Child Protection and Well-Being: A Right or a Privilege

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to shed light on children's well-being in the frame of educational policy. Current research on well-being opens the discourse on children and their placement in policies and reforms. Children continue to face hardships in societies in various cultures up to current times (WHO, 2022). Well-being is a complex notion that presents new interests in recent research with educational organizations, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Council of International Schools (CIS) incorporating this concept in their structures for evaluation and accreditations providing implications for policy makers. Considerations on how children are viewed, including the child in neo-liberal contexts invite us to address the ways children are thought of and placed in societal contexts with connections to social justice and children's well-being. This study proposes Nussbaum's (2011) Capability Approach and draws connections from Bernstein's pedagogical rights, to highlight a different view on childhood inviting the narrative for policy makers to make new considerations that support children's well-being in schools and educational contexts.

1. Introduction

The idea that children have the right to be happy, safe and protected from harm is not a novel one. We can argue that children's safety and well-being is a priority and a paramount concern for every country, culture and community. *In the Pursuit of Happiness*, Aristotle associates the human good with "well-being" and describes it to be the ultimate purpose of the human soul (Charles, 1999). In ref-

lection on the advancements in how the world works and the development in the knowledge economy, one may be tempted to propose that "civilized and intelligent" structures have been created to support children's well-being and their rights to be protected and to flourish. However, research indicates that children have been subject of abuse, maltreatment and neglect over the years up to our present date. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), around one billion children between the ages of two to 17 have been the object of physical, sexual or emotional abuse in the mentioned year only. With many children being found entangled in displacements and areas of conflicts, UNICEF declares societies as spaces not suitable for children (UNICEF, 2023). The increase in child protection concerns was documented in their *Annual Result Report* (2017).

Promises from the knowledge economy and advancements in technological development and the free market have yet only produced a narrow margin of "winners" versus a larger amount of "losers" (Metcalf, 2017). How are children viewed in such contexts and how do various considerations of childhood impact policies and in turn children's well-being?

In considering schools, particularly international schools, as spaces where children's well-being is considered a paramount priority, we can contend that schools carry a responsibility for creating pathways, to not only identify abuse, but also by creating the right environment and resources for these children to address their adversities and prevent it. This can be achieved by putting "well-being" at the forefront of their practices.

Well-Being Conferences in 2020/2021/2022 (n.d.), the 2nd International Conference on Well-being in Educational Systems (2020), highlight the concept of "well-being" as part of a 21st century discourse. Educational organizations such as the Council of International Schools (CIS, n.d.) and the International Baccalaureate (IB) World Schools have included the concept of well-being as a domain for school programs and as a criterion for accreditation. Since well-being is often included in the discourse related with in-equality (Spratt, 2017), I will discuss how this concept came into being with the inception of the "rights movement" and make connections to images of childhood and how these, in turn, impact policies.

By unpacking the "being and becoming" conceptualization of childhood, and the "super child" in "neoliberal contexts", this study will suggest new thoughts and implications for policy makers and practitioners in educational contexts in relation to children's well-being. By using Nussbaum's (2011) "capability framework" to critically analyze discourse related to the concepts of safety and well-being, the study will invite considerations pertaining to a "whole child" image; and how by adopting suitable approaches, will create new pathways that drive and inform policies in educational contexts. The study will draw on a theoretical perspective connecting Bernstein's Pedagogic Rights with the "capability framework" and discuss implications to school practices. The study will end with implications to policy makers after drawing on connections to recent approaches

followed by the Council of International Schools (CIS), International Baccalaureate (IB) and the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA) to support child safety and well-being in schools.

2. Human Capability as an Analysis Framework

According to Schweiger and Graf (2015), children are entitled to achieve important functionings in order to develop their capabilities, and failing to do so constitutes an "injustice". Therefore, comes the capabilities approach as an answer to matters related to justice. The Capability Approach, developed by Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen (1992) to critique Western development models focused on economic growth (Vizard, 2001) and later expanded by Martha Nussbaum (2011), provides a framework for analyzing social justice and child well-being. The basic premise of this approach argues that there is equality when people's capabilities are empowered to do and be. Influenced by UNDP Director Geraldine Fraser's concept of giving power to the people to make choices, Nussbaum's framework brought into focus the role of "individual freedom" in leading a better life. In 1990, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Director Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi discussed that:

People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about much more than economic growth, which is only a means—if a very important one—of enlarging people's choices ("People are the real wealth of nations"—The Mail & Guardian, 2011).

According to Nussbaum (2011), theories of development have given us policies that "ignore" our most basic human needs, dignity and respect. By providing a list of ten capabilities, Nussbaum (2011) extended on the human rights movement and Sen's Capability approach. According to her, a life lacking any of these capabilities is not a good life and justice is achieved when humans are able to develop these functions, if they choose to (Nussbaum, 2017). Her framework supports the idea that living well as a human being is about "leading a life empowered by choice". Utilizing Nussbaum's framework of human development enables us to compare different discourses, including those about children in neoliberal contexts, and understand the implications on children's learning and well-being. As a framework for justice, I am concerned with how the capability approach addresses children's well-being by drawing connections to children's individuality, their diverse and complex needs; and the ways it challenges views that consider children as lacking agency and in need of protection, or that children need to be molded in certain ways to fit certain standards. By unpacking the concept of well-being, I develop my analysis further.

3. Well-Being: A Multifaceted Concept

Well-being is often associated with terms such as happiness, abuse, mental health, child protection and safety. Research indicates a plethora of interest

around the concept of well-being. According to Ben-Arieh et al. (2014), the term well-being recorded a one billion internet hits indicating a "multifaceted" definition of the concept. When attempting to define it, its meaning is often "derived" from other terms associated with it (Spratt, 2017). The term well-being can be connected to individuals and social contexts, and is included in normative assessments that connect policy and educational practice. An individual's well-being can be impacted positively or negatively depending on a series of factors that influence it. Before moving further, perhaps it's wise to discuss what's meant by "abuse" and "child protection" in order to establish how these terms connect to well-being.

Save the Children (n.d.) defines abuse as an intentional act that causes "harm" to a child's safety and well-being… The organization categorizes abuse to be "physical", "emotional & psychological" or "sexual". In a child protection manual on "abuse" and "harm", Miller (2015) defines abuse as the activity undertaken by an "adult" or a "caregiver" which is damaging to a child's well-being. The definitions stated above establish the connection between abuse and well-being as one (abuse) being detrimental to the other (well-being). Child protection, encompassing structures to safeguard children from harm, aligns closely with the concept of well-being. In reviewing child protection policies pertaining to educational contexts, one notices the responsive and preventative layers to these measures. To illustrate, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2006) defines child protection as the pathways adhered to "protect" children from abuse, as well as "prevent" them from maltreatment and violence. Therefore, a child's well-being is dependent on factors related to being protected from harm through preventative and responsive measures. Both responsive and preventive measures are essential to address maltreatment and abuse and we are particularly interested in how school contexts address those measures to support children's well-being.

UNICEF uses a set of domains to define well-being: material well-being; health and safety; education, peer and family relationships, behaviors and risks and young people's own sense of subjective well-being. UNICEF (2006), defines well-being as:

"*The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born*" (UNICEF, 2007).

Connecting well-being as a variable to "quality of life", the World Health Organization (WHO) defines quality of life as:

"*an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment*" (*World Health Organization, 2022*).

The definitions above reflect the multifaceted attribute to the term "well-being" and its connection to other concepts and domains. Aspects pertaining to hopes and dreams, personal goals and position in society, health and safety, social interactions, communities, as well as belonging, are all, however not exclusively "big ideas" school contexts address and possibly incorporate in their practices. The question is to what extent are the above terms and domains incorporated and prioritized? By understanding the various ways, children are viewed, and how these views affect the ways in which children are granted opportunities to have agency and to flourish, have direct implications to the policy discourse. This in turn reflects how much emphasis is being given to practices that are responsive or preventative to support children's well-being. Therefore, our next section discusses various discourses on conceptualizations of childhood.

From a social justice premise, images of children have significance on structures within societies frameworks and forms which drive policies.

4. Images of Childhood: Being, Becoming, and the Super Child

Research on childhood reflects notions relating to "being" and "becoming" (Uprichard, 2008; Huang 2019; Peleg, 2013). Studies that reflect these two distinct conceptualizations of children are based on two different schools of thought: child development and human rights which perceive children as becoming and being (Huang, 2019; Peleg, 2013). According to Harper et al. (2010), childhood in the 18th century was considered a period of an "imperfect adult", portrayed by what Jean Jacque Rousseau described as the "innocent period of life". Such perspectives connected to theories of socio-developmental psychology, perceive the child, "not yet an adult", as one who relies on adults for learning and protection as they mature and develop. This notion is affirmed by developmental psychologists, such as Piaget's (1936, 1932) *Theory of Cognitive Development* and *Theory of Moral Development* which describe children's maturity through stages reflecting the child as progressing from vulnerability to sophistication (Zelazo, 2013). Although Piaget's intention was not to present a theory to measure children's abilities, however, a "Piagetian perspective" inspired the notion of a gradual development of children of what was known to be *developmentalism* (Murris, 2019). Reflected in the languages of the Millennium Development Goals, and the World Bank (Murris, 2019), this perspective conveyed children through the lens of being vulnerable and ignoring their agency (Peleg, 2013). In contrast, the view of the child as "being" presents a differing "pedagogical" model of dealing with children (Reynaert, 2009). The notion of children as human rights holders presents them as having agency and choice in making their own lives, rather than having an adult make life for them (Peleg, 2013). The "being" view of childhood perceives children as active participants in constructing their own childhood. The CRC (2009) considers children as active participants in society and autonomous beings who have agency in constructing their lives (Reynaert, 2009). Nussbaum's (2011) Capability Approach highlights the

rights of the child to participate in shaping their future, viewing children as complex, with diverse needs and agency to make choices that affect their lives and well-being. In the context of child protection, this is reflected by allowing children the voice and space to exercise their rights. When provided the "space" and "willingness" of adults to listen to them and regardless of age and maturity, children are able to share their views (Peleg, 2013) and can discuss what is relevant to their well-being. Having a "unique voice" about their own development is the reason for giving them a voice, Nussbaum (2011). In contrast to the socio-developmental perspective discussed earlier, this view aligns with the "new" sociology of childhood that invites us to perceive children as "active and political agents" (Peleg, 2013) with an ability to construct childhood actively by him-or herself (Uprichard, 2008).

According to contemporary neoliberal discourse on children, a child is seen as "competitive", seeking risk and embracing new challenges (Kaščák & Pupala, 2013). In contrast to the vulnerable child, the "super" child is "molded" into the knowledge workers and gold-collar workers. What's wrong with this consideration and how to connect it with the above discussed notions on being and becoming?

In embracing the stance that children are complex beings, I argue that the discourse places significance on childhood in the "future" rather than focusing on what the child is. The "becoming child" is "incompetent" and lacking skills, while the "super child" cannot be placed in contexts where being required support is considered weakness. Considerations on children's well-being are viewed as deficit (Keddell & Hyslop, 2023). While the "being" child can be considered as an active member in social contexts constructing their own childhood, this may complement the "child in the making" (Uprichard, 2008), without considering children as incompetent moving from vulnerability to sophistication (Young, 1990).

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child asserts that every child has the right to life and states must support their survival and development to the fullest extent possible, ensuring they can experience childhood and grow into adults.

5. Recreating the Image of the Child

The Children's Rights Movement was primarily a response to the vulnerability of children post World War I. According to Harper, Jones and Tincati (2010), the Children's Rights movement is considered an important turning point in time in bringing the notion of children as holders of rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recreated the image of children through 54 articles that obliged states parties to consider and develop policies and legislations to meet children's needs.

The Children's Rights Movement

Violence against children has been recorded over the years as children have been abandoned, abused, neglected and mistreated in various ways (Hart, Lee, & Wernham, 2011). Global research indicates that child maltreatment was not

solely restricted to an intentional act of harm to children, but often was derived from culturally and legally approved acts (Gardner, 2017). Post-World War I, a declaration of the Rights of the Child was drafted and then introduced and adapted by the League of Nations in 1924. The declaration of the Rights of the Child stressed on child's entitlement to protection and assistance (Harper et al., 2010). A new version of the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1950 with the additions of the rights to a nationality and a name from birth and to a caring environment. An attempt to address issues related to continued acts related to child maltreatment and injustices, was led by child advocates who presented a proposal to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1978. Led by Poland, the first draft was adopted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on November 20th, 1989 (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). While children used to be considered as "incomplete persons" in the eyes of the community (Melton, 1983), the human rights movement presented children through a "positive" ideology. By emphasizing children's rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) created pathways for considerations for children's rights, their freedom and education. Since policies are always changing and in a "state of becoming" (Ball, 2016), these new considerations obliged for a new transformation of priorities, policies and practices (Hart & Brando, 2018). Child protection and well-being as well as considerations for policy making are highlighted in various clauses in the articles of the CRC. Article 19 for instance, obliged states to put measures in place in the form of social programs, not only to provide the required support for children, but also to encourage the identification, investigation, and reporting of child abuse.

Article 19

States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement (Article 19: Protection from abuse and neglect |CRIN, 2012).

A focus on children's well-being with connection to the "right to be protected", is reflected in Article 3 which prescribes that "*states Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being*". (United Nations, n.d.).

Furthermore, Article 29 presented a "general policy" identifying the importance of developing a child's personality and talents, and implying the role of education in preparing her for a "responsible life in a free society". Article 29

states that:

"… *The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential*" (United Nations, n.d.).

The CRC also addressed children's rights in being heard and the importance of creating an environment where freedom of expression is encouraged and nurtured. In Article 12, the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides:

"*States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child…*" (United Nations, n.d.).

The right to participation allowed children to express their views and initiate a dialogue between adults and children, reflecting them, not as "decision makers" (Peleg, 2013), but as ones empowered to share their perspectives.

The CRC was the first international document that presented discourse to safeguard children and portrayed them as "human beings entitled to rights" (Ullah 2015) in the areas of participation, protection and provision. Reflecting an image of a child that is empowered, the convention created channels that opened the debate with regards to different considerations about childhoods: children as bearers of rights, versus the vulnerable child, in need of protection (Reynaert, Bouverne-de-Bie, & Vandevelde, 2009). Evidently, the CRC brought children into focus through a new light, presenting them as rights holders when children in the past were considered weak and dependent on adults for protection and decision making. Since how we think of children impacts the way we deal with them, my concern lies with the practices that challenge, marginalize or suppress children's voices in societies that are focused on priorities that favor productivity and achievement rather than well-being.

Recognizing the complexity of the term well-being and its association with various factors, in the next section I address how various perspectives drive policy discourse.

6. Well-Being and Child Protection: Drivers of Policy Discourse

Ideas about children and their well-being are diverse and intrinsically connected to socio cultural, economic, political and religious contexts. These views have impacted the way children are treated within a family unit and society, and how they are protected by law. From child marriage to denying education to females, these issues reflected perspectives and understandings that informed the ways children were treated. Policies have come into being as ways to address big problems or answer difficult questions (Ball, 2015). Policy discourse allows us to reflect on our practices in order to address these problems. Ball (2015) explains that these conversations place subjects, such as students and educators in prime light in order to continuously improve what we do. In our context here, the image of the child and how considerations about childhood impact policies making and in turn well-being, are being put into focus. Concerns pertaining to children as being immature and imperfect beings, or how being in educational contexts

that focus solely on achievement and preparing children to a "market economy", continue to be areas of focus and discussion. As children continue to be at risk, how do policies form to protect children and what ideas of childhood do these policies speak to? Since societies' political structures impact policies, further analysis of the child in neo-liberal contexts allows us to consider the various different ways neoliberal contexts propose to remove obstacles facing children and support their well-being.

The Child in Neoliberal Contexts

Globalization has called for "educational restructuring" in the forms of "neoliberal reforms" (Sims, 2017). The UNDP in Human Development Report (1999) describes globalization as the increasing interdependence of individuals and societies on various levels: economic, educational, cultural, political and technological. This interdependence allowed for neo-liberal policies to invade schools and transform them into market agendas shifting the norms of the "public good" to the principles of "public economy" (Hager et al., 2018). School curricula adopted pedagogies that stifled critical thinking that challenged neoliberal trends (Giroux, 2014a). Educational policies prioritized "profit logic" over the support of ideas (Ball, 2012), promoting an authoritarian mindset and a distorted notion of freedom (Giroux, 2014b). Young people in neoliberal contexts were falling into the criminal system with increased referral load (Haly, 2010) while not much was done to hold reform systems accountable. Serving neoliberal contexts, schools transformed their spaces from nurturing children's capabilities and replaced them with competition aligning their agendas and policies with a market criterion. In adopting a stance that advocates states to take control of children's welfare and favor a neoliberal mindset which is based on individualistic gains and competition, what image of the child is reflected when children become the subjects of what Keddell (2017) called as "damaged becoming"? How do contexts such as these support children's identities and agency?

According to Ball (2003) a neoliberal culture of "performativity" and "accountability" does not lead to "egalitarianism" or social justice. If we want to consider education as a pathway to prepare children and future citizens for the "public good", under a neo-liberal agenda the focus becomes a "personal benefit" satisfying the job market. A school becomes part of societal institutions that are evaluated by how much they can financially contribute to the market. Children in such contexts become "consumers" rather than critical thinkers and choosers, with the focus being shifted to "productivity" through outcome-based learning rather than experience (Ball, 2012). In neoliberal contexts, teachers are forced to shift their pedagogy to serve a culture of achievement. Standardized outcomes become the focus and teachers face the pressure to produce "results" that allow schools to "achieve rankings" and in turn more enrollment. Teachers' and students' capacity to make autonomous decisions become limited as innovation and creativity are not encouraged and "corporate mentality" precedes academic one (Giroux, 2002). In a study conducted through analysis of young students' narrative, Robinson et al. (2018) describe how the culture of a school im-

provement that focuses on grades, competition and ranking, does not accommodate the dreams, desires, needs and interests of young people's lives.

By going beyond an "outcome based" understanding of schooling and neo-liberal agendas, focusing rather on the journey through which children could flourish, a capability approach provides relevant guidelines for alternative ways of viewing schools as spaces that put children and their well-being center stage. As such, the capability approach supports children's claim for justice by demanding that additional resources are provided to support their diverse needs (Haly, 2010).

7. A Capabilities Approach to Well-Being

Nussbaum presents a "capability framework" that discusses how engaging in "opportunities" for individuals can lead to a life of dignity and freedom. Her concern with "well-being" focuses on the "opportunities" through which one should be provided as a "choice or freedom". Nussbaum explains that "capabilities *are not just abilities residing inside a person, but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social and economic environment*" (Nussbaum, 2011: p. 20).

Nussbaum's notion of well-being is based on Aristotle's concepts of "good life" for every human (Gasper, 1997). To expand on this notion, the capabilities in this approach are seen as the pathway leading to freedom by having the "opportunity" to select. Schwiger and Graf (2015) further explain that a capability approach to well-being means the freedom to achieve, providing value to people's agency.

In a previous section, we discussed different considerations of childhood; one that considers children as being vulnerable and in need to develop their autonomy with time, and another that sees children as empowered agents, capable of making their own choices. While the super child is seen as capable and competitive, the super child is framed into the knowledge economy's promise of innovation and entrepreneurship (Kaščák & Pupala, 2013). In reflecting a differing image of the child, a capabilities approach asks what's needed for children to be and become. With respect to concepts of "being and becoming", taking into account children as "evolving capabilities" (Schweiger & Graf, 2015), distinguishes children as being active participants in their own development. In answering the question: "What is this person able to do and be?" Nussbaum (2011) proposes ten capabilities whereby the concept of well-being depends on the development of these in relation to an individual's abilities, skills and talents within her own political, social and economic context (Schweiger & Graf, 2015). The list is presented as follows:

Life, Bodily Health, Bodily Integrity, Senses, Imagination and Thought, Emotion, Practical Reason, Affiliation, Other Species, Play, Control Over One's Environment (Nussbaum, 2011: pp. 33-34).

With reference to the above, well-being here can be contextual and an intricate part of children's environment, social context and schooling. As Kagan et al.

(2007) describe well-being as something not only experienced by people, but also created by them. Seeing children as "striving agents" (Shweiger & Graf, 2015), they need to be provided with the scope and opportunities to make choices in relation to these capabilities. To argue that what happens in life is connected to the "adult to be", is worth investigating the time and contexts through which children's identities are shaped by. Sen (1992) discusses that a significant part of children's time through adulthood is essential to well-being. Schools and education are important contexts in relation to how and where children spend their time. Walker (2005) describes the role of education as one that supports children to expand on their capabilities. Nussbaum explains that by considering capabilities as "opportunities for freedom", a "supportive environment" is needed to develop them. By utilising these "opportunities" and using the resources in the environment, children can develop competencies that allow them to live a fulfilling adult life. By unpacking Nussbaum's list of capabilities to create opportunities for valuable interactions, play, and thoughtful experiences, children can grow their capabilities to live a life based on "personal values and judgement" (Walker, 2005). Failing to provide the opportunities for children to develop their capabilities, "constitutes an injustice" (Schweiger & Graf, 2015).

Nussbaum's concept of contextualized well-being has significant implications for educational settings through the "opportunities" it provides for a child to realize the "ten capabilities". In the next discussion, I will focus on a pedagogy that promotes children's agency, enabling them to develop their capabilities and consequently their well-being.

Education for Equality and Well-being

If we want to consider schools as spaces not only to "improve knowledge" and prepare future adults for employment but as ones that create experiences that foster safety and hope, one cannot but connect to Bernstein's (2000) "pedagogic rights". Without having these rights, children may fail to develop the capabilities to "function well" in society (Walker, 2006).

Nussbaum (2006) argues that an education for capability must focus on the freedom of the mind. Bernstein's (2000) "pedagogic rights" are based on the boundaries to which people are allowed to be free to "imagine and act" (Aristizábal & Walker, 2013). With reference to the wider contexts that influence education, we're going to explore how Bernstein's pedagogic rights connect to Nussbaum's capability framework.

Bernstein advocates for three "pedagogic rights" that allow individuals to participate in a context of equitable society. To Bernstein (2000), to translate these rights to society, people need to feel they have rights to be able to receive and contribute, and that they have the "confidence" that allows them to participate in this process. In considering the above within the context of education, learning and well-being, and linking to Nussbaum's framework, children need to feel that they are allowed to practice their agency in making choices, whether in schools or within social contexts. By creating experiences and interactions that are valuable to children and their needs, they are able to develop their "confidence" to

participate in learning and social contexts.

Both Nussbaum and Bernstein direct us to ponder upon opportunities for freedom. By contemplating how these aspects contribute to a child's well-being, more analysis can be drawn by examining each pedagogic right in connection with Nussbaum's list of capabilities. Bernstein's first pedagogic right is "individual enhancement". Bernstein (2000) defines this as "the means to expand personal horizons and results in confidence". This right is key to the development of an individual's confidence which can be linked to Nussbaum's capabilities: "senses, imagination and thought" and "practical reason". Educating children about their rights, "opening their minds" by engaging their reasoning and senses, allows them the "confidence" to explore making "choices" that support their well-being. The second pedagogic right is the right to "social inclusion". According to Bernstein, it is the right to be included socially, intellectually, culturally and personally; including the right to be autonomous (Bernstein, 2000). To Bernstein, the right to be included socially creates a sense of "belonging". Being connected to a community, having positive interactions and understanding that you are "empowered" to have a role in communities, to contribute, to connect and to empathize; is discussed in Nussbaum's affiliation, social relations and connection to other species. These feelings of togetherness contribute to children's understanding in knowing they belong to and are supported by others. The third right is the right to participation. To Bernstein, to "participate in the construction, maintenance and transformation of social order" (Bernstein, 2000). By being "engaged" in society and knowing that one has rights and responsibilities relates to Nussbaum's capability for practical reasons; the idea that children are able to make "reasonable" choices that are not only good for them but also ones that consider others, as a way to prepare them for civic exchange and societal engagement.

8. Connecting the Dots…

Children are social beings and educational contexts, such as schools continue to be important spaces whereby their identities and well-being are shaped and impacted in a positive or a negative way. The term 21st century and "current best practices" have been used in many contexts to allure us into perhaps thinking that in these modern times, matters related to children and their well-being are "better" than they have been in the past. In a globalized world, where schools and international schools, continue to grow in popularity paving pathways on innovative practices in learning and teaching, it is of interest to examine how these schools have incorporated aspects of well-being into their structures and practices.

1) The International School Scene

I argue that many international schools continue to be driven by a global market to provide high standard and quality education. In support of the idea that schools need to provide "safe spaces" for children, a number of internation-

al organizations led a proactive approach that focused on research and implementations that connect to "well-being". A study conducted by ISC Research in partnership with the International Educational Psychology Services (IEPS) and Cardiff University School of Psychology (ISC Research, 2018) on well-being included over 1000 international schools representing teachers and leaders from schools all over the world. The study revealed that positive relationships, strong support systems, effective communication and a positive environment were factors in favor of the development of the community's well-being. The study highlighted relationships as a direct factor that impacted student and staff well-being. Cooker et al. (2016) investigated the well-being of students in IB World Schools by exploring how the concept was "contextualized", perceived and promoted in the curriculum. The study identified a "holistic" approach towards well-being as being part of the "taught" and "hidden program". This means that social and emotional well-being was not particularly taught as a subject, neither was it the responsibility of a particular teacher. However, it was highlighted through the development of the Learner Profile which is incorporated in all aspects of an IB World school as it directly connects to its global mission.

The aforementioned studies highlight the importance placed on well-being in international schools and the factors contributing to their development in environments that prioritize relationships and a holistic approach to learning. Safeguarding children as a way to protect their well-being was also brought into focus, especially after incidents of abuse in the international school scene. According to Cincotta (2017), incidents of child abuse in international schools have uncovered gaps in the system. The Council of International School (CIS) mention no specific statistics regarding abuse by educators in international schools; nevertheless, it referred to gaps in the system. *The Munro Review* (2011), discussed the importance of "coordination" and "communication" among professionals and agencies to respond to concerns related to child safety. It argued that limited understanding of the public policy makers involved in child protection decision making are among the drivers in reviewing and improving the system (Munro, 2011). The International Task Force on Child Protection (ITFCP) came into being in 2014 to create awareness and "educate" regarding issues and challenges pertaining to child protection. In a joint effort by (CIS) and British inspection agencies, a new set of standards was put in place in order to ensure that pathways related to safeguarding children are implemented. A dedicated section on children's well-being can be found on CIS webpage. Similarly, the Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA) followed suit and collaborated in dedicating resources and support to "develop evidenced based initiatives that foster a whole school approach to the social and emotional well-being of the school community" (Child Protection & Well-Being, n.d.).

Reaching this point, one might be inclined to argue that while more awareness and efforts are being put to prioritize well-being and child protection measures in educational context, however, the international schools associated with or-

ganizations such as CIS, AISA and the IB continue to cater for the "elites" who seek international education as a pathway to access prominent universities across the world (Lauder, 2015). The growing numbers of IB World schools and others that are associated with CIS, AISA and other mentioned above, do not guarantee that the safety and well-being of "every" child is being considered, but rather reflect those who are privileged to be enrolled in these schools. The notion that students from middle and high socio-economic backgrounds will choose elite schools, puts international schools in the realm of being part of a global business with the aim to attract the "right kind of student" for the purpose of setting "internationally acclaimed standards". Even if we argue that some national educational systems may have developed child protection policies, international school "branding" will continue to pose positional competition creating injustices to those children who do not meet enrollment criteria or cannot afford it. What about the "rest"? Those who cannot afford to join a leading international school where children's capabilities and agency are prioritized? Is a child's well-being a privilege or a right?

2) What next: Implications to educational policy

It is relevant to affirm that how we perceive children impacts our actions, practices and the ways we interact with them. In considering educational contexts, we are particularly interested in advocating for the development of new frameworks that speak to the notion of children as being capable, empowered and having the agency to choose what is in favor to the development of their well-being. By investigating narratives pertaining to "being and becoming" notions of childhood, neoliberal discourse and connecting to current practices in international school contexts, I have discussed that there are multiple impediments that affect children to flourish in educational contexts. By considering a capability approach to well-being, I invite stakeholders to think of education through innovative ways that are beyond market and welfare agendas, outcomes-based learning and standardized testing, but through an image supportive of children as competent and active agents.

If we believe that the main purpose of education is to serve the "public good" by creating connections beyond the classroom and into the real world, it is essential to contemplate practices that support children's confidence, their participation in social contexts and their inclusion as members of society. After children have been denied agency because of their age or lack of resources, it is time to re-evaluate practices that support children to develop their confidence, express their ideas, negotiate and retrieve their rights to what Bernstein (2000) identifies as "individual enhancement", "inclusion" and "participation".

Although Nussbaum's capability approach may not have been particularly developed with children in mind (Peleg, 2013), I argue that like adults, children deserve to live a life of "dignity" and "freedom" which is crucial for matters pertaining to their well-being. In asking whether a capability approach would be the answer to address the dreadful abuses and horrifying conditions that children

continue to face. The answer to that is probably "no". However, I can attest that a capability approach has contributed to developing the discourse on social justice (Pogge, 2010) providing many considerations for policy makers to consider the diverse and complex needs of individuals and in the context of our argument: children. In her book *Creating Capabilities*, Nussbaum regards the capabilities framework as "*an urgent task to government and public policy to improve the quality of life for all people as defined by their capabilities*" (Nussbaum, 2011: p.19).

While this study did not delve into childhood in various cultures and how these various perspectives may inform policies. Yet, I have established the norm derived from the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child considering that definitions and views of childhood vary depending on the various assumptions associated with it. In keeping an open mind to the debate, Stables,& Haynes (2011) for instance, presents us with a semiotic perspective on childhood that highlights children's individuality and introduces them as signal users, influenced by their environment. This solidifies my previous argument allowing us to contemplate practices that speak to children's complex and diverse needs. This requires us to generate policies that address those qualities and needs that children reflect and incorporate. Regardless of their social, cultural or economic backgrounds, the capabilities approach speaks for an education that is inclusive of all as highlighted in the following:

"*In order to bring all individuals to the same level of* '*attainment*', *education needs to provide the resources to support those that face obstacles in the traditional hierarchy*" (Nussbaum, 2002).

9. Conclusion

To deny that schools will continue to serve agendas based on various interests regardless of prioritizing children's best interests is the not only point of argument. There will continue to be institutions that call themselves "educational" however, regard families as "customers" and students as additions to an enrollment list. Rethinking childhood will not end the debate on how children are or need to be viewed, however, it will invite us to examine the various ways we perceive childhood, and therefore act on it. In believing that children have capabilities and in that they are responsible for shaping the world we live in, I start a narrative that guides policy makers to consider schools as nourishing environments where positive relationships are nurtured and harnessed, and experiences are created based on children's passions and "complex needs". In allowing agency to children, the role of educators needs to be supported in creating spaces where safety and positive relationships are harnessed. In viewing children as critical thinkers, empowered and encompassing potential, rather than a score or an object to be molded to serve a certain end, we will be paving the way for a positive change. To start listening to the "silences" that speak to the struggles of children, we need to start negotiating programs that speak to the interests of

children and nurture their identities and characteristics. We need to start addressing issues before "harm" happens, not after it does. We need to invite a culture that supports a language of possibilities and improvement.

Nussbaum (1998), invites us to ponder "*an education 'fitted for freedom' only if it is such as to produce citizens who are free not because of wealth or birth, but because they can call their minds their own*". To create paradigm shifts where policies consider children as capable and evolving irrespective of their backgrounds, where schools—all schools—are nurturing spaces that empower them to actualize their capabilities to flourish; only then a child's well-being become a "right" and not a privilege.

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