricula, there is little evidence of how this grand vision of education for peace translates into practice in the reality of schools and classrooms (UNESCO, 2014). To this end, UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau (UNESCO Bangkok) launched the Happy Schools Project in 2014 to promote the importance of happiness in schools with the aim of enhancing learner well-being and holistic development.

This report presents the findings of a study initiated under the Happy Schools Project with the aim of developing a Happy Schools Framework. In particular, the study aimed to identify the criteria for what may constitute a happy school, along with strategies for reaching each of the criteria within a school context. The framework was developed following consultation with school-level stakeholders, and the criteria were structured under three broad themes: 1) People: referring to social relationships between the members of the school community, 2) Process: referring to teaching and learning methods, and 3) Place: referring to contextual factors.

This framework also relates to other initiatives such as the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) Model established by UNICEF. Indeed, the CFS model and the Happy Schools Project share some elements, especially with regard to enhancing learner well-being and improving the quality of education beyond the notion of academic outcomes. At the same time, they also differ in some respects. While the CFS model takes a rights-based approach founded on the Convention of the Rights of the Child, with a broader scope incorporating physical infrastructure, health, safety, security, nutrition and psychological well-being (UNICEF, 2009), the Happy Schools Project focuses on happiness in terms of the quality of education. In particular, it emphasizes the psycho-social and emotional dimensions of learning to promote happiness within the school context, focusing on the contribution of the schooling experience to learner well-being, growth and development.

This report is mainly targeted at the policy level as well as the school level. While on the one hand it aims to inform policymakers to ensure that education systems prioritize learner happiness and well-being, on the other it also aims to share various ideas and practices with schools that could help enhance happiness and well-being at the school level. Given the relevance of this report to various initiatives such as Positive Psychology or Positive Education, as well as Global Citizenship Education among others, it is also targeted towards researchers and academics, as well as the broader educational development community. Ultimately, it is hoped that the Happy Schools Framework will provide a starting point as an integral reference for measuring the quality of learning in schools that looks beyond strictly academic outcomes in the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

This report begins with a presentation of the research framework for the study, including the conceptual framework and the research methods used in Chapter Two. Chapter Three then provides in-depth background on the global and regional context, discussing the theoretical and philosophical bases for the concept of Happy Schools, presenting global initiatives related to happiness and well-being, and describing country case studies of relevant development and education policies in the Asia-Pacific region. The various strands of the primary data collected from the school-level stakeholders are then brought together to form the Happy Schools Framework in Chapter Four, which presents 22 criteria under three overarching themes, as well as examples of strategies for reaching each of the criteria. Reflections, next steps and conclusions will be then be offered in Chapter Five.

2

Research Design and Methodology

This report, and the Happy Schools Framework that it presents, are based on findings acquired through several research methods. While it broadly focuses on various countries of the Asia-Pacific region, the report does not focus in-depth on any particular country but draws on diverse country experiences,[1] while its findings are relevant for many other parts of the world. This chapter presents the overall research framework for this report, including the conceptual framework for the concept of Happy Schools as well as an initial hypothesis of the criteria for a happy school. It then examines the research methods that were employed in identifying the final criteria of what constitutes a happy school, as well as the examples of strategies in reaching each of the criteria, before ending with a discussion of the research limitations.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for happy schools (Figure 2) stems broadly from UNESCO's mandate to promote peace through education, and in particular from two of the four pillars of learning: Learning to Live Together and Learning to Be, as well as the field of Positive Psychology. While Learning to Live Together includes qualities that are essentially based on relationships, including empathy, tolerance, respect for diversity, communication and teamwork (UNESCO, 2014), the pillar Learning to Be refers more to qualities that stem from within a person, such as creativity, critical thinking, self-motivation, perseverance and optimism (Faure et. al., 1972). The framework also draws on elements of Positive Psychology, for which the core theoretical concept of well-being is 'PERMA': positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (Seligman, 2012).

Figure 2. *Conceptual framework for happy schools*

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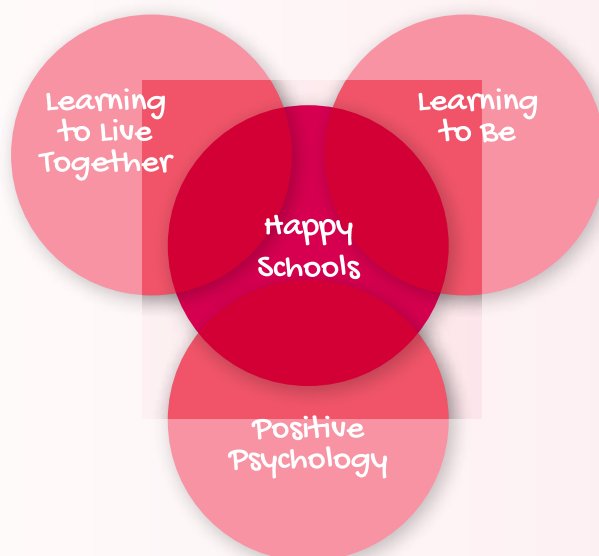
1 A summary of country experiences reflected through the research methods is presented in Annex 1.

7

Based on this conceptual framework, an initial hypothesis consisting of the potential criteria for what may constitute a happy school was developed, drawing from findings of a desk study that examined concepts and initiatives related to learner well-being. The initial hypothesis was used throughout the study as a reference. Based on the results from the primary research, this initial hypothesis (Table 1) was later enriched and developed into the criteria presented in the Happy Schools Framework in Chapter Four.

Table 1. *Initial hypothesis for the criteria for a happy school*

People	Process	Place
Friendship with other students (of the same or across grades)	Teamwork learning (help and support from other students)	Outdoor playing and green spaces
Good relationship between students and teachers	Learning content is useful for daily life	Creative visual displays
Helping students with special needs	Reasonable workload (homework and exams)	A warm and friendly learning environment
Support from the local community	Freedom to express opinion in school and in the classroom	Comfortable for students with different needs and backgrounds
Parental encouragement	Interesting and engaging learning activities	Good nutrition
School leadership	Frequent feedback from teachers	School is safe and free from bullying, stress and competition
	Extracurricular activities	
	Learning outside the classroom	

Methods

The research methods employed were purely qualitative in nature. These methods were chosen with the aim of understanding what factors describe a happy school and to 'identify variables that can then be measured, or hear silenced voices' (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). In this sense, this report seeks to understand the variables of a happy school based on the voices of those at the school level which may often be unheard. The criteria for happy schools were then identified based on an interpretation of the collective voices of school-level stakeholders. This study thus used a participatory approach, whereby the framework was developed through a desk study, while its verification was conducted through an empirical as well as experiential approach.

The methods included a desk study, a workshop with schools from member countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)[2], a survey and a seminar, which were conducted between June 2014 and November 2015. Each of these methods served a specific purpose in the development of the Happy Schools Framework.

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2 The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) consists of ten Member States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Desk Study

The desk study was conducted from the time of the Happy Schools Project launch in June 2014 up until November 2015, with the main objective of mapping various definitions and frameworks for happiness, as well as of identifying specific themes within the school context. An outcome of this desk study was the identification of potential criteria for developing an initial hypothesis, as presented in Table 1.

The desk study involved reviewing a broad range of literature from social, economic and psychology studies, in particular examining the fields of Positive Psychology and Positive Education. In addition, it involved analysis of relevant global, regional and country-specific policy documents and reports, especially with regard to the social and emotional dimensions of learning, education concepts and related initiatives by UNESCO and other organizations.

As part of the desk study, case studies were also undertaken in countries where the concept of prioritizing happiness and well-being is reflected in national and education policies, namely in Bhutan, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Vanuatu. A brief overview of each of these country cases is presented in Chapter Three.

ASEAN Schools Workshop

In November 2014, a two-hour discussion was conducted with students and teachers representing schools[3] from nine ASEAN countries.[4] The discussion was part of a training workshop organized by the ASEAN Children and Youth News Center that was held in Bangkok, Thailand.

The discussion began with a brief overview of what is meant by the concept of Happy Schools and why there is a need for schools to be happy. Two group activities followed. The first activity consisted of producing a happy schools country poster, whereby students and teachers were grouped by country and given a blank poster labelled with their country's flag as well as a 'happy' and a 'sad' face, as displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3. *Blank poster used in the ASEAN Schools Workshop*

The groups were asked to reflect on their country context and to consider what might make a school happy or unhappy and to write key words on the poster. They were then invited to present their posters to the other groups.

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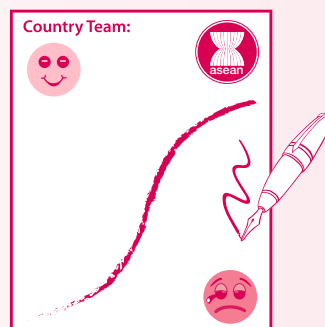
3 A variety of types of schools participated in the workshop, including government, vocational, private and international schools. For full details please see Annex 1.

4 Representatives of schools from nine of the ten ASEAN member countries participated in the workshop: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Only Singapore was not represented.

The second activity consisted of creating a 'recipe' for a happy school made up of a bag of 'ingredients'. For this activity, the participants were divided into four teams (two teams of students and two teams of teachers). The teams were asked to select the 'ingredients' that they felt were the most important for creating a happy school. The 'ingredients' consisted of cards labelled with criteria from the initial hypothesis (Table 1) as well as blank cards, so that the groups could add their own 'ingredients'.

Through these activities, school-level stakeholders' views regarding what constitutes a happy school were collected and checked against the criteria in the initial hypothesis to obtain a sense of which were most important.

Happy Schools Survey

An online survey[5] was designed to collect views from students, teachers, school principals, parents, school support staff and the general public[6] in the Asia-Pacific region on what constitutes a happy school. The survey consisted of four background questions and the following four open-ended questions:

1. What can make school a happy place?
2. What can make school an unhappy place?
3. What makes teaching and learning in schools fun and enjoyable?
4. From your experience, what can be done to make sure that all students feel included in schools?

The survey was made freely available online between January and May 2015. It was provided in English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Thai and the researchers collected over 650 responses (Figure 4). The majority of respondents consisted of students, so this report draws mostly from a learner perspective. Aiming to obtain a maximum variety of perspectives, no specific sample size was set, allowing for the survey to be open and accessible to the public to participate on a voluntary basis. Among the various research methods employed, the survey served as the most important in identifying the criteria for a happy school from a broader audience.

5 See Annex 2 for the full survey (in English).

6 In the context of the Happy Schools Survey, the term 'general public' refers to people who are not parents and who are not working or studying within a school environment.

Figure 4. *Survey responses by gender, stakeholder group, school type and language*

Gender

38%   62%

Stakeholder Group

School Principals
General Public
Parents
School Support Staff
Other
Students
Teachers

School Type

Public School: 422
Currently not working/studying: 95
Private School: 69
International school: 24
Religious School: 5
Other: 39

Language

Japanese **24%**
Chinese **11%**
Thai **12%**
Korean **17%**
Russian **18%**
English **18%**
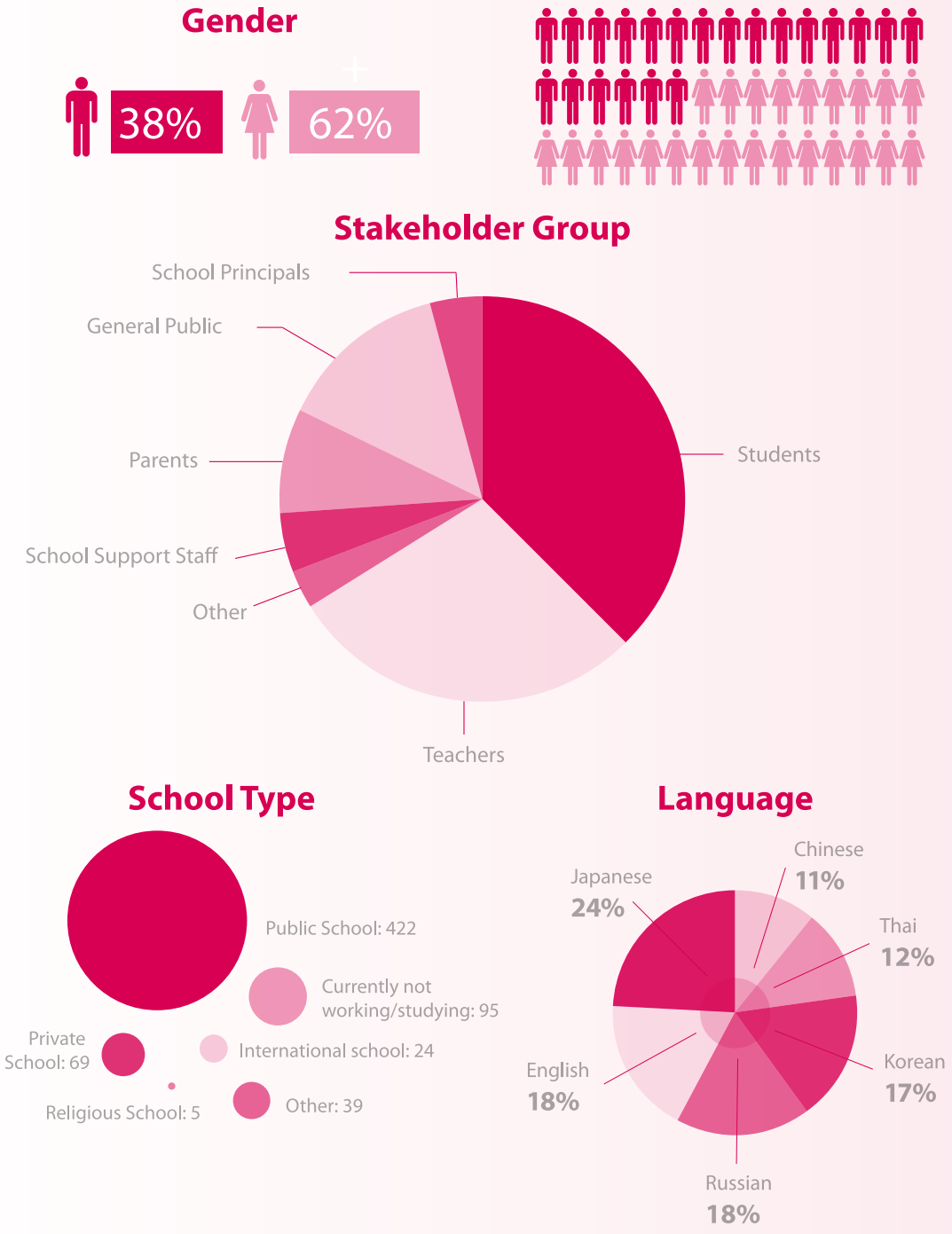
A number of overarching themes and sub-themes were identified from the survey data. These were later labelled as codes. While some codes were initially noted by the research team in order to guide the analysis of the data, open coding was conducted in order to allow themes to emerge from the data and to not limit the analysis (Creswell, 2007). The number of codes was limited to 30, however, so as to keep the themes focused and to more accurately track their frequency. Individual responses were then coded in order to obtain an idea of the most frequently occurring themes for all responses, as well as by specific variables, namely by language, gender, stakeholder group and school type. These codes, or key themes, became the criteria for a happy school, as presented in Chapter Four.

Happy Schools Seminar

The Happy Schools Seminar was held on 4 and 5 June 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand, bringing together a total of 20 representatives from six selected schools in five countries: Bhutan, India, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam (Table 2). Each school was represented by one student, one teacher and one school principal, with the exception of the New International School of Thailand (NIST), which, as the host of the seminar, was able to ensure the participation of more students. While representatives from schools in Akita Prefecture of Japan were not able to attend, information from these schools was presented at the seminar, based on research conducted by UNESCO Bangkok.

Table 2. *Schools that participated in the Happy Schools Seminar*

Country	School Name	School Type/Location	Representatives by Stakeholder group
Bhutan	Pemagatshel Middle Secondary School	Public, Rural	Student (1), Teacher (1), Principal (1)
India	Vidyashilp Academy	Private, Urban	Student (1), Teacher (1), Principal (1)
Republic of Korea	Daegu Gachang Elementary School	Public, Rural/Provincial	Student (1), Teacher (1), Principal (1)
Thailand	NIST International School	Private International School/Urban	Student (4), Teacher (1), Principal (1)
	Chulalongkorn Demonstration Secondary School	Public Demonstration School/Urban	Student (1), Teacher (1), Principal (1)
Viet Nam	VNIES Experimental Lower Secondary School	Public Experimental School/Urban	Student (1), Teacher (1), Principal (1)

The schools selected to participate in the seminar were chosen because they engage in innovative and promising practices that are in line with the concept of Happy Schools. The selection process involved inviting schools in the Asia-Pacific region to submit short applications describing their school practices and how they relate to the initial hypothesis.

The overall objective of the seminar was to further develop the Happy Schools Framework to facilitate its implementation in a diversity of contexts. This involved engaging in discussions to gain a shared understanding of the criteria outlined in the hypothesis and to identify strategies, ways and means for schools to meet each of those criteria. The seminar allowed for the criteria that were identified in the survey to be further enriched and validated by school-level stakeholders, while enabling further exploration of promising practices in meeting the criteria.

The seminar, facilitated by the JUMP! Foundation,[7] began with presentations from the schools on their best practices, which were followed by four practical and interactive activities[8] designed to obtain country, school, stakeholder and individual perspectives with regard to the concept of Happy Schools.

Limitations

This report presents an exploratory study of an abstract concept, which is perhaps the first of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region. Based on findings obtained from purely qualitative research methods, this report takes an interpretive approach in the analysis of the data, which may unintentionally influence the findings. In addition, this report does not intend to represent or reflect the entire Asia-Pacific region. Country case studies presented in Chapter Three for instance, aim to provide illustrative examples of countries that are prioritizing happiness and well-being in development and education policies. With regard to schools selected for the Happy Schools Seminar for instance, these were not intended to reflect the situation of their countries, or schools in disadvantaged areas. Instead, they were selected based on innovative and promising practices with the ultimate aim that these could eventually be widely implemented for the benefit of all schools, including those in disadvantaged areas or with limited resources.

In terms of the Happy Schools Survey, given the linguistic diversity of the region, access to the survey may have been limited, since it was only made available in six languages due to limited resources. At the same time, the survey was also shared as broadly as possible through regional and global networks, social media and website articles. This was an open online survey accessible to the general public, and there was no limitation on the sample size, nor on the proportion of respondents from a particular gender, stakeholder group, or school type. Self-selection, whereby individuals select themselves to participate in the survey, also presents one of the limitations of such surveys given that those with a particular interest in the topic and access to the internet are more likely to participate, rather than the general population (Bethlehem, 2010).

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7   The Jump! Foundation is an experiential education provider founded to inspire, empower and engage leadership and global citizenship among youth through facilitation programmes. Their facilitation of the Happy Schools Seminar ensured that all participants could have a voice in the activities and be encouraged to think about issues from various perspectives. For more information about the Jump! Foundation please see: http://jumpfoundation.org/

8   A detailed summary of these activities can be found in Annex 3.

The open nature of the survey led to some sizeable differences in these samples across groups, which meant that two or more variables could not be compared. Some of these cases are worth highlighting. For instance, of the 121 respondents who completed the survey in Russian, there was only one student. Therefore, while the results could be considered representative of other stakeholders such as teachers and parents, they cannot be considered representative of Russian-speaking students. With regard to the respondents who completed the survey in Japanese, it appeared that the majority of responses originated from schools in Akita Prefecture, which are renowned for prioritizing school happiness and well-being. This means that the results may not reflect perspectives from across Japan, yet allow for the collection of ideas and perspectives from schools that are already familiar with practices in line with the concept of Happy Schools.

While the analysis and coding of survey responses resulted in the quantification of the results, unequal sample sizes meant the inability to draw conclusions between and across variables of the survey, based on the figures obtained. These differences therefore mean that these figures would be statistically invalid to cite in the report, but rather, can only give an indication of the importance attributed to some themes over others.

Nonetheless, given the overall objective of this study to explore an broad definition of what constitutes a happy school, rather than 'measuring' the level of happiness of schools, these methods allowed for open exploration of variables or 'criteria' for a happy school. Most importantly, they allowed for the opinion of students, teachers and parents to be voiced as the basis for the Happy Schools Framework. This report, therefore, provides a valuable reference based on the opinions of school-level stakeholders supported by evidence from other sources, with the potential to be scaled up in further research.

3

Global and Regional Context

Happiness has long been fascinating for philosophers, policymakers, economists, scientists, educators and psychologists alike. Looking more broadly at the United Nations mandate for peace, as well as UNESCO's mandate of education for peace, the linkages between peace and happiness have also long been recognized. More than 2,500 years ago, the teachings of the Buddha, or *The Dhammapada*, stated that there is 'no happiness higher than peace' (Fronsdal, 2005, p. 50). In more recent times, the 2013 note by the Secretary General entitled *Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development* emphasizes that peace is one of the important determining factors for a country's happiness (United Nations General Assembly, 2013). Indeed, happiness has formed the core of philosophy and religion, and is now increasingly reflected in policy, including in the global policy agenda, development and education policies, and as the core focus of global initiatives for human development and advancement.

Above all and across various disciplines notions of happiness have always highlighted the importance of education or of 'learning', with education perceived as both a means and an end to enhancing happiness. Whether in Aristotle's theories of happiness, Positive Psychology, policies of happiness or in today's global happiness indices, education always seems to feature. The linkages between happiness and learning also indicate that happiness is, therefore, something that can be taught and learnt. Writing in an article of *Teacher Magazine*, Trevor Lee, a school principal from the United Kingdom argues that schools play a major role in 'teaching happiness', or at least, in developing the values, strengths and competencies that can nurture happiness. This is both through 'education as happiness', where school is a happy place to be, as well as 'educating for happiness' whereby the school explicitly guides learners as to how happiness can be achieved (Lee, 2001, p. 31).

With this in mind, this chapter is structured in three parts. Section A first examines theories of happiness from ancient philosophies until the present day. Section B then looks at the wider global context in terms of global trends and trends in education, as well as happiness within the context of UNESCO's mandate frameworks. Section C explores how happiness has been prioritized and reflected in development and education policies, by briefly examining five country cases.

A. Theories of Happiness

In exploring the theoretical background behind the concept of Happy Schools, it is first important to briefly define the terms happiness and well-being, which are used interchangeably throughout this report. Happiness can be defined as being in a positive emotional state or state of positive affect, whereas well-being refers to a value, or what can be considered as good for a person (Haybron, 2013). Given the purpose of this study, the term 'happiness' is particularly compelling 'because it allows individuals rather than experts to decide what is important to them. Purpose, mastery, connections, and self-regard are without worth unless they help individuals to create more satisfying lives for themselves and others' (Diener et. al., 1998, p. 37). The *World Happiness Report* for instance, chooses to use the term happiness as opposed to its academic equivalent 'subjective well-being', seen as more accessible and able to attract wider interest (Helliwell et. al., 2015). Bearing this definition in mind, it should be noted that while this section of the report is not exhaustive in terms of theories of happiness, it does draw from selected examples that provide conceptual background to the notion of Happy Schools.

Philosophies of Happiness

In both Western and Eastern thought, ancient philosophers contemplated happiness in their works.[9] Each of them identified themes that relate to today's world and our daily lives, and to the concept of Happy Schools. According to the Buddha, one can achieve happiness through the power of the mind, by overcoming needs and wants, equanimity or peace of mind and positive thinking (Fronsdal, 2005). Buddhism identifies happiness as something that is not only central to the individual being, but as something collective that is shared with others. This draws from our need for positive friendships and relationships in order to be happy. As noted in *The Dhammapada,* or teachings of the Buddha, 'happiness is having friends when the need arises' (Fronsdal, 2005, p. 80). It may thus come to no surprise that positive friendships and relationships consist of one of the key criteria for happy schools as will be further explored in Chapter Four.

According to Socrates, happiness is not only the purpose of life, but also something that is 'obtainable and teachable' through human effort; in particular through being 'virtuous' (Beebe, 2003). This effort to be virtuous is linked to learning, not only in terms of character development of skills, values and attitudes, but also in terms of how we relate to others within schools, which for learners is essentially a microcosm of society. On the other side of the globe, Confucius had identified social relationships as a source of happiness, and that learning can lead to happiness (Yao, 2003). This is expressed in *The Analects* as follows: 'To learn… [and] in time to practice, is that not joy? To have friends come visit from afar, is that not also happiness?' (Dietz, 2010, p. 222). Not only does this reflect relationships with others, but it also emphasizes the importance of love of learning and just how important it is for learning to be applied in daily life.

Aristotle later identified happiness not only as the purpose of human existence, but as something dependent on exercising moral character through virtues among which were friendship, justice and citizenship (Crisp, 2000). He also envisioned education as multidimensional consisting of four branches: 1) reading and writing, 2) gymnastics, 3) music, and 4) drawing; with reading, writing and drawing seen as useful abilities, gymnastics as instilling the virtue of courage, and music as an essential pleasure (Jowett, 1994; Newman, 2010).

Among the many great thinkers produced by the Age of Enlightenment, in the seventeenth century, was British philosopher John Locke, who coined the phrase 'the pursuit of happiness' in the literary masterpiece *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke examined education from various angles: psychology, philosophy and religion, with a 'concern for the physical, as well as the mental and spiritual well-being of children' (Aldrich, 1994, p. 68). Influenced by John Locke, Johann Pestalozzi, who some see as the 'father of modern pedagogy', explored how education could ultimately bring happiness and improvement of the human condition by focusing on the 'whole child'; aspiring beyond academic outcomes, to promote physical, mental and psychological development. He advocated for education to provide children with a crucial balance of three

9 For a comprehensive and accessible overview of different philosophies of happiness, from which many references in this section were sourced, please see: http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/

elements: head (cognitive development), heart (emotional development) and hands (physical development) (Brühlmeier, 2010). All of these stand at the core of the Happy Schools concept. Box 1 lists the most relevant aspects of Pestalozzi's approach to education that are also mirrored by the findings of this study explored in Chapter Four.

Box 1. *Selected aspects of Johann Pestalozzi's approach to education*

- Child-centred teaching and learning
- Learner freedom
- Relationship between students and teachers
- Experiential learning through practical and engaging teaching approaches
- Cross-curricular learning
- Authority based on love, not fear
- Parental engagement in learning

Sources: Adapted from Brühlmeier, 2010; Soëtard, 1994.

Direct references to happiness in education are also found in the 1930 work of the Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, entitled *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*. According to Kumagai (2000), Makiguchi saw the realization of happiness as the goal of value-creating pedagogy where 'education is guiding the person being educated in such a way that they are able to achieve happiness' (Kumagai, 2000, p. 35).

Science of Happiness

Philosophies of happiness were influential in the development of what is often referred to as the 'science of happiness', which stemmed from the founding of Positive Psychology by Martin Seligman in the late 1990s. Positive Psychology can be defined as follows:

Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play.

– Center for Positive Psychology, University of Pennsylvania

In his book *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman (2002) identifies three pillars in Positive Psychology: positive emotion, positive traits and positive institutions. In particular, positive institutions are seen to 'support the virtues, which in turn support the positive emotions' (Seligman, 2004, p. 80). Positive institutions also support people in 'identifying and using your highest strengths in order to belong to and serve something larger' than they are (Ibid, p. 86). The link to education and the concept of Happy Schools is clear – while positive emotion refers to feelings, traits refer to potential skills and competencies that can be acquired through learning, while institutions can be interpreted as the schools.

Seligman also identified six core virtues that are recognized across all cultures consisting of: wisdom and knowledge; courage; humanity; justice; temperance; spirituality and transcendence (Seligman, 2002). Based on an extensive review of religious and philosophical texts, these six virtues were each further elaborated as 22 character strengths (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).[10] Many of these are reflected in the Happy Schools Framework in one way of another, namely creativity, love of learning, kindness, and teamwork (Values in Action, 2015). These virtues and character strengths are illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. *The six virtues and 22 character strengths in Positive Psychology*

Wisdom & knowledge	Temperance	Courage	Justice	Transcendence	Love & humanity
• Creativity • Curiosity • Judgement • Love of learning • Perspective	• Forgiveness • Humility • Prudence • Self-Regulation	• Bravery • Perseverance • Honesty • Zest	• Teamwork • Fairness • Leadership	• Appreciation of beauty and excellence • Gratitude • Hope • Humour • Spirituality	• Love • Kindness • Social intelligence
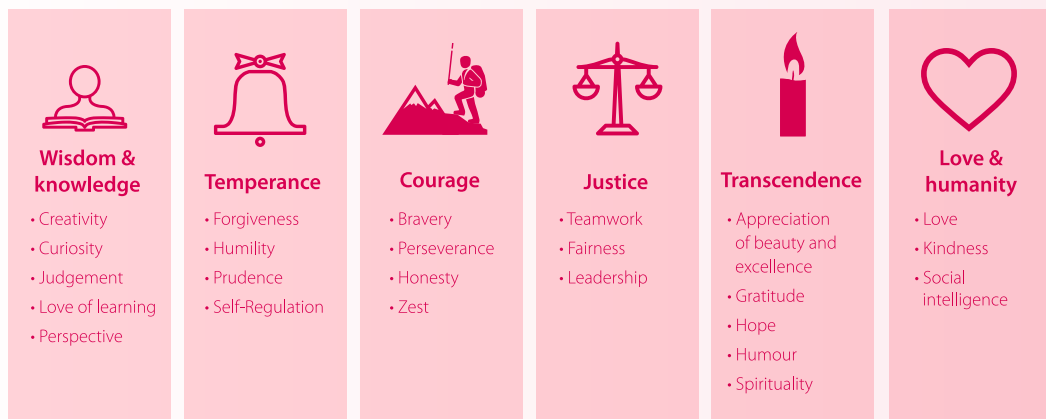
Source: Adapted from Values in Action, 2015.

In his later work *Flourish*, Seligman (2012) offers a theory of well-being consisting of five measurable elements known as PERMA: 1) Positive Emotion, 2) Engagement, 3) Relationships, 4) Meaning, and 5) Accomplishment (Seligman, 2012). As will be explored in Chapter Four, these five elements, which are developed through practice of the six virtues and 22 character strengths, are all very much present in the Happy Schools Framework.

Within this context, in an article on Positive Education, Seligman and other researchers argued that that happiness can in fact be taught in schools (Seligman et. al., 2009). Not only can it be taught, but evidence also shows that 'more well-being is synergistic with better learning' by broadening learners' attention, creative thinking and holistic thinking (Ibid, p. 294). In addition to better learning, the article advocates for well-being programmes in schools in order to help address depression and increase life satisfaction among learners. The article placed a particular emphasis on schools as the ideal setting: 'because most young people attend school, schools provide the opportunity to reach them and enhance their well-being on a wide scale' (Ibid, p. 295).

10 The classification system of character strengths and virtues, as well as the character strengths survey can be accessed on the VIA Institute on Character website: http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths/VIA-Classification

Other research in the field also indicates that child happiness, which is developed through practice of the virtues and character strengths, is related to higher learning achievements and is linked to future success in the world of work. For instance, self-discipline is seen as a better predictor of academic performance in high school than intelligence quotient (IQ) (Duckworth and Seligman, 2005), and happy teenagers are likely to earn significantly higher incomes than less happy teenagers after 15 years (Diener, 2002). Arguably, therefore, achieving happiness and well-being in learners is not only an objective in and of itself, but also presents a means for higher educational outcomes and potential success in future life and work.

A more recent initiative, the International Positive Education Network (IPEN), which was launched in early 2015, defines Positive Education as a 'double helix' of academics coupled with character and well-being (IPEN, 2016a). IPEN brings together school-level stakeholders as well as academia, government and relevant organizations, aiming to influence education policy reform, change education practices and support collaboration among a growing Positive Education community (IPEN, 2016b). Indeed the Positive Psychology and Positive Education movements have led to a multitude of ever-expanding research and initiatives, of which these are only some examples.

Throughout these various perspectives, the notion of altruism is strongly present. The Buddha and Confucius recognized the need for friendships, and in more recent times Seligman's theory of well-being sees a meaningful life as one where the virtues and strengths are applied for a greater purpose. All of these perspectives shed light on how happiness can potentially form the essence of human development. These philosophical and scientific notions of happiness also emphasize the fundamental role that education can play as both a source of happiness, and as an objective of education in itself.

B. Global Initiatives

Happiness is increasingly becoming part of the global policy agenda. Global trends in our ever-changing world are calling for a need to focus on happiness and well-being at the highest levels. This section will therefore examine the way that happiness and well-being are being integrated by the international community into the global development agenda, and also how these concepts are reflected in UNESCO's mandates and frameworks, namely in Education 2030, as well as through its philosophical bases. It will also briefly examine other global initiatives, both within and beyond the United Nations system, that seek to make happiness and well-being a priority, especially with regard to measuring countries' development.

Global Trends

As we adapt to our ever-changing world, some global trends call on the need for happiness to become a priority in development policies as well as in education policies. Increased mobility means that our societies are becoming more multicultural – calling for respect for diversity and cultural sensitivity towards others (UNESCO, 2014). At the same time we are also seeing a rise in violent extremism, which is leading to increasingly intolerant societies. Moreover, rising inequality between the rich and poor is bringing about greater divisions in societies. Environmental degradation also calls on all of us to be more respectful towards nature and the environment around us (Ibid). Simultaneously, rapid technological advances, while they bring many benefits, are leading to 'information overload' or 'infollution'. Experts in neuroscience argue that while technology such as 'smartphones', social media and email have made a vast amount of information available, it is impossible for humans to keep up with it, and our attempts to do so have led to unhealthy forms of multi-tasking which result in increased stress and ultimately perhaps, greater unhappiness (Levitin, 2015). In response to these trends, the Action for Happiness movement was founded in 2010 by experts from various disciplines, including psychology, education, economics and social innovation (Action for Happiness, 2016).

The nature of work is also changing. In some cases, employers are paying less attention to the academic results of prospective and current employees, but rather, to the skills and competencies that enable employees to better contribute to the workplace, such as communication and teamwork. Indeed, the advent of new technologies means that machines will soon replace us in a number of jobs, including so-called white-collar jobs. Some experts believe that machines could replace almost half of the existing jobs over the next 20 years (Frey and Osborne, 2015, p. 1). Competition is growing for the limited jobs, and this is reflected in the microcosm of society: schools. More than ever before this signals the need for education to focus on the skills and competencies that machines cannot replace, such as creativity, communication and collaborative problem solving.

Global Development Agenda

In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 65/309 entitled 'Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development', recognizing that 'the pursuit of happiness is a fundamental human goal' (United Nations General Assembly, 2011). The resolution called upon Member States to develop indicators to 'capture the importance of the pursuit of happiness and well-being in development with a view to guiding their public policies' (Ibid, p. 1). Following on from this resolution, in 2012 the Government of Bhutan convened the high level meeting at the UN Headquarters in New York entitled 'Happiness and Well-being: Defining a New Economic Paradigm', bringing together more than 800 people including heads of state, spiritual leaders, experts and representatives of civil society and the media (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2012). Subsequently, following submissions by Member-States sharing their perspectives on the pursuit of happiness and well-being, the United Nations Secretary General published a note mapping a number of global, regional and national policies, along with programmes, research and other initiatives relating to this theme (United Nations General Assembly, 2013).

As we embark on the new international development agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched in New York in September 2015 reflect the importance placed on the notion of well-being within and across the various goals and targets (United Nations General Assembly, 2015a). For example, SDG 3, which is dedicated to health, seeks to 'ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages' (Ibid, p. 14). SDG 9, dedicated to industry, innovation and infrastructure also includes a target that refers directly to the need to 'support economic development and human-well-being' (Ibid, p. 14), and SDG 16, which aims to 'promote peaceful and inclusive societies' (Ibid, p. 14). Education plays a tremendous role in global development and, as such, SDG 4, which aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (Ibid, p. 14), also captures many aspects of great relevance to the concept of Happy Schools.

Trends in Education

Countries often measure their success or level of development based on numbers and figures, such as economic indicators. Education systems have also traditionally relied on numbers and figures to measure their success and to gauge the development of learners. For example, the quality of education may be determined by considering student performance in examinations and in national or international assessments. Within this context, students are facing pressure to achieve higher scores as they compete to secure places in the best universities. This has led to increased private tutoring, and in some cases led to bullying, school violence, and in the worst cases, teenage suicides.

The pressure on schools as well as students to improve academic outcomes has arguably led to less attention being paid to other dimensions of learning, notably social and emotional learning, which are perceived as enhancing happiness. In *Creative Schools*, Robinson and Lou (2015) call upon education systems to shift away from 'exam-factory' education that over-emphasizes grades, and to place less emphasis on international league tables and standardized testing, to instead recognize the importance of developing creativity among students. They also argue that the real problem lies specifically in how international league tables are used by countries/policymakers to impose standards on school systems in order to compare and benchmark their performance with others (Robinson and Lou, 2015). In 2006, Sir Ken Robinson argued that schools were in fact 'killing creativity' and that 'creativity is as important now in education as literacy and we should treat it with the same status' (Robinson, 2006). Furthermore, Robinson and Lou (2015) argue that this requires giving equal importance to the arts as to academic subjects. In addition to creativity, they also point to eight core competencies that education should develop in students: curiosity, criticism, communication, collaboration, compassion, composure and citizenship.

UNESCO's Mandate and Frameworks

The vision for education as presented in the Incheon Declaration, initially adopted at the World Education Forum (May 2015), refers to a number of themes of great relevance to the concept of Happy Schools. In particular, these are also noted in the seventh target (Target 4.7) of SDG4:

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

(United Nations General Assembly, 2015, p. 14).

Arguably, the emphasis on 'skills' in order to create a more peaceful, equitable and sustainable world can be understood as the competencies, values, virtues or strengths relating to human behaviours and characteristics that were discussed earlier.

Since its inception in 1945, UNESCO has embodied these crucial aspects of learning. The UNESCO constitution states that 'it is in the minds of men [and women] that the defences of peace must constructed'. The emphasis on the power of the mind relates back to philosophies highlighting the importance of learning and education as the means to achieve happier and more peaceful societies.

UNESCO's mandate to promote peace through education has evolved over the past 70 years. In 1972, the landmark report *Learning to Be*, which was prepared by the International Commission on the Development of Education, focused on the development of human potential and highlighted important aspects of well-being in examining the state of the world's education (Faure, 1972). The Chairman of the Commission, Edgar Faure, emphasized the importance of complete fulfilment, richness of personality, the citizen, as well as the 'inventor of techniques and creative dreamer' - pointing towards the necessity for education to nurture these aspects so as to 'be'. Almost 25 years later, in 1996, the Commission for International Education for the Twenty-first Century published another landmark report, *Learning: The Treasure Within*. The report identified four pillars of learning: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together and Learning to Be (Delors, 1996). While acknowledging the importance of all four pillars, the report emphasizes the need to focus more on the third pillar, Learning to Live Together, in order to promote peace through education:

Learning to live together, by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values and, on this basis, creating a new spirit which, guided by recognition of our growing interdependence and common analysis of these risks and challenges of the future, would induce people to implement common projects or to manage the inevitable conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way.

(Ibid, p. 22).

These landmark reports and their underlying philosophy point to two very important dimensions of improving happiness among learners. While Learning to Be may refer to the learner's capacity to develop individual skills such as creativity, critical thinking and optimism, Learning to Live Together refers to the learner's development of inter-personal skills such as empathy, communication, teamwork and cultural sensitivity.

UNESCO's more recent initiatives and priority areas, including the Culture of Peace, Education for Sustainable Development as well as Global Citizenship Education, are based on the underlying philosophy that education is the means to achieving more peaceful societies. UNESCO's Asia-Pacific report on Learning to Live Together reflects this philosophy, noting that 'education is the most important tool for equipping young people, our future generation of leaders, with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to tackle prejudice and hostility and to build more peaceful, tolerant and equitable societies' (UNESCO, 2014, p. v). The report highlights the importance of assessing learning outcomes in line with the skills and competencies that have the potential to enhance happiness, and emphasizes that promoting the assessment of such skills and competencies will continue to form an important part of education policy reform processes (UNESCO, 2014). Such efforts were demonstrated in UNESCO's *Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives*, the first pedagogical guide on the topic (UNESCO, 2015a). Building on UNESCO's landmark publications on the two pillars of Learning to Be and Learning to Live Together, UNESCO's *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good?* also calls for renewed dialogue for a more humanistic vision of education (UNESCO, 2015b).

Other Global Initiatives

A number of other initiatives both within and beyond the UN system demonstrate how happiness and well-being are increasingly being incorporated as a measure of countries' development in an effort to shift beyond economic indicators. These include numerous efforts to measure levels of happiness and well-being in countries. The *World Happiness Report* is one example. The first edition of this annual report was prepared for the 2012 high-level meeting on happiness and continues to be published as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN). Other surveys and indices that have sought to measure happiness and well-being include the New Economics Foundation's Happy Planet Index, the World Values Survey, Gallup World Poll, the European Social Survey, the Eurobarometer, the Asiabarometer, the Latinobarometro, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Better Life Index (United Nations, 2013). In particular, the Better Life Index recognizes education among 11 factors that are essential for the quality of life (OECD, 2015b). In addition to this initiative, in 2012 the OECD also included indicators on student happiness as part of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Accordingly, in 2018, PISA will include a questionnaire dedicated to well-being, that will explore the link between learners' broad well-being and their learning outcomes, in terms of measures of social and emotional skills, learning contexts such as school, family, and community, as well as outcomes such as education, labour market, health and life satisfaction (OECD, 2015a).

C. Happiness in Policy

Some countries have, to various extents, formally recognized happiness as a goal of their development and education policies. These countries include Bhutan, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Vanuatu. While some may have reflected happiness in their policies because this philosophy is in line with their local culture and views of 'happiness', others have developed these policies as a direct response to levels of perceived unhappiness in the country based on various factors.

Bhutan

The Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan is renowned worldwide for prioritizing happiness in its national vision of development, using the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a holistic approach to measuring development progress rather than using purely economic indicators (United Nations General Assembly, 2013). Bhutan's 2008 constitution supports the pursuit of GNH, defining the government's role as being to 'ensure peace, security, well-being and happiness of the people' (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2008, p. 38). GNH is based on four pillars,[11] which have been further elaborated into nine domains of well-being (Figure 6). These include education, psychological well-being and community vitality (GNH Centre Bhutan, 2015).

Figure 6. *The nine domains of Gross National Happiness in Bhutan*

Psychological Well-being	Health	Time Use
Education	Cultural Diversity and Resilience	Good Governance
Community Vitality	Ecological Diversity and Resilience	Living Standards

Source: Adapted from GNH Centre Bhutan, 2015.

11 The four pillars of GNH are good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, preservation and promotion of culture, and environmental conservation.

Based on these domains, a GNH Index was developed consisting of 33 indicators in 2010. This was created as an alternative to conventional measures of development and provides a multidimensional measure of happiness (the goals of development in Bhutan), which focuses less on the individual and more on collective happiness (Ura et. al., 2012). Of the 33 indicators, these include four categorized under the domain of psychological well-being (life satisfaction, positive emotions, negative emotions, and spirituality), and four under the domain of education (literacy, schooling, knowledge and values) (Ibid).

Bhutan's 2011 national policy of Educating for Gross National Happiness underscores the fundamental role of education in promoting happiness and well-being among learners. The policy aims to infuse GNH through curriculum and teaching with the vision of 'an educated and enlightened society of "gyalyong gakid pelzom" [Gross National Happiness] at peace with itself, at peace with the world, built and sustained by the idealism and the creative enterprise of our citizens' (Ministry of Education [Bhutan], 2012, p. 6). Furthermore, the policy states one of its objectives as being 'To build a cadre of highly motivated and competent educators who are endowed with an abiding love of children, a deep love of learning, and who passionately value education as a positive instrument of empowerment' (Ibid, p. 6).

According to Bicknell (2012), the policy of Educating for GNH gives importance to elements such as collaboration between stakeholders, particularly involvement in schools by students, families and communities; sustainability; community service; and education practices that enable students to 'pause and reflect' so as to refresh the spirit, because 'education is about the heart and spirit, as well as the heart and soul' (Bricknell, 2012, p. 59). Zangmo (2014) likewise notes that the GNH-infused curriculum and, in particular, its inclusion of meditation and mindfulness, enables students' emotional needs to be equally considered alongside their academic performance.

Bhutan's Education Blueprint (2014-2024) promotes the vision of Educating for GNH and emphasizes the importance of a 'positive school culture' that enables both academic performance as well as learners' holistic development based on GNH values (Ministry of Education [Bhutan], 2014). Central to the policy of Educating for GNH is the importance of sustainability and protection of the environment, with the construction of 'green schools' listed as part of the policy's mission (Ministry of Education [Bhutan], 2012). The concept of 'Green Schools for a Green Bhutan' refers to the idea of the natural environment as an 'integrating context for learning' with the dual purpose of both 'conserving and learning with the environment' (Drakpa and Dorji, 2013, p. 314). This notion of greenery is further defined by the eight elements or dimensions of 'green schools' (Figure 7), all of which relate to the various criteria in the Happy Schools Framework.

Figure 7. *The eight dimensions of 'Green Schools for a Green Bhutan'*

Naturally or Environmentally Green In relation to a green school campus used both as a practical learning space as well as to grow produce.	**Intellectual Greenery** Focusing on the learner's mind which is 'fertile' and open to new ideas, creative, innovative and critical.	**Academic Greenery** Relating to deeper knowledge throughout generations in building subject learning in mathematics, history etc.	**Social Greenery** Focusing on friendships and relationships, and understanding, sharing and celebrating between the school, families and wider community as a basis for 'learning to live together and learn together'.
Cultural Greenery Relating to expression and celebration of religion, philosophy, arts, language and architecture within the school.	**Spiritual Greenery** Focusing on the existence of a greater being or presence, as part of spiritual experiences for both students and teachers.	**Aesthetic Greenery** Depicted both as optimism as well as the ability to appreciate beauty based on the value of purity and truth.	**Moral Greenery** Relating to teaching and learning as a process that enables learners to make the difference between what is right and wrong, or good and bad.

Source: Adapted from Drakpa and Dorji, 2013.

These eight dimensions reflect the philosophy behind the concept of Happy Schools and the criteria presented in the Happy Schools Framework. As part of the 'Green Schools for a Green Bhutan' concept, they also provide an example of how education policies formulated at the national level can be relevant and directly applicable at the school level.

Japan

In 2010, Japan's Cabinet Office established the Commission on Measuring Well-being and, in 2012, conducted its first Quality of Life Survey (United Nations General Assembly, 2013). While the Better Life Index, which compares well-being across OECD member countries, shows Japan to be performing above the OECD country average with regard to education, income, jobs and security, it indicates that Japan is performing lower than the average with regard to subjective well-being and related factors such as work-life balance (OECD, 2015c).

Japan has seen an increase in national concern for happiness and well-being in recent years, which may in part be due to a high frequency of mental health issues and high levels of stress in the country. According to the 2013 National Livelihood Survey, 48 per cent of respondents over the age of 12 reported feeling stress or concern in regard to their daily lives (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare [Japan], 2013). In the survey conducted in 2010, the main cause of stress among respondents aged 12 to 19 was reported to be related to academic performance and examinations (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare [Japan], 2010). The stress may also be a result of high levels of bullying, with data from 2013 indicating that 48.4 per cent of primary schools and 65.5 per cent of junior high schools had reported cases of bullying that year (Ministry of Internal Affairs and

Communications [Japan], 2014). The high levels of stress are reflected in Japan's suicide rates, which are among the highest in the world, including among younger generations (WHO, 2015). In 2011, suicide accounted for 10.2 per cent of deaths among children aged 10 to 14, and 29.3 per cent of deaths among adolescents aged between 15 and 19, with suicide among the top three most frequent causes of death in the country across all age groups (Japan Cabinet Office, 2013).

Japan's education policies reflect the increased concern for happiness and well-being. For instance, the 2007 School Education Act, which was seen as a major shift in the direction of education in Japan, emphasizes the importance of fostering a positive attitude towards learning, promoting individual uniqueness, developing an enriched sense of empathy and self-reliance, and fostering global citizenship while also preserving local culture and tradition (MEXT, 2011). In addition, the national curriculum development guidelines promote the principle of 'Zest for Living', which emphasizes the importance of well-balanced development of 'Chi-Toku-Tai' (知・徳・体), referring to academic prowess, well-rounded character and mental and physical health) (MEXT, n.d.).

Akita and Fukui prefectures have prioritized the concept of happiness in their sub-national policies and plans. Akita Prefecture's 'Strategic plan to nurture students' ability to question at three levels', for example, seeks to enable students to reach learning goals through relationships and collaborative problem solving, and through developing respectful relationships via voluntary activities, shared experiences and interactions with people from diverse backgrounds (UNESCO, 2014). Similarly, in Fukui Prefecture the prefectural five-year basic plan for education promotes the provision of physical and psychological help to ensure schools are free of bullying and children are well-nourished. It also aims to create a culture of trust in schools, involving the family and local communities, and encourages participation in sports and playing outdoors (Education Bureau of Fukui Prefecture, 2011).

Akita and Fukui are among the highest-performing prefectures in Japan's public examinations, which test both academic knowledge and the application of knowledge in daily life (National Institute for Educational Policy Research, 2015). In 2015, both prefectures performed particularly well across the various levels of education in assessments of the application of knowledge, with Akita and Fukui attaining first and third place, respectively, at the primary level, and first and second place, respectively, at the junior high level. It can be argued that the priority these prefectures accord to happiness and well-being, rather than to academic performance, may explain student success in these examinations. In this sense, high academic performance can be one of the benefits of prioritizing non-academic aspects of education.

Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea faces a number of social challenges, which are reflected in its suicide rate: the second highest in the world (OECD, 2015d). According to the OECD's Better Life Index, in 2015 Koreans had the lowest level of social network support among all OECD countries, with life satisfaction also below the OECD average (OECD, 2015e). While Korea ranks highly among OECD countries in domains such as health, educational outcomes, income and wealth, child well-being indicators indicate that it ranks among the bottom third of OECD countries in the domain 'social and family environment', particularly in terms of 'sense of belonging' and 'time spent with parents' (ibid).

Despite being one of the highest performing countries in PISA, 2012 results also showed that Korean 15-year-olds reported being the unhappiest among all participating countries (OECD, 2013, p. 24). This unhappiness among Korean children appears to stem from the education system and, more specifically, from the pressure they face to excel academically. Studies from 2013 found that the two highest causes of stress among students aged between 9 and 11 were exams and homework, followed by difficulties in their relationships with their parents as a consequence of their school grades (Korea Institution for Health and Social Affairs, 2013). This pressure may explain why the majority of Korean students are enrolled in private tutoring, with data from 2013 indicating that 70.5 per cent of students (elementary, middle and high school) received private education (Hankuk Bang Jeonghwan Foundation, 2013).

Rising school violence and bullying are of growing concern in the Republic of Korea, and it appears that these may also be linked to pressure on learners to achieve academically. A situation analysis conducted in 2013 found that 32.2 per cent of students aged between 9 and 17 had reported being bullied, while 21.5 per cent of students had reported bullying other students. According to Bae Joo-mi, an expert from the Korea Youth Counselling Institute, bullying is fuelled by competition to succeed in society but also within schools, as well as by the lack of importance placed on the kinds of non-academic skills that encourage children to develop 'healthy and moral personalities', both at school and at home (Lee, 2012). An analysis of the hopes and realities experienced by students showed a stark contrast between the two, as illustrated in Figure 8. For example, although more than 60 per cent of students reported that they hoped to rest at home after school, in reality less than 6 per cent reported doing so. Similarly, while almost half of the children reported that they hoped to play with friends after school, only around 23 per cent did so in reality (Korea Institution for Health and Social Affairs, 2013).

Figure 8. *Hope and reality in after-school activities among Korean children (%)*
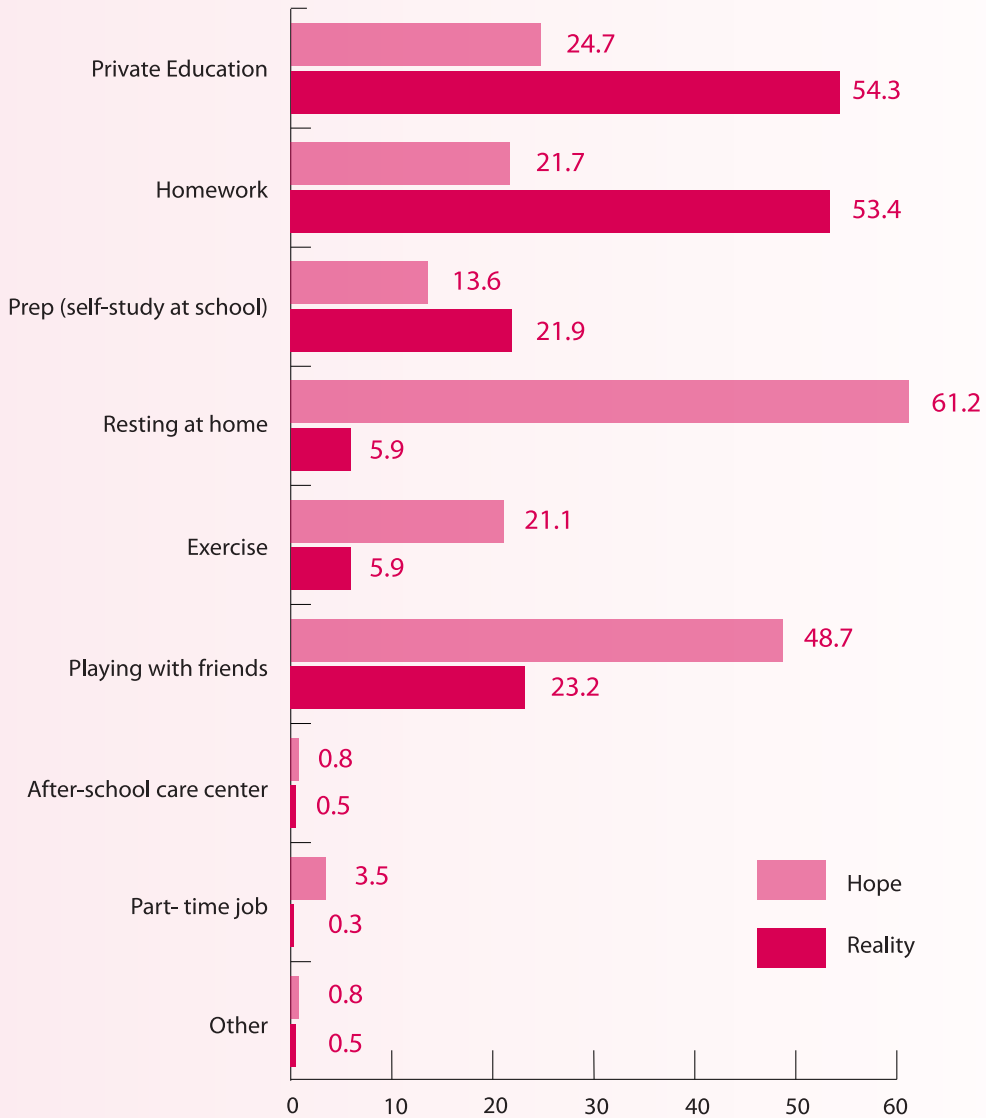
Source: Adapted from Korea Institution for Health and Social Affairs, 2013.

Recognizing the alarming signs of unhappiness among Korean students, the Government of the Republic of Korea developed a clear policy on promoting happiness in education. Since the inauguration of President Park Geun-hye in 2013, the government has been promoting the concept of 'Happy Education', with the slogan 'Happy Education for all, creative talent shapes the future', under which annual national education policy and plans have been launched (Ministry of Education [Republic of Korea], 2014). Accordingly, the 2013 national education policy includes

among its most important objectives the need for education to shape students' dreams and talents (Ministry of Education [Republic of Korea], 2013a). In accordance with this policy, the government initiated measures to tackle unhappiness in students, such as the introduction of more physical education and efforts to reduce stress relating to university-entrance examinations (Box 2).

Box 2. *2013 education policies and plans in the Republic of Korea*

- Emphasize curricula that foster students' dreams and talents (exam-free semester, character-building education, textbook-oriented exams).[12]
- Provide student-centred, customized academic and career counselling services.
- Increase physical education at school.
- Create favourable working environments for teachers to concentrate on teaching.
- Simplify college entrance examinations to reduce the financial and psychological burden of these examinations.

Source: Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea, 2013a, p.3.

Four key education policies in the Ministry of Education's (MoE) Major Education Plan for 2014 can be identified as seeking to improve happiness in education through: 1) the Free Semester System, where instead of exams students can enjoy experiential learning activities and a 'career search week'; 2) the Integrated Curriculum of Liberal Arts and Science to Nurture Creative Talent; 3) the focus on humanities, arts, sports and character-building through activities and clubs; and 4) the Violence-Free Safe Schools policy, which seeks to secure students' mental health through providing anonymous counselling systems, personalized education to prevent cyber-bullying and early detection of students who are at risk of depression (Ministry of Education [Republic of Korea], 2014).

The Free Semester System has attracted particular attention. According to the MoE, the rationale for this initiative is to build learners' character and nurture creativity, enhance learner happiness and reduce stress, and to provide learners with the opportunity to develop their talents and identify their future dreams (Ministry of Education [Republic of Korea], 2013b). With regard to the latter, MoE data (2013b) indicates that 11.2 per cent of students in elementary school, 34.4 per cent in middle school and 32.3 per cent in high school reported having 'no future dream'. This was perceived as being due to having too little time to identify their talents and interests and to reflect on their future dreams. The main critics of the initiative have claimed that not enough activities have been developed to implement the Free Semester System, and that it may increase work for teachers or have a negative impact on learners' learning abilities (Lee, 2015). Proponents of the initiative, however, feel that a break from exams enables students to take the time to reflect on their talents and interests, which may have long-lasting benefits for their future. The initiative, which is currently being piloted, could potentially be expanded to other levels of education and implemented more frequently if it results in successful outcomes for learner development and well-being.

12 This is based on the assumption that exams purely based on textbooks would decrease the need for students to enrol in private tutoring.

Policy efforts to promote student happiness and well-being have also been initiated at the provincial level in the Republic of Korea, and in particular in Daegu Metropolitan area. Daegu's education policy, entitled 'Cultivating dreams, hope and happiness' has four major strategies: 1) cultivating the five major abilities of students (social, moral, academic, physical and emotional), 2) supporting ability-based education 3) creating a safe and pleasant educational environment, and 4) establishing an educational community based on trust and happiness (Daegu Metropolitan Office of Education, 2013). Accordingly, the Daegu Metropolitan Office of Education has developed various programmes and activities including the 'Interactive happy time programme between students and teachers', which aims to foster communication and respect between students and teachers through enabling them to engage in activities and attend events together. The Office of Education has also established school counselling offices in which professional and sympathetic counsellors help students to address any difficulties and struggles they may be facing (Daegu Metropolitan Office of Education, 2013).

Singapore

The 2015 *World Happiness Report* ranked Singapore as the happiest country in Asia (Helliwell, et. al., 2015), and the results of PISA 2012 found that 15-year-olds in Singapore were not only among the highest performers, but also among the happiest at school (OECD, 2013). While the indicators of happiness in these measurements may not necessarily correspond with the definitions of happiness explored in this report, Singapore's results suggest that high levels of happiness are compatible with superior academic performance.

However, despite high scores in student happiness rankings, Singapore's education system has been described as a 'pressure cooker of stress' (Hill, 2010). A survey conducted in 2001 by UNICEF found that anxiety, driven by exams, was one of the greatest causes of unhappiness among the 14-year-old students surveyed, with 36 per cent stating failure in exams as their greatest fear (UNICEF, 2001). The pressure and stress also stem from students' high workloads, private tutoring and parental pressure to achieve high grades (Davie, 2015).

Recognizing the high level of stress that Singaporean students face at school, the Ministry of Education has taken a number of measures. For instance, since 2012 it has sought to reduce 'unhealthy competition' by no longer releasing the names of top performing students in the Primary School-Leaving Examination; no longer grading the performance of secondary schools based on student performance in exams; and by reducing awards to education institutions based on academic achievement (Ang, 2012).

Ongoing reforms are also being introduced, include revising in-school recognition to include non-academic achievements and thereby encouraging students to become more well-rounded and active; cutting back on syllabi content to leave space for deeper learning and application; and conducting a review of examinations and assessment methods 'to reduce reliance on rote learning and encourage independent learning and experimentation' (Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2016a).

In addition, the Ministry of Education's recent addendum to the 2016 Presidential Address highlighted priorities for the education sector that aim to increase student happiness and well-being. These include ensuring schools are inclusive of all learning needs and backgrounds; encouraging students to develop a passion for learning, 'to bring out the best in every child, regardless of his or her starting point'; and reducing the 'excessive focus on academic results' in favour of more holistic education that enables learners to pursue a broader range of interests and develop a variety of skills (Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2016b).

The Ministry of Education has also introduced Social Emotional Learning (SEL), which is an approach to holistic learner development that fosters positive relationships (Yeo, 2011). The ministry recognizes that a 'safe and caring school environment', including positive relationships between students and teachers, is crucial to the teaching and facilitation of SEL and to good academic outcomes (Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2015). In Singapore, SEL is based on four guiding principles: 1) integrating Singapore's core values into the curriculum; 2) ensuring that social and emotional competencies are infused or taught within the five domains of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management and responsible decision-making; 3) making the school environment an enabler and supporter of developing these competencies; and 4) ensuring that learners demonstrate good character and citizenship based on their acquisition of these competencies and based on the core values (Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2015).

SEL is integrated into the Ministry of Education's Character and Citizenship Education syllabus, which emphasizes the core values: respect, responsibility, resilience, integrity, care and harmony, which are seen as fundamental for good character. Based on these core values, the syllabus outlines the SEL competencies and skills that relate to citizenship as components of civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills consisting of active community life; global awareness; national and cultural identity; and socio-cultural sensitivity and awareness (Ministry of Education of Singapore, 2012).

The guiding principles for the development of the Character and Citizenship Education syllabus include student-centric, values-driven education; balanced representation of character and citizenship, expanding domains from self to the world; and students' life experiences. Of particular relevance to the Happy Schools Framework are its principles for teaching and learning, which include recognition that teachers are role models, so their attitudes and attributes should reflect the core values. This principle is based on the notion that values are not only taught but also 'caught', or 'lived' through experiences, recognizing that 'the quality of teacher-student relationships and a caring environment will be essential to the character development of students, and acknowledging the need for teachers to use engaging approaches and for parents to be partners in schools.

The syllabus identifies certain process-based teaching methods that allow for the development of the desired competencies, including storytelling, role-playing, experiential learning, dialogue and cooperative learning (Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2012). The syllabus also includes the Values in Action initiative, which provides a learning experience whereby learners can contribute meaningfully to the community (Thaiyalan, 2015). The syllabus has an interesting approach to assessment, whereby the students are put at the centre of the assessment process, which uses

self- and peer-assessment, and whereby assessment criteria are clearly communicated to students so that they are able to monitor their own progress and set goals for themselves, and whereby teachers discuss the process among themselves to ensure a more holistic feedback procedure (Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2012).

Vanuatu

In 2006, the New Economics Foundation's Happy Planet Index ranked Vanuatu the happiest country in the world, with measures based on three well-being indicators: life satisfaction, life expectancy and ecological footprint (NEF, 2006). In 2012, the country piloted the 'Alternative Indicators of Well-being for Melanesia', which aimed to reflect Melanesian values based on a survey covering three domains: resource access, cultural practice and community vitality. The well-being survey, which looked at both individual and household factors, considered a number of important aspects of collective well-being, namely education, respect, cultural participation and environmental protection (MNCC, 2012).

The concepts of happiness and well-being are reflected in Vanuatu's national and education policies. The Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy (2007-2016), for instance, outlines a vision for a 'caring education system which provides every young person with the lifelong skills, values and confidence to be self-reliant and to contribute to the development of Vanuatu, and which works in partnership with all stakeholders to provide well-managed schools' (Live and Learn, 2011). Similarly, Vanuatu's 2010 National Curriculum Statement states the curriculum's purpose as being to enable students to develop skills that will allow them 'to lead happy and peaceful lives' (Ministry of Education [Vanuatu], 2010, p. 2). Its vision is a 'supportive and caring teaching and learning environment' (Ibid, p. 10), and lists 'caring, sharing and participating' as one of the six paramount outcomes of national education (Ibid, p. 31). The statement makes direct references to the four pillars of learning, and in particular to Learning to Live Together, and lists well-being and happiness-related competencies such as respect, creativity, communication, self-confidence, recognition and expression of feelings.

Vanuatu's national teaching and learning resources also reflect a desire to foster well-being among students. For example, a teacher's guide for teaching history, which was developed by the Vanuatu National Cultural Council in 2005, suggests that, for each class, teachers engage students in exercises such as 'comprehensive questions', 'discussion' and 'thinking further' to enhance student understanding and ability to think critically (Vanuatu National Cultural Council, 2005). The guide also aims to foster student involvement in learning processes and to enable students to interact within groups. The guide is designed in a way to encourage students to be creative, and it recommends that teachers 'encourage students to think creatively', noting that 'there are no right or wrong answers. Students should be able to give good reasons for their decisions' (Ibid, p. 42). Arguably, this relates to many of the criteria within the Happy Schools Framework, such as learner freedom, creativity and engagement, as well as teamwork and collaborative spirit as will be examined in Chapter Four.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter examined the socio-political context of happiness, covering: theories of happiness, global initiatives, and happiness in policy through five country case studies. The various theories of happiness examined here share the recognition that education, through enabling understanding of oneself and others, can be a source of happiness in itself, and that through gaining certain competencies happiness can be learned. The theories also all share the view of education being multidimensional, encompassing academic, social and emotional and physical domains. In Positive Psychology, for example, schools promote happiness through encouraging students to develop virtues or 'character strengths', which in the context of UNESCO's work are referred to as 'transversal competencies' (UNESCO, 2016). In addition, learner happiness and well-being are perceived as leading to better learning, higher levels of achievement and success later in life.

Happiness and well-being are increasingly recognized as a global priority, including in the new international development agenda. This has followed from the recognition that the pressures of today's ever-changing world, including the changing nature of work, may be leading people to become unhappy, which requires education systems to adapt and shift towards prioritizing 'non-academic' domains of learning. At the global, national and education levels, efforts have been made to measure well-being and the skills and competencies that enhance happiness and well-being. This is demonstrated by the seventh target of SDG4, which is dedicated to promoting the skills and competencies that are reflected in concepts such as Learning to Be and Learning to Live Together as well as Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education.

The five country cases presented here – Bhutan, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Vanuatu – demonstrate how happiness and well-being have been recognized in their development and education policies in various contexts. While these countries may each have a different rationale for prioritizing these concepts, their policies share some similarities. First, they all capture, to various extents, notions of the importance of peace and sustainability for happiness. These countries' policies also are alike in the sense that they seek to use education to achieve national goals or develop national values. For example, Bhutan's 'Educating for GNH' policy seeks to enable the achievement of GNH; Singapore's policies to promote SEL and Citizenship Education seek to strengthen the nation's core values; and in Vanuatu education serves to uphold local culture and community. Japan's 'Zest for Living' policy and the Republic of Korea's 'Happy Education' policy similarly seek to bring about improvements in students' lives with the overall aim of creating happier societies. The five countries' policies also all share the general understanding that promoting happiness and well-being requires that education systems go beyond academic domains of learning, and encompass the social, emotional and physical domains. All of these countries, therefore, also share the recognition that education should be 'holistic' in order to enhance learner happiness and well-being.

4
The Happy Schools Framework

This chapter presents the Happy Schools Framework based on stakeholder definitions of what constitutes a happy school. As the very heart of this report, it also explores how notions of happiness and well-being are perceived and put into practice based on their perspectives. Recognizing stakeholders' perceptions is vital given that parents, teachers and other school-level stakeholders are the most crucial in integrating any vision for education (Delors, 1996). This focus on the school level also echoes calls for revolutionizing education from the ground up (Robinson and Lou, 2015).

This chapter begins with an overview of the criteria for a happy school, supported by an analysis of the key findings from the Happy School Survey. The following sections examine the three overarching categories of the framework – People, Process and Place. These sections explore each of the criteria in more detail, as well as examples of innovative and promising strategies for meeting each of the criteria. The examples cited in this chapter, unless otherwise indicated, are based on the findings of the survey, workshop and seminar.

A. Presentation of the Criteria

The criteria for a happy school, presented in Table 3, were selected based on an in-depth analysis of the data collected via the Happy Schools Survey and aim to present the collective 'voice' of respondents. The core of the Happy Schools Framework comprises the 22 criteria grouped in three categories: 1) People: referring to social relationships; 2) Process: referring to teaching and learning methods; and 3) Place: referring to contextual factors. These three categories are interconnected, with the criteria mutually reinforcing one another.

Table 3. *The Happy Schools Criteria*

People	Process	Place
Friendships and Relationships in the School Community	Reasonable and Fair Workload	Warm and Friendly Learning Environment
Positive Teacher Attitudes and Attributes	Teamwork and Collaborative Spirit	Secure Environment Free from Bullying
Respect for Diversity and Differences	Fun and Engaging Teaching and Learning Approaches	Open and Green Learning and Playing Spaces
Positive and Collaborative Values and Practices	Learner Freedom, Creativity and Engagement	School Vision and Leadership
Teacher Working Conditions and Well-being	Sense of Achievement and Accomplishment	Positive Discipline
Teacher Skills and Competencies	Extracurricular Activities and School Events	Good Health, Sanitation and Nutrition
	Learning as a Team between Students and Teachers	Democratic School Management
	Useful, Relevant and Engaging Learning Content	
	Mental Well-being and Stress-Management	

The survey aimed to obtain these perspectives by asking four main questions: 1) What makes a school happy?, 2) What makes a school unhappy?, 3) What can make teaching and learning fun and enjoyable?, and 4) What can be done to make all students feel included? This section examines the key findings for each of these questions, and presents the similarities and differences between the respondents' answers, based on gender, stakeholder type (student, teacher, etc.) and school type (public, private, international, etc.).

What makes a school happy?

The respondents, across all stakeholder groups, placed great emphasis on human interactions, as illustrated in Figure 9. The respondents emphasized the importance of **friendships and relationships within the school community**, which they felt should be based on trust, respect and tolerance, and they felt that the school community should be inclusive of all backgrounds and treat all members equally. Another key factor for a happy school identified by the respondents was a **warm and friendly learning environment** – both in terms of atmosphere and infrastructure – including a safe, clean and green school community free of bullying, with outdoor spaces for playing and sports, and free, healthy and delicious school meals. Respondents also cited **learner freedom, creativity and engagement**, fuelled by creative and practical activities, including experiential learning within and outside the classroom, field trips and extracurricular activities. They felt that appropriate activities would enable learners to express their opinions and learn freely, without the fear of making mistakes, i.e. 'learning without worrying', enabling students to develop a love for learning naturally and the curiosity to question what they are learning, while also allowing students the space to dream and develop their talents. The respondents felt that students needed to develop a sense of belonging and a collective identity, and that this could be developed through **teamwork and a collaborative spirit**, not only among students, but also between students and teachers. This factor relies on another factor, **positive teacher attitudes and attributes**, which respondents described as kindness, enthusiasm and fairness, as well as the role of teachers in serving as inspiring, creative and, ultimately, happy role models for learners.

Figure 9. *Top five factors for a happy school*

1 Friendships and Relationships in the School Community	2 Warm and Friendly Learning Environment	3 Learner Freedom, Creativity and Engagement	4 Teamwork and Collaborative Spirit	5 Positive Teacher Attitudes and Attributes

Overall, respondents (and in particular school principals) felt that a happy school is one that promotes holistic learner development, encompassing mental, physical and psychological well-being and providing emotional support to become 'a place where the child can grow'. According to a male secondary school student in Japan, a happy school means 'deciding one happy thing every day before going to school', which indicates the importance of thoughts in determining a student's level of happiness.

Comparisons by language in which the survey was conducted led to some interesting observations.[13] When answering what makes a school happy, responses to the survey conducted in Japanese placed a high emphasis on the 'harmonious' school, with 'greetings' and 'smiles' deemed crucial to building a warm and friendly learning environment. Responses to the survey in Chinese, however, indicated that a happy school is one where students have freedom and have less pressure from exams, while respondents to the survey in Korean indicated that a happy school is one that gives learners the freedom to dream and is one that is free from bullying. Responses to the surveys in Russian and Thai placed particular emphasis on the importance of discipline, rules and well-behaved students.

No major differences were observed between male and female respondents, with four of the top five criteria shared between both groups. Analysis of the responses of the different types of school-level stakeholders and schools found that all stakeholder groups and school types emphasized the importance of friendships and relationships in the school community and the importance of a warm and friendly learning environment. The latter factor was considered particularly important for students and school principals, and for respondents from all school types except international schools, who placed greater emphasis on teamwork and collaborative spirit.

What makes a school unhappy?

As illustrated in Figure 10, respondents felt that the factors that can make a school unhappy were related to human interactions between the stakeholders in the school community. The most frequently cited factor was an **unsafe environment prone to bullying**, with school violence and lack of respect between students. This factor was seen as being related to issues such as learner fear and anxiety, loneliness and low self-esteem. Another key factor that respondents across all stakeholder groups identified as contributing to making schools unhappy places was **high student workload and stress driven by exams and grades**, as such conditions resulted in long learning hours and an imbalance between study and play, as well as an emphasis on memorization, rather than understanding, so as to score highly in examinations. According to a teacher from Indonesia, the high workload and stress stem from a 'focus on standards, benchmarks and learning outcomes rather than on the human being'.

The next most-frequently cited factor in making schools unhappy was a **negative learning environment and school atmosphere**, which was mostly identified in terms of perceptions and behaviours, for instance a feeling of tension, apathy and silence, as well as a 'lack of smiles', absence of trust and poor harmony in the school community. Another factor perceived to be contributing to making schools unhappy was **negative teacher attitudes and attributes**, including attributes such as strict, unkind, unfair, unsupportive and insincere, and behaviours such as the use of conservative or conventional teaching methods. From the perspective of a male high school student from India, such attitudes and attributes meant that 'some teachers seem to be enemies and the kids are so

13 While no conclusions can be drawn by country, with the exception of the survey conducted in English and to some extent the survey in Russian, where respondents were from different countries, almost all respondents taking the survey in Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Thai were residents of those countries.

afraid of them that they start disliking the teacher and hence the school'. This relates to another factor identified by stakeholders: **bad relationships** within the school community, whether among students, teachers or between students and teachers. Respondents cited a lack of caring, selfishness and competition as features of bad relationships. Overall, the factors that contribute most to a school being an unhappy place stem primarily from people and their behaviour, which are also determining factors for making a school a happy place.

Figure 10: *Top five factors for an unhappy school*

1 Unsafe Environment Prone to Bullying	2 High Student Workload and Stress Driven by Exams and Grades	3 Negative Learning Environment and School Atmosphere	4 Negative Teacher Attitudes and Attributes	5 Bad Relationships

Responses to the survey in Japanese clearly identified an unhappy school as one with a negative learning environment and school atmosphere, manifested by a 'dismal mood', 'silence', a 'lack of smiles' and lack of consideration for others. Responses to the survey in Russian, tended to place more emphasis on the relationships between stakeholders, and the need for improved communication and more involvement of parents. Across all stakeholder groups and school types, most respondents felt that the two determining factors most likely to make a school unhappy were an unsafe environment where students were prone to bullying, and high workload and stress. Public schools emphasised the importance of a negative learning environment and school atmosphere and an unsafe environment in making a school an unhappy place, while international schools listed poor leadership as a significant factor, one that was not significantly reported by respondents from other types of schools.

What can make teaching and learning fun and enjoyable?

Across all groups, the factors that were perceived as making teaching and learning fun and enjoyable stem both from the Process and People categories, as outlined in Figure 11. The most-commonly cited factor was a **variety of fun and engaging teaching and learning approaches**, with respondents listing approaches such as project-based or experiential learning and investigative study that allow students to apply learning to daily life. As expressed by a female public school teacher from Kazakhstan, 'teaching should be interesting, entertaining, informative and dynamic'. Respondents from all groups also placed high importance on **learner freedom, creativity and engagement**, emphasizing that learners should be free to express their diverse opinions without judgement, to make mistakes and to have enough space to engage in learning that would stimulate their dreams, creativity and imagination. Another commonly-cited factor was **teamwork and collaborative spirit**, with respondents noting the importance of students learning together collaboratively. A similar factor was **learning as a team, between teachers and students**, emphasizing cooperation between students and teachers and a focus on shared objectives and goals. According to a female

secondary school student from Japan, this means 'making time to communicate closely with one another and to complete something together'. This factor depended heavily on **positive teacher attitudes and attributes**, as these result in better communication and cooperation with students.

Figure 11. *Top five factors in making teaching and learning fun and enjoyable*

1	2	3	4	5
Variety of Fun and Engaging Teaching and Learning Approaches	Learner Freedom, Creativity and Engagement	Teamwork and Collaborative Spirit	Learning as a Team between Teachers and Students	Positive Teacher Attitudes and Attributes

A comparison of the responses based on language found that students responding to the survey in Japanese viewed 'fun and engaging learning' as being highly collective and including activities such as collaborative problem solving and group projects, emphasizing the link between learning and cooperating with others. As a primary public school student explained, this means 'studying together to consider each other'. The stakeholder groups and school types did not differ with regard to the level of importance given to **learner freedom, creativity and engagement** as a factor making teaching and learning more enjoyable. Most stakeholders and school types, with the exception of school principals, felt that a **variety of fun and engaging learning approaches** was the most important factor affecting whether teaching and learning was enjoyable. Interestingly, **teamwork and collaborative spirit** was ranked among the highest for students, but was not among the top five factors for other stakeholder groups.

What can be done to make all students feel included?

An important feature of a happy school is that students from all backgrounds feel included as part of the school community. The top five factors contributing to such inclusion are illustrated in Figure 12. The most frequently cited factor by all respondents, but particularly by students, was **positive and collaborative values and practices**, which encompass love, empathy, compassion, acceptance, respect, and collective experiences conducted through teamwork and collaboration that create a sense of belonging, as well as fairness in terms of opportunity, inclusive pedagogies, and standing up to discrimination and injustice. This relates to another frequently-cited factor, **respect for diversity and differences**, which refers to respect for diverse religious, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and gender identities as well as for differing abilities and disabilities.

A significant theme that emerged more for this question than for others was the importance of **shared experiences and extracurricular activities**, whereby students can learn to work and live together though sports, cultural events, community outreach and monthly team-building activities. As explained by a female primary school student in Japan, these are 'activities that make everyone smile'. While these experiences and activities were often cited with regard to interactions among students, they were also cited for interactions between students and teachers, as well as with other

members of the school community. Indeed, teachers play a fundamental role in making schools more inclusive. As expressed by a male teacher from a private school in the Philippines, 'teachers and schools should stress the importance of tolerance and love'. This highlights the importance of **positive teacher attitudes and attributes**, another important factor in making all students feel included. Respondents also emphasized the need for **learner freedom, creativity and engagement**, so that all students feel that they can express their opinion freely in class, without fear of retribution, but also in terms of freedom in learning and thinking, and in valuing differences through positive behaviour.

Figure 12. *Top five factors in making all students feel included*

1 Positive and Collaborative Values and Practices	2 Respect for Diversity and Differences	3 Shared Experiences and Extracurricular Activities	4 Positive Teacher Attitudes and Attributes	5 Learner Freedom, Creativity and Engagement

Analysis of the differences in responses to the survey by language found that respondents to the survey in Chinese tended to perceive making all students feel included in terms of treating all students equally regardless of their academic achievement, while also ensuring the representation of ethnic minorities both in the curriculum and in school cultural events. Responses to the survey in Japanese were in the same line as the responses of this language-group to the other questions, that is, highlighting the importance of human relationships through practicing values and collaborating with others, as well as through friendships. Respondents to the Russian survey, tended to perceive inclusion in terms of the need to enrol and accept more students with disabilities into schools, as well as to ensure that schools are equipped with psychologists and mediators, so as to consider students' mental and emotional well-being, thus taking a more holistic approach to learner development.

Overall, the importance of **positive and collaborative values and practices** ranked highly irrespective of gender, stakeholder group or school type. It ranked highest, however, among students, followed closely by teachers. All stakeholder groups and school types also gave great importance to **shared experiences and extracurricular activities**. All types of respondents ranked **respect for diversity and differences** highly, but particularly parents, school support staff and the respondents from private schools. While it did not appear in the overall top five factors, the need for **democratic school management**, whereby students, teachers, parents and the wider community all have a voice in the running of the school, was given the highest importance among all factors by respondents from international schools, it was not accorded high importance in other types of schools.

B. People

As explained in the presentation of the criteria for a happy school, the respondents rated human relationships and interactions as being the most significant. While this was reflected across the three categories of People, Process and Place, the category of People was considered to be particularly important.

This section examines each of the criteria that were presented in Table 3 in more detail to explore how they are envisaged, based on the research findings, and gives examples of strategies that could be employed to achieve them. The examples were taken mainly from the survey responses, the school workshop and the Happy Schools Seminar, but also from other sources where appropriate.

Friendships and Relationships in the School Community

As noted previously, the respondents placed a particular emphasis on friendships and relationships as being vital in making schools happy places and in making learning fun and ensuring inclusion. As a male member of the general public from Indonesia commented, a happy school is one in which there is 'built-in social time and/or social learning time that encourages students to build strong friendships and intellectual relationships'. Student respondents saw this in terms of friendships with their classmates or students from different grades, and their relationships with teachers. While teachers also reported this in terms of relationships with students, this criterion also reflects the need to build strong and positive relationships with school management, and most importantly by engaging parents and the school community. The following provide some examples of potential strategies to facilitate these relationships.

Encourage parental involvement by making schools 'open' to the community

In Akita Prefecture (Japan), schools place particular importance on engaging the local community in school management and ensuring their active involvement. In the village of Higashi Naruse for instance, the attendance rate at parent-teacher associations is 120 per cent, with grandparents and other relatives also attending, and with 18 per cent of villagers registered as school volunteers (Yamaguchi et. al., 2016). In Yuzuwa Higashi Primary school, various parent-child learning activities are organized, and in Higashi Naruse Primary School local volunteers provide sports lessons. There is also a policy of ensuring that the school is open seven days a week for any parent, relative or community member who wishes to visit, participate or offer their support (Ibid). This is also common practice in Yuzawa Higashi Primary School, and as expressed by the school principal Shinji Suzuki, 'I believe that the school should be an open place for everybody. So, our school is always open to the community members'.

Implement multi-grade clubs or houses

NIST International School (Thailand) works on developing friendships across different grades through student 'houses', which are named various colours. Students belong to a 'house' and sit together in house groups, wearing hats in their house colour, during lunch breaks. This provides them with an opportunity to learn from other students of different ages. According to experts, multi-grade groupings of students can simulate relationships that resemble those of siblings and therefore create a family environment within schools (Hough, 2015).

Implement activities with other schools in the broader community

In Akita Prefecture (Japan), villages and schools implement various activities designed to foster positive friendships and relationships among students across different schools and with the broader community. In Higashi Naruse for instance, a project to promote 'hometown education' involved students and teachers learning together with members of the local community by planting flowers together and participating in joint sports events and games. As Takashi Tsurukai, the head of the board of education in Higashi Naruse village, explained, these activities aim 'to provide students with the opportunity to develop bonds with students from different grades'.

Positive Teacher Attitudes and Attributes

Among all criteria concerning teachers, the need for **positive teacher attitudes and attributes** emerged as being highly important for happy schools. This was particularly emphasized by students, but also by parents and by teachers themselves. As a male public high school student from the Philippines noted, 'professors must not be strict or pressure the students in exams, projects or activities. I know that some professors can make the students learn without pressuring them; the attitude of professors greatly matters to students'. A male parent from Kyrgyzstan explained the kinds of attitudes and attributes needed, noting that it is important to have 'active, positive, encouraging, interactive teachers who are innovative and fun'. A female parent from Australia also highlighted the issue of teacher recruitment and selection, noting that at times there was a 'wrong match between personalities and teaching roles'. A male teacher from a religious school in the Philippines similarly noted that a factor in unhappy schools is the 'I teach, you listen' kind of relationship between teachers and students. The following outlines examples of strategies used to promote more positive attitudes and attributes among teachers.

Create a sense of family in the school environment

Some schools have found that likening the school environment to that of a family can have a great impact on creating positive relationships between teachers and students. Chulalongkorn Demonstration Secondary School (Thailand), for instance, aims to do just that. Half of the students in the school are relatives of Chulalongkorn University staff, so this led to teachers treating all students as if they were their own children or relatives, giving them equal importance. While it may not be possible to exactly replicate this scenario in the average school, it is possible to foster a more family-like atmosphere within the school, which can bring out positive attitudes in teachers as well as in the wider community.

Prioritize teacher personality, attitude and ethics in teacher recruitment and evaluation

While this may apply more at the policy level in terms of teacher education and certification, it can also apply at the level of school management. UNESCO's study on Learning to Live Together found that, in some countries, teacher training can encompass aspects of teacher character and personality and teacher trainees can be assessed in these terms in order to receive their teaching certification (UNESCO, 2014). Similarly, evaluations of teachers could focus on whether or not they have **positive attitudes and attributes** and how well-rounded their students are, rather than on how well their students' performed in examinations.

Establish a system to allow for students to give feedback to teachers

The Viet Nam Institute of Educational Sciences (VNIES) Experimental School (Viet Nam) prepared and delivered a survey for the purpose of preparing for the Happy Schools Seminar, to identify what students viewed as the most important elements of a happy school. The survey identified the two most important factors as being 'teachers are enthusiastic and listen to students' and 'beautiful friendships with no violence'. Accordingly, in the presentation the school representative of VNIES noted that there is a need to 'teach students with real enthusiasm, to inspire them and give them frequent encouragement'. The school encourages mutual respect and communication between teachers and students, as well as friendship between teachers and parents. While in this instance the survey was prepared for the purpose of the seminar, surveys to identify opinions and needs could be a valuable way for students to communicate feedback to their teachers, while at the same time providing an opportunity for students to engage in investigative learning. This approach could also be used more widely to identify the perspectives of other stakeholders within the school community. This strategy also complements criteria such as offering students a **variety of fun and engaging learning approaches** and enabling **democratic school management**.

Respect for Diversity and Differences

Respect for diversity and differences was another factor cited by survey respondents as highly important for happy schools. The stakeholders all saw a need for schools to be inclusive of different needs, abilities and backgrounds, whether in terms of culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or physical and learning disabilities and difficulties. Stakeholders also highlighted the need to eliminate competition and favouritism among students, which could be achieved through encouraging more teamwork and collaboration. As a female member of the general public from India expressed it, schools need to 'encourage participation from all students, discuss different cultures and backgrounds in a class setting to raise awareness of differences and commonalities, and foster teamwork and collaboration on projects'. Ensuring respect for diversity and differences relates to criteria such as **useful, relevant and engaging learning content, fun and engaging teaching and learning approaches**, and **positive teacher attitudes and attributes**. The following strategies offer a few examples of how this criterion can be promoted.

Promote knowledge of other cultures both within and outside the school context

At VNIES Experimental Secondary School (Viet Nam), school events such as performances of traditional dances and music are held regularly to celebrate Viet Nam's ethnic minorities and to increase awareness of the diversity of cultures within the country. Other schools in the Asia-Pacific region raise awareness of diversity and differences through international exchanges, school twinning and field trips, though such activities inevitably require a larger school budget. At Daegu Gachang Elementary School (Republic of Korea), for example, cross-cultural awareness programmes, global camps and international exchange programmes have led to students developing an understanding of other countries and cultures. In particular a school exchange programme with China enabled students to share various experiences and build bonds through learning and playing together, dancing and music.

Encourage role play and discussion to create empathy and understanding

Linking to the need for more fun and engaging teaching and learning approaches, the use of role play and discussions can help to promote a sense of empathy and understanding among students and teachers alike. A teacher's guide in Vanuatu, for instance, suggests a lesson using role play, which requires students to analyze a story from two different perspectives. This is followed by a discussion in which students give reasons for each of the perspectives. According to the guide, 'This is also an opportunity for students to compare and contrast different religions and their tolerance of traditional aspects of life' (Vanuatu National Cultural Council, 2005, p. 61). This type of lesson could be adapted in a number of ways, such as to heighten sensitivity for those with special needs or to better understand students from different backgrounds and – most of all – differences in opinion. At NIST international school (Thailand), role plays and simulations are conducted as part of humanities classes, for instance simulating the journey of a refugee, so that students can put themselves in the shoes of others.

Promote understanding of others through teaching various religions and languages

Among the findings of the survey, respondents suggested that learning about various religions and learning languages other than one's own are effective ways of creating sensitivity and understanding among different groups. This reflects one of the suggestions made by UNESCO's Asia-Pacific study on Learning to Live Together, which was to review subject content 'to ensure fair representation of countries' diverse groups in subjects such as history' and to consider teaching religious education and various national languages to students of varying faiths and backgrounds so as 'to heighten understanding among various groups' (UNESCO, 2014, p. 81). This links to UNESCO's work on promoting intercultural dialogue as an essential tool for human development and peace building.

Include students with special needs through collaborative learning

Chulalongkorn Demonstration Secondary School (Thailand) promotes collaborative learning between students, including those with special needs, such as those with autism or those who are

visually impaired. Allowing students of mixed abilities and differing needs to learn collaboratively is believed to create a feeling of inclusion through reducing stigma, and may also develop valuable competencies among other students, such as the ability to show sensitivity, empathy and enhanced understanding. Therefore, the strategy of including learners with disabilities into mainstream classes could be considered.

Positive and Collaborative Values and Practices

The survey respondents frequently cited positive and collaborative values as one of the most important factors for a happy school. This refers to notions of kindness, empathy, tolerance, care and equal treatment across the school community. The following examples of specific strategies were identified for encouraging these values.

Infuse positive values, attitudes and practices

At NIST International School (Thailand), various positive attitudes and aspects of a learner profile are encouraged by displaying reminders of these throughout the school, in classrooms and elsewhere, such as the indoor basketball court, in the form of illustrations, definitions and statements. The desired attitudes include integrity, commitment, respect, appreciation, cooperation, tolerance, curiosity, independence, creativity, enthusiasm, empathy and confidence. Colourful visualizations of these attitudes are considered to serve as important reminders not just for learners but for the entire school community. The learner profiles are targeted more to students, and include statements referring to specific values, attitudes and behaviours, such as the statement for 'principled', which is expressed as 'I understand that we have rules, so that we can respect each other and play safely, as well as enjoy ourselves', and 'caring', which is expressed as 'I will take my turn as a leader and as a team player, I will think about others' feelings when I work in groups'.

Introduce dual-purpose learning across subjects

'Dual-purpose learning' refers to integrating 'character strengths' (based on Positive Psychology) into each lesson by identifying, reflecting and discussing those strengths within the context of the topic (Tough, 2011). For instance, in the teaching of a particular event in history, students may be asked to reflect on the main characters to identify the strengths or competencies that they employed, such as courage, optimism and perseverance, in achieving a certain goal. This is believed to not only enable students to better understand historical events and figures, but to enable them to more strongly identify with the values, strengths and competencies that motivated decisions leading to historical events. This presents an example of how these can be integrated throughout various subjects, rather than taught in isolation in dedicated subjects such as values education, for instance.

Teacher Conditions and Well-being

A recent review of teachers' status and rights in eight countries of the Asia-Pacific region found that despite increases in recent years, teachers' salaries remain low relative to those of other professions (UNESCO, 2015). In addition, as the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) highlighted in its triennial working sessions, teachers in many countries are working in a context of low social recognition, weak professional training and a lack of continuing professional development (ILO and UNESCO, 2012).

Many teachers who responded to the Happy Schools survey noted that good **teacher conditions and well-being** are essential in making schools happier places, and that, ultimately, focusing on improving teacher conditions and well-being could help in ensuring **positive attitudes and attributes** among teachers. Teachers who took part in the survey also reported that they felt a need for positive school management that could ensure better recognition and rewards, as well as a sense of accomplishment. As a female public school teacher in Myanmar explained:

If teachers have a decent salary, respect and acknowledgement, as well as the opportunity to grow in their profession, it will benefit their teaching. Motivated teachers will try to motivate their students to learn. The teaching and learning process greatly depends on the usefulness of the subject content and how it is taught.

The survey findings suggest that many of the criteria related to teachers are interrelated, with better teacher conditions potentially improving teacher attitudes, which may ultimately lead to teachers actively participating in training to improve their skills and competencies, in turn leading to more engaging teaching and learning approaches. The following provides an example of a strategy to improve teacher conditions.

Observe and celebrate teachers and their contributions to schools and society

Observation, at the school level, of World Teachers' Day and other days that recognize the valuable contributions teachers make, enables students and other stakeholders in the community to learn about the important roles teachers play and to develop greater respect for the profession. Similarly, giving teachers prizes for their accomplishments fuels motivation in teachers and results in improved performance and increased appreciation for their work. Two notable prizes at the global level include the UNESCO-Hamdan Prize for Outstanding Practice and Performance in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Teachers and the Varkey Foundation's Global Teacher Prize. Prizes and certificates can also be offered at the school level. These could be in addition to, or an alternative to, traditional teacher evaluations. Other measures to help enhance teacher well-being and working conditions, include involving teachers and their representatives through unions or associations, and offering teachers financial incentives, subsidies and bonuses when they are willing to teach in remote and rural areas or in difficult contexts, for instance.

Teacher Skills and Competencies

While many survey respondents highlighted the importance of highly skilled and competent teachers in making schools happy, teachers emphasized that opportunities for professional development were particularly important in improving happiness in schools. They felt that training opportunities, especially in terms of innovative and creative teaching methods, would enable them to learn how to make teaching and learning more fun and engaging. Given the high cost of professional development, however, such opportunities are not always provided through official channels. While at one level it is clear that opportunities for professional development are essential at the national level, it was also found that initiatives taken by management at the school level can be very beneficial, particularly in cases of limited budget allocations to professional development at the national level (UNESCO, 2015c, p. 4). Nonetheless, they can be provided informally at the school or local level as demonstrated by the following strategy.

Enhance teacher skills and competencies through school networks and peer support

Financing professional development in low-resource contexts at the local or school levels can be difficult, but this obstacle to training can be partially overcome by developing school networks and peer support within schools. These allow teachers to exchange experiences and information, which not only enhances their knowledge and skills, but also helps to increase their motivation. In Akita Prefecture (Japan), for instance, schools have highly motivated, committed and enthusiastic teachers, as a result of two main factors: 1) regular and close communication between teachers who offer each other peer support; and 2) a great sense of responsibility and pride in being a teacher as a consequence of engagement with the local community (Yamaguchi et. al., 2016). A local advisor from the prefectural board of education established this network of teachers through making over 100 visits to schools per year (Ibid). Similarly, VNIES Experimental Secondary School (Viet Nam) has increased teacher enthusiasm through holding weekly teacher seminars in which teachers reflect upon the week's activities, and share their ideas and experiences in using creative teaching methods.

Summary

Based on the various criteria explored in this section, Box 3 provides a summary of the suggested strategies listed in the category of People.

Box 3. *Strategy Box: People*

- Encourage parental involvement by making schools 'open' to the community
- Implement multi-grade clubs or houses
- Implement activities with other schools in the broader community
- Create a sense of family in the school environment
- Prioritize teacher personality, attitude and ethics in teacher recruitment and evaluation
- Establish a system to allow for students to give feedback to teachers
- Promote knowledge of other cultures both within and outside the school context
- Encourage role play and discussion to create empathy and understanding
- Promote understanding of others through teaching various religions and languages
- Include students with special needs through collaborative learning
- Infuse positive values, attitudes and practices
- Introduce dual-purpose learning across subjects
- Observe and celebrate teachers and their contributions to schools and society
- Enhance teacher skills and competencies through school networks and peer support

C. Process

Teaching and learning processes are a fundamental aspect of making schools happier places. As the survey found, the teaching and learning methods teachers use determine whether or not learning is enjoyable, and some methods can enable learners to gain non-academic skills and competencies. Furthermore, the approach to teaching and learning used by teachers affects whether or not learners feel free to express themselves, and are creative and engaged in learning. Given pressure on academic achievement, this also calls for different assessments that encompass non-academic skills and competencies, such as formative assessments at the school and classroom level.

Reasonable and Fair Workload

Among the most-frequently cited factors emerging from the survey regarding what makes schools unhappy was the perception of an unreasonable and unfair workload for students with regard to homework and examinations. Indeed, evidence from Chapter Three highlighted how the rising levels of students are experiencing significant stress resulting from pressure to score high grades in examinations. This pressure stems from both the education systems and from parents, and is based on the perception that examination results are the best means of measuring student learning and success in school. As a female member of the general public from China explained, 'In China, students are allocated to classes according to their academic performance, which has led to discrimination among students and physical punishments by teachers and parents. I think

China should gradually abolish the exam-based mentality since everyone has their own abilities in different things. There should be a holistic approach to evaluating students' performance'. Participants in the study identified alternative assessments as being beneficial for learner well-being as they shift emphasis from assessing purely cognitive skills towards assessing values and non-academic skills and competencies in students. Respondents also pointed to a need for schools and university to use non-academic criteria in their admissions processes. Integrating factors such as student personality, values, strengths and competencies is arguably especially important at the university level and it could shift the emphasis away from getting good grades in high-stakes exams and towards assessments based on 'the whole person'. The following presents examples of strategies with regard to ensuring a reasonable and fair workload for students.

Reduce standardized testing and exams

An increasingly popular strategy for improving student well-being is to reduce summative assessments, such as examinations, which focus on measuring knowledge, and to adopt forms of assessment that focus on evaluating students' progress and development of non-academic competencies. The Republic of Korea has a policy in this regard: a semester that is free of exams. This policy aims to reduce student stress, and is being extended beyond the trial zones and throughout the country. While this policy only applies to middle schools, other schools are adopting similar policies. For example, Daegu Gachang Elementary School, which was designated a 'happy school' in 2012 by the Daegu Metropolitan Office of Education, does not give any multiple choice examinations or tests, and instead evaluates students' performance through means such as performance assessments. In addition, recognizing the pressure to obtain good grades placed on students by their parents, the school has made efforts to educate parents on the benefits of alternative evaluation systems, via the school's 'parents' cooperative'. Similarly, Vidyashilp Academy (India), observing the negative impact of excess pressure and the stress faced by students with regard to examinations and tests, implemented a school policy of eliminating examinations for the first six years of schooling. Instead, assessment takes place on a daily basis through qualitative reviews of learners' thinking and of how they have learned through activities (using worksheets). This approach assesses their overall progress and seeks to create an enjoyable learning journey for students. Therefore it seems to be worth exploring whether exams can be to some extent supplemented by other forms of student evaluation and/or delayed until later years of schooling. The following outline examples of strategies to alternative forms of student evaluation.

Replace homework with optional activities to 'extend' learning

At Vidyashilp Academy in India, for all grades until Grade 6, homework has been replaced with optional 'extended activities' for students to choose from. These meaningful and enjoyable activities aim to 'extend' learning. They are based on lesson plans related to a particular topic and usually do not involve writing, but instead consist of investigative activities whereby students engage in a learning activity and then share what they have learned with the rest of the class. These presentations by students can involve explaining new ideas learned from a book, or presenting objects and useful products they have made. For example, after learning about coconut trees, students made items

from coconuts at home, and after learning about the life cycle, a student visited a silk farm and later made a presentation to the class describing her visit and displaying a silk cocoon in the classroom, enabling her classmates to learn about the process of silk-making. The learning activities also offer the opportunity to interact with parents, relatives and other members of the school community. After learning at school about Aryuveda medicine,[14] for instance, students went home and learned about home remedies from their grandparents. Since these extended activities are not mandatory, students are free to participate depending on their interest in the topic. According to the Deputy Principal of the academy, 'this makes motivation for learning intrinsic' and has resulted in progress among learners.

Value non-academic domains of learning through alternative assessments

Pemagatshel School (Bhutan) implements two types of alternative assessment programmes, which are based on the policy of Educating for Gross National Happiness (GNH): the 'Character Certificate' and the 'Socially Productive and Useful Work' (SUPW) programme. These aim to assess affective skills (feelings, values, appreciation and motivation) and psychomotor skills (physical movement and coordination). The Character Certificate is awarded to students based on an assessment of ten competencies relating to character, including leadership, honesty and integrity, respect for others and creativity. The SUPW is used among older students (grades 9 and 10) to assess their GNH values, which include empathy, love and care for nature, respect for self and others, integrity, green school spirit, teamwork, cooperation and creativity.

A similar programme is implemented by NIST International School (Thailand), one of four schools worldwide that offer the Global Citizen Diploma, an optional qualification for high school students. The overall aim of the programme is to assess students in their attitudes, character and experiences that make them 'good global citizens' and to provide 'a holistic measure of what students are best at as individuals' (Global Citizen Diploma, 2015), looking beyond traditional grading to measure a broader skill-set. Students enrolled in the programme work on projects based on three criteria: communications, global perspective and community engagement. Participation in these projects has enabled learners to develop critical thinking and communications skills by applying their learning through reflection on their personal experiences. Since the programme is optional, this has allowed for more student ownership as well as the development of self-motivation.

Include non-academic factors in school admissions

At NIST International School (Thailand) the admissions criteria for students include non-academic factors such as extracurricular activities and community involvement. As has been a longstanding practice in some countries such as the United States for instance, universities use evaluation methods to assess student competencies such as leadership, resilience and creativity, which some claim to have been particularly successful in identifying promising students who may not score highly in tests and examinations (Tomsho, 2009). Similarly, as noted earlier, the Republic of

14 Aryuveda medicine is a traditional form of medicine originating from the Indian subcontinent.

Korea views simplifying and reducing the burden of university entrance exams as part of their national education policy on school happiness. Beyond this case, it remains unclear how far this is reflected in university admissions across the Asia-Pacific region, and therefore presents an area for further exploration.

Teamwork and Collaborative Spirit

Survey responses highlighted the importance of teamwork and a collaborative spirit in making happy schools. Elements included creating a sense of belonging and encouraging students to learn together since 'cooperation enables learners to work together, as well as share responsibilities, materials, roles, and learning opportunities' (UNESCO, 2004, p. 22). The following two strategies emerged from the research findings.

Introduce group assignments for collaborative problem-solving

Many of the respondents to the survey conducted in Japanese listed collaborative problem-solving as the most enjoyable part of learning, with students stating that this kind of activity involved 'solving problems with classmates during lessons', and that it gave students 'a lot of opportunities to communicate with friends in the class' and to 'answer difficult questions together, rather than alone' and enabled students to 'accomplish something by cooperating together'.

Introduce diverse teamwork learning activities

Teachers at Daegu Gachang Elementary School (Republic of Korea) use a variety of teaching and learning approaches, with a particular emphasis on collaborative learning. Students work in teams and learn in various ways, via surveys, debates and games, and students and teachers help each other throughout the learning process.

Fun and Engaging Teaching and Learning Approaches

Respondents to the survey highlighted the need for more fun and engaging learning approaches in order to make the teaching and learning process more enjoyable for both students and teachers alike. Such approaches do not necessarily make learning easier and may not require less effort from learners, but rather, such approaches help fuel a genuine love of learning, which enables learners to succeed in school. According to a female public school teacher from the Philippines, a happy school would have 'fun and enjoyable lessons using creative and colourful instructional materials and fun activities'. The following presents a number of examples to incorporate such learning approaches.

Seize the potential of alternative learning approaches

Vidyashilp Academy's (India) Beyond Academics programme uses a variety of practical and innovative approaches to learning that aim to enhance academic learning through making learning fun and engaging for students and teachers alike. The programme's five components relate to

various criteria across the three categories of People, Process and Place. For instance, the Shilp Dew news-writing component encourages learner freedom and creativity, while the Shilp Encounter and Shilp Sparsh components foster intra-community relationships and respect for diversity and differences. The programme's components are presented in Box 4.

Box 4. *Alternative learning approaches used in Vidyashilp Academy's Beyond Academics Programme (India)*

Shilp Dew – This activity engages students by giving them the opportunity to create and publish school newspapers. In a dedicated room with an informal environment that simulates a real newsroom, learners broaden their knowledge of various issues. According to the school, this hands-on activity not only increases the relevance of the learning content, but has also resulted in dramatic improvements in writing skills.

Shilp Encounter – In this activity, students develop their communication skills through preparing and delivering speeches and presentations to an audience, including parents. The activity offers students a fun way to develop research skills (while preparing the presentations) and debating and critical thinking skills (by responding to questions from the audience), and to increase their self-esteem and confidence (by presenting to an audience made up of their peers and adults).

Shilp Sparsh – This is an experiential learning approach that involves weekly visits to local villages where learners participate in activities, though do not simply provide 'help'. This sensitizes students to the realities in communities that are less privileged than their own. The visits are followed by class discussions and written reflections.

Shilpreneurship – This activity aims to enable students to develop entrepreneurship skills through practical learning and real-world experiences that relate to the world of work. Led by the students themselves, activities include shadowing in enterprises, in which the students learn about such things as production processes, marketing techniques and accounting, and put their learning into practice by developing their own products to present to the school community.

Shilpgreenergy – In this approach, students engage in activities to apply what they have learned through practical experiences aimed at enhancing environmental awareness, to create a 'greenergy campus'.

Source: Adapted from Vidyashilp Academy, 2013.

Learner Freedom, Creativity and Engagement

Some survey respondents felt that, in some cases, schools provide a 'stifling' environment for learning, one that suppresses learner freedom, creativity and engagement. According to a male parent from Bangladesh, this makes children 'afraid to talk or feel unsafe to talk'. This, along with students' fear of making mistakes, was cited by all stakeholder types as an issue. School representatives at the Happy Schools Seminar highlighted the importance of valuing mistakes as part of the learning process, rather than seeing them as a source of shame. Many educators perceive mistakes as being an essential part of 'deliberate practice', whereby trouble spots are identified to work on, improve and eventually master. According to Mats and O'Brien (2014), 'Mistakes are the most important

thing that happens in any classroom because they tell you where to focus that deliberate practice'. As expressed by a female principal at an international school in India, a happy school is one that ensures 'freedom of expression and shared responsibilities in a non-threatening way, and where mistakes are not frowned upon'. Similarly, a female public school teacher in Thailand explained the benefits of encouraging learner freedom in schools, saying:

The more I am teaching, the more I'm trying to give to my students the possibility to express themselves and to make mistakes. It creates a space of real dialogue on everyday subjects, which is a great way to start. Art is also a way to give a place and role to each student. Through art each one of them can express feelings and experiences in a personal way.

The following offers examples of strategies to create more open atmospheres in classrooms.

Value mistakes as part of the learning process

Some schools encourage teachers to put students' work up on the wall, even if it has mistakes, as a common practice, as they feel this promotes learner freedom and reduces their fear of making mistakes, leading to greater learner motivation and perseverance. Mistakes are subtly corrected during lessons, with displays improving gradually over time. At Vidyashilp Academy, negative feelings that students are likely to have about their mistakes being displayed are minimized through encouraging learners to help each other in correcting their mistakes, while at the same time acknowledging their successes and the aspects of their work for being displayed. At VNIES Experimental Secondary School (Viet Nam), teachers have made great efforts to provide positive and encouraging feedback in student workbooks so as to reduce students' fear of making mistakes. This involves not placing a score or mark in the book and not highlighting errors using a red 'X', but instead focusing on what the student did correctly and providing helpful and practical comments, advice and encouragement.

Teach students to ask questions

Many survey respondents felt that students should be encouraged to ask questions in the classroom. According to Rothstein and Santana (2011, p. 1) who advocate for using the Question Formulation Technique, 'when students know how to ask their own questions, they take greater ownership of their learning, deepen comprehension, and make new connections and discoveries on their own'. Despite the simplicity of this approach, and the many benefits it brings, it has rarely been deliberately taught (Hough, 2015). This technique could be applied in schools in various contexts to encourage learners to ask questions.

Sense of Achievement and Accomplishment

Many of the students who responded to the survey felt that happy schools are places in which students feel a sense of achievement and accomplishment. This was not in terms of scoring high marks in examinations or obtaining good grades in assignments, but more in terms of receiving recognition and encouragement from teachers, parents and the wider school community. Indeed,

positive feedback and public recognition can hold a very high value in the eyes of students, and can motivate them to improve academically. Given that Positive Education strives for a combination of academic excellence and character and well-being (IPEN, 2016a), learner efforts to accomplish goals, even if small, should be celebrated. The following provides a few examples of ways to celebrate students' efforts.

Provide positive feedback and public recognition

In schools in Akita Prefecture (Japan), teachers ensure that they provide positive and careful feedback to students when reviewing homework, essays, paintings and presentations. Such work is displayed in the classroom along with the teacher's detailed comments. This ensures that students can see their accomplishments and have these achievements publicly recognized. According to teachers in these schools, this provides all students with the chance to be praised and acknowledged. Likewise, teachers in Daegu Gachang Elementary School (Republic of Korea) also display learners' work on the walls. As expressed by 11-year-old Joo Eun Kim, who participated in the Happy Schools Seminar, 'we make many displays to share what we have learned. It makes us feel happy and proud when we can share with others'.

Create a 'portfolio of dreams'

Daegu Gachang Elementary School's 'Dream Project' *(Gachang Dalinje)* enables students to develop their dreams and think about their future. As part of the project, each student has a 'dream steppingstone book' where they can outline their progress throughout their time at school. Entries are based on students' participation in the Gachang Master Program, which provides a space for students to develop their talents, whether in languages, ICT, music or sports. Students are then provided with a certificate as recognition. Arguably, this provides students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning experiences, progress as well as their future ambitions and longer term purposes, meaning and significance – all of which are important within the context of Positive Education. In addition, the programme not only allows for the development of character strengths such as perseverance or love of learning for instance, but it also enables them to feel a sense of achievement and accomplishment for developing skills that are not necessarily academic but are given equal importance.

Introduce prizes and rewards through school contests

Many survey respondents cited school contests as a way to celebrate students' efforts. Contests can provide students with a number of opportunities to engage in specific projects, such as a performance, essay or painting, and be recognized for their achievements, which is motivating for them. The recognition of accomplishments, especially small steps, is in line with the concepts underlying Positive Education.

Extracurricular Activities and School Events

All of the schools that participated in the Happy Schools Seminar agreed that extracurricular activities and school events may be one of the most important strategies in making schools happier places. Not only are extracurricular activities considered to help enhance learning in academic domains, but they are also widely acknowledged as being particularly beneficial in inculcating important character strengths that are central to Positive Education, such as kindness, perseverance and teamwork. In general, the seminar participants felt that extracurricular activities should be led by students, or organized collaboratively by students and teachers. From a student perspective, these activities are what made them happiest in school. Many students felt, however, that pressure to prepare for examinations limited the time they could spend on such activities. The following presents strategies for integrating such activities into the learning experience.

Offer after-school activities as an alternative to private tutoring

In response to the growing phenomenon of private tutoring in the Republic of Korea, which often results in excessive learning hours and little play time for students, Daegu Gachang Elementary School (Republic of Korea) launched a comprehensive after-school programme offering a broad variety of extracurricular activities. Offering such a broad variety of activities is seen by the school as a way to reduce private tutoring, and as a result has meant that few of its students are enrolled in private tuition given these opportunities to develop new skills. Through these many activities, the after-school programmes allow for students to develop new skills in an enjoyable way, ranging from learning new languages, martial arts, creative arts or dance.

Organize school events to promote a sense of collective purpose in the school community

Pemagatshel School (Bhutan) organizes events and celebrates national days as a means of bringing the school community together. For example, the school organizes collective picnics, to gather all members of the community. Similarly, the school holds an annual ceremony in which they give a white scarf (*khadhar*) to the new students to mark the beginning of their school life, with the aim of developing a sense of belonging in the students. The school also celebrates international days; for example, students organize and celebrate Teachers' Day to show their gratitude and to create positive relationships between students and teachers. Likewise, the school marks the annual Earth Hour to increase students' environmental awareness; observes 'Hand Washing Day' to improve students' personal hygiene and health; and encourages students to engage in community service.

Engage students through media clubs

School media and newspapers are extracurricular activities that provide students with a fun and engaging way to learn various skills. Pemagatshel Middle School (Bhutan) offers learning opportunities using various forms of media so as to engage the whole school community. The media used by the school include a school newsletter (*Gatshel Selwi Melong*), brochure, handbook, a Saturday morning news programme and a radio show. Similarly, Vidyashilp Academy, as noted in Box 4, uses media as part of its Beyond Academics programme, which has reportedly resulted in improving students' written communication skills, spelling and grammar.

Learning as a Team between Students and Teachers

Survey respondents frequently cited the need for students and teachers to learn together as a team, either through a shared journey or towards a common goal, so as to give them a shared sense of ownership in the teaching and learning process. According to a male public school student from China, 'Relationships in which there is friendship between teachers and students ensure both are given the equal chance to learn from each other'. The following presents a particularly pertinent strategy.

Replace textbooks with collaborative lesson plans

At Vidyashilp Academy (India), textbooks have been replaced with lesson plans so as to give teachers a sense of ownership over lesson content, which they develop through their own research. Teachers create draft lesson plans, which each include an aim, objective, activity and outcome. Developing a lesson plan is a highly collaborative process, whereby the draft lesson plan is shared online and peer reviewed by several teachers as well as by students. Students provide feedback at the planning stage, come up with questions for assessments based on the lessons, rate the lessons after their delivery and also reflect on their own work. Students can suggest new content based on what they have learned outside of school or based on questions they have raised in class. At times, students' work is used as part of the lesson plans. It is believed that allowing for diverse perspectives in the development of lesson plans increases the relevance of the learning content to students. According to Selvi, the Deputy Principal at Vidyashilp, this shared experience between teachers and students in designing lesson plans 'creates a sense of credibility for children's thought processes and helps them understand that we genuinely value their opinions and feedback in curriculum design through teamwork'.

Useful, Relevant and Engaging Learning Content

Many participants in the survey and seminar felt that learning content in school was not useful or relevant to learners' daily lives. As explained by 14-year-old Nguyen Ngoc Van Thao from VNIES Experimental Secondary School (Viet Nam), there is a gap between content that is assessed and content that is useful in everyday life:

What do you think about a student who gets ten out of ten on a civic education exam about honesty, but has actually cheated in the exam to get such high marks? Or we learn biology to protect our environment -some students get really good marks in biology exams, but they litter trash in the street! We must emphasize that the main purpose of studying is to improve our real life and to help our countries develop. We are not learning to be a genius or to make our brains bigger! We always say 'knowledge is power', but according to the American author Dale Carnegie, 'Knowledge isn't power until it is applied'.

At the national level, this requires that curricula be designed to reflect contemporary and relevant issues, with guidance for teachers on how to make these issues relevant to learners' lives, and at the school level this requires integrating experiential learning into subjects. In the words of a female

public school teacher in Thailand, learning content needs to ensure 'contact with real things from everyday life - nature, food, emotion and philosophy'. At the same time, there is also a need to ensure assessments are appropriate. Teachers must evaluate the values, skills and competencies that relate to topics and learning content at the school level – whether through discussions between students, teachers and parents or through observations by the students, teachers and/or parents. The following presents two strategies to ensure learning content is useful, engaging and relevant.

Ensure that learning content can be applied

The strategy on 'extended activities' used by Vidyashilp Academy (India), which was presented under the criterion **fair and reasonable workload**, serves as a good example of how learning can be 'extended' beyond the classroom for learners to apply in daily life. Other examples include replicating real-life scenarios or environments, allocating creative spaces for learning, and encouraging learners to make use of social media to share their learning with others (Roscorla, 2014).

Make learning more interdisciplinary

Interdisciplinary learning approaches applied across subject areas was also raised by respondents to the survey. An example is found in the case of Finland where education reforms undertaken in 2015 introduced the notion of 'teaching by topic' as opposed to 'teaching by subject', using interdisciplinary classes to make learning more applicable to daily life and, in particular, to better prepare students for the world of work. According to education officials in Finland, the benefits of such an approach include making learning less passive and more collaborative, improved learning outcomes among students, more 'joyful learning' and the development of competencies such as creativity, critical thinking and communication (Garner, 2013). A more interdisciplinary and integrated approach to curricula, as well as to teaching and learning approaches could therefore be considered.

Mental Well-being and Stress-Management

As was explored in Chapter Three, education is essentially multidimensional and must be viewed as a means to not only develop academic or intellectual skills, but also to develop physical and psychological capacities. The following describes strategies that have been used to enhance students' mental well-being and stress-management.

Provide in-school psychologists or counsellors

Many respondents to the survey emphasized the need for schools to have an in-house psychologist or counsellor, or easy access to these services, so that students have the opportunity to talk about their concerns in a safe and anonymous space. This reflects the findings of many experts who believe implementing well-being programmes in schools have many benefits (Seligman et. al., 2009). Such programmes and services allow for early detection of stress and depression, and can be of great benefit not only for students, but also for teachers and other members of the school community. While not all school budgets may allow for an in-house certified psychologist, it may

be possible to hire a school counsellor. Pemagatshel School (Bhutan) employs a full-time counsellor who plays a very important role in providing students with a space to speak anonymously, and who also provides career counselling and peer support. Another option in low-resource contexts is to appoint and train a teacher or a member of the local community to serve as a school counsellor, either on a paid or voluntary basis.

Implement school well-being programmes

Northwood Prep in the United Kingdom promotes the concept of 'lessons in pupil well-being' or 'happiness lessons', and has seen many benefits. According to Trevor Lee, the school principal, the programme has resulted in students not only looking forward to lessons, but also being able to learn practical methods such as meditation or increased sleep for instance, for dealing constructively with difficult times in their lives (Lee, 2001). Other 'reflective' activities also include painting, listening to music, writing poetry or journaling.

Introduce mindfulness meditation

There is growing interest in the innovative practice of 'mindfulness' and 'mindfulness meditation' in school settings. Drawing from local customs and Buddhist heritage, Pemagatshel School (Bhutan) has introduced mindfulness meditation and has found this to have had a positive effect not only on student focus and concentration, but also on learners' well-being. Mindfulness meditation is incorporated in daily school life in various ways, including two-minute meditation sessions before the first, fifth and seventh periods, guided meditation sessions every Monday during the school assembly, and mindfulness practice during extracurricular activities. Other schools could replicate this programme by identifying a suitable time in the timetable to allocate to meditation practice or other quiet reflection, whether in a specific class, as part of assemblies or as a separate activity.

Use visual displays with suggestions for stress-management

Another simple way to teach stress-management techniques in schools is to communicate suggestions to learners through posters displayed prominently in the school. NIST International School (Thailand), for example, displayed a poster titled 'Stress Less' in the school hallway with a number of stress-management suggestions for students, such as dancing, going for a walk, talking about problems, going to bed earlier, meditating, eating healthily, listening to music and smiling. Visual displays such as these are considered to not only provide positive reinforcement to a learner who may be suffering from stress, but to also provide an important form of communication with those who may not feel able to express their problems and to illustrate that they are not alone in feeling stressed.

Summary

Based on the various criteria explored in this section, Box 5 provides a summary of the suggested strategies listed in the category of Process.

Box 5. *Strategy Box: Process*

- Reduce standardized testing and exams
- Replace homework with optional activities to 'extend' learning
- Value non-academic domains of learning through alternative assessments
- Include non-academic factors in school admissions
- Introduce group assignments for collaborative problem-solving
- Introduce diverse teamwork learning activities
- Seize the potential of alternative learning approaches
- Value mistakes as part of the learning process
- Teach students to ask questions
- Provide positive feedback and public recognition
- Create a 'portfolio of dreams'
- Introduce prizes and rewards through school contests
- Offer after-school activities as an alternative to private tutoring
- Organize school events to promote a sense of collective purpose in the school community
- Engage students through media clubs
- Replace textbooks with collaborative lesson plans
- Ensure that learning content can be applied
- Make learning more interdisciplinary
- Provide in-school psychologists or counsellors
- Implement school well-being programmes
- Introduce mindfulness meditation
- Use visual displays with suggestions for stress-management

D. Place

Schools have the incredible potential to serve as positive, or 'happy', institutions. While this section focuses on schools as a 'place' in terms of the wider learning and school context, it is important to note that many of these criteria are also related to the category of People.

Secure Environment Free of Bullying

The survey respondents identified an unsafe environment prone to bullying as the factor most likely to lead to unhappiness in schools. Respondents cited rising school violence and bullying as being due to students' differing socio-economic backgrounds and to competition in student rankings based on academic achievement. In addition, respondents felt that an unsafe environment gave students a sense of isolation, fear, anxiety and loneliness. The following two strategies are being used to improve learning environments in schools.

Foster student interaction and collaboration through shared learning and playing activities

At Daegu Gachang Elementary School (Republic of Korea) they believe that the broad variety of activities they offer, including sports, arts and languages, has reduced stress among students, which is caused by competition. Other types of activities include extracurricular activities, group learning, 'ice-breakers' within the classroom, and play activities and games that promote collaboration during recreational breaks. The activities have had the result that students tend to interact more with one another and help each other. As a result of the school's efforts, the Daegu Metropolitan Office of Education assessed the school as being safe and free from bullying.

Install a buddy bench

A number of schools worldwide have recognized the benefits of installing a 'buddy bench' in the playground to reduce bullying, promote friendships among students and reduce loneliness (Hough, 2015). Some consider that this could also help in developing important competencies among learners such as solidarity and kindness towards others. NIST International School (Thailand) installed a buddy bench in the playground and explained to the students that if a student is seen sitting on this bench, they are seeking friends so other students should approach them and join them. This strategy is also of great relevance to fostering **positive friendships and relationships**.

Warm and Friendly Learning Environment

Respondents to the survey felt that a **warm and friendly learning environment** was the second-most important factor in fostering happiness in schools, and expressed a need for more interaction between school-level stakeholders, learner-friendly classroom environments and the use of music and visuals in learning. The following provide strategies to promote warmer and friendlier learning environments in schools.

Place emphasis on greetings and smiles

As explored earlier in this chapter, results from the survey conducted in Japanese placed a particular emphasis on the importance of greeting and smiling at one another in order to create a warm and friendly learning environment. When asked what factors make a school happy, a female primary public school student cited 'a lot of smiles'. Similarly, a male public school principal cited 'cheerful smiles and greetings'. According to Hough (2015), encouraging smiling in schools may be one of the simplest strategies for creating a warm and friendly learning environment. Citing a teacher who made this an everyday goal, it was found that it enhanced well-being in the school community (Hough, 2015).

Remove walls around classrooms

Yuzawa Higashu Primary School in Akita Prefecture (Japan) has made its classrooms completely open, by removing the doors and some of the interior walls. These open classrooms have been found to create a sense of transparency, by making the teaching and learning process openly visible to the school community, including other teachers, parents and school staff. The hallway is wide and spacious so that it can also be a space for learners to play during the cold winter months. Similarly, NIST International School (Thailand) keeps classrooms open in early grades so that the students in these classes can interact more with one another. While implementing this strategy would depend on the infrastructure of the school, for these schools it was noted as contributing to a happier learning environment, particularly at the primary level.

Replace school bells with music

In 2011, the then principal of Pemagatshel School (Bhutan) replaced the school bell with music following his visit to Sathya Sai School in Thailand. The main objectives of this initiative were to start the day positively; preserve and promote culture and tradition; refresh the mind of the students after lessons; support learning through music; and end the day positively. The music that is played varies, with the school playing traditional Bhutanese songs, English nursery rhymes, and religious music on auspicious days.

As explained by Jigme, a teacher from Pemagatshel School, 'We are very careful about the type of song that we play, as it is the whole school that will be listening, relaxing and enjoying that very moment'. According to this teacher, the use of music rather than bells has resulted in a number of positive changes. Both teachers and students have learned traditional songs, students have begun to show an interest in religious/cultural days and have an increased sense of belonging and students have become more aware of the time. Furthermore, learning has become much livelier and the initiative has eased stress, thereby creating a happy learning environment. He noted that 'It is very exciting to see students and even some teachers happily grooving to the tune of music'.

Use creative, colourful and meaningful visual displays

Schools in Akita Prefecture (Japan) organize monthly book displays in their hallways, with a new theme each month, and they display colourful and informative posters created by students and use the steps in their schools to display synonyms and vocabulary. These visual displays are used to communicate with students and raise their awareness of various issues. Similarly, NIST International School (Thailand) raises awareness of the importance of exercise by noting the number of calories lost through walking each step in the school. This also supports other criteria such as **health, sanitation and nutrition** which will be examined later in this chapter.

Open and Green Learning and Playing Spaces

The survey respondents felt that happy schools have spaces and equipment that are conducive to creating a positive learning environment, including good infrastructure, sanitation facilities and ICT equipment. In particular, respondents stressed the important of green outdoor spaces for learning and playing, so that learners can spend time outside the classroom and connect with nature. According to a female private school teacher from the Philippines, a happy school is one with 'an environment conducive to learning and socialization, with plenty of natural light and greenery, and well-maintained infrastructure'. A female public school teacher from Thailand likewise recognized the importance of green spaces, but in a broader sense, saying that 'contact with the outside world – nature and people of other cultures and ages' is essential. The following strategies are listed in this regard.

Create relaxing and creative spaces

Pemagatshel School (Bhutan) opened a school 'reading cafe', to provide a comfortable space for learners to enjoy reading during their spare time. The environment in the cafe is more relaxed than a traditional library and provides a space for students to socialize and relax, as well as read.

Establish a school garden

Given the importance for students to have a green school environment, a number of schools have implemented school garden programmes which they consider as making the school environment greener and providing opportunities for practical learning activities, while also leading to improved nutrition and greater involvement of parents and other members of the school community. Daegu Gachang Elementary School (Republic of Korea), for instance, established a vegetable garden that students and their families are welcome to use in their free time.

Make use of outdoor spaces for learning and playing

VNIES Experimental Secondary School (Viet Nam), allows students to study subjects such as art, physical education and biology outside. Students enjoy this experience and feel that they learn well outdoors. As student Nguyen Ngoc Van Thao expressed it, 'We are allowed to enjoy fresh air and beautiful scenery to improve our health and have more inspiration, so that lessons are more

effective'. Similarly, Daegu Gachang Elementary School (Republic of Korea) uses the local natural environment in the community for sports activities and to encourage students to exercise and stay healthy. The school uses green spaces within the school campus for investigative learning activities, and as a learning space, with outdoor classrooms set up with tables and benches. Given the long school hours, this serves to enable students to have more time outside the classroom.

School Vision and Leadership

Looking more at the wider management of the school, respondents felt it was important to have a school vision that was conducive to happy schools. Among the schools that participated in the seminar, several had school visions, mottos or slogans with direct references to happiness or that were linked to the concept of Happy Schools. The following describes examples of these school visions.

Promote school visions that prioritize happiness

The vision of Daegu Gachang Elementary School (Republic of Korea) is a 'school that nurtures dreams and talents'. Similarly, the vision of Yuzawa Higashi Primary School also refers to dreams, 'Be a child with dreams and self-motivation, let's make a happy school together!' Based on this school vision, the Yuzawa Higashi school principal, Shinji Suzuki, envisions happiness as consisting of four elements: 1) to be loved, 2) to be praised, 3) to have a role, and 4) to be appreciated. These elements reflect many important aspects of the other criteria presented as part of the Happy Schools Framework, particularly with regard to friendships, relationships and the importance of having a sense of achievement. The visions of four schools in Akita Prefecture (Japan) are listed in Box 6.

Box 6. *School visions from selected schools in Akita Prefecture (Japan)*

Yuzawa Higashi Primary School
Be a child with dreams and self-motivation, let's make a happy school together!

Higashi Naruse Junior High School
To raise students who learn proactively, have compassion, and live a full life.

Yuzawa Kita Junior High School
To raise students who have compassion, an indomitable spirit and creativity.

Higashi Naruse Primary School
Filled with dreams, being bright, and having compassion and an indomitable spirit.

Source: Yamaguchi et. al., 2015.

Positive Discipline

Many of the participants in the study highlighted a need for schools to use 'positive discipline' techniques rather than physical or emotional punishment. Indeed, physical and emotional punishment, were cited by survey respondents as being among the factors most likely to make schools unhappy places. One type of emotional punishment cited by students was when teachers compared students with each other, whether in terms of their achievements, behaviour or appearance. Rather than having the intended effect of motivating students, such comparisons led to students losing confidence in themselves. Likewise, punishment for mistakes tends to undermine students' self-assurance and learning capacity. As noted by a male private school teacher from the Philippines, 'Children are "punished" for making mistakes, but making mistakes is learning'. In the face of issues such as school violence and delinquency, clearly schools need to have some form of discipline. Some believe that assisting students to develop the character strength of self-regulation could provide a solution. They suggest that timely teacher interventions are more effective than the application of conventional forms of punishment, and argue that discipline should be viewed as a long-term learning process (Short et. al., 1993). The following strategies offer examples of 'positive discipline' that can be used in schools.

Replace punishment with constructive activities that foster emotional regulation

According to Hough (2015), listening to students and using alternatives to conventional punishments such as student isolation or 'time out', could create a safe space with constructive activities that can enable learners to foster emotional regulation. Similarly, students can develop skills in self-discipline through games. He cites an expert in this field, Christina Hinton, who has observed that participating in activities and games relating to emotions enable learners to experience and deal with their emotions rather than suppressing them (Hough, 2015).

Introduce delayed gratification in the classroom

More than 40 years ago, a team led by the American psychologist Walter Mischel conducted a series of studies that are today known as the 'Stanford marshmallow experiment'. The experiment, which involves a child being given the option of either receiving one treat, such as a marshmallow, immediately or waiting 15 minutes for a bigger reward, such as two marshmallows, found that when the children converted 'the passive waiting situation into an instrumental activity' they were able to wait longer for the reward (Mischel and Bill, 1974, p. 1086). Thus, it is necessary for students to develop character strengths such as self-regulation and the capacity to distract themselves from temptation. Similarly, other studies have found that there is a direct link between self-regulation and learners reaching their intellectual potential (Duckworth and Seligman, 2005). Accordingly, those who are able to regulate their emotions and delay gratification are more likely to succeed in school. Therefore, efforts to introduce methods that enable students to develop self-discipline and delay gratification have the potential to reduce conflict and violence in schools, thereby avoiding a need for punishment.

Good Health, Sanitation and Nutrition

Survey respondents cited the importance of a clean and healthy school environment, as well as improved nutrition, in making schools happier places. At the Happy Schools Seminar, nutrition was highlighted as being particularly important, along with initiatives to combine environmental awareness with health and sanitation. The following strategies demonstrate how schools can improve health, sanitation and nutrition.

Ensure the availability of healthy food in school cafeterias

The cafeteria at NIST International School (Thailand) offers a discount to students on meals that are selected from the salad bar. This gives students a financial incentive to make healthy meal choices. In addition, the school has installed snack stations around the school that offer juices, nuts and other nutritious food, with limited junk food options. In addition, the school displays posters with nutritional information on the walls to raise awareness among students of which types of food are nutritious and to encourage them to make healthier choices. In low-income contexts, another means of improving nutrition in schools is to introduce school vegetable gardens or a vegetable-producing cooperative led by the local community.

Have a school nutritionist

As noted in an earlier example, Daegu Gachang Elementary School (Republic of Korea) established a vegetable garden, which while also serving as a means of encouraging community involvement in the school, provides vegetables to the school lunch programme, under which healthy and nutritious meals are prepared by a professional nutritionist. While hiring a professional nutritionist may be challenging in a low-income context, schools could identify volunteers, such as local members of the community, to prepare school meals and could raise funds to cover the costs of nutrition training for the volunteers.

Organize school community clean ups

Pemagatshel School (Bhutan) regularly organizes school clean-ups within the community to keep the school and local community free of litter. This practical and collaborative activity not only contributes to improved sanitation and health, but also enables students and teachers to feel engaged together while also developing a sense of responsibility for health in their local community, as well as appreciation for the beauty of the local environment.

Democratic School Management

The various stakeholder groups all felt that democratic school management, wherein the views of all stakeholders are considered, is important for a school to be happy. Respondents highlighted the need for students to be able to question what they felt were 'strict and unreasonable' school rules and regulations, and for teachers and students to be allowed to contribute suggestions regarding

the overall management of the school. As a female university student from Viet Nam explained, 'students should take part in almost all activities within the school, including expressing their ideas about school rules, uniforms and lessons, to make the school happier'. The following is an example of a strategy that can be used to give students greater input in school management.

Allow students to be the principal for a day

While allowing for student voices to be more present in the management of the school, the survey results showed frequent responses suggesting for students to act as school principal for a day. This is implemented at NIST International School (Thailand), which allows students to spend a day as the school principal. During that day, the student is accompanied by a teacher to oversee school management and is free to make suggestions for improvements around the school.

Summary

Based on the various criteria explored in this section, Box 7 includes a summary of the suggested strategies listed in the category of Place.

Box 7. *Strategy Box: Place*

- Foster student interaction and collaboration through shared learning and playing activities
- Install a buddy bench
- Place emphasis on greetings and smiles
- Remove walls around classrooms
- Replace school bells with music
- Use creative, colourful and meaningful visual displays
- Create relaxing and creative spaces
- Establish a school garden
- Make use of outdoor spaces for learning and playing
- Promote school visions that prioritize happiness
- Replace punishment with constructive activities that foster emotional regulation
- Introduce delayed gratification in the classroom
- Ensure the availability of healthy food in school cafeterias
- Have a school nutritionist
- Organize school community clean ups
- Allow students to be the principal for a day

Chapter Conclusion

The Happy Schools Framework was developed based on the collective opinions and perspectives of school-level stakeholders: students, teachers, school principals, school support staff and members of the general public. Thus, it was constructed through a participatory approach, with the research team analyzing the responses of the stakeholders to identify 22 criteria under the three broad categories: People, Process and Place.

While the strategies presented in this chapter are not exhaustive, they do provide ideas and examples of ways in which each of the criteria for a happy school can be achieved.

The strategies under the People category show the importance of encouraging friendships and relationships between the members of the school community, particularly those between teachers and students. They also illustrate how schools can ensure people of all backgrounds and needs feel included, and can ensure respect for diversity and differences.

The strategies described under the Process category illustrate how schools can use fun and engaging approaches to make learning enjoyable for students and teachers alike and how schools can promote learner freedom and encourage students to express their opinions and feel free to make mistakes. They also show how schools can make students' workloads more reasonable, thus preventing excessive stress among students. In addition, they offer ideas for extracurricular activities, which are among the factors considered most important for making schools happier places.

Strategies described under the category of Place showed how to promote happiness through improved infrastructure and physical contexts and through making these environments warm, friendly and conducive to learning.

In general, these strategies show that simple ideas and small changes can make large and positive differences in students' well-being and learning outcomes. The 22 criteria under the three categories and the strategies used to achieve those criteria are linked and mutually reinforce each other. For example, strategies to improve relationships and friendships (People), can also help to create a warm and friendly learning environment (Place), while strategies to encourage positive teacher attitudes and attributes and improvements in teachers' skills and competencies (People) can lead to fun and engaging teaching and learning approaches (Process). Thus, the three categories are all of equal importance in making schools happier places.

5

Reflections, Next Steps and Conclusions
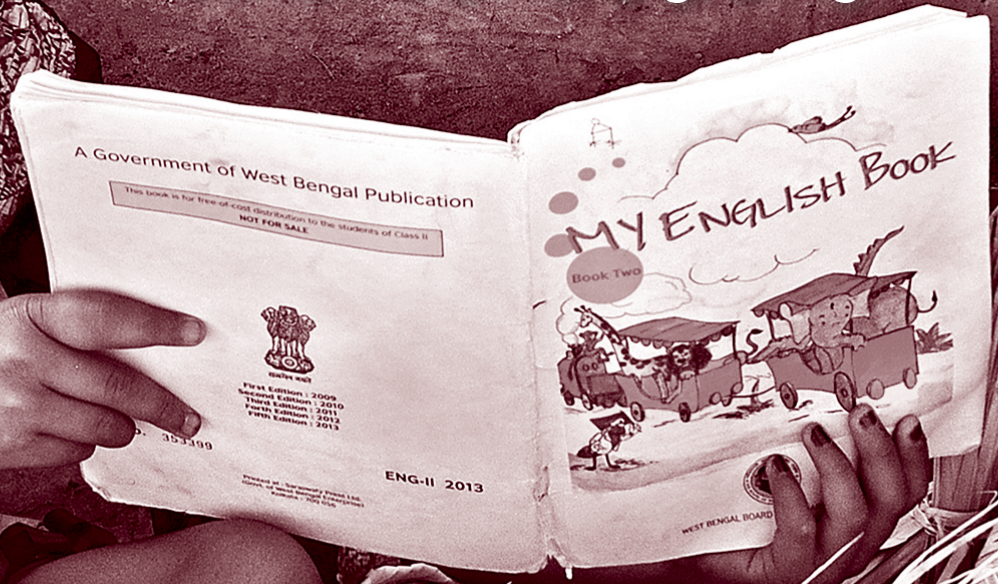
Reflections

As discussed in this report, **happiness has always been defined as a human purpose** in various philosophies, from ancient times until today. Well-being is now reflected as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Education 2030 (SDG4), with the latter highlighting the importance of developing skills and competencies that nurture well-being. It is clear that an increasing number of countries are also prioritizing happiness and well-being as part of their policy frameworks. In particular, education has been recognized as something that can enhance happiness and well-being through contributing to learners' holistic development, nurturing their intellectual, physical, psychological and moral competencies and giving them a sense of belonging and meaning.

Given the importance placed on happiness and well-being today, this report has pointed to a number of important policy implications that lead us to question existing education policies and practices. Reviewing overloaded curricula with too many subjects, ensuring new types of teachers and pedagogies that promote positive attitudes and attributes, as well as a renewed emphasis on school organizations and clubs are but a few examples. It also questions the motivation behind education policymaking, in particular with regard to assessment systems and the disproportionate focus on international league tables, benchmarks and results from examinations. While international league tables may not themselves be the problem, they do influence countries/policymakers, driving them to impose standards on school systems in order to compare and benchmark their performance with others (Robinson and Lou, 2015).

Within this context, this report calls **for a fundamental shift in education to allow for learners' unique talents and strengths to shine**. An enabling school environment that provides more time for reflection as opposed to the rush-and-efficiency logic, could potentially result in equal if not higher levels of achievement and would almost certainly lead to greater well-being among students and teachers.

Based on the many perspectives examined throughout the report, one can conclude that they all recognize **happiness as something that is both collective and strongly linked to education**. Indeed, education may not only be the means for happiness, but it can also bring happiness in and of itself by fuelling a genuine love of learning. When reflecting on the strengths and competencies required of learners for success in their future lives and work, many are seen to also promote happiness and well-being, for instance those that relate to friendships and relationships with others, such as communication, teamwork and empathy among others.

Therefore, **all human beings can learn to be happy, but can also be happy to learn**. This is recognized in the various theories and concepts explored in this report, and mirrored by the results of the primary research methods conducted for this study. As expressed by Nguyen Ngoc Van Thao, a 14-year-old student from VNIES Experimental Secondary School (Viet Nam), learning should be something essentially enjoyable that gives them the self-motivation to strive for excellence, rather than something that is forced: 'I think that we shouldn't make the students feel that studying is a

burden. The teacher's duty is not just giving homework to force students to be hardworking. They should try to make students love learning so that they will become hardworking naturally!' This highlights that learner happiness does not imply a lower level of effort or hard work, but rather, is tied to effort and accomplishing goals through character strengths such as perseverance, zest and a love of learning.

The need to fuel such a love of learning is supported by evidence that **prioritizing happiness and well-being can result in higher academic achievement**. Indeed, Positive Education perceives both academic excellence combined with character and well-being as equally important for learners. As explored in the case of Singapore, a number of ongoing reforms appear to highlight a shift in this direction, aiming to reduce emphasis on standardized tests and instead seeking excellence through a 'holistic education' that can instill 'passion for learning' in students (MoE [Singapore], 2016b). At the sub-national level, the examples of education in Akita and Fukui, two of Japan's highest performing prefectures in national assessments, have demonstrated that making notions of happiness and well-being the focus of policies and plans, rather than academic achievement, has resulted in excellent learning outcomes. This approach has seemingly yielded a number of benefits, with other academic evidence proving that well-being can be a bigger predictor of learner success and achievement than tests and exams (Duckworth and Seligman, 2005).

Reflecting on global trends and changes in our increasingly competitive world, **a continued exclusive or predominant focus on 'numbers' as indicators is undermining happiness and well-being** – whether in terms of using only exam scores as indicators of student learning or in terms of using only economic indicators to measure human development. Arguably, such an exclusive focus on 'numbers' can in fact be destructive to learner well-being. The country cases examined in Chapter Three demonstrate how issues such as student stress, depression and feelings of disengagement with society and the broader world – which in the worst cases can even result in student suicide - are growing and appear to be linked to pressures to perform academically and obtain high grades. In addition, even if we were to focus in purely economic terms in view of the human 'competitive advantage' in the future, it is the very virtues, values, strengths and competencies that were envisioned in theories of happiness that cannot be replaced by machines or by technology – as highlighted by Sir Ken Robinson and his call for creativity (Robinson, 2006), and which therefore must be prioritized by education systems.

As this report has shown, **to make schools happier places there are two levels of intervention**: the policy level and at the school level. Interventions at each of these levels are interdependent in many respects. For example, a school may seek to implement a happy school strategy but may be restricted in doing so by national education policies, regulations, curricula and assessment practices. At the same time, there may be national policies and curricula that strongly reflect the philosophy behind the concept of Happy Schools, but their implementation may be lacking at the school level. Thus, reforms at the national level need to be in harmony with reforms at the school level, with both having equal importance.

At the policy level, this issue brings up a number of considerations for governments: primarily to **prioritize happiness and learner well-being in national and education policies**, to review evaluation and assessment systems, how time is spent in school on activities that consider non-academic aspects of learner achievement, and including students' character, personalities and relevant skills and competencies in the admissions process. There is a very strong case for countries to prioritize happiness and well-being as part of their development and education policies. As explored in Chapter Three, examples from five countries – Bhutan, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Vanuatu – each with different cultures, levels of development, and different conceptions of happiness, show that this is possible. While some countries such as Bhutan and Vanuatu, have reflected notions of happiness and well-being based on their traditions and culture, others, such as Japan and the Republic of Korea, have taken such measures in direct response to perceived levels of unhappiness. As demonstrated by these country cases, happiness can be reflected in national policy in a number of ways – whether through national visions and philosophies, curricula, teacher policies, training or guidelines, as well as through suggested school practices.

With regard to pedagogy, this report highlights the **need for a new generation of 'positive teachers'** who are both equipped and supported to use innovative teaching and learning strategies. Dual-purpose learning was presented as an example of how important values and competencies can be taught within and across subjects, while at the same time making the learning content more relevant to learners' daily lives. This report also highlights the importance of teachers' attitudes and attributes, which should be given equal, if not more, weight than other factors in terms of criteria for teacher recruitment and evaluation. As explored in Pestalozzi's approach to education (Box 1), positive relationships between students and teachers and teachers' authority based on love as opposed to fear are pertinent aspects that are mirrored in the results of the Happy Schools Survey. In particular, the impact of teacher attitudes and attributes on learner happiness were highlighted in survey results, with respondents citing positive traits such as caring, understanding and empathetic teachers, and negative traits such as strict, conservative and uncaring teachers. While teachers may fear the loss of authority or lack of discipline from their students, the research findings show that when teachers award students with a sense of trust and responsibility for their actions, as was pointed out in the example on self-regulation, it can lead to a more balanced and harmonious environment.

With regard to assessment, the **values, strengths and competencies that can develop and nurture happiness among students need to be recognized and evaluated** and given equal weighting to more academic skills that are assessed in high-stakes examinations. Given that the second unhappiest factor in schools was reported as stress related to student workload in preparing for exams, education systems need to prioritize assessing those skills and competencies that are ultimately the most important. This highlights the need to 'measure what we treasure', meaning that learner happiness and well-being should be reflected as part of learning outcomes within education systems.

This report gave examples of alternative assessments that formally recognize and measure such competencies, including the Global Citizen Diploma offered by NIST International School (Thailand) and the Character Certificate offered at Pemagatshel School (Bhutan). The 'exam-free' semester

policy in the Republic of Korea for instance, also highlights the extent to which student stress fueled by exams has become a national concern. While this may be only a temporary lifting of exams, it aims to allow time for learners to reflect on their talents and strengths to identify their future dreams (Ministry of Education [Republic of Korea], 2013b). The reduction of exams may not necessarily be feasible or desirable in all contexts, however countries can consider changing the content and forms of assessment so as to help better reflect competencies that nurture happiness as something measurable alongside academic competencies.

Next Steps

The policy implications of the research findings suggest **an important need for policy dialogue**, whereby the findings could be scaled up and translated into succinct conclusions and recommendations at the policy level. Indeed, the country case studies examined in Chapter Three highlight how some countries have been promoting happiness and well-being in their development and education policies. At the same time, the criteria for happy schools, which are based on various stakeholder perspectives at the school level, provide an important source of feedback in view of incorporating a participatory approach in the development of such policy recommendations. These could be further built upon through the holding of a policy seminar to examine how countries could apply the Happy Schools Framework within their policy context, as well as through the production of a policy brief to outline these recommendations.

The strategies highlighted in this report are not exhaustive and simply outline some examples of practical actions that arose from the research findings and that can be implemented at the school level. As a starting point, **a repository of strategies, or a 'strategy bank' could be established**, where individuals, schools, experts or members of the general public could be invited to submit practical 'strategies' relating to one or more of the criteria for happy schools to be considered. Such a 'strategy bank' could be in the form of an online database, in order to be easily accessed by schools.

In addition, **the over-focus on 'numbers' highlights the need for an advocacy campaign that can change attitudes** with regard to the meaning of 'good quality' education. This would help to give enhanced recognition to the importance of happiness and well-being in schools in a world driven by statistics, tests and competition. In particular, a campaign using innovative forms of advocacy, whether through social media, and special events, could help reach a broader audience. For example, the research findings have indicated the influential role of parents, relatives and other community members in shaping learner values and competencies. Indeed, parental pressure on students to perform academically cannot be underestimated, and such a campaign could be targeted to sensitizing them to the role of education in nurturing learner's unique talents.

Arguably, **the Happy Schools Framework has the potential to be scaled up to other regions** given its relevance to many other parts of the world beyond the Asia-Pacific region. As examined in Chapter Three in particular, the desk study found that many of the issues calling for such a framework have been voiced in other parts of the world, which could be applied and then adapted based on different regional contexts.

In light of growing efforts to measure happiness, **the Happy Schools Framework could present the basis for an integral measure of the quality of education**. Indeed, in addition to existing initiatives such as the *World Happiness Report* and the World Values Survey, countries are also increasingly looking to measure non-academic skills and competencies as learning outcomes. The Happy Schools Framework could, therefore, present an opportunity to link measures of happiness with measures of educational quality. The criteria could be reviewed and validated, with additional quantitative measures developed for the Happy Schools Framework to be eventually applied in countries, whereby recognition could be given to schools that reach the criteria.

Conclusions

To conclude, this report has presented the Happy Schools Framework based on two main sources of evidence: theories and policies of happiness and well-being based on the desk study, and the criteria for a happy school based on the primary research findings.

Firstly, of the various definitions of happiness explored in Chapter Three, these clearly outline the linkages between happiness and education: happiness is not only something that can be learnt, but learning can also be a great source of happiness. Education is, therefore, both a means and an end to happiness.

Furthermore, in response to trends such as demographic changes, rising mobility, growing intolerance and violent extremism, increased competition and rapid technological advancement, many countries have recognized that education has a key role to play in building happier, healthier and more peaceful societies. In particular, this requires reflecting on how to best prepare learners, especially in terms of their human 'competitive advantage' through developing skills and competencies such as creativity, critical thinking, communication and teamwork.

The new global development agenda and Education 2030, as well as other global initiatives such as the International Positive Education Network (IPEN), all reinforce this notion and reflect the concepts of happiness and well-being, while country examples from Bhutan, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Vanuatu each highlight the different emphases, approaches and perspectives on what constitutes 'happiness'. Throughout these examples of theories, initiatives and policies presented in Chapter Three, it is clear that educational quality and school happiness are inseparable, with growing recognition that excellence can be a result of happier learners and happier school systems as opposed to standardized testing and examinations alone. This demonstrates that happiness and well-being in learners should not be considered only as an objective for education systems, but also as a means for higher educational outcomes and potential success in future life and work.

Secondly, the report introduced the Happy Schools Framework and the 22 criteria that make for a happy school. These were developed based on the primary research findings, which used a participatory approach to capture the collective opinions and perspectives of school-level stakeholders. The report then presented examples of concrete and practical strategies that can

be taken, in most part at the school level, to achieve the criteria required to make schools happy. The criteria are interrelated across the three categories of People, Process and Place, making them mutually reinforcing of one another.

As demonstrated in Chapter Four, the survey results showed a number of determinants of a happy or unhappy school, from which these criteria were drawn. Respondents to the survey felt that a happy school is one in which there are positive friendships and relationships within warm and friendly environments. They also felt that learners should have the freedom to express themselves and be both creative and engaged through a collaborative spirit facilitated by positive teachers. In contrast, they felt that an unhappy school is one which is prone to bullying and where students have excessive workloads, driven by an emphasis on exams and grades, which leads to high levels of stress. Other features of an unhappy school include a negative learning environment and school atmosphere, fuelled by negative teacher attitudes and attributes and, more generally, by poor relationships. The latter three sections of Chapter Four on People, Process and Place therefore aimed to more clearly define how the 22 criteria for a happy school can be reached through suggested strategies, generally at the school level. While these are not exhaustive, they do provide ideas and examples based on the research findings, on a number of initiatives or interventions that can enhance happiness and well-being in schools.

Overall, both the theoretical and practical aspects of this report appear to provide a basic common vision of what constitutes a happy school. This calls for us to question a number of existing policies and practices with regard to curricula, pedagogy and assessment, in order to review how far they are conducive to enhancing happiness and well-being in school systems.

The findings presented in this report indicate a clear need for more time and space for learners and educators in order to enhance happiness and well-being in schools. The need for more time – including time for extracurricular activities, for learners to reflect on their learning and identify their passions, or for more engaging and enjoyable teaching and learning methods to be prepared – may have been restricted due to fears of low academic achievement in learners. The need for more space – including the space for learners to express their personalities or to make mistakes, to apply learning content through a wider perspective in daily life, or even for green and outdoor areas for playing or to learn outside of the classroom – may have been restricted due to fears of teachers losing authority or a lack of school discipline.

The fears that have traditionally restricted time and space in schools must be overcome so as to fuel a genuine love of learning, higher levels of learning achievement and, ultimately, learner happiness and well-being. This report calls on policy makers and schools alike to stop, pause and reflect, to create more time and space in schools so that learners can focus on developing their unique talents, strengths and interests. Only through joint efforts from decision-makers at both the policy and school levels, can happiness be prioritized in education systems and schools, inspiring happier learners who can create happier societies and, ultimately, a happier world.
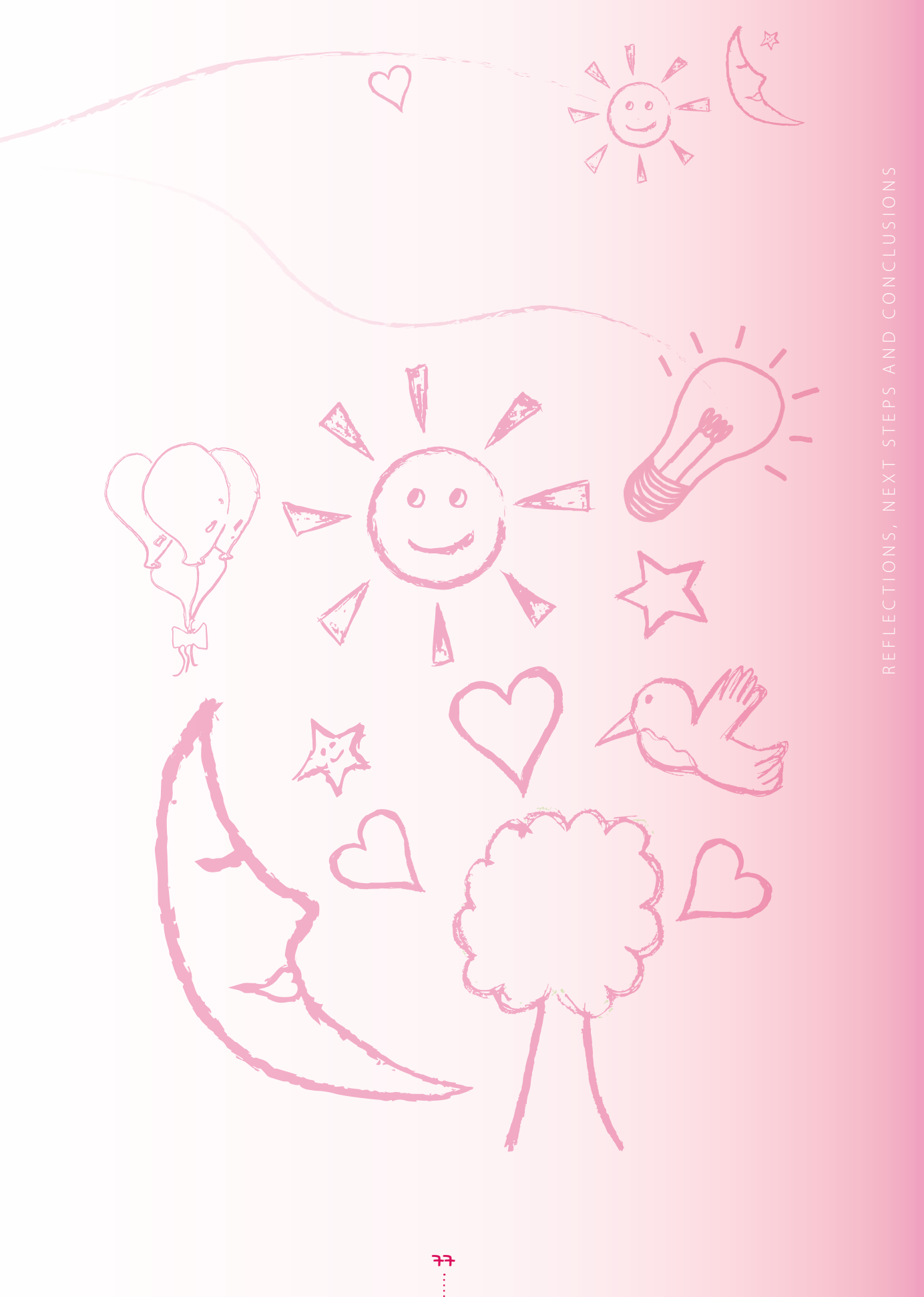
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Annex 1
Summary of countries reflected in the research findings

This report reflects various country experiences, as gathered through the participation of various respondents and schools.

With regard to the ASEAN schools workshop, these were chosen as a sub-region with schools selected for their involvement with the partner (ASEAN Children's News Centre – ACN), whereas for the Happy Schools Survey respondents participating in the various languages (Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Thai) were each asked to state their country of residence. The Happy Schools Seminar, however, reflects a selection of schools based on promising and innovative practices rather than by country.

Desk Study

The desk study covered countries that have given particular attention to the concept of happiness and well-being in national and education policies:

- **Bhutan**
- **Japan**
- **Republic of Korea**
- **Singapore**
- **Vanuatu**

ASEAN Schools Workshop[15]

The ASEAN Schools Workshop selected schools from the ASEAN sub-region based on their involvement with the partner, the ASEAN Children's News Centre.

15 All ASEAN Member States were represented at the workshop with the exception of Singapore.

Table A1. *Participating schools in the ASEAN Schools Workshop, by country and school type/location*

Country	School Name	School Type/Location
Brunei Darussalam	Jerudong International School	International School/Urban
Cambodia	Preah Sisowath High School	Public/Urban
Indonesia	Budi Mulia Dua Vocational High School	Vocational/Urban
Laos	School for Gifted Student and Preparatory Studies	Government/Urban
Malaysia	St George's School	Private/Urban
	St. Joseph Secondary School	Private/Urban
Myanmar	Crane International School Myanmar	International School/Urban
Philippines	University of Santo Tomas High School	Private/Urban
Thailand	Islamic College of Thailand	Public/Urban
	Vajiravudh College	Public/Urban
Viet Nam	Phạm Ngọc Thạch – Junior High School	Public/Urban

Happy Schools Survey

The survey was made available in six languages (Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Thai) and respondents were asked to state their country of residence.

Table A2. *Number of respondents to the Happy Schools Survey, by country/jurisdiction of residence*

Afghanistan	1	**Malaysia**	1
Australia	2	**Mongolia**	2
Bangladesh	1	**Myanmar**	1
Brunei Darussalam	2	**Pakistan**	1
Cambodia	1	**Philippines**	26
China	71	**Russia**	32
India	37	**Singapore**	1
Indonesia	12	**Thailand**	100
Iran, Islamic Republic of	1	**Tokelau**	1
Japan	155	**Turkey**	3
Jordan	1	**USA**	2
Kazakhstan	65	**Uzbekistan**	1
Korea	107	**Viet Nam**	6
Kyrgyzstan	19	**Zimbabwe**	1
Lao PDR	**1**	**Total**	**654**

Happy Schools Seminar

The Happy Schools Seminar included various schools, selected for their promising and innovative practices rather than for their country.

Table A3. *Participating schools in the Happy Schools Seminar, by country and school type/location*

Country	School Name	School Type/Location
Bhutan	Pemagatshel Middle Secondary School	Public, Rural
India	Vidyashilp Academy	Private, Urban
Japan	Selected schools from Akita prefecture[16]	Public, Rural/Semi-urban
Republic of Korea	Daegu Gachang Elementary School	Public, Rural/Provincial
Thailand	NIST International School	Private International School/Urban
	Chulalongkorn Demonstration Secondary School	Public Demonstration School/Urban
Viet Nam	VNIES Experimental Lower Secondary School	Public Experimental School/Urban

16 While representatives from selected schools in Akita prefecture were unable to attend the seminar, an overview of perspectives was presented based on practices from the following nine schools in Yuzawa City: Yuzawa Nishi primary school, Yamada junior high school, Yuzawa Higashi primary school, Yuzawa Kita junior high school, Komagata primary school, Inakawa junior high school; Ugo Town: Ugo junior high school; Higashi Naruse Village: Higashi Naruse primary school, Higashi Naruse junior high school.

Annex 2
Happy Schools Survey

1. What is your gender?

☐ **Male**

☐ **Female**

☐ **Transgender**

☐ **Other (please specify)** ....

2. Are you a...

☐ **Student**

☐ **Teacher**

☐ **School Principal**

☐ **School Support Staff**

☐ **General Public**

☐ **Other (please specify)** ....

3. In which country/jurisdiction do you currently reside?

Drop down menu of Asia-Pacific Member States

☐ **Other (please specify)**

4. In which type of school are you currently studying/working?

☐ **Public government-funded school**

☐ **Private school**

☐ **International school**

☐ **Other (please specify)** ....

5. What can make schools a happy place? *(Please list three things)*

6. What can make schools an unhappy place? *(Please list three things)*

7. What makes teaching and learning in schools fun and enjoyable?
(For example, how should teachers teach, classroom/school environment, student involvement in the learning process, learning content).

8. From your experience, what can be done to make sure that all students feel included in schools?
(For example, students from different cultures, religions and ethnicities, students with disabilities or special learning needs, and to reduce bullying, negative competition and exam-related stress).

Annex 3
Happy Schools Seminar Activities

1 Build a Happy Learner

In this activity, participants were separated into groups based on stakeholder type: students, teachers and principals. They were provided with flip charts and markers, and were instructed to 'build' a happy learner. This involved drawing of a body to symbolize 'the learner', with participants free to draw or write either within or around the body, and to present the drawing as a poster. The only instructions given were to reflect and discuss on what is most important for a learner to be happy from the perspective of their stakeholder group. This activity was designed to get each stakeholder group to reflect, discuss and reach consensus on what 'criteria' are the most important for a 'happy school' with regard to the individual learner. Based on analysis and interpretation of the posters, a number of key themes were identified.

2 The Criteria in Practice – Individual Reflections

Stakeholder posters from the first activity were displayed as a gallery walk, and participants were each given five cards and asked to write down the top five most important criteria for a happy school. Each stakeholder group was given a specific colour in order to distinguish the different perspectives: students (green), teachers (gold) and principals (orange). The purpose of this activity was to allow all participants to reflect on the different ways that a 'happy school' can be viewed, and then select the criteria that have struck them individually. Participants were then divided into four mixed groups and asked to categorize their cards by general theme. This enabled the grouping of the criteria under major themes.

3 The Criteria in Practice – School Posters

In this activity, participants were grouped by school and asked to keep in mind the various themes from previous activities. They were given guidelines, which included identifying the top five most important criteria that apply in their school, and to provide examples of the strategies taken by their schools to reach these criteria. Each school group was provided with flip chart paper, markers, post-its and a print out of the initial criteria, and were allowed to freely brainstorm, draw and write based on these guidelines. They were reminded that this should be a 'school poster', reflecting the situation of their school, rather than a general example from their country.

4 The Criteria in Different Contexts – Country Posters

The participants were then grouped by school/country and asked to reflect on their broader country context. They were asked to consider how the criteria identified in earlier activities could

be reached in different types of schools[17] within their country context. That is, when looking at the criteria, they were asked to take into consideration examples such as schools in rural areas, schools with low budgets, and/or schools with mixed cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. They were also asked to identify any challenges to reaching the criteria and how those challenges can be overcome. Guiding questions were provided, as follows: 1) How can these criteria be met in your country context? 2) How can they apply to different cultural, religious or social/economic groups? 3) What are the challenges in meeting these criteria and how can they be overcome?

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17 The schools participating in the seminar were chosen based on their implementation of innovative and promising practices that are in line with the concept of Happy Schools and its initial criteria, and therefore were not necessarily representative of the average school in their countries. The purpose of this activity was to consider other types of schools within their country context; especially those that are less privileged.

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