Well-being and the early years curriculum: a case study of the Foundation Phase in Wales

Alyson Lewis

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School of Social Science Cardiff University

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Acknowledgments

Summary

This thesis explores how the concept of well-being is understood and operationalised in the early years through examining the implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales. In 2008, the Welsh Government presented well-being as one of seven Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase, which is the statutory curriculum for 3-to-7 year olds. Despite the appealing interest of well-being within policy, very limited research focuses on understanding the nature of well-being in schools and the curriculum. Well-being is generally acknowledged as a complex concept and there are many different explanations. In addition, and despite the fast-growing interest in education there is little consensus about child well-being.

Therefore, this study explores primary school practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being and examines day-to-day classroom practices. This qualitative case study included eight focus groups, 21 practitioner interviews, as well as 342 hours of observations in two primary schools.

Several Bernsteinian concepts are drawn upon in the analysis. Key findings suggest that practitioners are uncertain about the nature of well-being as well as operationalising and capturing well-being. The study reveals four different dimensions associated with the concept of well-being, and one unwarranted assumption shared by some practitioners about a child's well-being and their socio-economic background. In addition, five different types of well-being practices are identified; four of these practices are integrated in nature and one of them is discretely delivered by adults. The study shows that criterion-referenced assessment is implemented in different ways, but practitioners encounter various difficulties when capturing children's well-being. Practitioners also report that well-being assessment tools are missing helpful follow-up strategies.

The thesis concludes by discussing ways of developing practitioners' understanding of complex concepts such as well-being and pedagogy, and the longer term policy implications regarding the curriculum and assessment. Future directions about child well-being research are considered.

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1   Introduction

1.1 Rationale of the study

The central aim of this thesis is to explore how the concept of well-being is understood and operationalised[1] in the early years curriculum through examining the implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales. This study is important for four reasons. Firstly, there are many different explanations and interpretations of well-being which are rooted in traditional discourses of philosophy, psychology and economics, and this often causes confusion about the nature of well-being (Coleman, 2009). In addition, there is limited consensus around child well-being, particularly children under the age of eight years (Statham and Chase, 2010; Raghavan and Alexandrova, 2015). Therefore there is a need to understand how traditional discourses relate to young children in an education context. Secondly, despite different explanations of well-being there is very limited research that analyses and reports well-being from the perspective of the primary school practitioner (Morrow and Mayall, 2009). Thirdly, there is a paucity of research into understanding and operationalising well-being in the curriculum, despite a fast-growing interest in policy (Pollard and Lee, 2003; Fraillon, 2004; Awartani et al. 2008; McLaughlin, 2008; Coleman, 2009; Davis et al. 2010*;* Roberts, 2010; Statham and Chase, 2010; Hicks, 2011; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012; Soutter et al. 2012; Walker, 2012; Amerijckx and Humblet, 2014; Raghavan and Alexandrova, 2015). Fourthly, the way children's well-being is assessed has not kept pace with the importance of supporting and promoting well-being, and the development of well-being measures for adults (Fraillon, 2004; Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011).

1.2 Well-being, society and the State

This section provides a brief synopsis of the role of the State and how its relationship with well-being has developed over time. Well-being is generally

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[1] For the purpose of this study, 'operationalised' refers to teaching, delivering, supporting/promoting and/or assessing and measuring. At times, 'operationalised' only refers to assessment and measuring and this is signposted where necessary.

viewed as a fundamental human right (Soutter et al. 2012) and the importance of promoting and supporting children's well-being is widely acknowledged and accepted (Fraillon, 2004). However, the role of the State in 'improving' and 'measuring' well-being has shifted over the years (Bailey, 2009). For example, the success of a country was and still is traditionally measured using "standard macro-economic statistics" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (OECD), 2011, p.14) such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (O'Donnell et al. 2014). Many agree that GDP is a useful 'objective' measure of economic growth but it only captures part of a picture (McLellan and Steward, 2015). GDP was criticised for failing "to give a true account of people's current and future living conditions" (OECD, 2011, p.14).

In 1974, the economist Richard Easterlin embarked on exploring the relationship between economic growth and happiness and recognised that psychology would be able to help understand this relationship. Therefore, his work led to more 'self-reported' and 'life satisfaction' surveys aimed at adults which set out to capture societal well-being (UNICEF, 2013). Around this time, McLellan and Steward (2015) report that happiness started to be used synonymously for well-being which creates some debate as to whether they are related concepts, or whether they share the same meaning.

This shift towards 'self-reported well-being', and 'quality of life thinking' emerged mainly because GDP was considered an inadequate measure of societal satisfaction (Gasper, 2010). O'Donnell et al. (2014) add that "this measure is not well suited to modern, service-based economies with larger Government sectors" (p.10). In 2009, economists stated that too much emphasis is placed on GDP which is used as a standard economic indicator for measuring quality of life (Stiglitz et al. 2009). They suggest more emphasis should be placed on measuring people's 'subjective' well-being; this dimension focuses on people's life satisfaction, positive and negative feelings and how someone feels about the purpose and meaning of life (OECD, 2011). However, not everyone agrees that the State should capture people's subjective well-being. Thompson and Marks (2006) explain that liberal thinkers believe, "the happiness of individuals is not the business of the State and, hence, the Government should not be

concerned with measuring well-being" (p.2). Therefore, there are political, moral and ethical dilemmas associated with well-being and the State.

Lord Richard Layard (2011), a leading economist, suggests that concentrating on the well-being of the nation rather than focusing on economic wealth and using GDP as an indicator of well-being is a revolutionary idea. Layard (2011) asserts that the "Government's role should be to increase happiness and reduce misery" (p.1). Therefore, Layard (2011) suggests that "policy analysis must recast to reflect outcomes in terms of changes to happiness" (p.1). This highlights the political, contentious nature of well-being and raises questions about who should take responsibility for well-being and how should it be measured.

Policy interest about quality of life and well-being was supported by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1999 (Bailey, 2009). Almost a decade ago, David Cameron (the then Prime Minister) stated;

> it's time we admitted that there's more to life than money, and it's time we focused not just on GDP, but on GWB - General Well-Being…Improving our society's sense of well-being is, I believe, the central political challenge of our times (BBC News, 2006).

Layard (2011) is in favour of moving away from GDP and suggests that "a fundamental cultural change is underway in Britain" (p.1). According to O'Donnell et al. (2014) the United Kingdom (UK) is well on its way to moving away from GDP to 'General Well-Being'. This shift is a growing idea in other countries, for example the Bhutan Government now use the term 'Gross National Happiness'.

Well-being is currently an appealing concept, particularly for the State (Amerijckx and Humblet, 2014) and Bailey (2009) claims that the shift is moving at an extremely fast-pace in UK policy, and it could be argued that the following initiatives across the UK support this claim:

- Scottish Government's 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) national approach to improving outcomes and supporting well-being (Scottish Government, 2008).

- Welsh Government's 'Building a Brighter Future' with 'children's health and well-being' as one of its five outcomes (Welsh Government, 2013a).
- England's 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) policy framework with 'achieving economic well-being' as one of its five outcomes (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2004).
- Northern Ireland's 'Our Children and Young People' ten year strategy with one of its six outcomes as experiencing 'economic and environmental well-being' (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2006).

In addition to the initiatives identified above, Wales has recently introduced two well-being Acts, namely the 'Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014', and the 'Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015'. Both Acts focus on people having a say about what matters to them, and they focus on the present and future lives of all citizens (Welsh Government, 2015a). The Acts signify a positive direction towards focusing on well-being and it could be argued that well-being has a greater opportunity of going under the spotlight. Furthermore, the legislation encourages people to discuss and debate the nature of well-being, as well as consider how well-being is operationalised in practice. Therefore, it could be argued that Wales is leading the way in developing a nation's well-being.

The UK is now regarded by Berry (2014) as a global leader in measuring the well-being of its nation. In 2010, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) accepted an invitation from the UK Government to develop a 'measuring national well-being programme'. However, the ONS focus mainly on reporting the well-being of children who are eight years old and above (ONS, 2013). Therefore, the well-being of younger children under the age of eight years is generally overlooked. There are four possible reasons which explain this, firstly there could be a limited understanding amongst adults about a young child's ability to report information about their subjective well-being, secondly, existing tools are not suitable for use with younger children, thirdly, it could be more time-consuming to capture the well-being of young children compared to those over the age of eight years and lastly, there is a view that parents/carers are able to provide more reliable information about the subjective well-being of

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young children. Statham and Chase (2010) suggest there is a need for the subjective well-being of young children to be recognised. They claim that younger children are frequently under-represented in data.

Learning and knowing about young children's well-being from the perspective of the child could enlighten and inform adults about how to improve services and target initiatives and policies that suit the needs of all children. Therefore, arguing from an early childhood rights perspective, there could be more efforts placed upon recognising the subjective well-being of young children. Research findings consistently report that children's views are not taken seriously and they are not encouraged to become actively involved in making decisions, particularly in education (Venninen et al. 2014). According to Ben-Arieh and Frones (2011) children are generally perceived as passive objects and "are acted on by the structures of the adult world" (p.470).

Despite this general view about young children, there is a slow shift emerging in terms of capturing the well-being of young children under the age of eight years. For example, in 2008, Wales produced its first children and young people's well-being monitor but this did not capture the subjective voices of children (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008g). However, in 2011, when the second well-being monitor was published it captured the voices of children and young people (Welsh Government, 2011a). In 2015, a third well-being monitor was published and included self-reported data about health but this was from children eight years old and above (Welsh Government, 2015d). Generally, however, the development of tools to capture child well-being has not kept pace compared with the way adult well-being is measured (Pollard and Lee, 2003; National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), 2008; Mayr and Ulich, 2009; Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011; Watson et al. 2012).

In 2011, the Welsh Government acknowledged two new challenges relating to well-being. Firstly, measuring well-being and secondly, the way in which well-being evidence is used to inform, develop and/or shape policy (Welsh Government, 2011a). In 2014, the 'all-party parliamentary group on well-being economics' reported;

well-being evidence can not only help target public spending more effectively at improving people's lives, but in many cases has the potential to deliver significant long-term savings by reducing demand on public services (cited in Berry, 2014, p.2).

It seems that the present focus is on policy-makers to effectively utilise data produced by the ONS, UNICEF and various indices to inform and develop policy. However, McLaughlin (2008) argues that UNICEF data, for example, should be read with caution and can be interpreted in many different ways. Morrow and Mayall (2009) further suggest that not enough critiques of UNICEF data have taken place and the findings are over used. Statham and Chase (2010) add that data was not disaggregated for the 2007 UNICEF report which rated the UK as being one of the lowest richest countries on children's subjective well-being. It only focused on children over the age of 11-years and many assumptions were made about well-being. Furthermore, Hicks et al. (2011) state that the UK, in the 2007 UNICEF report, only refers to England. Therefore, it could be argued that this is not representative of the UK. These comments raise concerns about well-being data being misinterpreted and manipulated to shape and inform policies in the near future.

It is expected that the demand for more 'subjective' well-being measures, in general, will increase in the near future (O'Donnell et al. 2014). However, there is some uncertainty about whether subjective well-being measures are robust enough to inform policy (Statham & Chase, 2010; Forgeard et al. 2011). For subjective well-being data to be useful it should be contextualised, and the New Economics Foundation (NEF) (2009, p.5) argue that; "reflecting on the factors underpinning subjective responses rather than taking them at face value is an important part of the analysis process", but this process takes time. La Placa et al. (2013) claim that unless objective and subjective well-being data are gathered and used alongside each other, "rational evaluations of wellbeing[2]" (p.118) will be difficult to obtain. Moreover, there seems to be very little research evidence about the benefits of utilising both types of data and this seems to be a new development.

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[2] At times throughout the thesis, 'well-being' appears without the hyphen as intended by La Placa et al. (2013).

This section has briefly discussed the historical and contemporary role of the State and its relationship with well-being. The discussion draws attention to the differences between the 'objective' and 'subjective' dimension of well-being. In addition, it highlights that the objective dimension is more often associated with younger children than the subjective dimension. The next section discusses the concept of well-being in more detail and introduces other key issues.

1.3 The conceptual nature of well-being

This section briefly discusses the key issues relating to the concept of child-well-being in order to highlight some of the complexities. Well-being discourses are traditionally rooted in philosophy, psychology and economics. However, there is a weak theoretical underpinning associated with child well-being (Pollard and Lee, 2003; Fraillon, 2004; McLaughlin, 2008; Awartani et al. 2008; Statham and Chase, 2010; Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011; Hicks et al. 2011; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012; Walker, 2012; Raghavan and Alexandrova, 2015). It could be argued that Mashford-Scott et al. (2012), Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) and Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) have contributed to understanding and developing a discourse of 'child well-being'. But there is generally a lack of research into understanding the conceptual nature of well-being, particularly in the context of education for children under the age of eight years.

It is important to note that traditional discourses of well-being were constructed at a time in history when childhood was not viewed as a distinct life phase, and limited understanding existed about the concept of childhood. It was not until the end of the fifteenth century that a modern understanding of childhood started to emerge (Brockliss and Montgomery, 2013). Therefore, Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) state that it is unlikely that 'philosophical' discourses of well-being will straightforwardly extend to children because they were not written with them in mind. This is a relevant point and their claim is explored further in the thesis.

Well-being is often described as a vague, complex, 'catch-all' concept (Haworth and Hart, 2007; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012), for example

it could mean 'happiness', 'quality of life', 'meeting basic needs to lead a happy and healthy future', and/or 'protection' in terms of safeguarding. Morrow and Mayall (2009) suggest that well-being is the 'new' term which is being used by politicians and educationalists instead of children's 'welfare'. In addition, Morrow and Mayall (2009) hypothesise that the term 'well-being' shares the same meaning as 'welfare' across countries. Statham and Chase (2010) argue that in general "there is still limited agreement on what the constituent components of child wellbeing are, or how they should be weighted in terms of importance or priority" (p.6). Similarly, Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) suggest "there is neither consensus, nor much discussion on what constitutes child well-being" (p.888). One explanation for a lack of consensus and different interpretations of well-being is put forward by Gasper (2010), who argues that well-being is intertwined with personal values and this makes it an interesting philosophical concept to research.

Various well-being domains also known as 'types' are used to describe well-being which help to provide some clarity about its meaning. For example, adjectives are often used to describe well-being, such as 'emotional' well-being, 'social' well-being, 'physical' well-being, 'economic' well-being, 'general' well-being to name but a few. However, there is little consensus about which domains relate to children. According to Statham and Chase (2010) there are three well-being domains that relate to children, but Fauth and Thompson (2009) claim there are four domains and this indicates a lack of consensus. There are very few empirical investigations which focus on practitioners' perspectives of well-being domains and whether some are privileged more than others. In addition, studies that investigate well-being domains in curriculum policy are also limited. Therefore, this thesis explores well-being domains from a practitioner's perspective and within policy that relates to young children.

In addition to a lack of consensus about the meaning of well-being, there is a need to acknowledge that well-being is associated with various 'definitions' and 'factors' that contribute positively or negatively to someone's well-being. By recognising this, it could help to alleviate the ambiguous nature of the concept (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Coleman, 2009). The following explanation of well-being

can be interpreted in many different ways and it begins with a 'definition' which is followed by the 'factors' that contribute to well-being;

> well-being is a positive, social and mental state; it is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity. It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose, that they feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society. It is enhanced by conditions that include supportive personal relationships, strong and inclusive communities, good health, financial and personal security, rewarding employment and a healthy and attractive environment (Welsh Government, 2011a, p.46).

When Ereaut and Whiting (2008) investigated the usage and function of well-being in public policy for the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), they recommend that policy-makers need to acknowledge and recognise that well-being is fundamentally about, "ambition and vision" [and] "operational measurement" (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008, p.19). These are two different interpretations of well-being which are evident in the 2011 Welsh Government quote above. According to Coleman (2009) there are "too many views of how to define well-being" (p.288) and he states "this cannot but help lead to confusion and uncertainty" (p.289).

According to Desjardins (2008) knowledge about well-being in general is often based on people's assumptions. Moreover, Mayr and Ulich (1999) suggest, "there is a tacit assumption that children's well-being will help them develop into happy and successful adults" (p.230). It could be argued that assumptions alone are not enough to ensure that young children develop into happy and successful adults.

The majority of research about well-being relates to theoretical discussions and policy discourses and very little research focuses on understanding well-being from the perspective of professionals who work with children, such as teachers, teaching assistants, health visitors, social workers to name but a few (Morrow and Mayall, 2009). Education researchers such as Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) write specifically about the young child under the age of eight years within a school context, and suggest that practitioners working in the early years sector adopt two different discourses of well-being, which is the 'objective' and 'subjective'. They further claim that the leading discourse is the 'objective' "because it serves to quantify wellbeing; making it more measurable"

(Mashford-Scott et al. 2012, p.239). This tension between objective versus subjective is revisited throughout the thesis.

To summarise, limited consensus exists about the specific nature of child well-being and knowledge about well-being is often associated with assumptions, despite a fast-growing policy interest in education. Therefore, the next section briefly considers why there has been a rise in well-being and schools.

1.4 Well-being and schools

This section explores some of the reasons for a rise in well-being in schools and considers the benefits associated with well-being and education policy. In the last decade or so there has been a fast-growing interest in children's well-being, particularly in education (Bailey, 2009; Coleman, 2009), and there are various reasons put forward by different commentators to explain the growing interest. Some of the reasons are psychological, sociological, economic and/or political in nature but there is not one single reason to explain the growing interest. Bailey (2009) suggests there has been a shift in policy from a focus on the 'physical' needs of a person to their 'emotional and mental health' needs. He suggests this has occurred because;

> discussions take it for granted that well-being equates to mental health and that consequently social policy needs to take a therapeutic turn in order to address the evident problems generated by such issues as inequalities of wealth and opportunities (p.795).

Therefore, Bailey (2009) claims that a 'therapeutic turn' in policy places an unrealistic expectation on schools to play an important role in 'alleviating' mental health issues through implementing targeted intervention programmes (Bailey, 2009). The argument often suggested in policy is the high cost of not meeting some children's emotional health and social needs which could lead to problems later in adulthood, such as educational failure and reliance upon financial support from the State (O'Donnell et al. 2014). Therefore, schools are often perceived and utilised as a way of 'preventing' this occurring later in life and this creates debate (Craig, 2007; Clack, 2012).

Berry (2014) proposes that one way of saving public money in the health and education sector is to provide compulsory mindfulness[3] training to teachers, nurses and doctors. Weare (2014) suggests that policy-makers are drawn to mindfulness training and its long term benefits because it is a relatively low cost strategy and has quick results. However, Berry (2014) acknowledges that the evidence on 'mindfulness in schools' which is used to improve children's mental health is relatively new and gaining momentum. Therefore, it could be argued that policy-makers need to consider the research evidence carefully before deciding how schools can support and promote children's well-being.

An example of where evidence was not fully taken into consideration by the State is argued by Craig (2007) and Watson et al, (2012) in relation to the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme. This programme emerged in 2005 as a national approach designed to promote and develop children's social, emotional and behavioural skills (Hallam, 2009). However, Craig (2007) and Watson et al, (2012) argue that a substantial amount of money that cost around 40 million pounds, between 2007 and 2011, was inappropriately spent on an intervention based on very little supporting evidence in terms of improving academic outcomes for children in schools. Banerjee et al. (2014) recent study showed there is a lot of variety in the way schools implement the SEAL programme, and the most positive impact seems to occur when there is consistent and systematic delivery and a whole-school ethos.

The SEAL programme which emerged around the same time as the Every Child Matters initiative (DfES, 2004) is designed to "facilitate broader goals relating to behaviour, relationships, and learning at school" (Banerjee et al. 2014, p.720). There is a general view that children with better 'emotional health and well-being' will achieve better in school and go on to lead happy, healthy, fulfilled, purposeful lives (DfE, 2015; Rose et al. 2016). Therefore, many claims are included in policy about the benefits of well-being and its important relationship with, for example, learners' concentration, effective learning, parental engagement and the school environment. However, critics, such as Mayr and

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[3] Mindfulness is often understood as an intervention to strengthen someone's personal resources – dealing with mental health issues and nurturing 'emotional' well-being (Berry, 2014).

Ulich, (1999); Desjardins (2008); Ecclestone and Hayes, (2009a); Humphrey et al. (2010); and Gillies, (2011) indicate that there is a lack of robust, empirical evidence to support such claims about what well-being can achieve, as well as what schools can do to support and promote well-being. The majority of research evidence about well-being and schools relates to targeted intervention programmes which show how they can improve children's academic achievements (Durlak and Weissberg, 2913). But the findings are mixed, and there are concerns about whether intervention programmes promote images of children as needy, weak and fragile (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009a). Pollard and Lee (2008) suggest that in order to help children thrive and flourish more focus should be placed upon children's 'strengths' and 'capabilities', as opposed to their 'deficiencies' and 'difficulties'.

This section has briefly considered some of the reasons for a fast-growing interest in well-being and the role of school. However, there is evidence to suggest that well-being has always been an important aspect of education, despite it being argued as a fast-growing interest in education policy. For example, references were made to well-being in the Plowden report written in 1967 (Plowden, 1967) and in a 1980 report entitled 'a view of the curriculum' (Department for Education and Science, 1980). Therefore, the next section takes a closer look at well-being in curriculum policy.

1.5 Well-being and the curriculum

This section briefly examines how well-being is presented in the context of the curriculum. In 1988, a National Curriculum was introduced for 5-to-16 year olds with 'discrete' subject areas which set out a minimum entitlement for all children. However, a concern started to emerge that 'subjects' were being placed at the heart of the curriculum as opposed to 'children' which the Plowden report emphasised in 1967 (Maynard and Chicken, 2010). Whitty et al. (1994) explain that in order to ensure that children and young people were provided with the necessary skills for preparation for life 'after' school (also known as softer skills), such as living a happy, healthy, successful life, the 'integrated' delivery model was introduced in the late twentieth century. This occurred as a response to the perceived 'narrow' subject-based discrete areas of the National

Curriculum. Well-being was not included as a discrete subject when the National Curriculum was introduced, however 'Personal and Social Education' (PSE) was a statutory part of the basic curriculum.

In terms of understanding the nature of well-being in schools regarding the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment there is very limited research in this area (Davis et al. 2010; Stephen, 2010; Soutter et al. 2012) which makes this study significant. In 2012, Soutter et al. (2012) made an important contribution to understanding well-being in the 'New Zealand' curriculum, but there are very few reported studies as yet that focus on understanding well-being in the early years curriculum within a UK context. Contemporary research about the well-being of young children under the age of eight years in the early years is relatively new and rising (McLellan and Steward, 2015). For example, recent studies by Seland et al. (2015) focus on very young children under the age of three years and explore how they experience subjective well-being. Edwards et al. (2015) study report that listening to children's interests in the early years classroom can often be more beneficial in promoting and supporting well-being than implementing targeted intervention programmes.

In 2008, when the Foundation Phase was introduced in Wales as the new statutory curriculum for all 3-to-7 year olds it placed more emphasis on listening to children's interests and social interaction (Aasen and Waters, 2006). The new curriculum replaced Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum for 5-to-7 year olds and the Desirable Outcomes for 3-to-5 year olds. The Foundation Phase is briefly described as;

> marking a radical departure from the more formal, competency-based approach associated with the previous Key Stage 1 National Curriculum, it was designed to provide a developmental, experiential, play-based approach to teaching and learning (Taylor et al. 2015, p.1).

According to Aasen and Waters (2006) the new curriculum for young children in Wales is a positive shift towards adopting a socio-cultural understanding of the child. This places more emphasis on social interaction, child-centred practice, children's rights and understanding children as meaning-makers. Children's well-being is emphasised in the policy as being at the centre of the curriculum (Taylor et al. 2015) and the Welsh Government state, "Personal and Social

Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity is at the heart of the Foundation Phase and should be developed across the curriculum" (Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), 2008a, p.14). However, for this to be enacted in classrooms, Aasen and Waters (2006) suggest that "what is now needed is an interpretation of well-being through the socio-cultural theoretical framework rather than that of the developmental child" (p.125).

The Foundation Phase consists of seven 'Areas of Learning' and well-being is presented explicitly in the Area called: 'Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity' (PSDWBCD)[4]. The Welsh Government state that "for each Area of Learning the **educational programme** sets out what children should be taught and the **outcomes** set out the expected standards of children's performance" (WAG, 2008a p.2). PSDWBCD includes 41 different skills, ten of which are identified as well-being skills (see Appendix 1, p.264). At the end of the Foundation Phase when a child is seven years old teachers are required to make a judgement about this Area and score a child's Outcome between one and six (see Appendix 3, p.268). Teachers are also required to assess and make a judgement about children's achievements in two other Areas of Learning, namely 'Mathematical Development' and 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills'. Arguably, since 2008 well-being is presented differently in the curriculum for young children in Wales. One possible explanation for this change is the role of the State in measuring and improving well-being. In general, Aasen and Waters (2006) suggest that in order to implement the Foundation Phase it involves "a way of thinking, acting and being within the early years classroom that is substantially different from the requirements of previous statutory curricula" (p.128).

Prior to the Foundation Phase, well-being was presented in the Desirable Outcomes, for 3-to-5 year olds, as a 'principle of good quality educational practice', not as an explicit 'Area of Learning'. The policy direction for well-being in the Desirable Outcomes stated; "adults concerned with under-fives have a particular responsibility for their care, safety, protection and well-being" (ACCAC, 2000, p.3). Even though well-being was not explicitly presented as an Area of Learning in the Desirable Outcomes, there was an 'Area of Learning

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[4] From here on the acronym PSDWBCD will be used throughout the study.

and Experience' called 'Personal and Social Development' (PSD). In terms of Key Stage 1, for 5-to-7 year olds, Personal and Social Education (PSE) was a statutory part of the basic curriculum. Therefore, it could be argued that PSD and PSE are similar in nature to PSDWBCD, but nonetheless Table 1 attempts to show that over the last decade the way in which well-being is presented in curriculum policy for young children has changed in Wales.

Table 1: Policy changes to well-being in the early years curriculum (Wales)

Pre-2008	Post-2008
Desirable Outcomes for 3-to-5 year olds: • There was an 'Area of Learning and Experience' called 'Personal and Social Development.' • Well-being was presented as a principle of good quality educational practice. National Curriculum Key Stage 1 for 5-to-7 year olds: • Personal and Social Education (PSE) was a statutory part of the 'basic' curriculum.	Foundation Phase for 3-to-7 year olds: • There is an 'Area of Learning' called 'Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity' (PSDWBCD). • Well-being is presented as a skill and an Outcome to be assessed • The policy direction is to integrated well-being across the curriculum.

To summarise, limited research focuses on understanding the specific nature of child well-being in the context of the early years curriculum. As a consequence this limits the understanding of application to practice. This is significant particularly when Wales presents well-being as an 'Area of Learning' in the Foundation Phase.

1.6 Aim of the study

The central aim of this thesis is to explore how the concept of well-being is understood and operationalised in the early years through examining the implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales. This aim will be achieved by considering the following questions:

1. What do primary school practitioners (such as teachers and teaching assistants) know and understand about young children's well-being?
2. How is well-being operationalised in practice?
3. What tools do primary school practitioners use to capture well-being in the classroom and to what extent are they fit for purpose?

The following sections explain the origin of the thesis and the background context to the PhD, and the chapter concludes with an explanation of the structure of the thesis.

1.7 Origin of the thesis

A case study design of the Foundation Phase in Wales was adopted to explore how well-being is understood and operationalised. Schools that took part in this study had previously been selected for a three-year Welsh Government funded evaluation of the Foundation Phase, led by Professor Chris Taylor at Cardiff University. The evaluation aimed to generate a number of important outputs and one of these included an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded doctoral research studentship (Taylor et al. 2015). In March 2012, I was awarded what has been described as "a highly prestigious studentship" (Taylor et al. 2013, p.25) and for three years I was based at the all-Wales ESRC Doctoral Training Centre (DTC).

The annual report of the first year of the Foundation Phase evaluation states; "the studentship is designed to complement and add value to the funded evaluation" (Taylor et al. 2013, p.25). With this in mind the research proposal for this PhD emerged from discussions with the evaluation team and a summary of the proposal was published in the Update and Technical Report 2012/2013 (Taylor et al. 2014) (see Appendix 2, p.266). In addition, a presentation was given to the Welsh Government evaluation team. On reflection of the proposal,

I realise that it was slightly ambitious in the time-scale (three years) particularly in terms of piloting well-being tools with a participatory element. Nonetheless, the proposal was welcomed by the team and there was a general feeling that examining how well-being is understood and practiced would be a useful contribution to policy and practice. I clearly recall that a member of staff from Estyn, which is the Inspectorate for Education and Training provision in Wales, was particularly interested in the focus on measuring well-being rather than how practitioners understand well-being. The reason for this interest by Estyn is more than likely related to the new inspection framework introduced in September 2010, with a focus on three key questions where well-being is used as an indicator for one of these questions.

The two primary schools that agreed to participate in this study were located in different Local Authorities and different socio-economic contexts in South Wales. This study is exploratory and interpretive in nature and adopts multiple methods for data capture, such as focus groups, interviews, observations and documentary evidence. Teachers and teaching assistants[5] are referred to as 'practitioners' throughout the study. The qualitative multiple methods design suited me as a researcher because having worked as an early years teacher for eight years with 3-to-5 year olds I was aware of being able to capture data from other sources (such as weekly planning and timetables) rather than focusing solely on the perspectives of practitioners. I was aware of their commitments and how taking part in research might be time-consuming. I was able to understand what it was like for practitioners to have another adult observing in their classroom and being asked questions about their practice. So I made sure I put them at ease and was approachable and non-threatening. The idea I aimed to get across to the two schools which were being used as research sites was: *"I am here to find out about something and I'm very grateful to you for helping with education research".* The initial focus for this study was on 'emotional' and 'social' well-being' which stems, in part, from my experience of writing school reports for children in my class. My favourite section in the

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[5] Additional Practitioners (APs) is the preferred term used by the Welsh Government for practitioners who assist teachers. But when the participants were asked to clarify their title, they had a preference for teaching assistants not APs.

school report was writing about a child's personal and social development[6]. This was an opportunity for me to write about the 'soft' outcomes of achievement as opposed to more academic 'hard' outcomes, which senior members of staff were always interested in. I recall another colleague saying to me around the time of writing school reports; *"I can't believe you like writing about that, I think it's the most difficult".*

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis draws upon primary school practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being and examines their classroom practices in order to understand how well-being is understood and operationalised through Wales' flagship policy, the Foundation Phase. This thesis is structured in seven chapters as follows:

Chapter 2 introduces the reader to a range of key issues relating to well-being within education policy and practice and is structured in three main sections. Section one explores the reasons why there is a fast-growing rise in well-being and education and considers the importance of well-being at policy level. Various claims about the relationship between well-being and education are discussed as well as a critical exploration of the empirical research evidence that supports these claims. It argues that not enough robust empirical data is available to support grand claims about well-being in policy, and there are mixed findings about the benefit of targeted programmes that aim to improve well-being. Section two discusses the various ways in which well-being is captured in policy and classroom practice, and critically considers the reasons for limited tools in relation to children under the age of eight years. Section three focuses in detail on the role of well-being in the curriculum and examines the policy direction for delivering well-being in the Foundation Phase. It shows that the 'integrated' curriculum code is strongly advocated. This section also argues that various interpretations of well-being exist in various curricula.

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[6] At the time, 'Personal and Social Development' was an 'Area of Learning and Experience' in the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning document.

Chapter 3 critically examines the nature of well-being within dominant discourses and explores the following question: *what exactly is well-being?* The chapter is structured in two main sections; section one critically discusses the objective and subjective dimensions of well-being and argues that their similarities are not always acknowledged. Well-being domains are explained and further examined in policy documents which relate to young children. The chapter argues that some well-being domains are privileged in policy and they are not always presented consistently. Section one also discusses the various perspectives of well-being from dominant discourses, such as philosophy, psychology and economics. It concludes with a diagram that aims to show the distinct features of well-being. Section two examines the nature of child well-being in more detail and discusses current research by Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) and Amerijckx and Humblet (2014). Moreover, a recent claim made by Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) is critically evaluated. A second diagram is presented in this chapter which attempts to show the distinct features of well-being in a school context, and it is used as a tool to explore the essence of well-being in various policy documents relating to the Foundation Phase.

Chapter 4 explains the methodology and is structured in five main sections. Section one provides a detailed discussion about the interpretivist approach and justifies a case study design, section two explains the sampling techniques and provides information about the two participating primary schools that were used as research sites. Section three discusses and evaluates the research methods adopted for this study which include focus groups, interviews, observations and documentary evidence. Section four explains the ethical processes that took place prior to the study, during the study and after the study. Lastly, section five explains the approaches taken to data analysis. Various tables are presented throughout this chapter so information can be easily located.

Chapter 5 is the first empirical chapter which discusses practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being and identifies the dominant discourses and domains, some of which were discussed in Chapter 3. It also reveals that practitioners are hesitant and uncertain about articulating well-being. On interrogation of the data, this chapter reveals four different dimensions associated with well-being and these are discussed in detail. The chapter also

discusses an unwarranted assumption that practitioners share about well-being and a child's socio-economic background. Therefore, this chapter raises questions about how do practitioners go about operationalising the various dimensions of well-being in practice.

Chapter 6 is the second empirical chapter which explains how practitioners go about operationalising[7] the various beliefs they have about well-being in practice. The data and findings reveal that the integrated curriculum code which is strongly perceived by practitioners and strongly advocated in policy is not being implemented for the seven Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase, in at least two different schools[8]. This chapter draws upon various Bernsteinian (1977; 1982; 1990) concepts such as 'classification'[9] and 'framing'[10] in order to understand how well-being is operationalised in relation to other Areas of Learning in the curriculum. In Bernstein's (1977) terms, well-being is more often than not weakly classified and weakly framed – particularly in comparison with other Areas of Learning, such as 'Mathematical Development' and 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills'. However, 'at times' well-being is strongly classified and strongly framed. Data and analysis show that five different types of practices are currently in use to operationalise well-being in the curriculum. Four of these practices are integrated in nature and enacted by children and adults and one of them is discretely delivered by adults. Practitioners also experience various challenges in putting well-being into practice which raises questions about whether they experience any other challenges such as, capturing well-being.

Chapter 7 is the final empirical chapter which explores whether practitioners experience any further challenges in terms of capturing well-being. Data and analysis reveal that practitioners encounter four difficulties in capturing well-being in the curriculum. One of the difficulties they face is interpreting Foundation Phase Outcome criteria. However, in the main, this chapter investigates how practitioners assess, measure, document and/or evidence

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[7] 'Operationalising' in Chapter 6 broadly refers to teaching, delivering, promoting and/or supporting well-being, not assessment.
[8] Ten Foundation Phase classrooms were observed in two different schools for the purpose of this study.
[9] 'Classification' refers to the relationship between Areas of Learning in a curriculum.
[10] 'Framing' refers to the pedagogical relationship between adult and child.

well-being. The tools practitioners use to capture well-being are discussed in detail but the majority of tools typify criterion-referenced assessment. This chapter suggests that digital tools may empower children slightly more than paper-based tools. Various well-being assessment tools were selected and explored with practitioners in two workshop-based focus groups, and practitioners generally feel that tools are missing many features. Therefore, it could be argued that 'tool developers' need to work more closely with practitioners.

Chapter 8 is the conclusion chapter which revisits the three research questions and summarises the key findings, before discussing how this thesis contributes to the following three areas: understanding the implementation of Foundation Phase policy in Wales, understanding the nature of well-being in the early years and lastly, a more general understanding of well-being in the curriculum. Short term policy and practice implications are discussed in terms of developing practitioners' knowledge and understanding of aspects relating to their practice, and helping practitioners overcome challenges they face. Longer term policy implications are also discussed in terms of assessment and curriculum development. The chapter concludes with a consideration of future directions for child well-being research.

2 Understanding the role of well-being within education policy and practice

2.1 Introduction

The State is increasingly interested in improving and measuring the quality of people's lives and their well-being. But in the last decade or so there has been a fast-growing interest in the well-being of children and young people, particularly in education (Coleman, 2009; Welsh Government, 2011a; Amerijckx and Humblet, 2014). However, there are concerns that many claims, in general, are made about education and well-being without being supported with robust empirical evidence (Desjardins, 2008). Moreover, there is a paucity of research into understanding and operationalising well-being in the school curriculum (Davis et al. 2010*;* Soutter et al. 2012).

Therefore, this chapter aims to firstly, understand the rise of well-being in policy before examining current research about the relationship between well-being and education. Secondly, it aims to explore how well-being is measured and understand why children's well-being has not kept pace with the way in which adult well-being is measured (Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011). Thirdly, it aims to discuss the role of well-being in schools and examine well-being as a subject area in curriculum policy, with a particular focus on the Foundation Phase. This chapter is structured in three main sections from here on.

2.2 Well-being and education policy

This section explores the reasons for a rise in well-being and education policy before understanding why well-being is an appealing concept at policy level. Then it critically examines current research about the relationship between well-being and education.

2.2.1 The rise of well-being in education policy

As previously outlined in the introduction, the shift at policy level from physical needs to emotional and mental health needs may have contributed firstly, to the

expectation of schools to deliver well-being and happiness lessons, and secondly to the introduction of therapeutic intervention programmes, such as the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme (Bailey, 2009). Adams (2012) suggests there is a moral panic about the quality and status of childhood and this is why there has been a rise, whereas Clack (2012) thinks "the well-being agenda sought to address the problem of unhappiness in affluent societies" (p.509). However, Coleman (2009) highlights there are many different types of reasons as to why there has been a rapid increase in children's well-being and education policy in the last decade or so, and suggests various reasons.

The work of Daniel Goleman[11] on the links between thinking and emotional intelligence and emotional health are seen as influential, and provides one reason as to why well-being has emerged in education (Coleman, 2009). In addition, the concerns about the rise, or perceived rise, of children's reported mental health problems, ill health and poor educational outcomes are seen as being significant which places an expectation on schools to improve well-being. O'Donnell et al. (2014) argue that not enough is being done to support mental ill-health in comparison with the support for physical illness. They report that many children require therapy in dealing with psychological problems. Another reason for the rise in well-being within education could relate to the UNICEF reports on the poor well-being of children in affluent countries, as well as politicians' concerns about unhappy childhoods. However, critics such as Adams (2012), Myers (2012) and Ecclestone and Hayes (2009a; 2009b) suggest that claims about unhappy childhoods and mental health problems are often overstated and distorted. Furthermore, they argue against the 'childhood in crisis' debate.

In addition to the reasons highlighted above, Coleman (2009) proposes important developments in policy that have contributed to the rise of well-being in education, such as the National Healthy Schools Programme in 1999 and the Education and Inspection Act (2006). Also, the Every Child Matters (ECM) policy initiative in England is claimed to have increased awareness of young

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[11] An American psychologist and science journalist.

children's well-being with one of its five key outcomes targeting children's 'economic' well-being. This emphasis is on enhancing human capital theory, with the expectation that "investing in early years provision will contribute to society's future economic benefits… and more generally, by preparing children for school and preventing later academic failure" (Stephen, 2010, p.249). Thompson and Marks (2006) suggest that "the ECM framework emphasises the need to place the well-being of children at the heart of the service delivery, focusing on the needs of each child as a whole person" (p.7). In essence, this ECM quote is very similar in nature to what was being emphasised in the Plowden report written in 1967. It states, "at the heart of the educational process lies the child" (Plowden, 1967, p.7). Furthermore, the Plowden report specifically acknowledges well-being and claims that;

> day nurseries have made, and are making, a contribution towards the intellectual and emotional, as well as the physical, well-being of children from the age of six months until they enter school (Plowden, 1967, p.122).

In 1980, the then Department for Education and Science published a report called 'A view of the Curriculum' and it states, "if it is to be effective, the school curriculum must allow for differences. It must contribute to children's present well-being" (Department for Education and Science, 1980, p.2). Therefore, it could be argued that even though there seems to be a fast-growing interest in well-being, it has always been an important aspect of education.

2.2.2 The importance of well-being in education policy

From a policy perspective it seems there are broadly two reasons as to why well-being matters. Firstly, well-being is understood as a pre-requisite and often focuses on the here and now, such as being an effective learner, improving concentration and engagement, improving behaviour and school attendance (WAG, 2008b; WAG, 2008c; WAG, 2010). The following quote which was published by the Department for Education (DfE) on Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education is an example of well-being as a pre-requisite. The report states, "pupils with better health and well-being can achieve better academically…" (DfE, 2015, p.3).

Secondly, well-being matters in policy because it is believed to be associated with the quality of life as an adult and tends to focus more on the future, and

factors that contribute towards greater success. In other words, well-being is considered a by-product/outcome and White (2009) argues that policy mainly refers to well-being as "an outcome to be sought" (p.19). This understanding is evident in the work of O'Donnell et al. (2014) when they claim that an adult's well-being, meaning 'life satisfaction', is closely associated with the emotional health of a child. Also, the Australian early years learning framework for 0-to-5 year olds[12] includes evidence of well-being as a by-product/outcome. It states;

> sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs - the need for tenderness and affection; security and clarity; social recognition; to feel competent; physical needs and for meaning in life (adapted from Laevers 1994) (Australian Government, 2009, p.48).

In other words, well-being is the by-product/outcome of meeting children's basic needs. The Welsh Government also highlight that in relation to the Foundation Phase, well-being is a by-product/outcome of meeting children's basic needs of feeling safe and secure, having food and shelter, and experiencing warmth and affection from others (WAG, 2008c).

In addition to meeting children's basic needs, well-being is the by-product/outcome of parental involvement in a child's education. The Welsh Government (2013b, p.1) claim that "greater parental involvement in schools has a significant impact on pupils' well-being, which subsequently impacts on their learning and life chances". It is also reported that "establishing closer links between home and school has a significant impact on learners' well-being" (Estyn, 2012, p.34). The OECD (2011) suggests that the home environment of a child contributes positively or negatively to children's well-being, but they also highlight that "the factors shaping children's well-being are complex, interrelated and difficult to untangle" (OECD, 2011, p.94). Furthermore, it is reported that when schools provide more activities that are creative and exciting in nature this results in positive child well-being (Estyn, 2013). Finally, Estyn (2014) state that "poor building maintenance and security have a negative impact on pupils' wellbeing" (p.67). In other words, well-being is a by-product/outcome of a child's school environment.

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[12] One of the five key learning outcomes of the curriculum is a strong sense of well-being.

To summarise, children's well-being is considered important in policy because (a) it is perceived as a pre-requisite to developing a range of skills and competencies, and/or (b) well-being is the by-product/outcome of other factors, such as parental engagement and the school environment. Both interpretations of understanding well-being link to life chances and future success. Therefore, this raises the following question: what evidence is there to support claims which are made about the relationship between well-being and education?

2.2.3 Research evidence about well-being and education

Research that explores the relationship between well-being and education mainly focuses on well-being as a by-product/outcome, for example parental engagement or socio-economic background. There is some evidence to suggest that schools are appropriate contexts for developing and promoting children's well-being, but there are very few studies in the UK that have explored well-being in primary schools (Morrison Gutman and Feinstein, 2008). Also, there are factors associated with high or low well-being but the causal links are unclear and difficult to prove between education and well-being. This provides one explanation as to why there is limited research in this area (Morrison Gutman et al. 2010). Generally, well-being and education is discussed in relation to academic achievement and success (Soutter et al. 2012; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012). However, there seems to be a lack of robust empirical evidence available that confirms educational achievement and well-being (Mayr and Ulich, 1999; Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009a; Humphrey et al. 2010; Gillies, 2011).

Desjardins (2008) argues that the links between education and well-being are very complex and "not well supported by a rigorous knowledge base, nor well understood" (p.23). In addition, knowledge and understanding of the nature of well-being is not usually researched within educational contexts, and is largely based on people's assumptions which are often described as 'taken-for-granted truths' (Desjardins, 2008). Mayr and Ulich (1999) suggest that early years practitioners generally accept that a child's well-being contributes to a happy and successful future.

Despite the argument suggested about the lack of robust empirical evidence and many assumptions associated with the concept, there is some evidence that shows certain well-being domains[13] are related to educational outcomes. For example, in November 2012, the childhood well-being research centre produced a report on the impact of pupil behaviour and pupil well-being on education outcomes. They concluded that children with better 'emotional' well-being made more progress in primary school. Also, they found that children with higher levels in all four domains, such as 'emotional', 'behavioural', 'school' and 'social' well-being tend to have higher education outcomes.

Morrison Gutman and Feinstein (2008) used data from a previous study to discuss the effects of primary school on children's well-being between 8-to-10 year olds. It is quite common to report on child well-being in this way which uses secondary data and does not directly consult with children themselves. Their report found that most children experience 'positive' well-being at school and therefore schools can help make a difference to well-being. Their study also investigated school effects, such as the type of school, its ethos and relationships with parents and percentage of disadvantaged learners. They found minimal effects on well-being linked to the type of school and relationships with parents, but found significant effects on well-being linked with the percentage of disadvantaged learners. In a different study, Morrison Gutman et al. (2010) found a relationship between vulnerable and poorer children who enjoyed school and positive changes in 'behavioural' and 'social' well-being. They argue that children who have unstable, stressful, poorer backgrounds benefit from schools that provide positive learning environments. Despite these findings, Morrison Gutman and Vorhaus (2012) and Sabates and Hammond (2008) suggest that, far more evidence is needed to investigate well-being and education outcomes especially between diverse groups of children. Despite the limited research amongst diverse groups of children Axford (2009) examined the relationship between needs, rights, poverty, quality of life and social exclusion, and found "they are related but not as closely as is widely assumed" (p.372). Axford (2009) also found from a large sample of young people that;

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[13] Various well-being domains are discussed in the next chapter.

47% of children were in poverty but enjoying a decent quality of life, while 8% of children were not in poverty but nevertheless had a poor quality of life… Kevin a 15-year old boy, came from a non-poor family but exhibited poor self-esteem and suicidal thoughts apparently related to his father's lack of affection towards him (p.378).

It seems that positive feelings about quality of life and well-being are associated with diverse socio-economic contexts, and assumptions should be avoided about linking socio-economic circumstances with well-being. McLellan and Steward (2015) suggest that "it is important to be concerned with everyone's wellbeing and not just the wellbeing of those who might be perceived to be vulnerable in some way" (McLellan and Steward, 2015, p.309). They further suggest that in education it is the well-being of vulnerable children that practitioners are mainly concerned about, rather than the well-being of all children. However, there is limited empirical evidence to support this claim. This thesis aims to improve the evidence base by exploring practitioners' knowledge and understanding of children's well-being.

To summarise, there appears to be a gap between research evidence and what could be termed as 'grand' claims about well-being and education policy. Furthermore, Berry (2014) suggests that the State need to focus their attention on measuring well-being to confirm that "child wellbeing is both vital for academic attainment and an important outcome of the education system in its own right" (Berry, 2014, p.34). However, Berry's statement presents a challenge, because the way well-being is assessed has not kept pace with the importance of supporting and promoting well-being and the way in which well-being is measured for adults (Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011). This indicates that new measures of well-being for children, particularly in education may need developing. Therefore, the next section aims to examine how the well-being of children is measured.

2.3 Measuring child well-being

This section briefly explains how the State measures well-being and discusses various well-being measures for children under the age of eight years. It concludes with a discussion about the challenges associated with capturing

children's well-being which explains why measures have not kept pace with adult well-being measures.

2.3.1 General measures of well-being in policy

In the main, there are three broad types of well-being measures in policy, namely (1) indices, (2) objective indicators and (3) subjective measures which are usually underpinned by discourses of psychology (Gasper, 2004; Fattore et al. 2009; Walker, 2012). White and Abeyasekera (2014) explain that psychologists might use various statistical tests to measure subjective well-being, whereas economists might use household surveys to capture people's happiness. Regardless of the discourse, measures tend to focus on how happy someone is rather than focus on what makes them happy. Essentially, White and Abeyasekera (2014) highlight that "different kinds of measures give different kinds of results, and so different kinds of evidence for policy" (p.10). The three broad types are now briefly discussed.

1) Indices: At a more global (macro) level, countries that are interested in monitoring and capturing the well-being of children might use an 'Index of well-being', such as the work of Jonathan Bradshaw and the 'Child and Well-being Index for the European Union'. Indices usually consist of indicators which have been developed to monitor well-being across countries and over time (Statham and Chase, 2010), and according to Moore et al. (2012) they are useful in three ways. Firstly, they help to capture and assess the general state of children's well-being on a large scale; secondly they enable comparisons to be made between different groups of children and across cultures; and thirdly they track how well-being changes over time (Fauth and Thompson, 2009).

However, there are criticisms about this type of measure. For example, findings from a range of indices are often used to discuss well-being, but the index may not have been specifically designed to capture well-being which questions its validity (Hicks et al. 2011). Also, some indicators within an index may be missing and do not always relate entirely to children's well-being. Furthermore, Statham and Chase (2010) report that "children and young people prioritise different aspects of wellbeing to those included in some of the traditional measures" (p.15). Therefore, the drawback of using data from some indices is

that information might not be representative of what is important to children, and information is misused to inform and shape policies. Awartani et al. (2008) argue that indicators show a narrow understanding of well-being and usually relate to hedonic well-being[14] (McLellan and Steward, 2015).

2) Objective indicators: These types of measures use statistics about income, employment, poverty, and attainment to name but a few to report on well-being, and they are often considered easier to quantify (NEF, 2009). In 2013, UNICEF reported the well-being of 11-to-15 year olds in rich countries and ranked the UK 16th out of 29 countries on all five well-being domains. They used poverty rates, infant mortality rates, low birth weight, immunisation rates, PISA[15] results and the number of children enrolled in pre-school to report on well-being (UNICEF, 2013). These measures are known as 'proxy indicators' and are used when you cannot measure exactly what you want or need. Proxy indicators generally dominate the measurement of well-being and happiness (NEF, 2009). Another example of a proxy indicator of well-being is highlighted in an Annual Report by Estyn where it states;

> in a minority of schools, there are important shortcomings in aspects of wellbeing. These include poor attendance or rates of attendance…high levels of absenteeism or poor behaviour of a few pupils (Estyn, 2014, p.73).

The drawback of relying on objective measures is that assumptions can be made about children's well-being when they have not been directly consulted themselves. Privileging objective information was evident in the first 2008 children and young people's well-being monitor for Wales which did not capture the voices of children and young people. So in this instance it can be seen that the State favoured objective measures rather than subjective evidence. However, the lack of child voice was recognised by the Welsh Government in 2011 and as a result the second well-being monitor included views from children and young people (Welsh Government, 2011a)[16].

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[14] Hedonic well-being is a specific discourse of well-being and is explained in the next chapter.
[15] Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of 15-year olds which takes place every three years.
[16] One-to-one and group interviews took place with participants aged between 6-months-to-25 years. Parents spoke on behalf of those aged four years old and under.

3) Subjective measures: This method captures someone's feelings, emotions, aspirations, likes, dislikes and views about their purpose in life. Aspects such as these are considered not so easy to measure (NEF, 2009). In psychology, cognitive measures of evaluating life satisfaction are sometimes used individually or they might be combined with negative and positive emotions about recent events to provide a more comprehensive picture (White, 2014). One example where measures were combined can be found in the work of the Children's Society where they combined three different subjective well-being measures to create a single composite measure[17] (Rees et al. 2010). Combining scores recognises that different measures capture different aspects of well-being. Hicks et al. (2011) regard subjective well-being very highly and claim that the views of children and young people are important. Children have a right to contribute what they think and feel rather than be viewed as passive recipients which is the case in objective measures.

Some attention was given to children's subjective well-being in part two of the 2013 UNICEF report where Cantril's ladder of life satisfaction was used to find out what mattered to children, and what they had to say about their lives. However, the report overall appears to favour objective data but UNICEF (2013) acknowledges that;

> if the aim is to measure children's well-being then there can be no more direct or reliable method than asking children themselves to say what they think about their own lives (UNICEF, 2013, p.42).

Despite this acknowledgement, Lansdown (2001) asserts that;

> the welfare model of childcare has perpetuated the view that children lack the capacity to contribute to their own well-being or do not have a valid and valuable contribution to make (p.93).

There is the view that elements of subjective measures, such as life satisfaction and personal feelings are abstract ideas that children might find difficult to understand (NEF, 2009; Wigelsworth et al. 2010). Therefore, the reliability of children's responses could be questioned, but the same argument could be applied to adults. Another criticism of subjective measures is the fact that it may be more time-consuming compared with objective measures. According to

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[17] Cantril's ladder of happiness (scale 0-to-10), happiness with life as a whole scale (items 0-to-10) and Huebner's Life Satisfaction Scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree items) were used with 10-to-15 year olds.

Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) subjective well-being evidence is often viewed by some as less credible. One example of this is reported by Statham and Chase (2010) who state that in order to influence policy, specific domains of well-being were targeted in a 2009 OECD report, and children's subjective well-being was removed and never reported on. It could be argued that this is disrespectful to acknowledging children's views.

To summarise, indices, objective indicators and subjective measures are utilised by the State to report on well-being for children generally over the age of eight years. As previously stated, it is recognised that solely relying on objective data as an indicator of well-being is not enough to inform policy and that subjective data is beneficial in providing a more comprehensive, clearer, reliable picture (NEF, 2009; McLellan and Steward, 2015). However, very few measures exist which are aimed at young children and this raises the following questions: what types of measures have been developed for young children and why are they limited?

2.3.2 Capturing the well-being of young children

A few subjective well-being measures exist for children under the age of eight years and they usually adopt a psychological stance, for example the Pictorial Self-Concept Scale (Fauth and Thompson, 2009). This tool is aimed at early primary school-aged children and involves 50 picture cards where children are asked to rate themselves using the following categories; 'like me', 'sometimes like me', 'not like me'. As with all tools there are drawbacks and weaknesses and children may initially require a significant amount of time in order to understand the picture cards.

Another subjective tool aimed at 5-to-7 year olds has been developed by researchers at the School of Psychology, University of Sussex (Banerjee, 2015). This involves a free online socio-emotional questionnaire that captures children's feelings about school and their peers, but little is known about how the information can be used to inform classroom practice. An adult may need to assist a child in completing the questionnaire which can be time-consuming and they could potentially influence the children's responses. Children under the age of eight years also completed questionnaires in the Millennium Cohort

Study (Joshi et al. 2011) and in the recent evaluation of the Foundation Phase in Wales (Taylor et al. 2015). Therefore, it seems that questionnaires are a common method for capturing children's subjective well-being.

Generally, the majority of subjective well-being tools are aimed at eight year olds and above so there is a tendency to adapt tools for use with younger children. An example of this is evident in the Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) study (Parkes et al. 2014). The report states "little is known about the importance of relationships, material and other influences on subjective well-being in children younger than ten years old" (Parkes et al. 2014, p.4). Therefore, for the purpose of the GUS study Parkes et al. (2014) adapted Huebner's multi-dimensional Life Satisfaction Scale for seven year olds. However, because this is a new development there could be a weakness with regards to validity and reliability.

A different kind of measure called The Development and Well-being Assessment (DAWBA) tool is an example of a composite measure. The DAWBA is aimed at 5-to-17 year olds and consists of parental interviews, teacher questionnaires and the use of rating scales. This tool is used primarily for diagnosing psychiatric child and adolescent mental health (DAWBA, 2012), but it shows that different measures can be used alongside each other to provide one score; thus presenting a more comprehensive picture.

In relation to the early years classroom, evidence suggests that more objective type measures have been developed. For example, in 1976 the Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS) was developed in Belgium to indicate the quality of the learning process. The tool consists of a rating scale of 1-to-5 and is considered quick and easy to use, and provides immediate feedback about a child's well-being and involvement (Laevers, 2003). However, Forgeard et al. (2011) questions;

> why do we want one number to summarise the wellbeing of an individual…? Perhaps it is because a single number satisfies our craving for simple findings or conclusions, in spite of the complexity of the phenomena being studied (p.97).

Perhaps the complexity of well-being is overlooked with the LIS or it could be argued that the complexity is virtually impossible to capture. Another objective

tool which has recently been developed also adopts a rating scale component. In 2009, German researchers developed the PERIK[18] tool which is theoretically underpinned by concepts of 'mental health', 'resilience' and 'school readiness'. It consists of six dimensions of well-being also known as socio-emotional competencies (Mayr and Ulich, 2009). The purpose was to develop a practical, not too complex, reliable tool to record well-being in a systematic way for pre-school teachers working with 3-to-6 year olds. Mayr and Ulich (2009) suggest that the tool can be used to gather quantitative and qualitative data and this is one of the tool's strengths. For full effectiveness, they suggest it should be used alongside other tools in the classroom. However, there is very little evidence about its application in practice and it would be useful to know whether this tool provides helpful information that informs classroom practice.

In 2010, Roberts (2010) attempted to develop a well-being observational tool for practitioners working with young children. The tool consists of thirty-two well-being codes and various assessment sheets. Roberts (2010) suggests that the assessment sheets "do not quantify progress, nor 'test' children's knowledge, skills and understanding in an objective or comprehensive way…" (p.142). She further claims that the tool is a way of capturing "children's interests, their companions and their experiences…and provides a rich source of evidence" (p.142). Although this tool sounds useful, it may be time-consuming to use and the information it provides may not be that helpful to practitioners in helping children progress. However, there is very little evidence available about its practical use and this is a similar finding with other tools. Conversely, White et al. (2013) conducted a study with Scottish practitioners to ascertain their views about using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)[19] to assess children's social and emotional well-being on-entry to primary school. Views were positive but practitioners "felt that the SDQ had not identified anything they did not already know about a child" (White et al. 2013, p.87).

It seems that objective indicator tools are more commonly associated with younger children under the age of eight years. This is where children are conceptualised as 'objects', rather than 'subjects' who are willing and capable of reflecting upon their experiences (Seland et al. 2015). To summarise, there are

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[18] PERIK is a German acronym for positive development and resilience in kindergarten.
[19] The SDQ tool is briefly described in Table 2.

very few tools available for capturing children's subjective well-being especially in the context of the classroom. The tools that have been developed vary in nature and design and have different aims and purposes. This is shown in Table 2 which summarises some of the tools that currently exist for capturing young children's well-being.

Table 2: Well-being tools for use with young children

Name of tool/measure	Background information	Aims/purpose of the tool/measure	Tool component(s) and type
The Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS)	First developed in 1976* by Professor Ferre Leavers in Belgium. *From 1991 in the UK.	Provides information about the indicators of the quality of the learning process/educational setting. Aims to give practitioners immediate feedback about their work.	Rating scale 1-to-5.
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)	First developed in 1997 by Robert Goodman (School of Psychiatry) in the UK.	To diagnose children who potentially might need mental health support.	Behavioural screening questionnaire tool (several versions available for researchers, clinicians and educationalists) with 25 items.
PERIK	First developed in 1999 by two researchers - Mayr and Ulich in Germany.	To develop a practical, not too complex, reliable instrument for pre-school teachers enabling them to observe and record well-being systematically.	Six dimensions with six items, rating scale 1-to-6.
Observational tool	First developed in 2010 by Rosemary Roberts in the UK.	To record information about children's well-being that informs practitioners about children's interests, their companions, and experiences in a structured way. To help practitioners plan more appropriately for individual children.	Three types of coded observation sheets.

2.3.3 Reasons for limited tools

The following discussion considers why there might be limited tools for capturing children's well-being at a policy and classroom level. One of the main tensions associated with capturing children's well-being is the debate between positive development which focuses on 'strengths and capabilities', versus negative development which focuses on 'difficulties and deficiencies'. Psychological measures of well-being tend to focus on negative indicators of well-being and this has been the case since the Second World War. For example, the consideration that the focus towards society and children has been negative and is still evident today has been argued by Haworth and Hart (2007), who state that there should be an adoption of a more positive approach focussing on children's strengths, capabilities and talents. Pollard and Lee (2003) claim that "only by examining children's strengths and abilities will we discover the core elements of wellbeing that enable children to flourish and thrive" (p.59). Another benefit to focusing on children's strengths is reported by Roberts (2010) who claims that when a positive approach is adopted, strong links with families are strengthened.

The criticism evident in research is that too many tools focus on negative development outcomes and are diagnostic in nature, such as the DAWBA tool which focuses on psychiatric diagnoses as a way of providing better services (Goodman et al. 2000). The SDQ is another tool which is used for mainly targeting children's developmental problems and concerns. A small group of pre-school practitioners in Scotland felt that the SDQ labelled children too soon and too young, when they used it as a transition tool to assess children's well-being on-entry to primary school (White et al. 2013).

Another example of a tool that focuses on negative development indicators is the Canadian Early Development Instrument (EDI). This tool is a population based measure which aims to capture five aspects of school readiness. One of the aspects specifically relates to 'physical health and well-being' which has been interpreted to measure the gross and fine motor skills of 4-to-5 year olds. Average scores are generated for the five aspects and children are labelled one of three categories: top, middle or vulnerable. The aim of the tool is to identify

the needs of children and provide the most appropriate services (Early Development Instrument, 2015). However, it appears that many tools focus on what children cannot do and aim to find out what is wrong in order to fix it or put it right, thus supporting Haworth and Hart's (2007) argument. Mayr and Ulich (2009) believe that the PERIK tool they developed provides an alternative to the negative development perspective.

Mayr and Ulich (2009) suggest that in the last few years the shift from the negative also known as the deficit perspective to a focus on positive development, which is traditionally neglected in research, has started to emerge. Similarly, Ben-Arieh (2005) argues that the majority of tools commonly used for early childhood development always focus on developmental delay and deficiencies, and the notion of the child 'becoming' something in the future. He states that a change is needed from a focus on negative to positive development outcomes but regardless of their focus, the literature consistently suggests that "there is no standard method to assess well-being in children" (Pollard and Lee, 2003, p.68). Furthermore, measures that exist are more likely to focus on the objective dimension of well-being rather than the subjective dimension. It seems that the development of well-being measures for young children particularly in an education context is needed.

2.3.4 The challenges of capturing children's well-being

Limited tools may exist because of specific challenges associated with young children and there appear to be three main challenges which are now discussed in turn. The first challenge is associated with young children's ability to comprehend abstract ideas, such as life evaluation, feelings and meaning in life which they might find difficult to understand (NEF, 2009; Wigelsworth et al. 2010). The NEF (2009) suggest there is concern about whether young children are able to report honestly and reliably on their inner-feelings and this often creates debate. But equally this argument could apply to adults; they may understand abstract concepts but choose not to report honestly. In other words, they may say what they think the listener wants to hear.

Fauth and Thompson (2009) state that "some researchers do not think that young children have the cognitive capacity to understand abstract questions related to 'who are you'?" (p.38). However, understanding the feelings of others can start to develop in children as young as nine months of age where they begin to develop a sense of self-awareness. Also, at around the age of 15-months young children start to recognise themselves in the mirror (Smidt, 2013). Therefore, it could be argued that children from a young age are capable of responding to 'who are you?' questions.

The view that children are far too young and cognitively unable to contribute may be associated with different social constructions of childhood, such as the notion of 'being' and 'becoming'. Uprichard (2008) explains that the 'being' child is considered to be an active citizen, a 'subject' of their experience, an agent of change with positive contributions to make, whereas the 'becoming' child is viewed as an 'object' and is something to be 'seen' and not 'heard'. Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) suggest that tools to capture children's subjective well-being are limited because young children are often viewed and constructed as immature, needy, incompetent and lacking insight which is associated with the 'becoming' notion. Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) explain that in order to focus more attention on children's subjective well-being "a different set of…beliefs about knowledge to traditional research approaches is required" (p.240), and this involves a paradigm shift which presents a significant challenge.

The second challenge associated with capturing well-being is the complexity of the nature of the concept, such as a lack of consensus about the meaning of well-being and its multi-dimensional nature[20]. For example, it can mean 'happiness', 'quality of life', 'life satisfaction', 'contentment' and so on (Ben-Arieh and Frones, 2011). The challenge arises when one domain of well-being or one discourse is focused upon and overlooks the multi-dimensional nature (Forgeard et al. 2011; Hervas and Vazquez, 2013). Pollard and Lee's (2003) systematic review of well-being found that measures of well-being were not multi-dimensional, and general claims were being made about well-being

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[20] Different perspectives of well-being are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

having only focused on one domain. To some extent this is flawed and disregards the complexity of the concept. That is why Forgeard et al. (2011) and Braverman (2012) argue that a multi-dimensional tool improves reliability. However, Zill (2006; cited in Erbstein et al. 2012) suggests that assessing the validity of multi-dimensional tools is difficult.

If well-being assessments are going to be effective they need to capture multiple domains and contextual information (Fernandes et al. 2012). The importance of capturing contextual information was highlighted by participants in a study conducted by White et al. (2013) when they used the SDQ as a way of assessing well-being. For example, practitioners felt restricted by selecting 'not true', 'somewhat true' and 'certainly true'. They wanted the option of recording contextual information. One participant of their study said "there could be outside factors that impact on a child and their behaviour…" (White et al. 2013, p.94). Prilleltensky et al. (2001; cited in Fattore et al. 2009) argue that what is hidden and concealed from measures of well-being are the important broader contextual dimensions, such as "parental, familial, communal and social well-being" (p.72) which the participants from White et al. (2013) study recognise. Furthermore, Fraillon (2004) and Fauth and Thompson (2009) suggest that aspects such as belonging, participation and values should be considered within the broader school context as they can influence children's well-being. Therefore, an understanding of well-being as an inter-connected concept makes it challenging to capture.

The third challenge of capturing children's well-being is including perspectives from different people which aim to present a comprehensive picture. Humphrey et al. (2011) found that only three out of a possible twelve measures included perspectives from parent, child and practitioner. They suggest that priority is not placed on multiple perspectives which could provide unique information (Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011). Wigelsworth et al. (2010) argue that information from one respondent or one measure alone is not the most effective in gathering reliable information. Therefore, the way forward might be to include multiple perspectives and measures that capture different well-being domains. However, the development of such a tool might be a long process which involves piloting, testing and evaluating.

To summarise, there are some measures that have been developed to capture children's subjective and objective well-being. But the tools tend to be objective and diagnostic in nature and focus on capturing children's developmental delay and deficiencies. Furthermore, various challenges are associated with capturing the well-being of children and this might explain why limited tools exist, particularly for young children under the age of eight years. In addition to limited tools, limited evidence also exists about operationalising well-being in schools. Therefore, the following section examines well-being in the context of the curriculum to understand the role of school and child well-being.

2.4 Well-being and the role of school

This section considers the role of school in supporting and promoting well-being and reviews current research evidence. Then it begins to understand the nature of well-being as a subject area of a curriculum and examines the policy direction about delivering well-being in the Foundation Phase.

2.4.1 Supporting and developing children's well-being

In 2012, Soutter et al. (2012) reported that well-being is poorly understood in educational contexts and this is further supported by Davis et al. (2010) who suggests that limited research focuses on the delivery of well-being in classrooms. Despite this, some research exists on strategies that enhance children's well-being such as the work of Huppert (2007; cited in McLaughlin, 2008) who claim there are certain strategies that practitioners can implement in order to enhance children's well-being. For example, children should be encouraged to take regular exercise and develop positive ways of thinking, such as engaging in mindfulness.

According to the OECD (2006) two pedagogical approaches are beneficial for children's well-being. They state;

> a focus on the agency of the child, including respect for the child's natural learning strategies; and the extensive use of listening, project work and documentation in work with young children (p.16).

The OECD is not specific about a child's natural learning strategy in the quote above, but it could imply 'play' of some sort. According to Woolf (2013);

> play is the medium most able to provide opportunities for becoming more self-aware, empathetic and motivated as well as becoming more able to manage feelings and develop and deploy social skills (p.28).

However, Gleave and Cole-Hamilton (2012) highlight that it is difficult to provide a causal link between play and well-being which is often the case between well-being and education. Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) assert that;

> in order to understand how to best support children's well-being in the early childhood setting. We need to understand how young children subjectively experience wellbeing, including the factors that *they* perceive as impacting on it, from their first-hand perspective (p.237).

Understanding children's subjective experiences is supported by Barblett and Maloney (2010) who state, "meaning belongs to the individual rather than to the person assessing the individual's behaviours" (p.13). Proponents who adopt this view value children's perceptions of their experiences, and believe they have valid contributions to make and should be listened to and respected. This reinforces the importance of subjective well-being and a previous argument about acknowledging and utilising both subjective and objective dimensions of well-being. However, research about young children's subjective well-being in educational contexts is limited and evidence about what it may offer children regarding their provision, the curriculum and pedagogy and practitioners and/or parents is also limited.

Research evidence mainly relates to specific targeted intervention programmes, such as the Student Assist Programme (SAP) and the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme to name but a few. In other words, these are programmes which aim to fix or put something right, but the evidence about what they can achieve is mixed, and there is dispute over what can be achieved in the longer term. Carol Craig (2007) current chief executive for the centre for confidence and well-being disagrees with the universal explicit teaching of well-being.   She criticises SEAL for getting children to socially comply with a set of outcomes that outlines the type of person they should become (Craig, 2007).

Recent reports on children's mental health are viewed as over-pessimistic and this has led to an increase in intervention programmes argues Ecclestone and Hayes (2009a; 2009b). Furthermore, they argue that the debate about therapeutic interventions has largely been uncritical and it promotes images of children as vulnerable, needy, weak and fragile (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009b). Therefore, those who quickly turn to implementing intervention programmes may be more inclined to think that children are unable to cope and need some sort of help and support and as a result adopt a negative, deficit view of children. On the other hand Bartholomew (2007, p.27) argues that "interventions should not be denied to children where there is evidence that they work". According to Durlak and Weissberg (2013, p.2) "hundreds of controlled research studies conducted during the past few decades indicate that social and emotional learning programmes can improve pupils' academic performance". In addition, O'Donnell et al. (2014) write very positively about the benefits of intervention programmes in schools.

Additional evidence about positive impacts on children is also reported by Humphrey et al. (2010) who conducted a study about the SEAL programme. However, the gains started to decline after a few weeks and it was recommended that the SEAL programme should be more intensive and delivered over a longer period of time. Bywater and Sharples (2012) claim that;

> choosing a programme that works is not enough to guarantee success; implementing the programme with fidelity takes time and resources, but is necessary to achieve the desired, proven outcome (p. 404).

Similarly, Rones and Hoagward (2000; cited in Hallam, 2009) agree that SEAL on its own is not effective. Factors such as consistent implementation of the programme, input from parents/carers, practitioners and peers alongside the integration of SEAL into the daily curriculum will help to make it more effective. When Coleman (2009) explored the role of well-being in schools his discussion focused mainly on the limited empirical evidence of the effectiveness of intervention programmes. Many of the programmes have drawn criticism from experts who claim there is an "insufficient and inconsistent evidence base" (Humphrey et al. 2010, p.513; Mayr and Ulich, 1999; Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009a; Gillies, 2011) between well-being and improved academic performance.

This is an important criticism and raises questions as to whether schools and/or the State are aware of insufficient supporting evidence.

A further concern is raised by Clack (2012) that schools can often become "the backdoor for addressing a whole host of societal ills" (p.502) which questions the realistic expectation for schools in supporting and improving well-being. Craig (2007) strongly feels that "problems with young people's well-being are the result of an enormous number of social and cultural changes" (p.13). Craig (2007) in citing the work of Bradshaw claims that Governments should be targeting and responding to family breakdown, rather than focusing on providing individual lessons on social and emotional skills in schools. Downey and Kelly (1986) claim that, "to put extra resources only into the education of such children is to attempt to deal with the symptoms without getting at the root causes of their difficulties" (p.233). Craig's (2009) report suggests that there is little point in teaching universal emotional and social skills to children who do not need it; they could be utilising their time more effectively.

2.4.2 Approaches to operationalising well-being in the classroom

Very little research has been conducted into the teaching of well-being and there is a view that;

> teaching well-being is not quite like other academic disciplines…the teaching of well-being must have experience as its primary aim: we should be teaching the students how to be well, how to do well-being. In order for this stuff to work, we have to get the students to experience it (Morris, 2009, p.4).

By referring to well-being in the curriculum as something that should be experienced, Morris (2009) favours a constructivist pedagogical approach. He suggests it is not like teaching other subjects and emphasises that "the subject is directly about the students and about being human, rather than being about ideas by and large…" (p.6). Well-being is conceptualised in this description as something abstract with an unfixed meaning; it is about exploring what it means to exist and bears a resemblance to a eudaimonic discourse of well-being. This discourse and many others are explained in the next chapter.

Similarly, Downey and Kelly (1986) agree with Morris (2009) but they also emphasise the importance of moral education which closely relate to well-being

in the curriculum. They state "it is an area to which no clear body of knowledge can be assigned… it extends, like language learning, across every experience children have, both inside school and outside it…" (p.151). To some extent this description represents an integrated view of delivering well-being. Another description by Morris (2009) also implies an integrated approach to delivering well-being. He states that "the teaching of well-being relates directly to life as it is lived and life does not divide neatly into categories and sub-divisions: it is a web of connections and inter-related experiences" (p.201).

What is noteworthy is that whilst there is little research evidence available about well-being and the curriculum, contemporary research about young children's well-being and education is gaining momentum (McLellan and Steward, 2015). An example of a current phenomenological study conducted by Seland et al. (2015) set out to explore in what contexts do 1-to-3 year olds experience subjective well-being. They found that;

> …staff members creating an intersubjective space dominated by high sensitivity and responsivity is also an important factor for toddlers' wellbeing. Wellbeing is expressed in situations where the child is seen, understood and recognized as a subject with their own intentions, needs and preferences… (Seland et al. 2015, p.70).

The findings from Seland et al. (2015) study show that children experience subjective well-being when adults firstly, view children as subjects of their experience and focus on the here and now as in the 'being' notion, rather than focusing on the future as in the 'becoming' notion. Secondly, children are more likely to experience subjective well-being when practitioners enact a rights-based pedagogy but this is an under-researched area. Another recent study conducted about young children's well-being in education found that;

> well-being education generated by educators according to young children's interests is potentially more meaningful to children than intervention approaches designed to change children's behaviour… (Edwards et al. 2015, p.4).

When educators persistently focus on developing positive feelings through targeted intervention programmes such as SEAL, there is the argument that this may be disadvantaging children from experiencing a range of emotions more naturally, such as negative emotions which are needed for healthy well-rounded development (Craig et al. 2007; cited in Watson et al. 2012). Allowing and

encouraging children to experience both positive and negative emotions is further supported by Dowling (2010) who states that for children to be able to understand their emotions they need to experience a range of them. Some argue that "children need to experience negative emotions and low self-esteem in order to be challenged and motivated to succeed and to develop persistence and resilience" (Watson et al. 2012, p.4). Craig (2009) draws upon the work of positive psychologist Professor Martin Seligman to explain the importance of children experiencing a range of emotions, and asserts;

> anxiety, depression, and anger, exist for a purpose: they galvanize you into action to change yourself or your world, and by doing so to terminate the negative emotion. Inevitably, such feelings carry pain but they are an effective 'alarm system' which warns us of danger, loss, and trespass. So artificially trying to protect children from bad feelings will undermine their development, not aid it (Craig, 2009, p.11).

Likewise, Ecclestone and Hayes (2009b) adopt a similar view to Craig (2009) and disagree with targeted interventions as an approach to operationalising well-being. They strongly feel that "emotional intelligence, emotional literacy and emotional well-being are not educational activities" (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009b, p.147). However, if schools and educators shared this view it would be questionable as to who would be responsible for children's emotional well-being or any other type of well-being. Layard (2007) suggests that many would argue that teaching well-being and/or happiness is the role of parents, and as a leading economist he argues;

> …it is so important to the welfare of our children what the other children are like. So we obviously have an interest as a society in what happens to other peoples' children and I think that is an absolutely overwhelming argument for the State taking a major responsibility for the character development of the children of each family (Layard, 2007, p.6).

Layard's (2007) point also raises the importance of working in partnership with parents in contributing to children's well-being but this is also another under-researched area.

2.4.3 Well-being as an Area of Learning in the curriculum

In the last 20 years or so well-being has started to appear as a subject area of the statutory curriculum in various countries. As outlined in Chapter 1, in 1996

Wales (and England) introduced its first statutory early years curriculum for 3-to-5 year olds called the 'Desirable Outcomes', and presented well-being as a 'principle of good quality educational practice'. It states "adults concerned with under-fives have a particular responsibility for their care, safety, protection and well-being" (ACCAC, 2000, p.3). This implies a somewhat general responsibility for children's welfare and happiness and a discourse of care (Spratt, 2016). Then in 2008, the Welsh Government introduced its new curriculum called the 'Foundation Phase' for 3-to-7 year olds, and located well-being within one of seven Areas of Learning called: Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity (PSDWBCD). Well-being is now presented as a 'skill' and there is an expectation and requirement to assess it and give an 'Outcome' or score between one and six. Teachers are also expected to do the same in other Areas of Learning, such as Mathematical Development and Language, Literacy and Communication Skills.

Similarly, in a UK context Scotland introduced a new curriculum in 2010 called Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) for 3-to-18 year olds. The CfE includes eight subject areas and one of them is 'Health and well-being'. Each curriculum area is associated with experiences and outcomes and well-being is presented in three different ways. Firstly, as an 'attribute', secondly as a 'capability' and thirdly, as an 'outcome' (Scottish Government, 2015) which is similar to the Welsh curriculum.

Looking further afield, New Zealand introduced its first national early years curriculum in 1996 for 0-to-5 year olds which consists of four principles and five strands with several goals. One of the strands is 'well-being' which is presented to practitioners in three different ways, firstly as 'knowledge to be gained', secondly as a 'skill' and thirdly, as an 'attitude' (Ministry of Education, 1996). 13 years later, in 2009, Australia introduced its first national early years curriculum for 0-to-5 year olds which consists of five outcomes. Outcome three states "children have a strong sense of wellbeing" (Australian Government, 2009, p.3). It states that an outcome is a 'skill', 'knowledge' or 'disposition' which practitioners should promote in partnership with children and their families. So in the Australian context it is presented as any one of three concepts. However,

the conceptual understanding is unclear and it could be argued that well-being has many different meanings in the context of the curriculum which is the same in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales curricula.

The four curricula discussed show that well-being is presented to practitioners in eight different ways[21] which could present challenges in the way it is operationalised. This might explain why Bailey (2009), who writes from a philosophical perspective, suggests that placing well-being in the curriculum should be considered with caution; it is often misunderstood, taken-for-granted and thus problematic. Therefore, the following discussion examines the policy direction for well-being within the Foundation Phase.

2.4.4 The policy direction for delivering well-being

The Foundation Phase curriculum aimed at 3-to-7 year olds is explored in more detail because in comparison with the other three curricula, previously discussed, there is evidence to suggest that well-being is presented differently in Wales' early years curriculum from the period between 1996 to 2008. The shift from well-being presented as a 'principle of good quality educational practice' in 1996 to being presented as a 'skill' and an 'Outcome' in 2008 makes the Foundation Phase an interesting and useful case study.

The Foundation Phase consists of seven Areas of Learning and well-being is located in the Area of Learning called 'Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity' (PSDWBCD). In relation to the seven Areas, the Welsh Government state;

> they must complement each other and work together to provide a cross-curricular approach to form a practical relevant curriculum. They should not be approached in isolation (WAG, 2008a, p.14).

'Cross-curricular' implies an integrated approach to the delivery and this is described by Kelly (1999) as "learning through subjects rather than the learning of subjects" (p.206). Bernstein (1982), a British sociologist, suggests the 'integrated' code is characterised by Areas of Learning or subjects of a

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[21] (1) a principle of practice, (2) a skill, (3) knowledge, (4) an attitude, (5) a disposition, (6) an attribute, (7) a capability, (8) an outcome.

curriculum that are open in relation to one another. They are not standalone but inter-connected.   Whereas the 'collection' code is characterised as standalone Areas of Learning or subjects that are clearly distinct from one another. They are compartmentalised and discrete. Bernstein (1977) states that both curriculum codes exist on a spectrum from strong to weak which means there can be numerous variations. Whitty et al. (1994) explain that the integrated code was introduced in the late twentieth century as a response to the narrow subject-based collection code. The integrated code was viewed as one way of ensuring that children and young people were provided with the necessary skills for preparation for life after school.

The Welsh Government further advocate the integrated code and state that, "emphasis is placed on developing children's skills across the Areas of Learning, to provide a suitable and integrated approach for young children's learning" (WAG, 2008a, p.14). In addition, it states, "Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity is at the heart of the Foundation Phase and should be developed across the curriculum" (WAG, 2008a, p.14). This demonstrates a clear direction in policy to deliver well-being across the curriculum in an integrated, cross-curricular way. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the integrated code and places PSDWBCD at the centre of the curriculum. The dotted lines highlight that the Areas of Learning are open in relation to one another.

Figure 1: Visual interpretation of the integrated code in the Foundation Phase
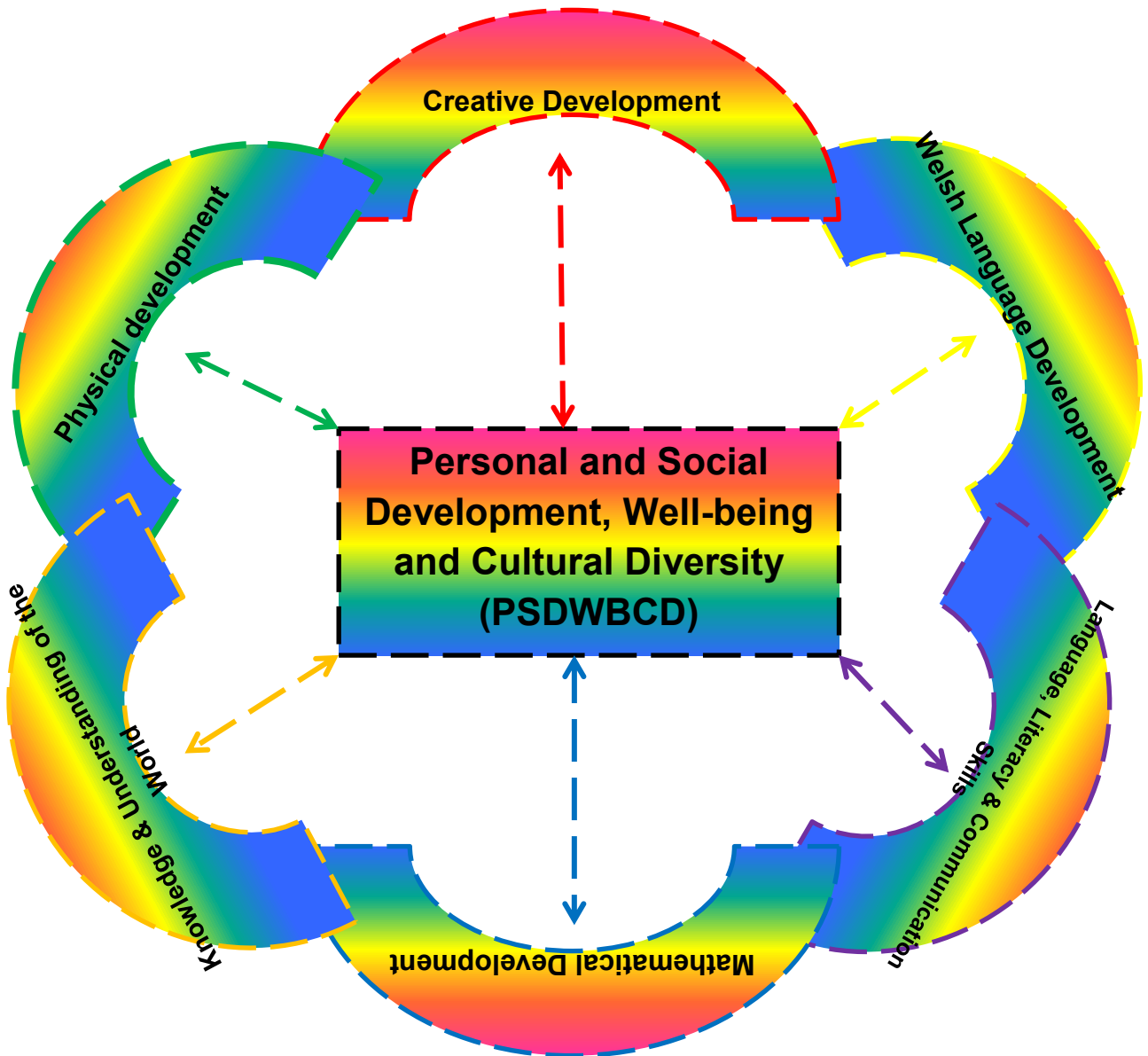
In contrast, there is different guidance provided in documents produced by the Welsh Government to support the implementation of the Foundation Phase. The 'Learning and Teaching Pedagogy' document suggests that practitioners can choose two approaches. Firstly, "a practitioner's planning might be holistic, taking a thematic approach across all Areas of Learning" (WAG, 2008b, p.13) as in Figure 1, and is associated with the integrated code. Secondly, "practitioners might want to undertake discrete planning for each Area of Learning" (p.13) which is associated with the collection code. However, in relation to PSDWBCD, it specifically states;

> Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity should be an integral part of planning across all Areas of Learning regardless of whether a practitioner's planning is holistic, discrete or involves a combination of approaches (p.15).

Therefore, the Area of Learning where well-being is located is presented differently to that of the other six Areas and this makes it different and unique. In one respect the Welsh Government state that the seven Areas of Learning should not be delivered in isolation then it states that practitioners may choose; there are mixed messages in policy about whether the curriculum should be delivered in an integrated, cross-curricular way across all Areas of Learning and/or to teach it discretely. What is clear is that PSDWBCD should be delivered in an integrated way. It is the combination of the 'integrated' code versus 'collection' code that is problematised throughout this thesis. Other associated Bernsteinian concepts (1977; 1982; 1990) such as 'classification' and 'framing' are drawn upon to further understand how well-being is conceptualised and operationalised.

2.4.5 A philosophical understanding of well-being in the curriculum

There is the suggestion that a more philosophical understanding of well-being is needed in education, which means shifting from well-being to the well-lived life (Clack, 2012). This is an alternative view compared with Layard's view for example, where Clack (2012) asserts that "if well-being is understood as a form of practice that enables the resources for the well-lived life, it can never be reduced to skills training" (p.508). This view suggests that well-being should not be reduced to a skill or an outcome as it is presented in some early years curricula.

In the broadest sense, education is associated with developing skills that are deemed necessary for living a success and thriving future. However, this becomes problematic when well-being is included in the curriculum alongside other Areas of Learning such as, Mathematical Development or Language, Literacy and Communication Skills. It raises questions such as, how does one decide on the well-lived life for children? What does it mean to live a well-lived life? What does a well-lived life look like? How does one decide upon the

nature of child well-being in the context of the curriculum? What does child well-being look like? Clack (2012) continues to argue from a philosophical perspective and states;

> the well-lived life is intimately connected to the development of character: something that takes time and which cannot be gained through short cuts or quick fixes… there needs to be a rich curriculum that offers opportunities for all to find subjects and disciplines that, through their exploration and practice, cultivate their sense of well-being. But it also means ensuring that there are spaces in the curriculum that allow for reflection on the nature of life and the meaning of life. This need not mean adding anything radically new to the already packed school day (p.508).

It appears that Clack (2012) rejects the way in which well-being is currently presented in the four early years curricula previously discussed. Instead Clack (2012) raises the importance of Religious Education (RE) in the curriculum as the place where well-being and the well-lived life can be explored. What is noticeable is that in Foundation Phase policy, it states "the skills highlighted in the RE framework largely match those in the Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity Area of Learning…" (WAG, 2008a, p.13). Therefore, this raises questions about the rationale for including 'well-being' as a discrete Area of Learning in the Foundation Phase.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the reasons why well-being is a fast-growing and appealing concept in education policy. Firstly, the State think it may reduce the demand on various public services and thus save public money in the longer term, secondly the State want to improve people's lives, thirdly the State are responding to the childhood crisis debate about the rise or perceived rise in mental health issues, and/or lastly, the State think it could help children learn more effectively which increases academic outcomes and future success. Evidence from the 1967 Plowden report highlights that well-being has always been an important aspect of education, particularly with young children. Moreover, this chapter demonstrated that despite the rise in well-being and education policy the links between well-being and education are complex, and there is a general lack of robust empirical data that associates school success and achievement with well-being. There are mixed findings and views about

whether targeted intervention programmes make a difference to children's success and life chances. Therefore, it seems there is a tension between claims about well-being and what it can offer versus research evidence.

In addition, this chapter discovered that various well-being measures exist and the State is more inclined to use indices to report on children's well-being. However, there is some concern that well-being data is over used, misused and misinterpreted to shape policy. Objective indicators tend to be the most dominant measure but they only show part of a picture. There is a developing trend in capturing the subjective well-being of children aged eight years and above but limited tools are available particularly for capturing young children's subjective well-being in education. Three challenges are associated with this which relate to adults thinking children are too young and unable to cognitively contribute, secondly, the recognition of well-being as a complex concept and a lack of consensus about the meaning of well-being; thirdly, developing a composite tool that captures a comprehensive picture from a range of perspectives is also challenging. Therefore, it concluded that developing, piloting, testing and evaluating the most appropriate tool could be a long process.

This chapter also revealed that well-being is presented in eight[22] different ways across four[23] different early years curricula. Wales' Foundation Phase curriculum was examined further because in the last decade or so well-being has undergone an interesting policy shift from a 'principle of good quality educational practice to a 'skill' and an 'Outcome'. It concludes that the policy direction for delivering well-being in the curriculum is somewhat unclear in Wales. For example, mixed messages are in use about the 'integrated' or 'collection' code. This raises the following questions which are explored in the next chapter: what exactly is well-being and what are the dominant discourses?

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[22] (1) a principle of practice, (2) a skill, (3) knowledge, (4) an attitude, (5) a disposition, (6) an attribute, (7) a capability, (8) an outcome.
[23] Wales, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia.

3   Examining the nature of well-being

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 focused on understanding the role of well-being in education policy and practice and explored why well-being is a fast-growing interest and an appealing concept in policy. However, evidence was presented from as far back as the 1960s to highlight that well-being has always been an important focus in education, particularly with young children. Chapter 2 also discussed the policy benefits of focusing on well-being and suggested there are two broad reasons as to why children's well-being matters; firstly, well-being is understood as a pre-requisite to developing a broad range of skills and competencies, such as becoming an effective learner. Secondly, well-being is understood as a by-product/outcome of, for example, meeting children's basic needs or being literate. Chapter 2 also reported that well-being is measured in different ways and the objective dimension of well-being is usually privileged in policy. This highlights two points, firstly that well-being is defined and conceptualised differently and secondly, dominant discourses of well-being exist.

Furthermore, Chapter 2 demonstrated that well-being is presented in several different ways across different early years curricula[24]. This raises the following questions: what exactly is well-being? What are the dominant discourses of well-being? How is it understood within the context of an early years curriculum? Fraillon (2004) and Coleman (2009) claim that questions such as these are difficult to answer and require further research. Therefore, this chapter attempts to address these questions and is structured in two main sections.

3.2 Dimensions, domains and discourses of well-being

This section is important because much confusion and uncertainty exists about what well-being is (Coleman, 2009; Roberts, 2010) as well as a lack of consensus amongst cultures, languages and disciplines (Statham and Chase,

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[24] Wales, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia.

2010; Soutter et al. 2012). Furthermore, well-being is reported as a vague, complex, 'catch-all' concept that is often misunderstood (Haworth and Hart, 2007; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012). Therefore, it broadly sets out to critically explain what well-being is by drawing upon dimensions, domains and dominant discourses. It concludes with a conceptual framework of well-being which aims to provide clarity about what it is.

This section firstly explains the two overarching dimensions of well-being which are commonly associated with the concept, namely objective and subjective well-being and establishes their similarities and differences. Secondly, it discusses different well-being domains and explores which domains relate to young children and the early years curriculum. Thirdly, it discusses various discourses of well-being such as philosophy, psychology and economics.

3.2.1 Subjective and objective dimensions of well-being

This chapter demonstrates that different explanations, definitions and interpretations of well-being exist. The objective dimension is usually conceptualised as a 'concrete noun' that can be quantified, and tends to have a fixed meaning; whereas the subjective dimension conceptualises well-being as an 'abstract noun' which is socially and culturally constructed, and tends to have an unfixed meaning and more difficult to quantify (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008).

The subjective dimension of well-being is usually understood as a concept that is complex in nature and fluctuates. This dimension is captured in the following quote: "well-being is subjective and varies by person, gender, age, relationships, status, place, culture and more" (Chambers, 2014; cited in White and Abeyasekera, 2014, p.xi). This dimension is also closely associated with people's values where they reflect and consider what is important to them (Gasper, 2010) and this creates debate. Gasper (2010) suggests that nouns are typically reified and argues that well-being is not a "definite single thing, or just two things – 'subjective well-being' and 'objective well-being' – or any number of things" (p.352). He further argues that "a conception of well-being rests on a conception of being and/or of human life" (p.357). Similarly, Ereaut and Whiting (2008) claim that;

the meaning of wellbeing is not fixed - it cannot be. It is a *primary cultural judgement*; just like *'what makes a good life?'* it is the stuff of fundamental philosophical debate (p.7).

These views highlight that some proponents are averse to defining well-being and consider the task a problematic and impossible one (Coleman, 2009; Statham and Chase, 2010). Therefore, if this view applies to practitioners working with young children in schools, operationalising well-being in the curriculum could prove to be challenging and controversial.

In contrast, the objective dimension of well-being is adopted by Dodge et al. (2012) who appear to take a different perspective about the meaning of well-being to that of Chambers (2014; cited in White and Abeyasekera, 2014), Gasper (2010) and Ereaut and Whiting (2008). They draw upon Reber's (1995) definition which is taken from a psychology dictionary claiming that well-being is a state of being stable. They suggest that;

stable wellbeing is when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge. When individuals have more challenges than resources, the see-saw dips, along with their well-being and vice-versa (Dodge et al. 2012, p.230).

The quote above highlights that some proponents believe that it is possible to define well-being and it can have a fixed meaning. However, Dodge et al. (2012) also recognise that "the concept of wellbeing is undeniably complex" (p.229) and proponents of the subjective dimension also take this view. Dodge et al's (2012) interpretation of well-being relates to a number of aspects, namely psychological, social and physical resources and challenges and they also describe well-being as a concept that fluctuates. To help reach this definition Dodge et al. (2012) reviewed three complex theoretical models of well-being drawing upon the work of Heady and Wearing (1989), Cummins (2010) and Csikszentmihalhyi (2002) to develop a new model. Dodge et al's (2012) new, simplified model focuses on equilibrium which they describe is a continuous state/set point of well-being without having to face life challenges or events. They explain the new model by using the image of a see-saw to help explain their definition of well-being. They imply that well-being is the balance point (equilibrium) between how an individual uses their resources such as their skills

to face life challenges. The ideology is that the see-saw dips either side acknowledging that well-being is a state of continual flux. However, it seems that they have simplified a complex concept and Gasper (2010) suggests there is a danger of the concept being over simplified. The see-saw model would benefit from showing examples of how someone's 'resources', 'challenges' and 'equilibrium' interact and function, but this would be difficult to show on a model and might complicate it even further. Dodge et al. (2012) highlight the strengths of the model yet they avoid discussing or acknowledging any weaknesses. For example, they assert that one of the strengths is that the new model "can be applied to all individuals regardless of age, culture and gender" (Dodge et al. 2012, p.231) and this is a relevant point which indicates that they perceive the components of well-being to be the same for children and adults. However, they only include three broad domains on both sides of the see-saw, namely psychological, social and physical, but a broad range of other domains exist which are discussed later on in this section.

Other academics who have tried to define the objective dimension of well-being, such as La Placa et al. (2013) conclude from their evaluation of McNaught's framework that "the structure of the framework is dynamic because the components are lived entities, and the relationships within and between these entities are in continual flux" (p.121). Mayr and Ulich (1999) adopt a similar view to La Placa et al. (2013) and claim that well-being is "a complex physical and psychological state and disposition" (p.230). Similarly, NEF (2009) assert that well-being emerges in relation to "a dynamic interaction of different factors" (p.7). Furthermore, Ben-Arieh and Frones (2011, p.465) state that "children's movement through the life course implies that their well-being (and capabilities) is continuously changing…". Therefore, well-being might be difficult to teach and capture as a subject of the early years curriculum if this particular view was held by practitioners working with young children in schools.

Despite the view that the subjective and objective dimension of well-being is complex and fluctuates, Pollard and Lee (2003), Fraillon (2004) and Dodge et al. (2012) argue that a unified definition is needed. Establishing a unified definition might enable better consistency of support for well-being and more

efficient implementation of policies (Fraillon, 2004), but there is very little empirical evidence to support this. Fraillon (2004) suggests that the education sector in particular need to establish a common definition of well-being, but La Placa et al. (2013) state that due to its inherent complexity a simple definition will be difficult to attain and may not be that helpful. According to Statham and Chase (2010) well-being is often difficult to narrow down to just one simple definition because there are subjective and objective ways of understanding the concept. Furthermore, Mayr and Ulich (1999) suggest that well-being is difficult to define because there are numerous domains that inter-relate. Gasper (2010) agrees and describes well-being as a vector concept with many "fuzzy and contingent" (p.358) components. Moreover, well-being is often described as a nebulous concept. However, it could be argued that proponents who adopt a more concrete understanding of well-being such as Dodge et al. (2012) have made a particular effort to help identify the 'fuzzy' and 'contingent' components.

Another reason as to why well-being is considered difficult to define could be related to the argument that well-being is usually conflated with other concepts, such as 'happiness', 'life satisfaction', 'quality of life', 'emotional literacy', 'emotional intelligence' and 'positive mental health' to name but a few (Pollard and Lee, 2003; Fraillon, 2004; McLaughlin, 2008; Awartani et al. 2008; Statham and Chase, 2010; Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011; Hicks et al. 2011; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012; Walker, 2012). However, Coleman (2009) asserts, "it has to be said that well-being is not quite the same as happiness" (283). According to Morrow and Mayall (2009) conflating concepts makes defining well-being "conceptually muddy" (p.221).

The argument that well-being is conflated with other concepts and used synonymously supports Ereaut and Whiting's (2008) claim that well-being is socially and culturally constructed and does not have a fixed meaning. Also, this argument highlights that the concept is vague and ambiguous and can have many different meanings. Watson et al. (2012) highlight that research about well-being, in general, is usually limited because there is much variation about the meaning of well-being and there is a lack of consistency in how it is understood, defined and implemented. In addition, Coleman (2009) suggests

that when there are differences between how well-being is understood it is very difficult to measure and operationalise, therefore it is problematic for schools to show that well-being has improved or changed. He further argues that there are "too many views of how to define well-being" (p.288). However, it could be argued that a clear definition of well-being is required within curriculum policy, if practitioners are expected to operationalise it.

The discussion thus far has explained some of the main characteristics associated with the two overarching dimensions - objective and subjective well-being. Table 3 attempts to summarise the key points of the discussion so far and highlight the differences and similarities between the dimensions.

Table 3: The similarities and differences between the two most commonly reported dimensions of well-being

Differences	
between subjective and objective well-being	
Subjective dimension	**Objective dimension**
Difficult/impossible to define	Can be defined
Unfixed definition	Fixed definition
Abstract noun	Concrete noun
Difficult to quantify/ not measurable	Can be quantified/ is measurable
Interpretivist stance	Positivist stance
Similarities	
between subjective and objective well-being	
Complex	
Fluctuates and changes	
Based on people's values	
Conflated with other concepts	

Due to there being different meanings and interpretations of well-being it could be argued that when well-being is discussed there should be some clarification or indication about its meaning. This would make it easier to comprehend, and in relation to the curriculum it could make it easier to operationalise. For

example, different meanings of well-being are evident in the following two descriptions, where researchers are explicit yet brief about what they mean by child well-being. In the first description, Edwards et al. (2015) state; "in this paper, we consider 'well-being' in terms of overweight and obesity prevention…" (p.3), whereas in the second description Taylor et al. (2015) state;

> throughout the report we refer to pupil wellbeing. This was measured using the Leuven scale of wellbeing. This is largely a measure of physical wellbeing that can be used in the observation of individual children (Taylor et al. 2015, p.iii).

The two descriptions show that well-being has two different meanings in the context of the research. Also, Taylor et al. (2015) refer to different domains, namely 'pupil' well-being and 'physical' well-being which indicates that well-being is recognised as a concept that encompasses different domains. This raises the following question: how many different domains are there and which domains are associated with young children and curriculum policy?

3.2.2 Various well-being domains

Evidence shows that many different domains of well-being exist. For example, over a decade ago Pollard and Lee (2003) conducted a systematic review of well-being which does not specifically relate to children and identified five distinct domains, namely (1) physical, (2) psychological, (3) cognitive, (4) social and (5) economic well-being. More recently, in 2011 McNaught (2011; cited in La Placa et al. 2013) developed a framework for defining well-being which also does not specifically relate to children and identified four broad domains, namely (1) societal, (2) community, (3) family and (4) individual. The framework shows that well-being is defined as a dynamic inter-play of the four domains. La Placa et al. (2013) suggest that McNaught's framework for defining well-being acknowledges the multiple components associated with the concept. It shows how "it brings together how people feel about their circumstances and assessment of how their objective circumstances affect them as individuals, families and societies" (La Placa et al. 2013, p.120). Furthermore, the framework highlights the two overarching dimensions of well-being, the objective and subjective.

Some research about the domains of young children's well-being under the age of eight years took place in 2009 by Fauth and Thompson (2009) who conducted a review for the National Children's Bureau. They identified four domains, namely (1) physical well-being, (2) mental health, emotional and social well-being, (3) cognitive and language development and school performance, and (4) beliefs. However, in 2010, Statham and Chase (2010) reported that child well-being usually relates to three domains, namely (1) emotional, (2) physical and (3) social well-being. So the domains identified by Fauth and Thompson (2009) and Statham and Chase (2010) are different to Pollard and Lee's review (2003) and McNaught's (2011; cited in La Placa et al. 2013) framework, which may indicate that different well-being domains relate to different age groups. However, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) devised a framework for measuring well-being which includes ten domains applicable to all age groups (ONS, 2015) but it states that the ways in which the domains are measured vary for the age groups (ONS, 2014). It seems there is little consensus about the domains of well-being and there are mixed views about whether these domains apply to both children and adults.

Even though some research has focused on identifying well-being domains, there is very limited research about well-being domains within education policy. Therefore, Table 4 and the following discussion briefly explores the domains relating to young children and the Foundation Phase. It addresses the following questions by applying content analysis: which domains are present in policy documents relating to young children and the early years curriculum in Wales? Are there domains that appear more frequently?

Table 4: The range of domains and their frequency identified in various policy documents relating to young children

Name of policy document:	Different well-being domains and their frequency identified in policy documents relating to young children:							
	Well-being/ emotional development	Emotional well-being	Physical well-being	Health & well-being	Well-being & involvement	Health & emotional well-being	Child health & mental well-being	Personal child health & well-being
Observing children (WAG, 2008d).	X							
Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity (WAG, 2008c).		X	X					
Physical Development (WAG, 2008e).			X	X				
Learning and Teaching Pedagogy (WAG, 2008b).		X		X	X			
Foundation Phase Child Development Profile Guidance (WAG, 2009).	X							
Further Steps Outdoors (Welsh Government, 2014b).				X				
Personal and Social Education (PSE) Framework for 7-to-19 year olds in Wales (WAG, 2008f).						X		

Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan' (Welsh Government, 2013a).				X		X	X	X
Foundation Phase framework (revised) (Welsh Government, 2015c).		X	X					
	Total number of domains communicated							
	2	3	3	4	1	2	1	1

Table 4 raises three points: firstly that various policy documents make explicit reference to eight different well-being domains which could mean the same thing. Secondly, 'emotional well-being', 'physical well-being' and 'health and well-being' appear slightly more frequently than others. Thirdly, that social well-being is omitted from various policy documents. This is noteworthy because the nature of social well-being incorporates a range of social skills, but specifically pro-social behaviour (Fauth and Thompson, 2009). According to Eisenberg (2003) pro-social behaviour is an important aspect of positive development. Therefore, if social well-being is not explicitly communicated in policy documents compared with other domains, this supports Haworth and Hart's (2007) argument, put forward in Chapter 2; that a widespread negative view towards young children may still exist.

A strong 'health and well-being' and 'physical well-being' focus in education related policy might be related to another argument suggested by Clack (2012) in Chapter 2, that schools are being targeted to tackle health inequalities and various other societal ills. The following reasons put forward by Whitebread (2012) and Craft et al. (2008) also explain why the emotional domain appears more frequently in Welsh policy. For example, Whitebread (2012) suggests there are "powerful links in the human mind between emotion and cognition"

(p.28). Moreover, Craft et al. (2008) claim that "positive emotional states are necessary for most transferable learning, playfulness, discovery and invention" (p.127). If certain domains are more dominant than others in policy this raises the following question: which discourses are usually associated with well-being and why?

3.2.3 Leading discourses of well-being

Well-being discourses are traditionally rooted in philosophy, psychology and economics. One of the main differences between the discourses is the belief that well-being can or cannot be measured. Firstly, philosophical perspectives of well-being have existed for centuries and are associated with the work of Greek philosophers Aristippus of Cyrene, Plato and Aristotle (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Raghavan and Alexandrova, 2015). Generally, there are four different ways of understanding well-being within 'philosophy' which highlights there is no consensus. The four discourses are generally known as:

1. hedonism/mental states discourse
2. eudaimonism/flourishing discourse
3. needs-based/objectivist discourse
4. desire-based/preference satisfaction discourse.

The first two discourses relate to feelings and functioning whereas the last two relate to contributing and determining factors of well-being. Clack (2012) suggests that to some extent the four discourses are all underpinned by happiness, but the way in which happiness is conceptualised varies. Brief explanations of the four discourses follow;

(1) Hedonic/mental states discourse is characterised by feelings of happiness or pleasure (Thompson and Marks, 2006; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Raghavan and Alexandrova, 2015) and Aristippus of Cyrene believed that the ultimate good life consisted of pleasure (McLellan and Steward, 2015). Jeremy Bentham, a British philosopher, argued that a good society is built on maximising pleasure for the greatest number of people (Ryan and Deci, 2001).

(2) The eudaimonic/flourishing discourse was central to ancient Greek ethics and identified by Aristotle (Walker, 2012) but it differs to the hedonic

perspective. For example, the eudaimonic discourse encompasses ideas of human functioning and development, autonomy, self-realisation and fulfilment, having a sense of purpose and meaning to life, living an authentic life, being true to oneself and fulfilling one's potential (Thompson and Marks, 2006; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Dodge et al. 2012; Hervas and Vazquez, 2013). Gasper (2004) suggests those who share an Aristotelian viewpoint believe that;

> human beings have more faculties than just feeling happiness, pleasure or pain; notably they are creatures of reasoning and meaning-making, of imagination, and of intra and inter-societal links and identities (p.1).

Also, Huppert (2014) supports this view that well-being is not solely about feelings at a single point in time or how materialistic one feels, but it encompasses how human beings interact and communicate with others. Ryan and Deci (2001) cite the work of Waterman (1993) and claim;

> eudaimonia occurs when people's life activities are most congruent or meshing with deeply held values and are holistically or fully engaged. Under such circumstances people would feel intensely alive and authentic, existing as who they really are (p.146).

To sum up, the hedonic and eudaimonic discourses of well-being can be described as 'feeling happy and good' and 'functioning well' with a purpose and goal in life (Huppert, 2014).

(3) Needs-based/objectivist discourse is characterised by a priori knowledge and proponents believe there are numerous underlying conditions, or "necessary prerequisites" (Thompson and Marks, 2006, p.9) for well-being to emerge. Prerequisites such as, "health, income, education, freedom and so on" (Thompson and Marks, 2006, p.9) are considered to be contributors to well-being. Furthermore, a person's 'needs' is open to interpretation, and could relate to happiness, fulfilment in life and/or positive relationships (Raghavan and Alexandrova, 2015). This reinforces Gasper's (2010) argument that concepts of well-being are entangled with values and the 'needs' of a person are closely linked to what people think are important, which is controversial. The needs-based perspective is reflected in the work of the OECD (2011) who suggests that well-being is about meeting a range of human needs.

(4) Desire-based/preference satisfaction discourse is often characterised by people satisfying their wants and desires. It means the more people do this, the

more their well-being will increase (Thompson and Marks, 2006). Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) explain that this approach is more than just being interested in how someone feels about their fulfilment; it is rooted in the actual fulfilment of the desire value or preference.

Despite there being four main discourses within philosophy which is complex in itself, the discussion of measuring well-being is not a strong focus in philosophy as it is within psychology. McLellan and Steward (2015) highlight that traditional eudaimonic discourses of well-being and the view of developing one's potential is not a new idea, particularly for humanistic psychologists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, as well as leaders of the positive psychology movement such as, Mihaly Csikszentmihalhyi and Martin Seligman.

The second, more contemporary discourse associated with well-being is 'positive psychology', and Martin Seligman (2011; cited in Dodge et al. 2012) has contributed significantly to developing this movement. Seligman (2011; cited in Dodge et al. 2012) suggests that well-being constitutes five constructs which he calls PERMA - Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. He proposes that well-being is a combination of hedonic and eudaimonic discourses (McLellan and Steward, 2015).

In the 1960s, psychologists were very interested in measuring well-being and began investigating correlates of happiness in adults. They started using subjective well-being and happiness interchangeably (McLellan and Steward, 2015). Many psychologists believe that subjective well-being encompasses two discourses. Firstly, the affect discourse which is about positive and negative emotions and is also considered to be a hedonic/mental states discourse (Ryan and Deci, 2001; McLellan and Steward, 2015). Secondly, psychologists adopt the life satisfaction discourse where someone makes a cognitive evaluation of aspects of their life. This second discourse of subjective well-being is also considered to be an evaluation based discourse (Thompson and Marks, 2006).

The two main discourses within psychology were further developed by Sen (1999; cited in Ben-Arieh and Frones, 2011), a Nobel Prize-winning economist who was interested in more than just feelings and functioning, and proposed the capabilities approach for understanding well-being. The capabilities approach

relates to individual contexts, interactions and relationships and closely resembles the work of developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner and ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory shows that five different sub-systems interact (Ben-Arieh and Frones, 2011). These sub-systems emphasise the child's immediate environment as the micro-system, right through to the macro-system which emphasises political and cultural values. Ben-Arieh and Frones (2011) argue that;

> the relationships between the family and the community, and between the community and the wider society and its institutions, facilitates or obstructs the transactions that produce the level of well-being (p.467).

Thirdly, in the last decade or so, 'economics' is the discourse which is considered to have been the "most vociferous in championing the importance of well-being…by identifying well-being as a key indicator of the state of the nation" (McLellan and Steward, 2015, p.308). However, as previously discussed in Chapter 1, GDP was being overused as a standard measure for people's well-being, life satisfaction and quality of life. Therefore, economists such as Sen and Stiglitz recognised that another discourse such as psychology could help to conceptualise and gain a better understanding of someone's subjective well-being.

McLellan and Steward (2015) suggest that economists turned to the discourse of psychology, as opposed to philosophy, because psychology focuses on "the scientific study of human mind and behaviour" (p.308) and is more associated with 'measuring' constructs. Clack (2012) suggests that this move towards science, rather than the humanities, arts or philosophy, highlights the cultural assumption that science is more effective, valuable and true. Overlooking philosophy may ignore "the complex and often messy reality of being human" (Clack, 2012, p.507). Clack (2012) continues to argue that science seduces people to believe that it is a panacea to a range of problems.

Despite there being an inter-disciplinary shift between psychology and economics in understanding well-being, McLellan and Steward (2015) argue that positive psychologists focus too narrowly on feelings and functioning and

highlight the importance of sociology as a discourse in understanding well-being. They claim that;

> sociology in particular has a specific contribution to make…the social networks that an individual possesses are valuable not only to that individual but also to the community and wider society (p.5).

Therefore, it could be argued that a new development seems to be emerging which encompasses a multi-disciplinary understanding of well-being, but there is limited evidence available which draws upon multi-disciplinary understandings of well-being. Axford (2009) suggests that adopting more than one discourse of well-being is beneficial in gaining a clearer picture.

This section is summed up by the following conceptual framework (in Figure 2) which highlights the key points of the discussion so far. It can be followed from top to bottom and represents the order in which they have been discussed in this section.

Figure 2: Well-being conceptual framework

Dimensions of well-being

Subjective well-being

Objective well-being

Similarities

Complex

Levels fluctuate and change

Based on people's values

Conflated with other concepts

Subjective well-being:
1. Difficult/impossible to define
2. Unfixed definition
3. Abstract noun
4. Difficult to quantify/ not measurable
5. Interpretivist

Objective well-being:
1. Can be defined
2. Fixed definition
3. Concrete noun
4. Can be quantified/ is measurable
5. Positivist stance

Well-being domains

The development of well-being discourses

Inter-disciplinary

Multi-disciplinary

Philosophy
hedonic
eudaimonic
needs
desire

Psychology
affect
cognitive evaluation

Economics
GDP indicator
capabilities approach

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3.3 Discourses of child well-being and the early years curriculum

This section is important because child well-being in particular is reported to have a weak theoretical underpinning (Pollard and Lee, 2003; Fraillon, 2004; McLaughlin, 2008; Awartani et al. 2008; Statham and Chase, 2010; Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011; Hicks et al. 2011; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012; Walker, 2012). Furthermore, limited research exists about the meaning of well-being in a school curriculum context (Davis et al. 2010; Soutter et al. 2012). Therefore, it explores current research about child well-being discourses and draws upon the discourses discussed in section one to examine a claim made by Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015). They claim that a theory of child well-being does not currently exist and it is unlikely that philosophical perspectives for example, will straightforwardly be extended to children because they were not originally written with them in mind. Finally, this section presents a structural framework of children's well-being in the early years curriculum and applies it to the Foundation Phase in Wales, in order to seek a better understanding of the distinct features associated with well-being.

This section firstly explains five dominant child well-being discourses that currently exist in a research context, and secondly, it describes more specifically the two broad discourses of child well-being associated with education. Thirdly, it discusses the validity of a claim made by Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) by drawing upon discourses discussed in section one, fourthly it develops and presents a framework based on evidence reported in Chapter 2 and finally, it applies the framework to various Foundation Phase policy documents.

3.3.1 General discourses of child well-being

Theoretical discussions about child well-being are limited (Pollard and Lee, 2003; Fraillon, 2004; McLaughlin, 2008; Awartani et al. 2008;

Statham and Chase, 2010; Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011; Hicks et al. 2011; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012; Walker, 2012) and the reasons for this are unclear, but Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) suggest that the most likely reason is that, "it stems from the dominant and longstanding view of children as merely future adults, who, as a result, do not require a theory of their own" (p.893). They continue to state that "the deficiency model of childhood, according to which a child is defined as an incomplete or immature adult, is a natural companion to this view" (p.893).

Despite the lack of reported child well-being theory there is a general consensus that children's well-being is a multi-dimensional, holistic concept that encompasses many different aspects of a child's life (Axford, 2009; NEF, 2009; Statham and Chase, 2010; Moore et al. 2012; Amerijckx and Humblet, 2014). In other words it is viewed as an 'irreducible holistic totality' (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008). However, a tension arises between this view and with the 'reducible to components' view because "there is still limited agreement on what the constituent components of child wellbeing are, or how they should be weighted in terms of importance or priority" (Statham and Chase, 2010, p.6). Similarly, Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) are in agreement and suggest "there is neither consensus, nor much discussion on what constitutes child well-being" (p.888). Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) agree with Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) and report that even though well-being is an appealing concept particularly at policy level, there is virtually no consensus about a definition and literature which specifically focuses upon young children's well-being is limited.

In 2014, Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) decided that some sort of consensus was needed about young children's well-being and therefore, carried out the following study. Their study involved searching five databases from biomedicine and the human and social sciences and the outcome involved reviewing 209 papers on child well-being. They found that;

- 3% of papers focused on theoretical discussions of well-being and were dominated by measures or indicators of well-being,
- 15% focused on methodological issues,
- 82% focused on empirical papers which mainly consisted of determinants of well-being.

The extremely low percentage of papers which focuses on theoretical discussions is concerning (Amerijckx and Humblet, 2014), particularly when child well-being is a fast-growing topic and frequently appears in policy. The low percentage of papers that focuses on conceptualising well-being may explain why Desjardins (2008) argues that too many taken-for-granted truths are associated with well-being. In other words, presumptions about well-being are made because there is a paucity of empirical evidence to draw upon.

An important contribution is made by Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) in understanding the concept of child well-being. On reviewing the scientific literature they identified five dominant discourses which they call structural theoretical axes that contain two binary positions. The five discourses identified by Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) include the following:
1. Positive (strengths) versus negative (deficiencies)
2. Subjective versus objective
3. State (meaning a hedonic, present position) versus process (meaning a eudaimonic, future position)
4. Material versus spiritual
5. Individual versus community

The five discourses are shown in Figure 3. Their study also revealed that the positions on the right-hand side tend to be privileged and are more dominant.

Figure 3: Five dominant discourses of child well-being

Child well-being discourses	
Under-represented positions	Privileged positions
(1) Positive ⟷	Negative
(2) Subjective ⟷	Objective
(3) State ⟷	Process
(4) Material ⟷	Spiritual
(5) Individual ⟷	Community
Adapted from Amerijckx and Humblet (2014)	
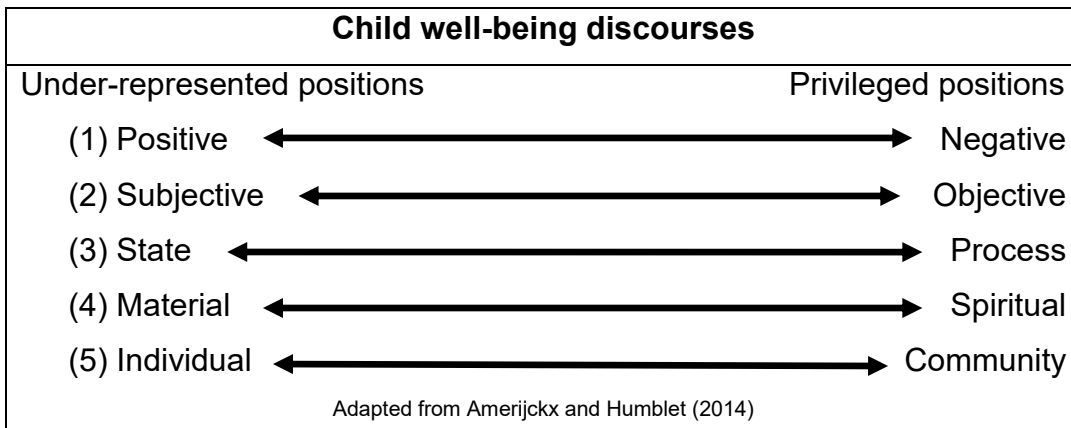
What is noteworthy is that there is evidence in other explanations of well-being that strengthen two arguments, firstly that dominant discourses of child well-being exist (Amerijckx and Humblet, 2014), and secondly, that a theory of child well-being may not be needed. For example, Statham and Chase's (2010) explanations about a children's rights perspective which focuses upon children's attributes and strengths and is positive in nature, versus a developmental perspective which focuses on difficulties and deficiencies and is negative in nature, bears a resemblance with the (1) 'positive versus negative' discourse.

Another example of a dominant discourse is the 'two sources theory' which is proposed by Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015). In 2015, they set out to explore three existing philosophical theories and claim they have constructed a theory of child well-being which "is a worthwhile endeavour for child theorists" (p.899). However, in essence the 'two sources theory' closely resembles the (3) 'state versus process' discourse identified by Amerijckx and Humblet in 2014.

Another explanation, by sociologists Morrow and Mayall (2009) resembles the 'state versus process' discourse when they discuss the notion of being and becoming. They suggest that the government privileges a child becoming something in the future which resembles the process position, and pays less focus on the being which resembles the

state position. They conclude that if more emphasis was placed upon the being position this would help to move away from a focus on outcomes and the expectation of children becoming something in the future. Ben-Arieh and Frones (2011) further explain that the process position is associated with well-becoming which is often understood as the unfolding of development and a focus on life chances in becoming future citizens.

Also, the process position is defined as "a future oriented focus…in preparing children to a productive and happy adulthood" (Ben-Arieh, 2005, p.8). Uprichard (2008) and Ben-Arieh (2005) state that adopting a being and becoming discourse helps to increase child agency and claim that both positions complement each other. Uprichard (2008) recommends that "sometimes it will be better to be more present orientated than future orientated, and vice versa" (p.311). It seems that progress is needed to ensure that both dimensions within the dominant discourses identified in Figure 3 are acknowledged and recognised more equally.

Even though Amerijckx and Humblet's (2014) research about child well-being discourses is an important contribution in understanding what child well-being means, their study does not relate specifically to children's well-being and education. Therefore, the following discussion draws upon the work of early childhood researchers such as Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) to ascertain whether any of the five discourses suggested by Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) in Figure 3 are dominant in relation to an early years curriculum context.

3.3.2 Discourses of well-being and the early years curriculum
Early childhood researchers such as Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) suggest there are broadly two discourses of understanding child well-being in education, namely the 'developmental-oriented view' and the child's 'subjective experience view'. They define the developmental-oriented view as a "child's achievement or demonstration of particular skills, abilities and behaviours" (p.236). They further explain that this view relies

upon indicators or descriptors of well-being and acts as a proxy measure. What is noticeable is that other explanations of well-being resemble the developmental-oriented view, for example the following definition by Fauth and Thompson (2009) state;

> well-being encompasses the developmentally appropriate tasks, milestones, and contexts throughout a child's life course that are known to influence their current quality of life and happiness and pave the way for their future health and success (p.1).

Other education researchers such as Soutter et al. (2012) further support the views of Mashford-Scott et al. (2012), and agree that the developmental-oriented view is the leading discourse of well-being in education. These views resemble the dominant objective dimension highlighted by Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) in Figure 3.

The second discourse of children's well-being in education as defined by Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) is "the child's subjective experience" (p.236). This view is often described as being more child-centred and focuses on a child's sense of well-being which involves intrinsic feelings (Mashford-Scott et al. 2012). Features of this second view are evident in Waters (2009) discussion of the holistic perspective of well-being which relates to children's lived experiences and a notion of feeling valued, as well as Fontana's (1995) description of the being view. Even though different terminology is in use, for example by Mashford-Scott et al. (2012), Waters (2009) and Fontana (1995) it is the subjective position in Figure 3 which is being communicated.

The child's subjective experience view or a sense of well-being is considered to be the less dominant discourse by Mashford-Scott et al. (2012). This supports Amerijckx and Humblet's (2014) findings that some discourses such as the subjective dimension are under-represented. Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) suggest this occurs because of different epistemological beliefs. They assert that the subjective view is underpinned by a constructivist epistemology, and the developmental-oriented view is underpinned by a positivist epistemology. They further

argue that the dominance of a developmental-oriented view of well-being "limits our ability to understand, measure and promote children's well-being in ways that are meaningful to children and their day-to-day lives" (p.239).

To some extent the five child well-being discourses identified by Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) in Figure 3 indicate a possible contrast between epistemological beliefs. It seems that the objective versus subjective discourse is mostly associated with young children's well-being and the early years curriculum, but the objective dimension is the most dominant. However, as previously stated there is limited empirical evidence from practitioners who work with children to support this claim.

The tension between the objective and the subjective discourse is particularly problematic regarding young children and Ereaut and Whiting (2008) raise the following question: "who has authority to define what wellbeing means for the child?" (p.5). In addition to this tension, child well-being lacks theoretical underpinning (Pollard and Lee, 2003; Fraillon, 2004; McLaughlin, 2008; Awartani et al. 2008; Statham and Chase, 2010; Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011; Hicks et al. 2011; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012; Walker, 2012). Therefore, the following discussion establishes whether discourses (explored in 3.2.3) which were not originally written with children in mind relate to them.

3.3.3 Exploring the validity of a claim

The following discussion draws upon a claim made by Raghavan and Alexandrova in 2015. They suggest that a theory of child well-being does not currently exist, and it is unlikely that philosophical theories for example, will straightforwardly be extended to children because they were not originally written with them in mind. Therefore, the following discussion critically draws upon some of the leading well-being discourses previously discussed in section one of this chapter to address the following question: to what extent can leading discourses of well-

being within philosophy and psychology relate to young children when they were not originally written with children in mind?

In relation to philosophy and a hedonic/mental states discourse, very young children as young as two months show emotions including happiness and pleasure by smiling (Neaum, 2010). Moreover, from around the age of 12-months children start to "recognise other people's emotions and moods and express their own" (Neaum, 2010, p.56). Whitebread (2012) reminds us that research "probably under-estimates the level of understanding of young children about others' psychological states and characteristics" (p.46). At around the age of four years children usually reflect upon and talk about their feelings or they might show happiness and pleasure through non-verbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions (Neaum, 2010). Also, children may associate feelings of happiness and pleasure in different contexts, such as the classroom or home environment. Therefore, it could be argued that even though hedonic perspectives were not originally written with children in mind they relate to children in some way. In addition, hedonic perspectives and relating them to young children may involve adults interpreting whether children are showing feelings of happiness and pleasure if they find it difficult or are unable to articulate their feelings.

Some proponents might not associate a eudaimonic/flourishing discourse with young children because some of the broader components such as, purpose in life, being true to yourself and living authentically are abstract ideas which younger children might find difficult to comprehend (NEF, 2009; Wigelsworth et al. 2010). However, according to Neaum (2010) young children at around the age of five years "have a good sense of the past, present and future" (p.49) and children aged around seven years start to think in the abstract (Neaum, 2010). Dodge et al. (2012) cite the work of Ryff (1989) and suggest that eudaimonic well-being constitutes autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, realisation of potential and self-acceptance. Therefore, it could be argued that going to school in general contributes to fulfilling a

child's potential. Soutter et al. (2012) highlight that a traditional schooling model involves preparing young people for work and transmitting knowledge, but he describes a more contemporary model and states;

> today, education is seen as a key factor in developing capacities not only for work and civic engagement, but also for experiencing a flourishing life, making wellbeing a topic of widespread interest, and modern importance (p.112).

Waterman (1993; cited in Ryan and Deci, 2001) suggests that eudaimonic well-being involves a person feeling intensely alive and existing as whom they really are. However, it is questionable whether schools provide the opportunities for this to happen, particularly when curriculum frameworks and assessment processes are closely tied to pre-determined criteria (Basford and Bath, 2014). Basford and Bath (2014) suggest that practitioners are working within a highly regulated framework, which to some extent forces them "to undertake strategic rather than authentic manoeuvres in order to satisfy those demands" (p.120). Perhaps eudaimonic well-being does not comfortably fit current curriculum frameworks.

Eudaimonia is defined as "excellent functioning in accordance with the organism's nature" (Raghavan and Alexandrova, 2015, p.895) so in relation to young children this could be interpreted as their ability to playfully engage and actively explore. In other words, if a eudaimonic discourse of well-being was enacted in the classroom, children might be given more opportunities to play. Eudaimonic well-being is generally associated with the way someone functions and the Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS) discussed in the previous chapter could be a useful tool for assessing children's engagement and assessing the meaningfulness and purposefulness of what they do. However, the LIS does not capture children's subjective well-being, but Fauth and Thompson (2009) state that "accurately assessing children's internal states is quite difficult" (p.5). It is clear that hedonic discourses of well-being which focus on 'feeling happy and good' and eudaimonic discourses which focus on 'functioning well', construct well-being differently. But this raises the question whether

'feeling happy' and 'functioning well' can be explicitly taught as an area of the curriculum.

The needs-based/objectivist discourse, according to Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015), are the closest in nature to children's well-being because pre-requisites or underlying conditions provide opportunities for children to be able to thrive and make progress. The importance of forming attachments and positive relationships and nurturing children are essential for healthy learning and development which is widely accepted (Page et al. 2013). The longitudinal study of Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) found, that "where staff showed warmth and were responsive to the individual needs of children, children made more progress" (Sylva et al. 2004, p.3).

Desire-based/preference satisfaction discourses also relate to children in some way. For example, this perspective is often characterised by people satisfying their wants and desires in order to increase well-being. But an adult may need to intervene if they feel that a child was for example, increasing their well-being by biting other children. Another example might be to intervene if a child was increasing their well-being by eating excessive amounts of unhealthy foods.

Lastly, the two discourses within psychology which encompass positive and negative emotions and a cognitive evaluation may also relate to children in some way. For example, at around the age of four years children are very capable of showing a wide range of positive and negative emotions about school and about their home, despite having a vocabulary that is developing and increasing. According to Neaum (2010) the vocabulary of a three year old child is rapidly developing and by the age of five years "children have a wide range of vocabulary and can use it appropriately" (p.52). Making a cognitive evaluation of their life might be more challenging for younger children because they would have limited experiences to draw upon and limited memory capacity to recall and make a judgement. Nonetheless, young children at around the age of three years are capable of using language to report on what is

happening (Neaum, 2010). As previously mentioned, by five years of age children have the ability to understand and report on the past, present and future so it is possible for children to make cognitive evaluations of aspects that matter to them and their life.

This discussion shows that many of the leading discourses of well-being within philosophy and psychology relate to young children in some way which raises a different point. If existing knowledge and understanding about children's learning and development relates to existing discourses, then a theory of child well-being may not be helpful or beneficial. This raises an important question about what would be beneficial and useful in terms of research about young children's well-being in education.

According to Soutter et al. (2012) the current challenge for well-being scholars and educationalists is to "establish a wellbeing discourse that is relevant to and resonates with the schooling sector" (p.112). This is important particularly when well-being in the last 20 years or so has started to appear as an area of the early years curriculum (see Chapter 2). Therefore, the following discussion begins to explore the distinct features of well-being in the context of the curriculum by developing a structural framework that is relevant to the early years sector.

3.3.4 Developing a well-being framework

Frameworks which help to establish a well-being discourse in education are generally limited. However, Soutter et al. (2012) developed one in relation to the New Zealand curriculum and claim that;

> it provides a possible language with which to discuss a complex phenomenon generally considered as a constellation of ideas rather than a distinct entity (p.117).

They further argue that the framework is "an analytical tool to guide discussion" (p.118). Konu and Rimpela (2002) developed a different kind of framework for well-being in schools which was based on Allardt's (1989) sociological model of welfare. It consists of three basic needs: (1) having - material and non-material needs, school environment, (2) loving

- relationships and interactions, and (3) being - personal growth, self-fulfilment. It presents the framework from a child's perspective. Even though both frameworks are different and were developed for different purposes they both communicate the importance of basic human needs and attempt to discuss a complex concept such as well-being in education.

In attempting to establish a well-being discourse that is relevant to the early years sector, it is useful to draw upon findings reported in Chapter 2 which revealed that well-being is presented to practitioners in eight different ways across four different curricula. The eight different interpretations are as follows:

1. **A principle of good early years practice (Wales between 1996 and 2008)**
2. **An attribute (Scotland)**
3. **A disposition (Australia)**
4. **An attitude (New Zealand)**
5. **A capability (Scotland)**
6. **A skill (New Zealand, Australia and Wales from 2008)**
7. **Knowledge (New Zealand and Australia)**
8. **An assessed outcome (Scotland and Wales from 2008)**

The eight different interpretations have been categorised by four different colours to show that well-being encompasses four different meanings that are inter-related. They are as follows:

1. **Well-being as a principle of daily practice**
2. **Well-being as a child's personal characteristics**
3. **Well-being as knowledge and a skill**
4. **Well-being as an assessed outcome**

This finding attempts to shows that in relation to the early years curriculum, well-being is not just about two broad discourses, such as the developmental-oriented view and the child's subjective experience view, as previously suggested by Mashford-Scott et al. (2012). The meaning of

well-being in relation to the early years curriculum encompasses much more.

The following framework (see Figure 4) attempts to show what constitutes a well-being discourse that is relevant to those working in the early years sector. It suggests that the four meanings are inter-related and that various domains exist within the meanings.

Figure 4: Proposed framework for understanding child well-being in the early years curriculum

Four inter-related meanings			
1. Principles of early years practice (learning environment, interactions & relationships)	2. Child's personal characteristics (e.g. attributes, traits, attitudes)	3. Well-being knowledge and skills e.g. knowing about keeping safe, and eating healthily (curriculum content)	4. Assessed curriculum outcome
• Explicitly stated in curriculum policy • Practitioners' values	• Observable indicators • Communicated by child (subjective) • A child's home background that could influence well-being	• Knowledge and skills gained in other areas of the curriculum which could influence well-being (by-product) • Explicit teaching	• Practitioners' judgement • Communicated by child (subjective) • Written evidence

Well-being domains

Child well-being

3.3.5 Applying the framework to the Foundation Phase

The following discussion uses the proposed framework (see Figure 4) and applies it to various Foundation Phase curriculum policy documents in order to address the following question: what does the proposed framework tell us about the concept of well-being in the Foundation Phase?

In relation to understanding **principles of early years practice** the current Foundation Phase curriculum states that out of the seven Areas of Learning: "Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity is at the heart of the Foundation Phase…" (WAG, 2008a, p.14). This indicates to practitioners that this Area of Learning is more significant than the others. However, the meaning of 'at the heart of the Foundation Phase' is ambiguous and open to interpretation. This is where different domains might exist amongst practitioners. For example, some practitioners might focus more attention on a child's 'emotional' well-being or some might focus more attention on 'physical' well-being.

Currently, well-being is located within one of seven Areas of Learning which consists of four parts: (1) Personal development, (2) Social development, (3) Well-being and (4) Cultural Diversity. The 'Well-being' part of the Area of Learning is presented as ten skills as shown in Figure 5 (WAG, 2008a).

Figure 5: Well-being skills as they are presented in the Foundation Phase curriculum

Well-being:
"Children should be given opportunities to:
1) value and contribute to their own well-being and to the well-being of others
2) be aware of their own feelings and develop the ability to express them in an appropriate way
3) understand the relationship between feelings and actions and that other people have feelings
4) demonstrate care, respect and affection for other children, adults and their environment
5) develop a growing interest in the world around them and understand what their environment has to offer when playing alone and with others
6) understand and recognise the changes that happen to their bodies as they exercise and describe the changes to their breathing, heart rate, appearance and feelings
7) develop an understanding that exercise and hygiene and the right types of food and drink are important for healthy bodies
8) ask for assistance when needed
9) develop an understanding about dangers in the home and outside environment
10) understand that medicines are taken to make them feel better and that some drugs are dangerous" (WAG, 2008a, p.17).

In relation to understanding well-being as a **child's personal characteristics** these are sometimes explicitly stated in curriculum policy. For example, one guidance document asserts;

> in order to feel happy about who they are and how they fit into groups, children need to develop self-awareness as individuals and as part of wider society. This will include self-esteem, self-knowledge, confidence, feeling valued and accepted by others…" (WAG, 2008c, p.16).

Statements one to five and statement eight in Figure 5, broadly relate to a child's personal characteristics. However, the 'Personal development' part of the Area of Learning seems to be more specific about children's personal characteristics because it mentions: 'shows curiosity', 'concentrates for

lengthening periods', 'takes risks', 'confident explorer' to name but a few (WAG, 2008a). This indicates that from a policy perspective it may not be straightforward in describing a concept such as well-being. Therefore, 'Personal development' helps to provide further information and shows that well-being is an inter-related concept.

In relation to understanding well-being as **knowledge and skills** and considering various well-being domains, statement one in Figure 5 could relate to any domain. Statements two and three seem to relate to 'emotional/psychological' well-being, statements four and five seem to relate to 'social' well-being and statements six to ten relate to 'physical' well-being. This indicates that different well-being domains are implicitly referred to within the curriculum, but there appears to be more focus on 'physical' well-being. In other words, there is more focus on children acquiring knowledge about being healthy and knowing about the dangers in the home and the wider environment, and developing skills, such as keeping clean and safe which is described by Waters (2009) as an instrumental perspective.

In order for practitioners to implement the Foundation Phase effectively they are provided with various non-statutory guidance documents that aim to complement the framework. For example, for each Area of Learning there is a guidance document and the one for PSDWBCD describes well-being as 'self-identity/self-esteem' and 'physical well-being' (WAG, 2008c) despite this, two of the curriculum skills (in Figure 5) relate to 'social' well-being. This suggests that certain well-being domains are privileged in Foundation Phase policy which is also shown in Table 4 (see 3.2.2).

In relation to understanding well-being as an **assessed curriculum outcome** teacher judgement and observation is referred to in the curriculum document (WAG, 2008a). However, the child's subjective voice is not explicitly mentioned as a requirement in the assessment process. This reinforces a similar point made earlier, that in general the objective dimension is privileged in relation to young children's well-being and policy. Foundation Phase teachers are required to decide upon a score between one and six for the four parts of the Area of Learning which means that even though well-being is presented as ten

skills (in Figure 5) the score relates to all four parts. However, the well-being domains vary in relation to the six Outcomes which teachers are required to use to help make a judgement. For example, Outcome six which is the highest score to be achieved when a child reaches the end of the Foundation Phase does not make any reference to 'physical' well-being, even though this domain makes up half of the well-being skills in the curriculum. Therefore, this reinforces the point that specific well-being domains are privileged in Foundation Phase curriculum policy.

To summarise, the proposed framework raises three points about well-being; firstly that certain domains are privileged in curriculum policy, such as 'physical' well-being and 'emotional/psychological' well-being. Secondly, the framework shows that the meaning of children's well-being in a curriculum context encompasses four different inter-related meanings which highlight its complexity. Thirdly, that describing and explaining well-being for curriculum purposes may not be a straightforward task at policy level.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to provide clarity about the nature of well-being and presented a conceptual framework at the end of section one which demonstrated that well-being constitutes two dimensions, numerous domains and is traditionally rooted within discourses of philosophy, psychology and economics. The chapter revealed that many similarities exist between the objective and subjective dimensions of well-being whereas the differences between the dimensions are usually overstated. Also, this chapter highlighted the new development emerging between psychology, economics and sociology and the value of adopting multi-disciplinary understandings in order to gain a clearer picture of well-being.

In addition, this chapter explored current research about discourses of child well-being and discovered that dominant discourses and domains exist within research and a curriculum policy context. For example, the objective versus subjective discourse and the state (present) versus process (future) discourse

are found to be the most dominant. The chapter also explored a claim made by Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) who state that a theory of child well-being does not currently exist because discourses were not originally written with children in mind. However, this chapter revealed that existing knowledge and understanding of child development relates to a range of well-being perspectives which indicate that a theory of child well-being may not be needed. Therefore, this chapter explored the possibility of what is needed in relation to research about children's well-being, and attempted to establish a well-being discourse for the early years sector by developing a framework. This proposed framework was then applied to various Foundation Phase curriculum policy documents in order to seek a better understanding of well-being.

The proposed framework (see Figure 4) was applied to various Foundation Phase policy documents and raised three points about well-being. Firstly, that physical and emotional/psychological well-being domains are privileged in policy. Secondly, there are four inter-related meanings at play which constitute a well-being discourse in education, and this could make it difficult to operationalise in practice. Lastly, that describing well-being for curriculum policy purposes may not be a straightforward task. Therefore, this study broadly sets out to firstly explore practitioners' knowledge and understanding of young children's well-being, and secondly to examine how well-being is operationalised in practice. The following chapter explains the methodology and provides a rationale for this qualitative study before discussing the findings.

4   Methodology

4.1 Outline of the chapter

This study investigates well-being in the early years curriculum. The study adopts a case study approach to explore the Foundation Phase in order to: (a) explore primary school practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being and (b) examine day-to-day classroom practices. The various reasons for investigating young children's well-being in education and using the Foundation Phase as a case study have been explained in previous chapters, as have the meaning of 'well-being' (see Chapters 1 to 3).

In this chapter, 'methodology' is broadly defined as explaining "what lies behind the approaches and methods of inquiry" (Punch, 2009, p.15) and is structured in five main sections. Section one explains the research design and approach; section two describes the sampling techniques and provides information about the primary schools where data was gathered; section three critically evaluates the qualitative research methods which were used for data capture; section four describes the ethical processes; and lastly section five discusses what guided the data analysis. Before providing further details it is useful to restate the research questions;

The research questions which this thesis considers are:
1. What do primary school practitioners (such as teachers and teaching assistants) know and understand about young children's well-being?
2. How is well-being operationalised in practice?
3. What tools do primary school practitioners use to capture well-being in the classroom and to what extent are they fit for purpose?

4.2 Research design and approach

This first section aims to firstly, acknowledge pragmatism and reflect on the main characteristics of positivism and interpretivism before explaining the significance of an interpretivist paradigm which was adopted for this study. Secondly it briefly explains the nature and function of qualitative inquiry and

highlights the strengths of exploratory research. Thirdly, it considers some of the main methodological approaches associated with education research, but provides a rationale for using a case study design.

4.2.1 An interpretive research paradigm

A research paradigm is usually described as a particular way of thinking and framing the world. It involves adopting a philosophical outlook on knowledge construction (Mukherji and Albon, 2015). Positivism is one such paradigm which has a much longer, well established history compared with the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm. One of the main differences between them lies in the origins of the sciences (Mukherji and Albon, 2015). Positivism is rooted in the natural sciences whereas interpretivism is associated with the social sciences. Cohen et al. (2011) point out that;

> positivism is less successful in its application to the study of human behaviour where the immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomenon contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world (p.7).

There is a belief that one of the guiding principles of educational research is to recognise and accept that there are "different research paradigms for different research purposes" (Cohen et al. 2011, p.1). Hughes (2001) agrees and adds;

> different paradigms give us different perspectives on the world, and so we should try to keep an open mind about the paradigm we favour as researchers and be prepared to try different ones" (p.32).

This is described as pragmatism which means selecting the most appropriate approach that helps to address the research questions (Ormston et al. 2014). O'Connell Davidson and Layder (1994; cited in Pole and Lampard, 2002) agree, and claim that methods need to address the topic being researched in a pragmatic way and that 'ontology' and 'epistemology' should not be the determining factors in the choice of research method. However, the fundamental nature of ontology is about perceiving entities, either "independently of human existence and human thought" [or as] "a function of human thought, analysis and perception" (Oliver, 2014, p.30). Therefore, ontology will always be one of the determining factors.

Ormston et al. (2014) argue that "pragmatism forces the researcher to be cautious and self-conscious about what they do" (p.20) and therefore, should not be criticised for adopting the 'anything goes' approach to research design. Creswell (2013) suggests that pragmatist researchers working within an interpretive framework are "not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality" (p.28). This is due to their strong belief that approaches and methods should be the determining factors in addressing the research questions.

Conversely, there are other proponents such as Blaikie (2010) and Mason (1996; cited in Pole and Lampard, 2002) who claim that ontological and epistemological positions of the researcher always takes precedence, and will be the determining factors which underpin the research design, methods and questions. It is often argued that all research is initially framed within a specific paradigm which is underpinned by philosophical beliefs and assumptions (Merriam, 1988; Hughes, 2001; Creswell, 2013). Grieshaber (2001) further states that all researchers at the start of a research project;

> embody particular beliefs, values and interests which are often reflected in the way the problem is formulated, research is designed, data collected and interpreted, and findings displayed (p.144).

Furthermore, Foster (1996, p.51) supports this view and suggests that "interpretations are made on the basis of the researcher's existing knowledge, conceptual framework and cultural standpoint…". There are mixed opinions about whether ontology and epistemology drive the research design, or whether research approaches and methods affect the research design.

Perhaps the most useful way to reach a decision about the research design is to consider a range of factors more holistically, such as;

- duration of project,
- available funds,
- previous research conducted and gaps in knowledge,
- background experience, skills and disciplinary expertise of researcher,
- research aims and questions that not only contribute to academic knowledge but also where necessary apply to policy and practice.

Applied research is generally associated with practical outcomes, problem solving and contributing to policy (Blaikie, 2010). The researcher believes that regardless of research paradigms, the main aim of conducting educational research is to ensure that the research design has the capacity to make more than one contribution/output. For example, outputs from this study could include the following:

- a conceptual/knowledge contribution of well-being which is useful for academics, practitioners and policy-makers,
- ways of operationalising well-being in the classroom,
- a consideration for the future development of tools to capture well-being in the early years curriculum.

The importance of applied research for this study derives from the researcher's professional experience as a teacher. In order to meet the purpose of this study and address the research questions, an interpretivist paradigm is adopted rather than a positivist one. Usually, "positivism is characterised by… generalisations about the world and the need for accurate measurement" (Mukherji and Albon, 2010, p.22) but the researcher is drawn towards interpretivism. This is because I worked as a teacher for eight years with diverse groups of young children who presented multiple understandings and interpretations of their experiences. Secondly, children demonstrated individual skills and talents on a daily basis, but at times it was difficult to come to terms with a curriculum and assessment system that required teachers to perform strategic acts, rather than authentic ones, in order to satisfy policy demands (Basford and Bath, 2014). In other words, I was compelled to conform to the scientific discourse of positivism when in fact this was not a true reflection of the children I worked with.

As a teacher I frequently felt like I was generalising and simplifying children's progress and achievements to a mere number, when in reality it did not seem to reflect the complex inter-play of children's learning, development, progress and background. It felt like the educational system was homogenising children and therefore, their past and present experiences and thoughts were being overlooked. In other words, as a teacher I was more concerned with the

individual and their direct experiences, which is a strong feature of the interpretivist paradigm. However, I was required to perform within a normative positivist paradigm (Cohen et al. 2011). I am describing two competing assessment paradigms here - the magnetic pull towards the positivist approach and a desire for a socio-cultural approach (Basford and Bath, 2014). Basford and Bath (2014) use the analogy of a game to emphasise the tension between strategic acts to satisfy policy-makers and authentic manoeuvres.

Researchers working within an interpretivist framework are interested in conducting research within naturalistic settings, for example classroom environments as opposed to experimental conditions. It is often argued that the social world cannot be interpreted and researched in exactly the same way as the natural sciences (Hughes, 2001; cited in Mukherji and Albon, 2010). Therefore, interpretivist researchers often reject the belief that "human behaviour is governed by general, universal laws and characterised by underlying regularities" (Cohen et al. 2011, p.15) and post structuralists challenge this view. Interpretivist researches tend to believe the argument posed by Mason (1996; cited in Pole and Lampard, 2002) who states;

> people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions are meaningful…and a legitimate way to generate data on these ontological properties is to interact with people, to talk to them, to listen to them and to gain access to their accounts and speculations (p.132).

Furthermore, Mukherji and Albon (2010), Cohen et al. (2011) and Punch and Oancea (2014) claim that participants' views are underpinned and influenced by cultural, historical, political, personal and professional contexts which means they are situated, and there are potentially multiple truths in existence. This stance is rather different from a positivist one which would agree with the following statement; "there is one truth waiting to be discovered that remains the same for all time, as in the positivist paradigm" (Mukherji and Albon, 2015, p.26).

The researcher acknowledges that ontology and epistemology will influence the research design, and believes that a researcher may find it difficult to detach themselves from their experiences and beliefs when they adopt an interpretivist paradigm. Hence, there is a section later in this chapter which addresses

reflexivity (see 4.4.7). In summary, regardless of research paradigms it seems that one of the most important aspects of research is to ensure that there is congruence between research aims, questions, methods and analysis. This is the aim of the following discussion.

4.2.2 The nature and function of qualitative inquiry

Qualitative research has continued to grow in education from about the 1960s onwards and it was around this time that the quantitative, positivist approach, which focuses on objective truths, facts and figures was challenged in education (Punch, 2009; Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013; Ormston et al. 2014). Newby (2014) explains that the positivist approach "could not provide all the answers to the questions that educational researchers were asking…" (p.38). Therefore, qualitative research was considered useful for "exploring, explaining, uncovering phenomena and for generating new theoretical insights" (Hammond and Wellington, 2013, p.107). Hughes (2001) states that "qualitative researchers generally aim to show something's meaning or significance to particular people or groups of people" (p.53). Thus in relation to this study this means examining what well-being means to practitioners who work with 3-to-7 year olds. This is important because Chapter 3 stated that very little empirical data exists about practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being. Furthermore, qualitative research is about seeking phenomena "through the eyes and in the words of the people involved" (Hughes, 2001, p.53). It is about empowering individuals and gaining an in-depth understanding of something by collecting different forms of data. It is also very useful for developing theories (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, a qualitative approach is considered more suitable for this study as opposed to a quantitative approach. However, Creswell (2013) acknowledges that numerous qualitative inquiry approaches exist, and identifies narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study as the five most commonly applied approaches. For the purpose of this study a case study approach is adopted.

Before discussing the qualitative inquiry approach adopted for this study it is important to consider the main functions of qualitative research, which include contextual/exploratory, explanatory, evaluative and generative research (Ritchie

and Ormston, 2014). This study overlaps with features of contextual/exploratory and generative functions. For example, it is contextual and exploratory in nature because it describes the meanings practitioners assign to well-being and identifies what it means in relation to the early years curriculum; and it is generative in nature because it explores, develops and theorises young children's well-being and explains how well-being operates in schools.

Exploratory research is useful in the context of this study because evidence presented in previous chapters suggest that insufficient studies have been conducted about the meaning of young children's well-being in education. Therefore, one of the strengths of exploratory research is to gain a more in-depth understanding of a concept or an issue which in turn provides future opportunities for more rigorous research (Brewer, 2007; Punch, 2009). In addition, exploratory research has a positive impact on child well-being by advancing its meaning. Another benefit of exploratory research is having the opportunity to apply 'inductive' reasoning. This means data is collected to see whether it provides an opportunity to form a hypothesis rather than a 'deductive' approach which starts with a hypothesis to test or prove (Hughes, 2001). An inductive approach involves searching for patterns, similarities and differences that help to build theory rather than test and/or verify an existing theory (Merriam, 1988; Guest et al. 2012; Mukherji and Albon, 2015).

Chapter 3 highlighted how very little theory exists about child well-being. Therefore, exploratory research and theory generation is justifiable, important and particularly helpful when "a new area for research is being developed" (Punch, 2009, p.22). However, Punch (2009) highlights that even though exploratory, descriptive studies are important, explanatory studies are generally perceived as having more impact. Hammond and Wellington (2013) argue that case studies are frequently dismissed as being descriptive, but they can be invaluable when little is known about a topic, such as well-being in the early years curriculum.

4.2.3 Rationale for a case study design

The main methodological approaches associated with education research broadly include case study, evaluation, ethnography and action research (Newby, 2014) but to address the purpose of this study a case study design is applied. Merriam (1988) defines a qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (p.16). However, the case study approach to research has a somewhat inconsistent historical trajectory from when it was first established in the early twentieth century. For example, in the late 1930s it was heavily criticised for only producing detailed descriptions and explanations of individuals or settings. From about the 1970s the case study approach started to regain status and recognition for its contribution to research, which was around the time when concerns were being raised about the weaknesses of the scientific, positivist approach (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013; Newby, 2014). Some of the main 'case study' thinkers involved the work of Stenhouse, Yin, Merriam and Stake (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013) who advocate and defend the case study approach.

There are many different types of case studies, such as the intrinsic case study where the researcher wants to find out more about something in general. There is the instrumental case study where the researcher sets out to refine a theory, and the multiple case study which is also called the collective case study or the comparative case study. The latter is useful for extending and improving knowledge about a phenomenon (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1994; cited in Punch, 2009) and provides opportunities to make comparisons (Punch, 2009; Newby, 2014) and therefore, is considered to be the most appropriate for this study. The evidence gathered from a multiple case study design is also considered to be more compelling and robust (Yin, 2014) because there is more than one case being studied and more patterns can be established.

Case studies fit extremely well with "the desire to understand complex social phenomena" (Yin, 1984, p.14) which in the context of this study is the meaning and enactment of children's well-being in the early years curriculum. Bryman (2012, p.72) suggests that "we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or

situations". One of the main arguments for a multiple case study design is the contribution it makes to building theory about a complex construct and also because it informs policy (Merriam, 1988; Brewer, 2007; Bryman, 2012). Therefore, a multiple case study design is useful for contributing to the development of theorising child well-being in education as opposed to verifying theory (Punch, 2009).

Even though there are advantages to using case studies, they have been criticised for their lack of generalisability and the findings only applying to that particular case (Edwards, 2001). According to Stephen (2010) case studies do not appeal to policy-makers. Hughes (2001) suggests that interpretivist case study findings should be used cautiously by others and should not be used to make claims about how well-being is understood by all practitioners working in the early years. This is a potential limitation. Therefore, a survey distributed to practitioners working in the Foundation Phase capturing their understanding of well-being may have helped to support a proposition and/or hypothesis about children's well-being in education. A survey can also provide more of an opportunity to generalise conceptions of well-being amongst early years practitioners. In addition to this, a survey would provide a counter argument to those who strongly criticise case studies. According to Bassey (1999) these include academics such as Hargreaves, Tooley and Darby as well as Miles (1979).

Despite the criticisms of a case study design, it can be argued that findings from case studies can be utilised to inform practice and provide invaluable information to professionals (Mukherji and Albon, 2010). Punch (2009) also highlights that findings from a case study "can be put forward as being potentially applicable to other cases" (p.121) but this, he argues, depends on the aims and purposes of the study and the way in which data is analysed. In relation to this thesis, the case study design provides an opportunity to put forward propositions or hypotheses which can then be, according to Punch (2009), "assessed for their applicability and transferability to other situations" (p.122). Very often there are disapproving attitudes towards a case study design but as Punch (2009) argues;

properly conducted case studies, especially in situations where our knowledge is shallow, fragmentary, incomplete or non-existent have a valuable contribution to make in education research (p.123).

Therefore, adopting a case study design seems very appropriate for this study particularly when Chapters 2 and 3 evidenced the shallow and fragmented studies that exist about the meaning of young children's well-being in education. Punch (2009) suggests that in general too much research privileges measurement and quantification rather than focusing on gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities of a phenomenon. Evidence discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 suggest that this is the probable situation for children's well-being in education, and further supports the argument for a case study design and an interpretivist paradigm.

4.3 Sampling techniques and participants

In the main, this section describes two points; firstly, the various sampling techniques adopted for the study, and secondly it provides information about the two primary schools which were located in different Local Authorities. In addition, it briefly provides some background information about how the PhD was funded in order to explain the selection of research sites.

4.3.1 Sampling techniques

There are two main types of sampling, namely probability sampling which usually represents the whole population and includes various techniques, such as random and stratified sampling, and there is non-probability sampling that is often referred to as purposive or deliberate sampling which is intended not to be representative and is more specific in nature, and includes techniques such as opportunity and convenience sampling (Merriam, 1988; Cohen et al. 2011; Punch, 2009; Mukherji and Albon, 2015). Due to the nature of the funding and context of this PhD, opportunity and convenience sampling was applied. During 2011 to 2014 Professor Chris Taylor at Cardiff University led a three-year evaluation of the Foundation Phase which included an ESRC studentship. The evaluation included 41 case study schools which meant that the researcher had the opportunity of approaching and involving the existing schools to take part in

a further study. The case study schools were easily accessible to the researcher which Bryman (2012) describes as convenience sampling. However, it is acknowledged early on in this study that the findings from non-probability sampling "cannot be generalised beyond the sample itself" (Mac Naughton et al. 2001, p.156).

In addition to opportunity and convenience sampling, this study also involved criterion sampling. This is described by Miles and Huberman (1994; cited in Punch, 2009) as one of 16 different types of non-probability sampling in qualitative research. Criterion sampling helped to identify two schools, out of the 41, that met the following criteria:

- two year groups per-entry
- free school meal percentage either above or below average for Wales[25]
- different Local Authorities
- reasonable researcher travelling time to the school
- schools that welcomed and were at ease with researchers from the three-year evaluation
- similar Foundation Phase scores from the evaluation

The criterion sampling technique identified six schools that met the above criteria. These schools were contacted to seek whether they would be interested in participating.

4.3.2 The participating schools

The criterion sampling technique resulted in two schools agreeing to participate and they have been given the following pseudonyms, 'Ashbourne Primary school' and 'Redwood Primary school'. Both schools were located in different Local Authorities and were approximately 46 miles apart. The researcher did not know the practitioners or have any previous connections with the schools which meant that the researcher was entering the research sites on a very

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[25] The average in Wales is around 20% each year (My Local School, 2016).

neutral level. Table 5 provides some background information about the schools.

Table 5: Background information about the participating schools

	Ashbourne Primary school	**Redwood Primary School**
Average percentage of children who receive free school meals[26]	7.3% (below the average for Wales)	54.5% (above the average for Wales)
Foundation Phase evaluation score out of 60[27]	36.07	37.64
Classes and their age groups that took part in unstructured classroom observations	Nursery (3-to-4 year olds): 32 children (p/t), one teacher, four teaching assistants	Nursery (3-to-4 year olds): 59 children (f/t), one teacher, seven teaching assistants
	Reception (4-to-5 year olds): 29 children, one teacher, three teaching assistants	Reception (4-to-5 year olds): 30 children, one teacher, four teaching assistants
	Year 1 (5-to-6 year olds): 29 children, one teacher, two teaching assistants	Year 1 (5-to-6 year olds): 30 children, one teacher, one teaching assistant
	Year 2 (6-to-7 year olds): 27 children, one teacher, one teaching assistant	Year 2 (6-to-7 year olds): 30 children, one teacher, one teaching assistant

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[26] To maintain the schools' anonymity the percentages are not referenced.
[27] The score out of 60 indicates the extent to which settings implement the Foundation Phase.

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	Reception/Year 1 (4-to-6 year olds): 30 children, one teacher, two teaching assistants	Observation[28] class (3-to-6 year olds): 11 children, one teacher, one teaching assistant

4.4 Research methods

This section begins with an overview of research methods presented in a table, which is then followed by a brief description of the pilot methods. Hereafter, the multiple methods adopted for this study such as, focus groups, interviews, documentary evidence and classroom observations are discussed critically. This section concludes with a brief discussion about reflexivity in the research process.

4.4.1 Overview of research methods adopted for this study

The argument put forward by Ormston et al. (2014) is that "there is no single, accepted way of carrying out qualitative research" (p.20) but some of the main methods include observation, interview and documentary evidence all of which apply to this study (Punch, 2009; Yin, 2014). Adopting multiple methods is usually associated with qualitative researchers to help them "look at something holistically and comprehensively, to study it in its complexity, and to understand it in its context" (Punch, 2010, p.161). Furthermore,

> a common way of demonstrating authenticity of people's responses is to triangulate them, or elicit them using more than one research method and checking whether the responses are consistent (Hughes, 2001, p.36).

To summarise, the two mains reasons for adopting multiple methods was firstly to gain a more comprehensive picture of well-being and secondly, to show authenticity of the participants' responses. Therefore, Table 6 provides an overview of the multiple methods adopted for this study and is followed by a critical discussion of each one.

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[28] The observation class consisted of children who Redwood Primary school had identified as having additional/specific learning needs.

Table 6: Overview of research methods adopted for this study

School / Method	Ashbourne Primary school	Redwood Primary School
Focus groups	Three focus groups with teachers and teaching assistants One focus group tool workshop with teachers	Three focus groups with teachers and teaching assistants One focus group tool workshop with teachers and teaching assistants
Interviews	Six teachers (semi-structured) Two teachers (unstructured)	Five teachers (semi-structured) Three teaching assistants (semi-structured) Five teachers (unstructured)
Classroom observations	Total of 171 hours in the school in five different classrooms (between October 2013 and April 2014).	Total of 171 hours in the school in five different classrooms (between October 2013 and April 2014).
Documentary evidence	In both schools, various types of school documents, for example weekly timetables were either (1) observed and noted in field-notes, or (2) hard copies were given to the researcher.	

4.4.2 Pilot methods

Piloting methods or simulating the data procedures has many benefits, one of them is to establish the timing of interviews which was important for this study because the researcher wanted to clearly inform the participants before they

committed to taking part (Punch, 2009; Cohen et al. 2011). Knowing how long the methods were going to take allowed practitioners to decide whether they could take part before the school day commenced (i.e. before the children arrived), during the school day or after the school day. Piloting methods also contributes to improving the quality of data (Punch, 2009). For these reasons, one focus group took place with teaching assistants, and a further three individual semi-structured interviews took place with one Reception teacher, one Year 2 teacher and a Year 1 teaching assistant.

In light of the pilot, the semi-structured interview questions were reordered. For example, the first question about defining well-being was too direct, difficult and challenging and participants seemed very hesitant to respond and mentioned that it was difficult to answer. Consequently, the first question was moved towards the end of the interview which provided practitioners with more time to consider a response. Cohen et al. (2011), Sharp (2012) and Spratt (2016) suggest that difficult and more challenging questions should come in the middle or towards the end of an interview. Spratt (2016) states that questions such as 'what do you think well-being is?' are important, but they are conceptually difficult to answer. Therefore, the first interview questions were reworded to: What does well-being mean to you? What comes to mind when you think of children's well-being? What words/terms do you associate with well-being? Furthermore, according to Bell (2010) the order of questions asked during an interview can influence the relationship between interviewer and interviewee so it was important to get the first question right to enable participants to feel at ease and able to answer. Overall, piloting the methods was helpful and beneficial to improving the quality of the study.

4.4.3 Focus groups

Focus groups are a type of group interview very popular in social science and education research where the researcher facilitates a discussion rather than controls or directs a traditional alternate question and answer approach (Punch, 2009; Cohen et al. 2011). Focus groups can be informal or formal and people may or may not know each other (Bell, 2010). For this study the participants

knew each other and pre-determined questions were prepared to facilitate a discussion (see Appendix 4, p.270). Initially, six focus groups took place and they varied in length from eleven minutes to thirty minutes. They consisted of teachers and teaching assistants and ranged from three participants to eight participants. However, the optimal number for focus groups is between six and eight people (Bloor et al. 2001; Finch et al. 2014). Participants gave their permission to audio record the discussions. Finch et al. (2014) suggest that "people often seem to enjoy the experience of a group discussion and, having become part of it, can be reluctant to leave" (p.221). This occurred on at least two occasions where participants willingly continued discussing well-being after the focus groups had ended. To some extent this highlights practitioners' interest and enthusiasm for children's well-being and indicates their enjoyment for group discussions. It also indicates their keen interest to take part in research.

To start the group discussion, a focusing exercise took place which involved participants writing down their responses, on a large sheet of paper, to the following question: *what does well-being mean*? (Bloor et al. 2001). During the discussion, the second focusing exercise took place which involved practitioners interpreting a statement from Wales' early years Foundation Phase curriculum. According to Bloor et al. (2001) "the best designed focus groups probably incorporate two exercises" (p.46), but the main reason for including focusing exercises was to create a stimulating discussion between practitioners to explore the meaning of well-being in the curriculum.

In addition to the six focus groups, two more workshop-based focus groups took place in both schools and lasted approximately one hour each. The aim of these one hour discussions was to ascertain practitioners' views about tools that could be used to capture children's well-being in the classroom, and to further explore practitioners' understanding of well-being. Findings from the workshop-based focus groups have the potential to inform the future development of tools.

The eight focus groups in total were beneficial as they provided a forum for practitioners to voice their opinions and an opportunity "to play an active collaborative role in the research process" (Bloor et al. 2001, p.12). According to Punch (2009) group situations can "stimulate people in making explicit their views, perceptions, motives and reasons" (p.147). They are also useful for capturing a wide range of responses and are beneficial for pursuing ideas in follow-up interviews. In addition, they complement other methods (Bloor et al. 2001). Moreover, focus groups save time as the researcher gets to hear multiple views. However, some participants may dominate the discussion which could defeat the aim of focus groups (Cohen et al. 2011). In relation to this study, practitioners did not seem to dominate discussions, but some spoke slightly more often than others in the group. Another drawback is "that the distinct nature of focus group data raises particular problems for analysis" (Bloor et al. 2001, p.59). Approaches to data analysis are discussed later on.

4.4.4 Interviews (semi-structured and unstructured)

Interviews are regarded as one of the most common methods used to gather in-depth information about people's perceptions, views, thoughts and opinions (Punch, 2009; Sharp, 2012) and there are many different types, such as structured, semi-structured and unstructured, but an interview is often defined as a conversation with a purpose (Merriam, 1988; Pole and Lampard, 2002; Punch, 2009; Bell, 2010; Cohen et al. 2011; Sharp, 2012; Yeo et al. 2014). Furthermore, interviews are one of the main sources of evidence in a case study design (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2014). For this study, a total of 14 individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with practitioners from both schools to ascertain their understanding and perception of young children's well-being in relation to the early years curriculum. The interviews varied in length from ten minutes to 45 minutes.

Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful because they provide the interviewer with more opportunities to probe responses for further clarification and to gain more detail (Mukherji and Albon, 2010; Cohen et al. 2011; Yeo et al. 2014), and for this reason the interview schedule (see Appendix 5, p.271) included probing questions and prompts that were utilised throughout the

interview. However, "when using prompts, the researcher needs to be aware that introducing a topic may influence the participant's response and imply the researcher is seeking a particular answer" (Yeo et al. 2014, p.196). Therefore, prompts were used cautiously. Interviews can also be very time-consuming and this is a limitation, so it is important to ask the most appropriate and relevant questions (Punch, 2009; Sharp, 2012) which reinforces the importance of piloting the interview questions.

According to Cohen et al. (2011) there are ten different types of interview questions, for example experience and descriptive types to background and demographic type questions. The semi-structured interview schedule in Appendix 5 (p.271) shows that four different types of interview questions were asked, namely background, knowledge, experience and contrast type questions. Bell (2010) suggests that researchers "should be able to leave the interview with a set of responses that can be fairly easily recorded, summarised and analysed" (p.162), so with this in mind the semi-structured interview schedule was organised into five main parts, as identified below, to support an effective analysis;

1. Knowledge and understanding of well-being: meanings and interpretations
2. Operationalising well-being in the classroom: supporting, promoting and teaching
3. Capturing well-being in the classroom: assessing and documenting
4. Perception of well-being in relation to other Areas of Learning in the curriculum
5. Clarifying and defining well-being

The five main parts above also reflect the different types of interview questions, for example, they are knowledge, experience and contrast type questions. Interviews are beneficial because of their flexibility and versatility and the researcher can select the duration of the interview, the format, style and type, and they have the option of conducting interviews over time and repeating them to follow-up participant responses (Punch, 2009; Bell, 2010; Sharp, 2012). Another benefit of using interviews as a method of collecting data is that they

provide the researcher with additional information about the way in which participants answer a question. For example, their tone and manner, their facial expressions, their hesitations and pauses can be captured, nonetheless it could be misinterpreted (Bell, 2010). Despite the risk of being misinterpreted, Bell (2010) argues that questionnaires conceal these behaviours altogether. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that interviews are better suited than questionnaires to more open-ended, difficult questions, such as what does well-being mean to you or how would you define well-being?

In addition to 14 semi-structured interviews, a further seven unstructured interviews took place with teachers to gather and explore their views on a snapshot well-being tool, which consisted of the Foundation Phase Outcomes. Unstructured interviews are characterised by many open-ended questions and the interviewee retains most of the control during the interview. However, they tend to be more difficult to analyse (Sharp, 2012). Similar to the focus groups, the unstructured interviews conducted in this study provided another forum for practitioners to voice their opinions, and provided an opportunity for them to be actively involved in the research (Bloor et al. 2001).

Despite the many advantages of conducting interviews, all methods of data collection have their drawbacks and Pole and Lampard (2002) criticise interviews for being an "artificial act" (p.127) between two people. Therefore, information collected in this way may not always be totally reliable. Bell (2010) discusses another criticism and states, "the knowledge that the tape is running can sometimes inhibit honest responses" (p.167). All participants involved in this study gave consent for interviews to be audio recorded but on one occasion during data collection, one practitioner said *"if you turn that thing off* [dictaphone] *I'll tell you more"* (Nursery Teacher, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary). Even though recording interviews is beneficial for capturing detail at a later date it also has drawbacks.

4.4.5 Documentary evidence

Schools, like many other institutions, "produce a vast amount of documentary data" claims Punch (2009, p.159) but "unfortunately, much of it is neglected by researchers" (p.159). Similarly, Simons (2009) states that document analysis

adds depth to a case study and claims it "has not yet been fully exploited" (p.63) in research. Therefore, information from different types of documents were recorded and collected throughout the duration of the field-work but this varied across the ten different classrooms. For example, weekly timetables were usually displayed in the classrooms or on the back of cupboard doors and some teachers offered the researcher their termly planning. Other documents available to the researcher consisted of information about the learning zones within classrooms and assessment portfolios for Areas of Learning in the curriculum. Documentary evidence also included children's work books. Both schools voluntarily provided information about assessment arrangements for children in the Foundation Phase.   In addition, documentary evidence for this study included various policy documents relating to the Foundation Phase[29]. Merriam (1988) states that one of the main benefits of drawing upon various documents is that a researcher cannot alter or influence what is written by his or her presence, as they could in an observation.

4.4.6 Classroom observations

Observations, as with interviews, can vary from being unstructured to structured and from being participant to non-participant (Sharp, 2012; Bell, 2010; Mukherji and Albon, 2015; Punch, 2009). But for the purpose of this study the researcher adopted the role of a non-participant/observer as participant (Creswell, 2013). This is defined as "an outsider of the group under study, watching and taking field-notes from a distance" (Creswell, 2013, p.167). Punch (2009) cites the work of Gold (1958) when describing the spectrum of observational roles and suggests "observing as participant involves observing unobtrusively as possible, engaging in the setting to some extent but usually only for short periods of time" (p.247). This description best describes the role adopted for this study.

Even though the main purpose was to remain a non-participant there were occasions when children engaged with the researcher. For example, interaction took place when children approached the researcher and asked questions such

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[29] Related policy documents were mentioned in Chapter 3 (see 3.2.2).

as, "*what are you writing*"? and "*what are you doing*"? Also, interaction occurred when nursery children (3-to-4 year olds) approached the researcher to engage with puppets, and Year 2 children (6-to-7 year olds) asked for help with school tasks. In general, the researcher adopted the following view throughout the duration of field-work;

> the field-workers' task isn't to decide whether or not people should be doing what they do, it's to find out what they do and what it means…the point of field-work is to learn what people do or think… (Jackson, 1987; cited in Graue and Walsh, 1998, p.59).

Classroom observations were unstructured and conducted in the form of field-notes and written in situ which resemble narrative type observations (Papatheodorou and Luff, 2011). The aim was to capture how practitioners operationalise well-being in the classroom. Foster (1996) suggests that field-notes written immediately means the detail in observations are neither forgotten nor distorted. According to Punch (2009) when observations are unstructured and events naturally unfold they provide the researcher with more opportunities for themes to emerge in the research process, rather than be imposed on data at the beginning. One of the benefits of using observations as a research method in schools is that detailed aspects of school life are captured which would be difficult to gather in any other way (Foster, 1996). Another benefit of using observations in a multi-method design provides the researcher with opportunities to "verify what has been said in interviews" [and] "to show how something described in interviews is enacted in practice" (Punch, 2009, p.250). Therefore, the classroom observations were useful supplementary evidence for triangulating the findings.

Despite many advantages to observations as a research method, there are some disadvantages. For example, observations can be time-consuming (Foster, 1996) and when researchers decide to make observational field-notes the most difficult challenge they face is deciding on what to record. Foster (1996) further states that in the early stages of a project the focus may be unclear and it is not until the research progresses that the focus becomes clearer and narrower. When the focus is not clear there is a danger that the researcher will gather and record unnecessary information. Therefore, in order

to remain focused in the early stages of field-work, which took place in October 2013, the researcher attached the research questions and study aims to the front of the notebook. However, on reflection, some field-note information was not useful and did not provide any substance to the findings.

Another disadvantage to using observations as a research method is associated with the role of the researcher as non-participant/observer as participant (Creswell, 2013). For example, "no matter how unobtrusive a researcher tries to be, the nature of the context changes when she enters" (Ting, 1998; cited in Graue and Walsh, 1998, p.146). This limitation is also stated by Foster (1996) and Sharp (2012) who suggest that the presence of an observer is likely to change the behaviours of those being observed. However, McNaughton Nicholls et al. (2014) state that behaviours are more likely to change when single observations take place. Therefore, in order to reduce the potential change of behaviour amongst participants in schools, the researcher engaged in regular observations over a period of six months[30]. Foster (1996) states that spending longer periods of time in a setting, such as a school where children and practitioners can become accustomed to the presence of the researcher, helps the participants become more at ease and act more natural and this addresses the issue of reactivity (Foster, 1996).

There is also another potential drawback in spending longer periods of time in a setting. For example, what may start off as a neutral relationship between the researcher and practitioners may develop into a more social relationship which could begin to influence the participants in some way and impact on the quality, credibility and dependability of the data (Newby, 2014). Moreover, observations can be over-analysed where the researcher might misinterpret and go beyond what has actually been seen (Mukherji and Albon, 2015). In order to avoid misinterpretations and biases the practitioners were informed that the field-notes and data gathered belonged to them and they were able to confirm and/or agree with the observations at any time during the research.

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[30] 342 hours of observation in total.

4.4.7 Acknowledging reflexivity

Reflecting on the self in the research process is an important aspect of qualitative research inquiry but more so in ethnography (Mukherji and Albon, 2015; Ormston et al. 2014). Nevertheless, it was important to acknowledge that I was the one observing, interviewing and interacting with various participants in the field and that my values and beliefs could influence my actions (Simons, 2009). Therefore, "demonstrating reflexivity is a critical factor in ensuring the validity of the study" (Simons, 2009, p.93). Ryan and Campbell (2001) suggest that in order to have a valid study, researchers "need to constantly re-examine and criticise your understandings and actions" (p.62).

I entered the research field with eight years teaching experience of working with 3-to-5 year olds, and four years teaching experience as a Higher Education lecturer in early years education. However, I was mindful of the argument posed by Foster (1996) who states;

> the observers' existing knowledge, theories and values will inevitably influence the data they produce and the accounts and evaluations they produce…the danger is that this may introduce biases and inaccuracies into their work so that invalid, and therefore misleading, descriptions, explanations or evaluations are produced (p.14).

Therefore, as well as writing observational field-notes, I wrote weekly reflections about my experiences as a case study researcher to help maintain neutrality in an attempt to avoid biases and inaccuracies. Gillham (2010) calls this a research log where personal notes, questions for reflection and "insights, hunches or ideas" (p.23) are recorded. This was a time-consuming task but nevertheless an important one.

Previous sections of this chapter have explained the research design and approach, described the sampling techniques and provided information about the participating schools, as well as critically evaluated the research methods. The remainder of this chapter now turns to an explanation of the ethical processes and data analysis approaches.

4.5 Ethics

This section draws upon the guidelines from two ethical codes of conduct, namely the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA). In addition to this, it provides detailed information about ethical procedures that were conducted prior to the study, during the study and after the study (Greig et al. 2007).

4.5.1 Ethical codes of conduct and guidelines

According to Silverman (2006) it is only since the late twentieth century that ethical protocol has seriously been considered in research. The first BERA ethical guidelines were formally adopted in 1992 and more recently, revisions about cultural sensitivity were adopted in 2011 (BERA, 2011). BERA guidelines have been very useful for this study as it reminds researchers that they have a responsibility to conduct ethical and professional research to four different agents; firstly to the participants, secondly to the sponsors of research (for example, the ESRC), thirdly to the community of educational researchers and lastly, to educational professionals, policy-makers and the general public (BERA, 2011). As well as adhering to BERA guidelines, the EECERA guidelines which are specifically aimed at early childhood researchers were also considered. The guidelines and advice on gaining consent, also known as assent, from young children was useful and clarified that this would be an active and ongoing process throughout the study (EECERA, 2015).

4.5.2 The ethical process

In essence, ethics is "about how we treat study participants well" (Webster et al. 2014, p.78) and according to Greig et al. (2007) this is about treating participants well 'prior' to data collection, 'during' data collection and 'after' data collection. Prior to data collection, the ethical process for this study began by applying for a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate to work as an educational researcher in schools, and applying for ethical approval from the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University, of which approval was granted on the first attempt (see Appendix 6, p.273). A

draft letter to the 'gatekeeper' was included with the ethics application which in the context of this study is the Head teacher of a primary school. The gatekeeper is usually someone who gives permission for the research to take place at their school (Greig et al. 2007). However, Roberts-Holmes (2014) highlights that if the gatekeeper gives their consent this does not mean that individual children, parents or practitioners give consent too.

Initial contact with Head teachers was made by telephone where the conversation was guided by a transcript with key points about the project. The transcript helped to ensure that potential participating schools received similar information about what might be involved which would help them make an informed decision about participating in the research. If, at this point, the Head teacher was keen to take part they received a more detailed project information letter. After approximately one week, the Head teachers were contacted again to ask if there were any further questions and to arrange a convenient time to visit the school and the practitioners.

Informed consent is an important term used in research which involves providing sufficient information in words the participants can understand to enable them to give their consent (Alderson, 2005; Bell, 2005; Penn, 2008; Mac Naughton et al. 2001; Mukherji and Albon, 2015). Therefore a project briefing meeting was arranged in each of the participating schools which provided the practitioners with an opportunity to learn about the project aims and what might be involved, to be able to ask questions and consider whether they wanted to take part. One practitioner asked the following question at the briefing meeting: *"why do you want to do the research in our school"?* The researcher responded and referred to the criteria used for sampling the schools. At the project briefing meeting, potential participants were provided with a project information sheet (see Appendix 7, p.274). According to Bell (2010) participants should be given sufficient time to consider whether they want to take part and should not be expected to sign a consent form at this stage. After approximately two weeks, the schools were contacted to confirm their involvement. At this stage of the ethical process the two participating schools were provided with a letter for

parents/carers explaining the project aims and the researcher's role, as well as an 'opt out' option for their child (see Appendix 8, p.277).[31] The schools distributed the letters on behalf of the researcher. When the field-work began, the practitioners were asked to sign a letter of written consent (see Appendix 9, p.279).

During data collection the participants were able to withdraw at any time and this was made clear at the briefing meeting and on the project information sheet (Bell, 2010). Also, participants were informed about opting out of questions during the interviews (Pole and Lampard, 2002). Permission was sought from participants to audio record the focus groups and individual interviews, but at times a few participants did not want their responses to be recorded and this was granted immediately. For example, two participants said *"this is off the record".*

Occasionally, during field-work a new childcare or teaching student was present or a different teacher was covering the class who was unfamiliar to the researcher. Therefore, it seemed good ethical protocol to provide the new adult who was unfamiliar about the presence of the researcher with a project information sheet. In these instances, consent was gained verbally. This ethical action also highlights that this study was conducted with integrity at all times (Punch, 2009).

Data collection consisted of classroom observations which involved children, but up to this point only parental/carer consent had been granted prior to field-work and the children themselves had not been informed. Therefore, in relation to children, informed consent was gained 'moment by moment' and considered to be 'ongoing negotiation' (Mukherji and Albon, 2015; EECERA, 2015). For example, in the majority of instances the researcher was introduced to the children by the classroom teacher and throughout the duration of the project individual children approached the researcher to ask more specific questions, such as *"why are you here?",* and *"what are you writing?"* When this occurred

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[31] No letters were returned requesting their child to opt out of the study.

the researcher explained her presence and said to the child *"I hope this is okay with you"?*

During field-work, the researcher wanted to respect the privacy of participants and did not want to come across as being intrusive so decided to avoid using the central staffroom. According to Papatheodorou and Luff (2011) being diplomatic and tactful is a fundamental ethical principle. Also, the researcher adopted the view that the field-notes belonged equally to the participants and therefore, were available to view. However, the participants did not ask to see the field-notes.

Ethical protocol, as Greig et al. (2007) state, should also be considered after data collection. The participants have remained anonymous (Bell, 2010) and both schools have been given pseudonyms. Part of the Data Protection Act 1998 legislates that researchers should for example, store data securely and ensures that participants know how the data will be used (Mukherji and Albon, 2015). Therefore, data was stored on a secure University network and the project information letter explained how the data would be used. Transcripts include practitioner initials and the pseudonyms appear on the researcher's mobile telephone as the school contact numbers. Practitioners have been allocated a number, for example Reception teacher, Number 1, Teaching assistant number 1 and so on, to retain anonymity and this appears in the empirical Chapters 5 to 7. The researcher plans to contact the schools to provide a summary of the research (see Appendix 10, p.280). In keeping with ethical principles and contractual duties, the ESRC who funded this study will always be acknowledged when the findings are disseminated to various audiences.

4.6 Data analysis

This final section sets outs to firstly explain in broad terms the nature of data analysis and the importance of a stage/phase model of data analysis. Secondly, it justifies the use of thematic analysis for this study by presenting two tables with detailed information about the key terms and the six-phases that

were undertaken. Thirdly, it acknowledges dependability and credibility and discusses triangulation.

4.6.1 The nature of data analysis

Data analysis within a case study design is most probably the least developed in research (Yin, 2014) and is usually described as "examining, categorising, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to produce empirically based findings" (Yin, 2014, p.132), but there is no single or right way of analysing qualitative data (Punch, 2009; Cohen et al. 2011). Punch (2009) claims that in quantitative research the analysis is more transparent and easier to reproduce and these are considered significant challenges for qualitative researchers (Newby, 2014). Punch (2009) further suggests that data analysis needs to be "systematic, disciplined and able to be seen and described" (p.171). Therefore, qualitative analysis usually consists of various stages/phases and involves uncovering patterns, themes and making comparisons which are all central to the process of data analysis (Guest et al. 2012; Creswell, 2013; Mukherji and Albon, 2015).

The process of data analysis is described by Creswell (2013) as a spiral of four stages: (1) organising data, (2) reading and memoing, (3) describing, classifying and interpreting into codes and themes, (4) representing and visualising. Whereas Mukherji and Albon (2015) cite Denscombe's (2010) five stage process, which includes: (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) coding, (3) categorising, (4) identifying themes and relationships, (5) developing concepts and generalised statements. Despite many different terms or ways of describing the process of data analysis the stages/phases are very similar (Punch, 2009). This point is argued by Braun and Clarke (2006) in relation to thematic analysis which is another method for analysing qualitative data. They explain that "some of the phases of thematic analysis are similar to the phases of other qualitative research, so these stages are not necessarily all unique to thematic analysis" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.86). Thematic analysis is described as a 'six' phase recursive process where the main benefits include its

flexibility and accessibility rather than adopting a linear model (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

However, Yin (2014) adopts a different stance to those described above and does not refer to data analysis in stages/phases but suggests that case study researchers tend to have a general analytic strategy which is linked to the research aims and questions, and he suggests there are four different strategies. For the purpose of this study the general analytic strategy was 'working with data from the ground up' which is inductive rather than 'relying on theoretical propositions' which is deductive. Yin (2014) further suggests that in addition to having a general analytic strategy there are five specific techniques, such as 'cross-case analysis' which relates to this study. Analysing data in a case study design involves 'within-case analysis' and/or 'cross-case analysis' (Brewer, 2007). Cross-case analysis allowed the researcher to identify patterns and themes, and make comparisons about how well-being is understood and perceived by practitioners who work with children from different socio-economic backgrounds. Within-case analysis allowed comparisons to be made between practitioners who work in the same school. However, Lewis and Nicholls (2014) argue that case study analysis "in practice can become very complex, with comparisons made between different actors within a single case, between cases, and between groups of participants across cases" (p.67). Therefore, it was useful to follow a stage/phase model for this study to help manage such a complex task.

4.6.2 Data analysis approaches

As previously mentioned, data analysis generally consists of stages/phases and numerous approaches exist, such as content analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory, narrative analysis, conversation analysis and thematic analysis to name but a few (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013; Newby, 2014; Spencer et al. 2014; Mukherji and Albon, 2015). However, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that thematic analysis "is a poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method" (p.77). It is very flexible, accessible and compatible with a range of epistemologies, such as

realism/essentialism and constructionism (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Spencer et al. 2014) and this makes it particularly useful for pragmatist and early career researchers. Guest et al. (2012) argue that "thematic analysis is still the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set" (p.11). For these reasons, the researcher applied thematic analysis as the main approach to analysing data. Another reason for selecting thematic analysis links to the multiple methods adopted for this study (see 4.4.1, Table 6), and the six-phase recursive process provided opportunities to move logically between the data corpus. This is the name given to all the data collected for the study (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) use three other key terms alongside data corpus and Table 7 provides examples of how the key terms used in thematic analysis relate to data collected for this study.

Table 7: Examples of how the key terms in thematic analysis relate to data collected for this study

Key terms used by Braun and Clarke (2006) in thematic analysis	Data collected for this study
Data corpus: all data collected	- Focus groups - Focus group tool workshops - Semi-structured individual interviews - Unstructured interviews - Classroom observations (field-notes) - Various documentary evidence
Data set: various combinations of the data corpus (above) and data	- Focus groups/transcripts - Semi-structured individual

items (below)	interview/transcripts
Data item: individual data items	• Semi-structured interview transcript • Focus groups transcript • Classroom timetable
Data extract: individual coded extract which has been extracted from the data item	• Individual lines, comments from practitioners' interviews • Field-notes/observations

Table 8 shows the six-phases of thematic analysis with brief examples of the processes involved for this study. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that the phases should only be used as guidelines.

Table 8: Examples of the six-phase recursive process of thematic analysis

Phases of thematic analysis	Description of process/actions taken
1) Familiarisation with data	The researcher transcribed interviews, read and re-read data, and noted down initial ideas in the margin. For example, lots of 'ums', hesitations to interview questions, different well-being domains. A spread-sheet was generated with transcripts embedded as hyperlinks for quick retrieval at other phases.

2) Generate initial codes	Initial codes were generated from transcripts by colour coding text and adding notes in the margin (see an example in Appendix 11, p.281). For example, talking about feelings, parental responsibility, manners, basics, time-consuming, well-being is everything. The researcher systematically worked through the data set and produced a list of codes.
3) Search for themes	The researcher sorted initial codes into initial themes, such as assumptions, hesitations, objective indicators, reducible versus irreducible construct. Thematic maps were drawn (see an example in Appendix 12, p.282) to help start thinking about the relationships between codes and themes.
4) Review themes	The researcher checked and matched the coded extract data to the initial themes and reviewed the themes across the data set. For example, 'assumptions' became the 'taken-for-granted truths' theme. The data set was recoded as required[32].

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[32] Braun and Clarke (2006, p.91) state that "coding is an ongoing organic process".

5) Refine, cross-check and define themes	Ongoing analysis took place to define and refine the themes that began to tell a story. For example, 'taken for granted truths' was defined as 'common perceptions of well-being'. The 'reducible versus irreducible construct' theme was defined as 'various understandings/dimensions of well-being'.
6) Final analysis and produce report	The researcher ensured that examples of data extracts were compelling and interesting and that sufficient evidence was provided for each theme. The overall aim of this phase was to present an argument in relation to the research questions.

The six-phase process described above shows how codes inform the themes yet Grbich (2013) explains that in some analytic processes themes inform codes, and in some cases only themes or only codes are used. In other words, the processes of qualitative data analysis vary. In general, a theme emerges when it "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.82). Moreover, themes are not usually dependent upon their prevalence but they can be (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Some of the drawbacks of thematic analysis occur when themes overlap and there is little coherence and logic between them, as well as insufficient evidence to support each theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

In addition to utilising thematic analysis as the main approach to analysing data, the researcher applied content analysis to discover the frequency of well-being domains communicated by practitioners. Put simply, content analysis is described as "counting the number of times certain words or phrases are used" (Mukherji and Albon, 2015, p.264). Content analysis was also applied to curriculum policy documents and the outcome of this is displayed in Table 4 in Chapter 3 (see 3.2.2).

Finally, Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) packages such as, NVivo and ATLAS.ti were considered for this study to help identify patterns and make comparisons between participants' perceptions. Creswell (2013) claims that CAQDAS packages provide an "organised storage file system so that the researcher can quickly and easily locate material and store it in one place" (p.201). However, the researcher utilised a different strategy for this study which involved using hyperlinks to embed transcripts onto Microsoft Excel spread-sheets. The main decision not to use CAQDAS packages mainly related to the amount of time needed to navigate the functions and learn how to effectively use them. Also, grounded theory is often associated with CAQDAS packages and Stewart (2012) suggests that ATLAS.ti has the relevant functions to help researchers develop theory. However, the main aim was not to develop theory for this study so CAQDAS was not used as a strategy to analyse data. The main aim was to explore and examine the concept of young children's well-being in education, which in turn could lead to future research involving grounded theory and CAQDAS packages.

4.6.3 Acknowledging dependability and credibility

Reliability and validity are commonly accepted terms in quantitative research but they are often contested and sometimes rejected in qualitative research, and thus replaced with dependability and credibility (Simons, 2009; Cohen et al. 2011; Lewis et al. 2014). According to Simons (2009) one way of ensuring dependability and credibility in qualitative research is to apply the strategy of triangulation, which is defined as the;

means of cross-checking the relevance and significance of issues or testing out arguments and perspectives from different angles to generate and strengthen evidence in support of key claims (Simons, 2009, p.129).

Triangulation for this study involved corroborating findings from the data corpus[33] to gain a more in-depth understanding of the concepts and practices of children's well-being in the early years curriculum. In order to demonstrate practitioners' authenticity (Hughes, 2001) triangulation mainly took place between phases three-to-six of the thematic analysis process (see 4.6.2, Table 8). This involved cross-checking the themes with practitioners' responses, field-notes and documentary evidence to strengthen claims, and to establish a more comprehensive picture of well-being in the early years curriculum. Emerging similarities and differences between the themes were identified in a table (see Appendix 13, p.283). Yin (2014) describes this as the converging lines of inquiry process.

To conclude, triangulation increases credibility but does not guarantee it (Simons, 2009), and one of the drawbacks of case study findings is that they cannot be easily cross-checked and the findings can be biased and subjective (Cohen et al. 2011). Therefore, in order to avoid bias specific approaches such as thematic analysis and content analysis were utilised which provide a systematic and disciplined approach to data analysis that could be cross-checked, and would help to alleviate bias.

The subsequent chapters focus on discussing three areas: firstly, practitioners' knowledge and understanding of young children's well-being, secondly, practitioners' perceptions and practices of operationalising well-being in the early years curriculum and lastly, practitioners' perceptions and experiences of capturing children's well-being in the curriculum.

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[33] See 4.4.1 for an overview of methods.

5   Primary school practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being

5.1 Introduction

In order to understand how well-being is operationalised in practice one needs to establish what primary school practitioners (such as teachers and teaching assistants) know and understand about well-being (Mashford-Scott et al. 2012; Soutter et al. 2012), and this is the broader aim of this chapter. This is important because Chapters 2 and 3 concluded that there is a paucity of empirical evidence about well-being, particularly for young children and there is limited consensus about the nature of well-being (Coleman, 2009; Roberts, 2010; Statham and Chase, 2010; Soutter et al. 2012). Chapter 3 also concluded that dominant discourses and domains of child well-being exist within research and curriculum policy. Therefore, this chapter aims to discover whether dominant discourses and domains exist amongst practitioners' understanding when they engage in discussions about well-being in Wales.

Further evidence from Chapters 2 and 3 also support the rationale for this chapter, but this can be summed up in the following quote by Soutter et al. (2012) who argue that;

> research examining how well-being is defined and applied in educational policy is limited… currently, there is a lack of consensus across disciplines and sectors about what well-being means in an educational context (p.112).

This chapter draws upon two Bernsteinian concepts (1977, 1982) which relate to the curriculum, such as the 'collection' code and the 'integrated' code, in order to understand how well-being is understood as an Area of Learning in the curriculum.

5.2 Uncertainty about articulating well-being

Practitioners seemed hesitant in first talking about well-being and they did not always find the concept easy to explain. For example, there were numerous pauses, hesitations and subtle requests for clarity from the researcher when

they responded to the following question: 'what terms or words do you associate or think about with well-being?' One teaching assistant suggested its meaning but then asked the researcher *"is that what you would… [mean]?"* (Redwood Primary, individual interview). Another teaching assistant also subtly requested clarity when she said: *"what about praise, would that come under that?"* (Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). During another focus group at Ashbourne Primary Year 1 teaching assistant said: *"I would go with child's health. Do you think that's to do with well-being?"* Largely, practitioners seemed uncertain about explaining well-being and appeared to seek some sort of clarification.

Articulating the nature of well-being and defining it was generally a difficult task for practitioners. For example, when practitioners were asked to define well-being at the end of the individual interviews they found it somewhat challenging. One Nursery teaching assistant from Redwood Primary said: *"that is a hard question because it is a variety of things isn't it".* Another stated: *"it's hard isn't it well-being, there's so many things"* (Year 1 teacher, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). The following Reception teacher from Redwood Primary posed the following question back to the researcher and asked, *"as to define it, what should a five year old child's well-being look like?"* Two more practitioners during individual interviews acknowledged that *"well-being is tricky. You have to think of, you know, all of that really"* (Reception teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). Also, the Reception teacher in Ashbourne Primary referred to its many dimensions and said: *"now I've started discussing it, there are loads of dimensions to it, not really thought of it so much".* Another Reception teacher explained: *"it's really hard, really, really hard…I think it is a bit open-ended and sort of, you're not quite sure what it means"* (Number 2, Ashbourne Primary)*.* The following response from the Year 1 teacher in Ashbourne Primary was very brief when she attempted to define well-being, and said *"you know you can't".*

In one of the focus groups, one teaching assistant thought that it was particularly difficult to explain the nature of well-being in the context of younger children. She feels it is easier to explain for older children particularly teenagers where you can observe, for example changes in their appearance or mood.

This response may indicate that the nature of well-being is conceptualised differently in relation to a child's age but this was not a recurring theme.

Clearly, there is evidence to suggest that in general the majority of practitioners are hesitant and seek clarification when talking about the nature of well-being. Furthermore, when practitioners were asked to define and explain well-being this was not an easy task. This supports Ereaut and Whiting's (2008, p.7) claim, that well-being "is a *primary cultural judgement*; just like *'what makes a good life?'* it is the stuff of fundamental philosophical debate".

If practitioners find one concept such as well-being difficult to define and explain in relation to the curriculum, this raises the question about their knowledge and understanding of other concepts relating to their practice. Findings from a recent evaluation of the Foundation Phase show that;

> particular areas of uncertainty or confusion relate to: 'formal' and 'informal' teaching; 'learning through play'; continuous, enhanced and focussed provision; child-initiated, practitioner-initiated and practitioner-directed activities; and observation (Taylor et al. 2015, p.113).

Therefore, it is argued that well-being is another concept which practitioners are uncertain about and therefore can be added to the above areas which were highlighted in the evaluation. It could be argued that practitioners are uncertain about too many aspects of practice which need addressing.

5.3 Different dimensions to the concept of well-being

The next section shows that when practitioners discuss well-being they communicate different understandings about what it could mean. The data and analysis identify four different dimensions and they are described as:

1. Well-being as a pre-requisite *and* a by-product/outcome
2. Well-being is an irreducible *and* a reducible construct
3. Well-being can be assessed through objective indicators rather than needing subjective evidence from the child
4. Well-being needs an integrated approach rather than discrete delivery

The dimensions are significant because explanations of well-being, such as those discussed in Chapter 3 are often portrayed as being one dimension or the other. But the following discussion attempts to show that practitioners hold more than one understanding of well-being. Some of the dimensions were also favoured more than the other, such as the 'objective' over the 'subjective' and the 'integrated' over the 'discrete' understanding.

5.3.1 Well-being as a pre-requisite *and* a by-product/outcome

Pre-requisite: The following evidence demonstrates that practitioners understand well-being as a pre-requisite, where they adopt the view that well-being is central to children developing various skills and competencies. For example, the Nursery teacher at Ashbourne Primary said: *"sharing, taking turns, interacting with other children they need well-being to do that"* (focus group). In other words, this teacher believes that well-being refers to a set of skills which are a pre-requisite for sharing, taking turns and interacting with others. Similarly, another teacher explained: *"without well-being being in place you are not going to make great gains in your Maths and English, because your well-being needs to be there first"* (Year 1 teacher, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). Another teacher said:

> *without getting the well-being and behaviour and everything right, the Maths, the English everything else isn't going to fall into place. I think that needs to be the top priority and then everything else will kind of slot in behind it* (Year 2 teacher, individual interview, Redwood Primary).

Finally, another teacher said: *"he's interacting with other children, because they need well-being to do that"* (Nursery teacher, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). It appears that practitioners understand children's well-being as a pre-requisite to developing a range of skills and competencies and believe it is central to facilitating learning and development. In other words, well-being is regarded as something that is necessary to achieve a means to an end (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008). This view is also portrayed in curriculum policy. For example, the Welsh Government state: "well-being is essential to becoming an effective learner" (WAG, 2008c, p.4).

By-product/outcome: In contrast, the following teacher referred to the concept of well-being as a by-product/outcome of certain factors and/or experiences, for

example being literate and numerate. She said: *"they need the basics in order to have well-being"* (Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). When this teacher was asked further about what she meant by 'the basics', she said:

> *what I mean by the basics is being able to speak and listen so that's oracy and literacy. Read and write obviously because that is a key thing they need to learn and then obviously number as well. Read write and arithmetic like we used to have years ago. They are the basics that children need* (Year 2 teacher, individual interview, Ashbourne Primary).

The teacher above emphasises the importance of learning 'the basics', such as literacy and numeracy and believes that well-being is the outcome of being literate and numerate. This particular teacher's understanding resembles a needs-based philosophical perspective (Thompson and Marks, 2006) which has been explained in more detail in Chapter 3. But to summarise, this means that this teacher thinks that being literate and numerate are the underlying conditions that contribute to well-being.

The vast majority of practitioners feel that well-being is also the by-product/outcome of a child's home environment. For example, the following home circumstances were mentioned by practitioners when they talked about well-being: *"experienced some upset at home"*, *"witnessed substance misuse"*, and *"lacks stimulation"*. Furthermore, 13 out of 14 practitioners who were interviewed individually referred to poor or low well-being as a result of a child's home circumstances. For example, one teacher explains the circumstances of some home environments and situates school within a child's ecology[34]. She explained*:*

> *a lot of the parents suffer with sort of mild depression, mental health issues, they are on a lot of medication so a child's environment isn't necessarily a happy one…So you actually know that they are living in a home and environment where obviously there's a lot of drug use and that would impact on children's well-being. It's not necessarily their health but it could be the health of family members as well that can impact on them, that affects their dispositions to different things…how can you impact on well-being without getting into the family as well because that's a big part, we are only one aspect of it* (Reception teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview).

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[34] The micro and mesosystem of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory (Gordon Biddle et al. 2014).

The teacher highlights, towards the end of her response, the unique challenges that well-being brings when entering a curriculum context. She recognises that school is one layer of a very large contextual picture which could be termed the child's ecology. Fauth and Thompson (2009) state that "it is impossible to describe young children's well-being absent of the ecology of which they are part" (p.42). Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory draws educators' attention to the various systems that link to a child's development. For example, home context, siblings, peers, cultural and religious practices and government policies (Gordon Biddle et al. 2014). There is evidence of acknowledging a child's ecology in Foundation Phase policy when it states, "the experiences that children have had before entering the setting/school need to be recognised and considered" (WAG, 2008a, p.5).

The majority of practitioners often refer back to a child's home environment when they talk about the nature of well-being. They feel that the home environment was important in providing a good start in life and a by-product/outcome of this is well-being, but practitioners also view the home as impacting negatively on a child's well-being. Practitioners who work in Redwood Primary with children from poorer backgrounds made more reference to specific home circumstances, such as *"changes in parents having different partners", "stressed parents", "poor housing conditions", "violent homes"," large families"* and *"poor parenting knowledge",* and they perceive well-being as the by-product/outcome of these circumstances. There is evidence to suggest that low well-being is associated with children from poorer backgrounds and low social classes (Pople and Soloman, 2008), but there is also evidence that suggests well-being and positive feelings about quality of life are associated with diverse socio-economic backgrounds and not just those from poorer backgrounds (Axford, 2009).

Practitioners also talked about school being a substitute for providing praise and attention which children may not receive at home. There was also a perception amongst practitioners that regardless of what the school does, the child will always have to return home to that particular situation. For example, the

following teacher feels strongly that schools can only do so much in relation to a child's well-being. She said:

> *well-being comes a lot from home, because when they start with us in September they have never been to school before and we have had no effect on their well-being, so if they are low well-being that is the environment they have had at home. However much you do in school there's only so much you can do...* (Year 1 teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview).

The view adopted by the majority of practitioners such as the one above, raises questions about the realistic expectation for schools in terms of improving and developing well-being and how this may play out in practice. Clack (2012) puts forward the argument, which has been outlined in Chapter 2, that schools can often become "the backdoor for addressing a whole host of societal ills" (p.502). This resembles Bernstein's (1970) well-known quote in the 1970s where he claimed that schools cannot compensate for society. A similar point is made by West-Burnham (2010, p.2) who suggests;

> although schools have always been committed to educating the whole child, there are some variables influencing a child's well-being that are beyond the normal remit and influence of schools, for example the impact of the family, social class, social capital and poverty.

Even though well-being is understood by practitioners in the context of the early years curriculum as contributing to a set of skills and characteristics as in a pre-requisite, they also perceive well-being as the by-product/outcome of a child's home environment which they feel they cannot always influence.

5.3.2 Well-being is an irreducible *and* a reducible construct

Irreducible: In addition to the dimensions discussed above practitioners also perceived well-being as a concept that was so vast and all-encompassing. For example, practitioners use words such as, *"massive", "vast", "big", "huge", "wide and broad", "everything it is to be a child"*, *"meeting all of their needs"*, *"the whole person", "being very well-balanced and well-rounded", "it's everything"* and *"all of it"* to describe the nature of well-being. In addition, the word holistic was used frequently by practitioners when talking about well-being. One Reception teacher explained that, *"if you break the word down, 'being' is everything else it is to be human – a human being"* (Ashbourne Primary,

individual interview). One teaching assistant said: *"there's so much to it isn't there"* (Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). Another stated *"there are loads of dimensions to it"* (Reception teacher, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). Similarly, another teacher said: *"there are so many things to it"* (Year 1 teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview)*.* One more teacher stated *"there's so much to say"* (Nursery teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). The vast majority of practitioners believe that well-being is an irreducible holistic totality construct (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008). Therefore, this might be one of the reasons why practitioners find it difficult to explain and define.

Reducible to domains: In addition to an understanding of well-being as an irreducible construct, there is the reducible to components view (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008). This is usually discussed in well-being literature as domains, in other words different types of well-being which have been explained in Chapter 3. Statham and Chase (2010) suggest that the 'emotional', 'physical' and 'social' well-being domains are usually associated with children. It is noteworthy that only one teacher attempted to identify well-being by its domains when she said: *"it's not just the one part, it could be like physical, social, emotional well-being"* (Year 1 teacher, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). This particular teacher further explained that she was undertaking a Master's degree in early years and had recently completed a children's well-being module. Despite only one practitioner associating well-being with various domains, the analysis reveals that when practitioners talk about well-being they mention a variety of different terms which can be categorised into three different domains. Table 9 provides examples of the terms practitioners use to describe the nature of young children's well-being.

Table 9: Terms used by practitioners to describe the nature of child well-being

Emotional/psychological well-being domain	Social well-being domain	Physical well-being domain
Positive terms:		
Happy Confident Feels safe and secure Content Independent Good self-esteem Stable and settled Good behaviour Have fun Relaxed Bubbly Positive Eager, willing and ready to learn. More on task Enjoys their learning Has a sense of achievement and pride.	Responds well Gets along with others Speaks to others Works together Takes part Observes Eagerly joins in Takes turns Help one another Share Has friends Polite Nice and kind Respects others Encourages others Participates well Looks after others Cares for one another Knows how to conduct themselves. Knows the consequences of their actions.	Clean appearance Well-dressed Looks smart Eats properly and healthily. Takes care of personal hygiene. Keeps fit Well maintained
Negative terms:		
Withdrawn Quiet Shy Sad Lacks confidence Poor behaviour Lacks motivation Depressed Feel stressed Cry and whinge Distant Disappointed	Does not make conversation. Does not play with others.	Dirty appearance Not well-dressed or well-kept. Tired Looks exhausted

Angry Insular Self-esteem issues		

Table 9 shows that when practitioners discuss well-being, their responses can be categorised into three different domains of which have a variety of different meanings. The terms are also more positive than negative in nature. The most frequent positive term to be mentioned within the 'emotional/psychological' domain was happiness which indicates that practitioners view happiness and well-being as related concepts. However, Coleman (2009) argues that happiness is not quite the same as well-being and this creates debate.

Table 9 also demonstrates that when practitioners talk about well-being they refer less to the 'physical' domain and more to the 'emotional/psychological' domain. The dominant 'emotional/psychological' domain corresponds with a finding presented in Chapter 3, which demonstrated that 'emotional' well-being appears slightly more frequently than any other domain in various policy documents relating to young children. However, Thorburn (2014) warns that;

> a bias towards emotional definitions of well-being could manifest itself in curriculum attempts to diagnose, train and regulate feelings, and to manage some pupils' behavioural excesses better. Adherence to this line of thought could result in well-being becoming viewed more as a skills-based curriculum supplement for some pupils rather than as a central curriculum entitlement for all pupils (p.212).

Categorising the terms that practitioners use to explain well-being shows that the 'emotional/psychological' domain is privileged.

5.3.3 Well-being can be assessed through objective indicators rather than needing subjective evidence from the child

Objective indicators: In addition to the various ways of conceptualising well-being that have been discussed thus far, the majority of responses expressed by practitioners during the focus groups and individual interviews were dominated by the objective dimension of well-being, as opposed to the subjective dimension. The objective dimension is usually conceptualised as a concrete noun and fixed in nature. It is also generally associated with a

demonstration of positive and negative behaviours, various skills, achievements and developmental milestones; Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) describe this as the developmental-oriented view. Moreover, they suggest that it is the leading discourse amongst practitioners working with young children.

The following evidence shows that practitioners associate children's well-being with physical observable characteristics, cognitive ability and skills, almost like indicators or signs of well-being. For example, one practitioner said; *"you can see her sometimes she's like quite shaky"* (Nursery teaching assistant, Number 3, Redwood Primary, focus group). Another said, *"some of the ones we've had here sort of thing, it is the yes, no, head down, rather than bursting full of, I'll tell you this, I'll tell you that"* (Nursery teaching assistant, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). The following practitioner said *"well-being is about general appearance to others. You can usually pick a lot of things up about the way they look"* (Teaching assistant, number one, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). *"Well-being; it's all down to appearance"* (Teaching assistant, Number 1, Redwood Primary, focus group) said another. Similarly, another stated *"they could be lethargic coming in because they might not have had the appropriate breakfast"* (Teaching assistant, Number 2, Redwood Primary, focus group). Another practitioner stated the following when discussing the nature of well-being: *"they would be too scared to try things, won't attempt things, think they are not very good at things, that sort of thing, not a lot of confidence"* (Year 2 teacher, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview).

Further examples of the objective dimension of well-being included: *"good attainment"*, *"good stage in their development"*, *"being knowledgeable"*, *"well-spoken"*, *"follows and copes with routines"*. These examples focus on concrete, fixed attributes where practitioners draw upon children's achievements, behaviours and skills as indicators/signs of well-being and are quantifiable to some extent. Fontana (1995) argues that;

> formal education concentrates almost exclusively upon the knowing area, to the virtual exclusion of the being…in practical terms this means schools do very little in any systematic or focused way to develop 'being' in children…we may be the most knowledgeable person under the sun, but this is of scant consolation to us if we experience ourselves in a confused or unhappy or unsatisfactory way (p.279).

One of the drawbacks of favouring the objective developmental-oriented discourse can result in failing to recognise that "young children's experiences in the 'here and now' are of interest and value" (Mashford-Scott et al. 2012, p.249). If this is the case, arguing from a children's rights perspective, this needs addressing.

It is also suggested by Mashford-Scott et al. (2012), who specifically write from an early childhood perspective, that an over-emphasis on a developmental-oriented view of well-being is closely linked to a specific image of the child. They suggest an image that is "immature…lacking insight…and incapable of acting or speaking on their own behalf" (p.240). Therefore, it is argued that exploring practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being has drawn some attention to how they construct early childhood (Adams, 2012). Chapter 8 further discusses the associations between understandings of well-being and constructions of childhood.

Subjective: The following evidence demonstrates that some practitioners mentioned the subjective dimension of well-being when engaging in discussions about well-being. For example, one practitioner said: *"happy, secure, confident in being them, it's about self-belief"* (Year 2 teacher, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). Another practitioner referred to the child's subjective self and explained: *"it's about being me but confident in being me…happy me, healthy me; you know all those things"* (Reception teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). Another practitioner stated: *"knowing that they are valued and that people will listen to them and that they are heard"* (Observation teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). Another practitioner explained: *"being allowed to be who they are and who they want to be"* (Teaching assistant, Redwood Primary, individual interview). It could be argued that these types of responses relate to a eudaimonic discourse of well-being, because it is often described as a feeling of being alive and fully engaged and existing as whom they really are (Waterman, 1993; cited in Ryan and Deci, 2001).

An understanding of the child's subjective self is also evident in the following responses where the word 'sense' is repeatedly expressed by practitioners.

One practitioner said: *"well-being is about having a sense of belonging"* (Teaching assistant, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). Another said: *"Having a sense of achievement and pride"* (Year 1 teacher, number two, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). Another stated: *"Inspiring children to feel more comfortable within themselves promoting their sense of being proud of what they do"* (Reception teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). Finally, another practitioner's quote implied the word 'sense' and said: *"they feel they have something to offer, something to say…"* (Teaching assistant, Redwood Primary, focus group). This suggests that a child has a sense of agency and the practitioners are referring to a child's internal locus of control (Fontana, 1995). These types of responses which focus on the child's subjective self albeit limited, reflect different discourses of well-being such as hedonic/mental state (Ryan and Deci, 2001; McLellan and Steward, 2015), and a eudaimonic discourse (Thompson and Marks, 2006; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Dodge et al. 2012; Hervas and Vazquez, 2013).

The work of Miell (1995) and Rogers (1977, cited in Fontana, 1995) contributed to knowledge about the subjective self and are primarily concerned with an "individual's subject experience - the personal view of the world" (p.255). It might be the case that practitioners feel children are simply too young to have a personal view of the world and this is why there could be fewer responses relating to the subjective dimension of well-being. However, Chapter 3 argued that young children at around the age of three years are very capable of using language to report on what is happening, and at around the age of five years children have the ability to understand and report on the past, present and future (Neaum, 2010). Another explanation for fewer responses relating to the subjective dimension may indicate that practitioners take-it-for-granted that young children, "lack the capacity to contribute to their own well-being or do not have a valid and valuable contribution to make" (Lansdown, 2001, p.93).

5.3.4 Well-being needs an integrated approach rather than discrete delivery
As previously discussed, since 2008 well-being is presented to practitioners in the Foundation Phase as one of seven Areas of Learning, called Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity (PSDWBCD). The policy

guidance strongly emphasises that this Area should be delivered in an integrated way across the curriculum. Therefore, it was important to explore curriculum documentation with practitioners during data capture. Consequently, a copy of the PSDWBCD Area of Learning from the statutory curriculum (see Appendix 1, p.264) was used as a stimulus, with 14 practitioners during individual interviews, to ascertain how they perceive well-being in the curriculum. The majority of practitioners said they do not feel differently towards well-being in the curriculum since the introduction of the Foundation Phase. However, four out of the 14 practitioners interviewed feel there is more of a focus on measuring well-being. For example, one teacher stated, *"it's just the fact it has to be reported on now"* (Year 2 teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). Another teacher said, *"it's been given a status, a title now, whereas it didn't have that before…"* (Reception teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview).

There is a common perception amongst practitioners that well-being should be integrated across the curriculum rather than something that should be taught discretely. In Bernstein's (1994; cited in Whitty et al. 1994) terms, there are more horizontal discourses present amongst the practitioners about the delivery of well-being, as opposed to vertical discourses which usually relate to more traditional academic subjects and discrete teaching. For example, one teacher said, *"I don't think of it on its own, it's in all of them"* (Reception teacher, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). Another teacher said, *"no, it's not like teaching shape or number. Lots of it comes into other areas of the curriculum..."* (Observation teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). The following terms were used by practitioners to describe well-being as an Area of Learning within the curriculum, such as *"the whole thing", "whole child", "cross-curricular", "embedded", "inter-woven", "trickles into everything", "goes right the way across the curriculum", "it comes into other areas of the curriculum", "encounters everything", "comes across all other Areas of Learning", "umbrella of the whole child", and "everything connects".* These responses indicate a dominant view of the integrated code, in other words a permeation model (Whitty et al. 1994). Well-being is perceived as something that would be integrated alongside the other skills located within PSDWBCD,

through the remaining six Areas of Learning in the curriculum. In Bernstein's (1977) terms practitioners are weakly classifying well-being. Bernstein (1982, p.159) suggests "where classification is weak, there is reduced insulation between contents, for the boundaries between contents are weak or blurred". However, Seligman et al. (2009) take a different view in relation to well-being in the curriculum and claim;

> well-being should be taught in school on three grounds: as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking (p.295).

This quote by Seligman et al. (2009) depicts strong 'classification' and the 'collection' code where well-being would be delivered discretely as an Area of the curriculum. However, the following teacher disagrees and thinks that well-being is unnaturally placed in the statutory curriculum and seems frustrated that well-being is an Area of Learning. She said:

> *that's just a life skill that you learn constantly so to put it into a lesson seems a little bit contrived really... it shouldn't be something we should have to stand and teach on a Thursday morning sort of thing, you know it should just come through all of the time... as opposed to things I should teach them, um it's just things that happen all of the time…you don't need this as a planned out tool for the children to teach… it's just there for the sake of it really…they put this out there then what do we do with it. They don't really say what they want us to do with it, they just say it's there and you've got due regard for it. Those skills come through anyway, it's just a piece of paper really, I mean obviously you do all of those things* (Year 2 teacher, Number 2, individual interview, Ashbourne Primary).

As well as a general perception that well-being should be integrated throughout the curriculum some practitioners feel that well-being is something that should be encouraged and developed, rather than discretely taught. For example, one teacher said: *"I think it can be encouraged and promoted is a better word… some things can't be taught can they. We can promote them but can't teach them" (*Year 1 teacher, Number 1, individual interview, Ashbourne Primary). Another teacher indicated that well-being should be integrated but also mentioned the importance of continuously being aware of children's well-being. She said *"I think you've constantly got to be aware of children's well-being and how they are feeling and that will go through all activities, even through the*

whole curriculum. You've always got to be aware of well-being" (Nursery teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview).

A concern raised by Whitty et al. (1994) about the integrated code in the curriculum was suggested over two decades ago, because it "raises equal opportunity issues… as a source of pupil empowerment" (p.35). For example, it is argued that children from poorer backgrounds do not get the same experiences at home as children from more affluent backgrounds. Therefore, some children may miss out if PSDWBCD is integrated, rather than taught discretely. In other words, regardless of whether well-being takes on a permeation model, children from more affluent backgrounds are better able to make sense of integrated and discrete related knowledge. Therefore, children from poorer backgrounds are at a possible disadvantage if the integrated code is implemented.

This concludes the discussion of the different understandings of well-being communicated by practitioners which reinforce the complex nature of well-being. It also demonstrates that some dimensions are more dominant than others and some of the reasons for this are explored in the conclusion in Chapter 8. The remaining sections of this chapter aim to discuss practitioners' views about well-being in terms of the other Areas of Learning in the curriculum. This is important because the policy direction strongly places well-being which is situated within PSDWBCD as being at the core of the curriculum, as displayed in Figure 1 in Chapter 2.

5.4 The importance of well-being as the core Area of Learning

The guidance in the policy states: "Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity is at the heart of the Foundation Phase and should be developed across the curriculum" (WAG, 2008a, p.14). This is reiterated in Figure 1 in Chapter 2 which shows the central position of PSDWBCD. However, this guidance does not apply to the other six Areas of Learning. Therefore, practitioners were asked, during interviews, about their perceptions regarding the most important Area of Learning within the Foundation Phase.

Eight out of 14 practitioners said that PSDWBCD is the most important Area of Learning. But despite the pivotal direction in policy, six out of the 14 do not think it is the most important Area. They feel 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' and 'Mathematical Development' are the most important areas. The reasons they gave were as follows; *"I think that Maths and English are important because you can't get a job without them can you, that's what I think, I do think they are priority"* (Redwood Primary, Nursery teaching assistant, individual interview). However, the following comment does not focus on future job prospects; it focuses on the importance of language as a tool to access the curriculum. The practitioner said: *"like language, not language as in, um, for standards and everything, but language as a tool to access everything else"* (Redwood Primary, Reception Higher Level teaching Assistant (HLTA), individual interview).

Another practitioner highlighted the importance of Literacy and Numeracy skills but also stated that it should not be at the expense of anything else. She said, *"the thing is they need basic Literacy and Numeracy skills before they can access everything else, but I don't think it should be at the expense of everything else either"* (Redwood Primary, Observation teacher, individual interview). Another teacher said:

> *by saying Numeracy and Literacy is important they are the basics and they are really important, but that doesn't mean I don't think well-being and personal and social development is important. I just don't think it should be an Area of Learning* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 2 teacher, individual interview).

The teacher's reason above is interesting because even though she does not think PSDWBCD is the most important Area of Learning within the curriculum, it still remains an important aspect of her practice. This raises an important philosophical, political and moral question about whether PSDWBCD should be a subject Area in the curriculum which is formally assessed. This thesis suggests that the nature of children's well-being should remain a principle of practice *and* a child's right as a subject area in the curriculum. It could be argued that well-being can be played out in various ways just like it has various meanings.

A slightly different view was expressed by one Reception teacher at Redwood Primary who associated 'Personal and Social development, Moral and Spiritual development' with 3-to-5 year olds, and 'Well-being' with 5-to-7 year olds. She said:

> *for instance if we are talking upper Foundation Phase they would concentrate on this kind of aspect more* (teacher points to the well-being skills) *than we would, because one of their themes would relate to that kind of aspect, but I would say we don't touch on that end. We are more down this end* (teacher points to personal development, social development, moral and spiritual development skills). *I certainly feel these three areas would be ours…* (Reception teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview).

The Reception teacher might adopt this view because of her familiarity with the 'Personal and Social Development' Area of Learning in the previous curriculum, called the Desirable Outcomes for 3-to-5 year olds. Also, this teacher's comment indicates an association between well-being in the curriculum and 5-to-7 year olds. This suggests that for this particular teacher (as well as one other teaching assistant) the nature of well-being is conceptualised differently in relation to age. However, this finding was not widespread amongst practitioners.

To summarise, the guidance in policy advocates that PSDWBCD is at the heart of the Foundation Phase and should be integrated across the curriculum, regardless of the approach to curriculum delivery, but despite this guidance it is only viewed as being the most important Area of Learning by eight of the 14 practitioners interviewed. The final section of this chapter discusses the view shared amongst some practitioners that a child's home background can be used to make a judgement about their well-being.

5.5 An unwarranted assumption shared about a child's well-being

As previously discussed, one of the dimensions held amongst practitioners was an understanding of well-being as a by-product/outcome of a child's home circumstances. But practitioners also use the child's socio-economic circumstances to make a judgment about their well-being. For example, practitioners seem to have few concerns about a child's well-being from more

affluent backgrounds compared with more concerns about a child's well-being from poorer backgrounds. This finding supports the argument put forward by Desjardins (2008) that many claims about well-being and education are largely based on taken-for-granted truths, rather than robust, empirical evidence.

The following responses were communicated by practitioners working in Ashbourne Primary school where around seven percent of children receive free school meals[35]. One teacher confidently stated: "*I don't think we see a lot of low well-being…I don't have major sorts of attendance problems, which is related probably to the fact that they are quite happy in coming to school*" (Year 2 teacher, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). This particular teacher relies upon school attendance rates as an objective indicator for well-being. However, Sheppard (2011) asserts that attendance is frequently used as an independent predictor of behaviours, but it is difficult to make straightforward associations with attendance. Reid (2006) suggests that the way in which schools use attendance codes varies, which means that attendance data is not always reliable. Therefore, using school attendance data on its own is not an effective way of judging a child's well-being.

Another practitioner from Ashbourne Primary said: "*our children have got good well-being*" (Nursery teacher, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). Similarly, another teacher stated: "*luckily for us the vast majority of our children already come to school with high levels of well-being so the issue isn't here*" (Year 1 teacher, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). These responses from practitioners working with fewer children who receive free school meals indicate that they have no well-being concerns about the children they work with. But this is an unwarranted assumption and it may not be a true reflection of the child and their context.

Two teachers from Redwood Primary school, who work with children from poorer backgrounds where around fifty five percent of children receive free school meals[36], also share the same assumption as practitioners from Ashbourne Primary. They feel that a child from a more affluent background would more than likely enter school without well-being concerns. However,

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[35] 7% is below the average for schools in Wales.
[36] 55% is above the average for schools in Wales.

Chapter 2 argued that far more research is needed about well-being and diverse groups of children to securely link the relationship between well-being and socio-economic background (Morrison Gutman and Vorhaus, 2012; Sabates and Hammond, 2008). Furthermore, Axford (2009) found that some children from more affluent families also experience low well-being.

A different viewpoint relating to a child's home background was communicated by the following teacher who works in Redwood Primary. She said: "*I suppose you get the same issues about well-being everywhere*" (Nursery teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). This viewpoint highlights that no assumption is made about socio-economic background and well-being, but this was not the commonly held viewpoint. However, a different teacher from Redwood Primary implied that well-being has to be a priority if you work in a deprived area. She explained: "*I've always worked in schools where it has been high on the agenda in deprived areas and the well-being has had to be thought of*" (Year 2 teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview).

The Reception teacher in Redwood Primary explained her viewpoint differently, by saying "*if a child is articulate it doesn't mean to say their well-being is in line and if they are not articulate it doesn't mean to say they are low well-being*". This teacher recognises that a child's well-being is not always comparable with speech and language ability and therefore it would be incorrect to assume that just because a child is articulate and well-spoken that they have high well-being. It would also be incorrect to assume that if a child is not articulate their well-being is going to be low.

There seems to be a general perception amongst some practitioners that children from more affluent communities have better well-being and therefore practitioners do not have concerns about them. This is noteworthy, because the findings corroborate with traditional notions about educators who are usually "concerned only with the welfare of specific vulnerable groups" (McLellan and Steward, 2015, p.308). This raises a question about the well-being of all children particularly those from more affluent families. For example, if well-being is understood as a fundamental human right (Soutter et al. 2012), then relying on an assumption about a child's home background to make a

judgement about their well-being, means their needs could be overlooked early on in their education. It could be argued that over time this impacts on children's life chances and successes. This unwarranted assumption also raises the question about whether there are other taken-for-granted truths that practitioners have which may impact on children's achievements and experiences at school. Being aware of perceptions is important in education and this is demonstrated in the analysis of the Millennium Cohort Study where it reports;

> children who achieve the highest cognitive scores are not necessarily those who express the greatest wellbeing, although there is more congruence at the lower end of wellbeing and cognition. We therefore warn against treating models of cognitive ability as if they reflected children's subjective wellbeing (Welsh Government, 2011b, p.23).

The data presented in this chapter suggests that practitioners use a child's home background to make judgements about their well-being. They also perceive a child's home circumstances as being pivotal in promoting and supporting well-being and often feel frustrated in the role of school to improve well-being. Practitioners also believe that well-being contributes to children being prepared for school. Furthermore, their knowledge and understanding reflects various discourses and domains, but it is also associated with some uncertainty.

5.6 Summary of findings

This chapter set out to explore what practitioners know and understand about young children's well-being in the early years curriculum in Wales. It reveals that many different understandings of well-being exist amongst practitioners working in the Foundation Phase. The data and analysis revealed that when practitioners explain the nature of well-being their responses can be categorised into three well-being domains:

1. Emotional/psychological well-being
2. Social well-being
3. Physical well-being

In other words, practitioners regard well-being as a concept that is reducible to domains. Similarly, Chapter 3 found that policy relating to young children is dominated by the 'physical' and 'emotional/psychological' domain but excludes 'social' well-being. One explanation for overlooking social well-being in policy may relate to the debate about the 'positive' versus 'deficit' view of children and young people. Fauth and Thompson (2009) suggest that the very nature of 'social' well-being is about pro-social behaviours which are an important aspect of positive development (Eisenberg, 2003). Therefore, it could be argued that when policy excludes a domain such as 'social' well-being this indicates a possible 'deficit' view of the child and young person.

Evidence gathered from focus groups and individual interviews indicate that practitioners are hesitant when articulating the nature of well-being. They are uncertain about what it is and they do not have a fixed definition as such. But, despite this, when practitioners engage in discussions about the nature of well-being, they communicate various understandings which are discussed in detail throughout the chapter. Practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being are identified as four different dimensions:

1. Well-being as a pre-requisite *and* a by-product/outcome
2. Well-being is an irreducible *and* a reducible construct
3. Well-being can be assessed through objective indicators rather than needing subjective evidence from the child
4. Well-being needs an integrated approach rather than discrete delivery

The four dimensions reveal that well-being is neither one thing nor the other; well-being is understood by practitioners as having multiple meanings. This is noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, this is one of the very first studies that focus on understanding well-being from the perspective of the practitioner, which in turn may contribute to understanding how it is operationalised in the curriculum. Secondly, it demonstrates that the objective indicator dimension is not the leading perspective amongst early years practitioners which has been suggested by Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) and Soutter et al. (2012). This chapter provides empirical evidence which shows there are many dimensions. This chapter also shows that some practitioners share an unwarranted

assumption about well-being in terms of a child's socio-economic background. It is argued that in order to ensure that the needs of *all* children regardless of their background are met this misunderstanding needs addressing.

This chapter raises the following question: if practitioners hold different understandings of well-being and share an unwarranted assumption about the well-being of the children they work with, how do they go about operationalising well-being in practice? The following chapter aims to explore this question by drawing upon empirical findings from two different primary schools. It also draws upon other Bernsteinian concepts to inform the discussion.

6   Operationalising well-being in practice

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 demonstrated that practitioners hold a number of different beliefs about well-being: firstly that well-being is difficult to define and explain, secondly that well-being is a pre-requisite *and* a by-product/outcome of children's experiences[37], thirdly that well-being is an irreducible *and* reducible construct[38], fourthly there is more of a dominant belief that well-being can be assessed through objective indicators rather than needing subjective evidence from the child. Fifthly, some practitioners make an association between socio-economic background and well-being and feel that well-being is something they cannot always influence. Lastly, practitioners perceive well-being as something that should be integrated throughout the curriculum rather than taught discretely. Therefore, the broader aim of this chapter is to examine how practitioners go about operationalising[39] the knowledge and understanding they hold about well-being in practice. In order to achieve this, the chapter aims to analyse the practitioners' spoken words with their practices. Therefore, this provides an opportunity to verify the authenticity and consistency of practitioners' understanding of well-being (Punch, 2009; Hughes, 2001). This chapter further draws upon Bernsteinian concepts (1977; 1982; 1990) of pedagogic discourse, such as 'classification' and 'framing', in order to understand how well-being is operationalised in relation to other Areas of Learning in the curriculum.

6.2 Uncertainty about operationalising well-being

Chapter 5 demonstrated that practitioners are hesitant about explaining the nature of young children's well-being. Similarly, numerous hesitations for example, 'ums' and silent pauses exist when practitioners describe how to support and promote children's well-being. Being hesitant might indicate thinking time on the interviewee's part or secondly, some sort of problem or

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[37] By product/outcome of being literate, being numerate, the child's home environment.
[38] (1) social well-being, (2) emotional/psychological well-being (3) physical well-being.
[39] For the purpose of this chapter, 'operationalising' broadly refers to teaching, delivering and/or promoting and supporting not assessment.

quandary in conceptual understanding of well-being (Billig et al. 1988). The latter explanation draws attention to the practical dilemma of operationalising well-being in the curriculum. In general, practitioners did not always find it easy to explain how to promote and support well-being. This uncertainty was expressed by some of the practitioners in the following way. For example, one practitioner said: *"it's just a case of I don't know, I do anything in particular really, I just go on gut instinct which is probably the wrong thing to do but it seems to work for the children"* (Observation teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). Another teacher said, "*I don't feel we do it correctly and I don't think we approach it in a structured way. It's kind of getting where it all fits, it was never explained."* (Reception teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). Another teacher said *"Um, I don't know, it's quite hard to try and pin point"* (Year 2 teacher, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). Finally, one teacher said: *"it's very wishy, washy"* (Year 2 teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, focus group).

Being uncertain about promoting and supporting well-being is more than likely associated with the different dimensions that are associated with the concept, and its ambiguity. This might explain why eight out of the 14 practitioners who were interviewed communicated a broad-brush view to the following question: how do you promote and support children's well-being? They said that well-being is something they do, in other words enact, on a daily basis and is not something they teach discretely. For example, one practitioner said: *"it's an area that you do as a matter of your job, it's part of your job. It's innate to the teaching profession…that just goes right the way across the curriculum…"* (Reception teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). Another practitioner explained: *"it's everything you do, that's common sense isn't it… you've constantly got to be aware of children's well-being"* (Nursery teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). If this teacher thinks that you constantly have to be aware of children's well-being then it would make it incredibly difficult to teach and assess. However, what is unclear from her response is the reference to the nature and/or domain of well-being. For example, the teacher could be referring to children's safety/protection, children's happiness/sadness or children's health, or all of these aspects. This reinforces

Bailey's (2009) argument, that well-being in a curriculum context is problematic and has multiple interpretations.

Broad-brush viewpoints from practitioners correspond with their understanding of well-being as an irreducible construct (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008) and their difficulty in articulating well-being. Therefore, they are not certain about how to promote and support it. Broad-brush viewpoints might also indicate limited knowledge about how to promote and support children's well-being in the curriculum. This needs to be addressed particularly when practitioners are expected to deliver an integrated curriculum code and PSDWBCD is placed at the core of the curriculum.

6.3 Interpretations of well-being in Foundation Phase policy

One of the exercises during the focus groups involved practitioners discussing the following curriculum policy statement: "children should be given opportunities to value and contribute to their own well-being and to the well-being of others" (WAG, 2008a, p.17). Practitioners' interpretations about this statement varied, for example from helping children make progress in their learning and celebrating their achievements; to children being able to wash their hands, being kind, caring and helpful and considering the feelings of others. One practitioner said: *"that one is about teaching them to be nice to one another and to share and to get along"* (Observation teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). Other interpretations included children being independent and making choices, not having activities imposed on them, and having friendships and relationships with their family. Two Year 2 teachers feel that this statement from the curriculum is the responsibility of the parents not the school. For example, one said *"there is increased pressure on schools and educationalists to do other things that parents should be expected to do"* (Year 2 teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). Some practitioners pointed out that the statement could be interpreted in many different ways. For example, one teacher said *"it can be interpreted in a different way like a lot of the documentation"* (Year 1 teacher, Redwood Primary, focus group). Another

teacher said *"that's woolly, woolly, woolly"* (Nursery teacher, Ashbourne Primary, focus group).

It is clear that one well-being statement within Foundation Phase policy is associated with many different interpretations which supports an argument put forward by Penn (2008, p.166), that "policy writers cannot control how their texts will be interpreted". This focus group exercise shows that practitioners have many interpretations of one of the well-being skills in the curriculum. In addition to this, they also widely interpret the nature of well-being as demonstrated in Chapter 5. This reinforces Bailey's (2009) argument that placing well-being in the curriculum should be considered with caution and can be problematic. Numerous interpretations of only one of the 'ten' well-being statements in the curriculum explain why practitioners are uncertain about promoting and supporting well-being.

6.4 Well-being in relation to other Areas of Learning

In Bernstein's (1977) terms, PSDWBCD is more often than not weakly classified and weakly framed and certainly in comparison to other Areas of Learning such as 'Mathematical Development' and 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' which are very strongly classified and very strongly framed.

The following discussion attempts to show examples of strong classification and strong framing for other Areas of Learning in the curriculum before discussing various practices which emerged in the data and analysis that show weak framing for well-being. For example, 'Mathematical Development' and 'Language, Literacy and Communication skills' were timetabled more frequently and they appeared every day on the timetable as morning sessions. Bernstein (1977) states that some Areas of Learning in a curriculum "are afforded differential status and enter into open or closed relation to each other" (p.87); and he states that some Areas will be allocated more time than others. Therefore, by applying a Bernsteinian lens to the timetable observations, it shows that the curriculum is not being delivered in an integrated way and that some Areas of Learning have a different status and are allocated more time

than others. The aforementioned Areas are very strongly classified in this instance and "where classification is strong, contents are well insulated from each other by strong boundaries" (Bernstein, 1982, p.159). Chapter 5 also highlighted that when practitioners were asked to consider the most important Area of Learning in the curriculum, six out of 14 practitioners said 'Mathematical Development' and 'Language, Literacy and Communication skills'. Therefore, this highlights a resemblance between what practitioners say and what is practised.

Discrete literacy and numeracy lessons were observed more frequently than any other Area of Learning in both schools, even though the integrated code is advocated in policy. It was clear that certain Areas of Learning were more visible and timetabled on a daily basis than others, and Bernstein (1982) claims that "the stronger the classification… the more the educational relationship tends to be hierarchical and ritualised…" (p.166). He calls this a visible pedagogy (Bernstein, 1977; 1990). Moreover, a visible pedagogy is usually associated with a curriculum that focuses on the performance of a child, and assesses them in relation to explicit criteria (Bernstein, 1990). This closely resembles another policy message which has been outlined in Chapter 1 (see 1.5).

Applying the concept of 'framing' helps to explore how knowledge in the curriculum is transmitted and received, and depending on the context this can either be strong or weak (Bernstein, 1977; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). Strong framing is evident in the following examples where field-notes from both schools reflect more behaviourist, transmissive, traditional pedagogical approaches, and less constructivist approaches for certain Areas of Learning. The following example, from a Year 2 classroom in Redwood primary, highlights rituals and a hierarchical order when a child took it upon herself to change groups:

Teacher: "*What group are you in Sarah* (pseudonym)?"
Year 2 child: "*Capital letters*"
Teacher [said with frustration]: "*Well that's for English. You can't keep choosing what you want to do. For maths you are with the squares group*".

The following examples also highlight strong framing. The first example involves a Year 2 child in Redwood Primary who interrupted a whole class literacy lesson by saying; *"Miss, someone got runned over last night"* and the teacher replied, *"please concentrate"*. The child's comment was openly disregarded. On another occasion in the same class, a child handed out whiteboards and pens for a Read, Write, Inc session[40] and the children started flexing the whiteboards. At this point one child said: "*we could make music*" but the teacher replied, "*we are not making music, so stop doing that*". The Read, Write, Inc sessions occurred on a daily basis for Reception to Year 6[41] classes and the whole school was notified by a loud buzzer. This involved children moving to different classrooms for small group literacy sessions. Another example of strong framing was evident in the Year 1 classroom where children were only allowed to get tap water at certain times of the day. On another occasion a Year 2 teacher said to a group of children that, "*I'm not sure that there will be time for free choice today".* Lastly, the Observation teacher said to one child: "*after work you can go and play"* which also depicts strong framing.

The way in which the teachers respond in these examples indicates that time and space are highly structured and controlled by the adult. Therefore, this indicates strong framing because the boundary is sharp and practitioners have more control over the selection, organisation, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted (Bernstein, 1977).

Another example of strong framing where the adult controls the use of space is depicted in the 'Velcro board' in the Reception classes of Ashbourne Primary. The Velcro board works on the premise that once children complete the tasks set by their teacher they are allowed to select an area of the classroom to play. The Velcro board consists of twelve images of the areas[42] and children place their name under one of the images. For each classroom area such as the 'sand', 'computer', 'creative' or 'small world' area, there are places for children's names. This allows children to see which areas are available and which ones

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[40] Read, Write, Inc is a commercial literacy programme.
[41] For children aged between 4-to-11 years.
[42] The images were standard/generic computer images rather than 'real', meaningful photographs of the classroom areas.

are unavailable. In one of the Reception classes children were heard saying very warily *"ask the teacher can we go"*, which may indicate that the space is not mutually shared between the adult and child. However, it could be argued that the children were simply being well-mannered and polite, but the children seemed to be seeking permission to go and play. On other occasions during field-work, children approached the researcher to seek permission and asked: "*can I go in the role-play?"* and *"can I go and choose?"* Strong framing was also evident in one of the classes when the teacher reminded the children to use the toilet after play time and not during class time. Examples such as these highlight that the pedagogical space is controlled by the adult.

Another example of strong framing took place during a brief conversation with the Year 2 teacher from Ashbourne Primary who was covering Planning, Preparation and Assessment Time (PPA) time. She said, *"we've been told to keep the children on the carpet for fifteen minutes only"*, "*how do you feel about this?"* asked the researcher. The teacher replied, "*it bothers me, it means we can't extend the discussions".* In other words, the organisation and timing of the knowledge transmitted is sharp, controlled by the adult or senior staff and fixed. To some extent this could limit and/or hinder teaching and learning opportunities when there is a time constraint.

Bernstein (1982) states that "the nature of classification and framing affects the authority/power structure which controls the dissemination of educational knowledge, and the form of the knowledge transmitted" (p.163). It is suggested that Areas of Learning that are very strongly classified and very strongly framed, such as 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' and 'Mathematical development' have a different status in relation to PSDWBCD. This raises questions about whether children are receiving a broad and balanced curriculum.

Applying a Bernsteinian lens attempts to show that the integrated code is not currently being implemented across ten classrooms in two different primary schools, and some Areas of Learning are more strongly classified and more strongly framed than others. This raises questions about practitioners'

knowledge and understanding of the integrated code, as well as questions about its viability/application in practice. The following figure attempts to show how the Areas of Learning are currently being operationalised in ten classrooms. Figure 6 shows that Areas of Learning are generally closed in relation to one another and have strong boundaries between them. 'Mathematical Development' and 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' are very strongly bounded and this is shown by a sold line, whereas the other Areas of Learning have a dotted edge which give them a jagged appearance. The fine dotted arrows highlight that PSDWBCD is weakly classified and weakly framed relative to other Areas of Learning in the curriculum.

Figure 6: Visual interpretation of how the Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase are currently being implemented in two Primary schools

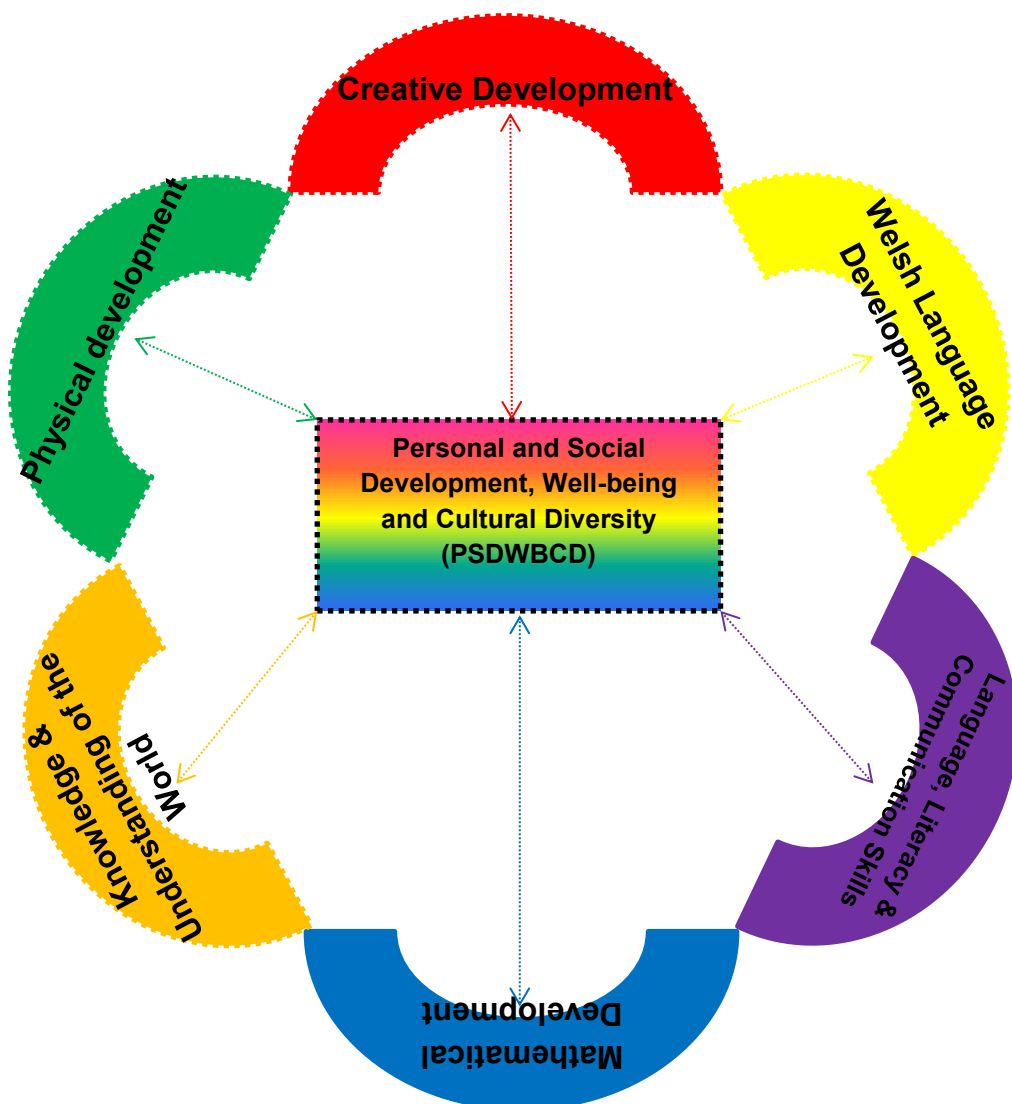Figure 6 attempts to show the 'collection code' and contrasts with Figure 1 in Chapter 2 (see 2.4.4) which shows the 'integrated code'. It is argued that what is practised in ten classrooms is in complete contrast to the direction advocated in policy. Figure 7 attempts to show this difference.

Figure 7: Difference between policy discourse (left-hand side) and Foundation Phase practice (right-hand side) in two Primary schools
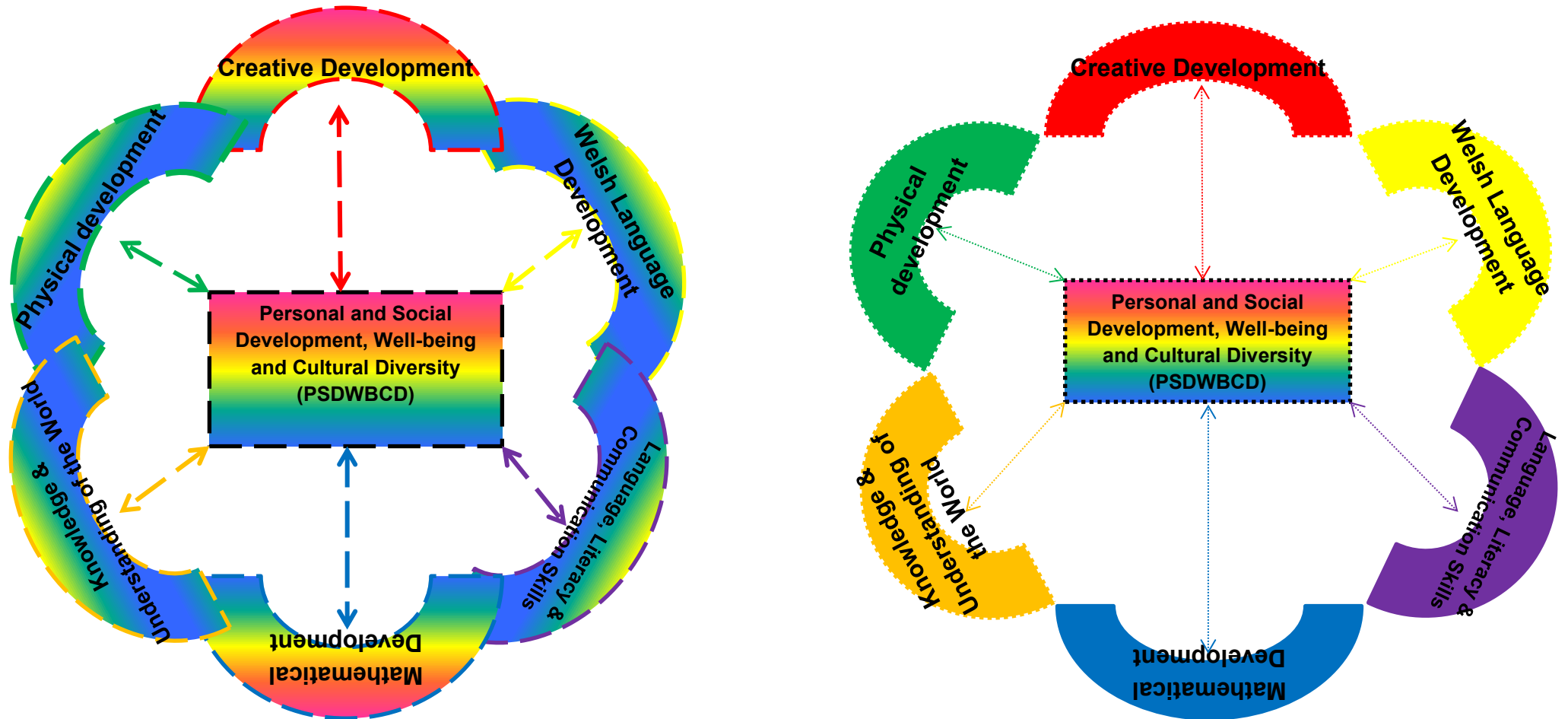
6.5 Different types of well-being practices

Even though practitioners are hesitant and uncertain about promoting and supporting children's well-being, when they begin to discuss how to operationalise well-being they frequently refer to three different kinds of practices; namely nurturing practices, classroom environment practices and whole school practices. Each of these practices discussed below are examples of weak framing and includes a table which attempt to show a resemblance between what practitioners say about their practice and what they do in practice. This verifies and authenticates practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being.

In addition to the three practices, the fieldwork that was conducted in ten different classrooms report practices that were enacted by children themselves; this is identified as the fourth practice which is also an example of weak framing. The fifth type of practice to be discussed in this section relates to the discrete teaching of well-being which is strongly classified and strongly framed. Each type of practice is now discussed in turn.

6.5.1 Nurturing practices

Various *nurturing type practices* were frequently expressed by practitioners as ways of operationalising well-being. For example, practitioners talked about being positive, smiling and generally being nice to children. They also said it was important to be there for children when they need it, to listen to them and make them feel safe and settled. Practitioners also said that supporting and promoting well-being is about putting children first and meeting all of their needs. Furthermore, practitioners feel that wiping children's faces and giving them something to eat if they are hungry is also an important well-being practice. In addition, practitioners discussed the following ways of operationalising well-being in practice such as, having a good rapport and good relationships with children, building trust, encouraging and valuing children, helping them achieve, having informal conversations with them, viewing them individually and including all children. These practices correspond with practitioners' understanding of the three well-being domains identified in

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Chapter 5, such as 'emotional/psychological', 'social' and 'physical' well-being and they are commonly associated with young children (Statham and Chase, 2010). The nurturing type practices also reflect a discourse of care (Spratt, 2016) but they are not discrete teaching practices. Table 10 provides examples of nurturing type practices that were recorded in field-notes.

Table 10: Field-note examples of day-to-day nurturing practices

Type of well-being practice	Field-note information
Nurturing Practices	"Are you feeling okay?" asked a teaching assistant (The teaching assistant was informed on the child's arrival to school that the child had been awake since 4am).
	Children arrive to school and select tasks independently and a teaching assistant asked children "how are you today"?
	Children were reminded to keep safe on 5th November.
	"Do you have a smile today" asks a teacher.
	Teacher personalises songs by including their name and children respond by smiling and laughing.
	Teacher asks "did you all have a nice weekend?"
	Children were given verbal praise and provided with certificates and stickers for their achievements in class and during award assemblies.
	Children changed after personal toileting accidents.
	Teaching assistant reminds children about keeping safe when playing outside at home – "don't wander off" said the teacher.
	Children comforted by the practitioners when upset about different things. For example, a child arrived to school crying because they were scared of being in the 'big' playground and the teacher hugged the child and said "try not to worry".
	Child's face grazed and Head teacher reminds children to wear safety helmets when riding bikes.
	Teaching assistant closes blind in the classroom to block out sun from children.
	Lights too bright for children on stage so they were

	readjusted.

6.5.2 Classroom environment practices

Various *classroom environment type practices* were also communicated as ways of putting children's well-being into practice. These included the following: providing group time, children having access to a wide range of activities, having enough space, children having structure and routine, letting them observe before joining in, providing a calm and positive classroom, adult observation, and having pets to look after. Furthermore, practitioners mentioned providing children with positive praise, promoting positive behaviour, using reward charts/systems, getting to know the children and how they behave, trying to bring out the best in children and finally, providing children with strategies to cope with an activity as ways of supporting and promoting children's well-being. Lastly, the time of year was significant for one teacher in supporting and promoting well-being when she said, *"at the start of the year you focus on helping them with routines and hand washing, then throughout the year it is more academic"* (Reception teacher, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). These practices also correspond with the three domains identified in Chapter 5. Table 11 provides examples of classroom environment practices that were reported in field-notes.

Table 11: Field-note examples of day-to-day classroom environment practices

Type of well-being practice	Field-note information
Classroom environment practices	Children feed class pets.
	New Nursery children start mid-year and only stay for register then leave the whole class carpet session.
	Free access to water bottles in the classroom.
	Greeting songs at the start and end of the day.
	Plenty of practitioners to settle children at the start of the

	Nursery day.

6.5.3 Whole school practices

Some *whole school type practices* were also expressed by practitioners as ways of putting well-being into practice. For example, there was a feeling that having an open-door policy and involving parents was important for supporting and promoting children's well-being. Children's play times and lunch times and planned transitions for Year 2 children moving to Year 3, and practitioners working as a team were also viewed as important for promoting and supporting well-being. Practitioners at Redwood Primary who work with children from poorer backgrounds said that providing financial help towards school trips and school uniform helps support children's well-being. Nursery and Reception practitioners in Redwood Primary also explained that once every half a term[43] for one week practitioners change year groups to enable adults and children to get to know each other. These practices reflect 'emotional/psychological', 'social' and 'economic' well-being domains.

Field-notes demonstrate that the Head teacher of Redwood Primary was observed on numerous occasions engaging with children and practitioners. For example, the Head teacher greeted parents/carers and children on a daily basis in the playground/car park before and at the end of the school day. On another occasion the Head teacher reminded a child about road safety and prevented a minor accident occurring. The same Head teacher often entered classrooms on an ad hoc basis and briefly talked with children. It could be argued that senior leaders of a school also have a role to play in promoting and supporting children's well-being. According to West-Burnham (2010, p.1) "leadership is likely to be a key factor in whether, or how, schools are successful in improving well-being and well-being outcomes". The Head teacher in Ashbourne Primary was rarely seen interacting with children and practitioners, and it was clear that both Head teachers enacted their daily role in different ways. Table 12 provides examples of whole school practices that were reported in field-notes.

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[43] Approximately six times a year.

Table 12: Field-note examples of day-to-day whole school practices

Type of well-being practice	Field-note information
Whole school practices	Children arrive to Nursery and parents/carers invited into the school cloakroom to assist their child.
	A parent asks a practitioner for help in getting their child to go to bed on time. Teacher reminds children about importance of bed time and getting sleep.
	Teacher reminds children to hold hands when walking home (parent had approached practitioner to ask for help).
	Teaching assistant reminds children how to treat their Mother positively (parent had previously approached practitioners for help with child's behaviour).

To some extent the three different kinds of practices discussed so far relate to a needs-based theory of well-being (see 3.2.3). This suggests that practitioners communicate various underlying conditions and contributing factors for well-being to emerge. This corresponds with practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being as a by-product/outcome. In other words, well-being is a by-product/outcome of meeting children's needs. The three different types of practices communicated by practitioners are varied but they generally occur as and when they are required and are not explicitly planned. In Bernstein's (1990) terms they are invisible pedagogies as opposed to visible pedagogies which were identified in 6.4.

6.5.4 Children's practices

The three practices discussed so far explain practitioners' examples of demonstrating well-being practices, but the researcher also observed children enacting well-being throughout the school day. Table 13 provides examples of children's practices that were reported in field-notes.

Table 13: Field-note examples of day-to-day children's practices

Type of well-being practice	Field-note information
Children's practices	A child falls over and another asks "are you alright?"
	Children comfort by each other when upset about different things.
	A child apologises for accidentally hurting another child.
	Children hug, show love and affection to large soft toy and each other. Also in the role-play a child cares for doll: "I'll get an ice pack". Child wraps up sponge and uses as an ice pack.
	A child helps another child, for example to put their painting on the drying rack, and another helps with dressing. Children also appraise each other's work by saying "I like that".

Field-notes that capture children enacting well-being such as the ones above are significant, particularly when one teacher said: *"some children just don't have empathy"* (Year 1 teacher, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). The field-notes show that young children are able to demonstrate empathy towards others. This finding also supports an argument made in Chapter 3 which suggests that young children are capable and knowledgeable beings despite what some adults think.

In general, the evidence so far indicates that practitioners mainly communicate and enact well-being as an integral aspect of their daily practice and it permeates everything they do. This finding concurs with practitioners' perceptions that well-being should not be explicitly taught like other areas of the curriculum. The nurturing, classroom environment and whole school practices also resemble principles of good quality educational practice; this is how well-being was presented to practitioners in the Desirable Outcomes document before the Foundation Phase was introduced in 2008. By applying Bernsteinian concepts, the practices so far indicate weak framing.

6.5.5 Discrete teaching practices

Even though there is more evidence of well-being practices that relate to creating an appropriate environment, field-notes provide *some* evidence of discrete well-being teaching taking place. This indicates while well-being may be weakly framed in relation to other Areas of Learning, there are times when it is strongly classified and strongly framed. This is significant because the policy direction from the Welsh Government advocates an integrated curriculum code where the seven Areas of Learning should not be delivered in isolation. For example, evidence from field-notes show that whilst PSDWBCD may not be explicitly included on weekly timetables to the same extent as other Areas of Learning, subtle references to it were present (see Table 14). This indicates that well-being is allocated some formal time and is strongly classified (Bernstein, 1977; 1982), despite practitioners' belief that well-being should be integrated. The different ways in which well-being and PSDWBCD appear in different school documents was observed during field-work and the examples are demonstrated in Table 14.

Table 14: Evidence of well-being and PSDWBCD in various school documents

Type of document and School	The way in which PSDWBCD is presented in documents
Redwood Primary	
Nursery and Reception class, weekly timetable	• Chatty Groups[44]
Nursery starter class, weekly timetable	• PSE (Personal & Social Education) • Routines
Nursery and Reception class, home weekly learning logs	• PSE • Encourage your child to talk about special occasions • Encourage your child to dress independently
Ashbourne Primary	
Year 2 class, continuous	• PSDWBCD

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[44] Chatty groups were communicated by practitioners during focus groups and interviews as a way of supporting and promoting well-being.

provision sheet for the book area	
Year 2 class, continuous provision sheet for the role-play area	• PSEW-BCD (Personal and Social Education and Well-being and Cultural Diversity)

Table 14 shows that PSDWBCD appears in various ways which indicates that practitioners may not conceptualise it as an Area of Learning as it is presented in Foundation Phase policy since its introduction in 2008. For example, PSE and PSEW-BCD should not be appearing. It could be argued that PSE is being used as either a substitute or a short-cut for PSDWBCD. During field-work, the researcher was often referred to as *"the PSE lady"*, in Ashbourne Primary, which is another indication that PSE is either being used as a substitute or a short-cut for well-being.

The following field-work example of one teacher's planning reinforces the argument that PSE is currently in use as a way of interpreting PSDWBCD. It also supports the argument that well-being is weakly classified compared with other Areas of Learning, and other skills within PSDWBCD. The planning example shows that whilst some discrete teaching is taking place the well-being skills within this Area are rarely included in the planning thus weaker classification. The Year 2 teacher covering PPA time, in Ashbourne Primary, willingly provided the researcher with her planning for two terms. The majority of skills were taken from the 'Personal Development', 'Social Development' and 'Moral and Spiritual Development' sections (see Appendix 1, p.264) of the statutory curriculum. Over a period of two terms, which varies between twelve and fifteen weeks, two out of the ten skills were delivered from the 'Well-being' section: "Children should be given opportunities to:

- demonstrate care, respect and affection for other children, adults and their environment
- be aware of their own feelings and develop the ability to express them in an appropriate way" (WAG, 2008a, p.17).

This planning example also corresponds with practitioners' perceptions that well-being should not be discretely taught and is understood more as a principle of practice rather than as a skill to be taught. Furthermore, it could be argued

that this particular planning example highlights that too many skills are presented in curriculum policy for practitioners to comprehend and implement. Therefore, this makes it difficult for practitioners to ensure that skills are delivered equally[45].

Evidence from focus groups and individual interviews demonstrate that when practitioners talk about how they support and promote children's well-being they discuss discrete teaching activities. For example, some practitioners mentioned 'chatty groups' which are a form of daily group time where children have the opportunity to talk about feelings, facial expressions, healthy eating and keeping fit. Allowing children to share personal news with the whole class, and various planned weekly activities and the use of worksheets, as well as reading stories and 'circle time' were also communicated as ways of supporting and promoting children's well-being. However, practitioners did not refer to children's play, either structured or spontaneous, as a way of promoting or supporting well-being. This is significant particularly when Foundation Phase policy which was introduced eight years ago has a strong emphasis on play-based learning (Waldron et al. 2014). Furthermore, Woolf (2013) states that;

> play is the medium most able to provide opportunities for becoming more self-aware, empathetic and motivated as well as becoming more able to manage feelings and develop and deploy social skills (p.28).

In light of this quote and the widely acknowledged importance of play for young children, one might have expected practitioners to refer to it in some way when they discussed how to support and promote children's well-being, but they did not. One of the key findings from the three-year evaluation of the Foundation Phase reported that practitioners are uncertain and confused about particular aspects of their practice, such as "learning through play…child-initiated, practitioner-initiated and practitioner-directed activities" (Taylor et al. 2015, p.113). This uncertainty expressed amongst practitioners in the evaluation might explain why practitioners of this PhD study did not consider play as a way of supporting and promoting well-being.

The following field-work observations from Ashbourne Primary show how worksheets are used to teach well-being. In Year 1, children were encouraged

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[45] PSDWBCD alone includes 41 different skills, ten of which relate to well-being.

to discuss what angry felt like and consider ways of calming down. Then they were expected to complete a worksheet about what they had discussed. This type of pedagogy is described by Bernstein (1982) as closed and controlled.

More examples of a closed and controlled pedagogy involved Year 2 children completing a worksheet which involved writing down what makes a good friend and another session involved completing a worksheet about resolutions. When the Year 2 teacher introduced the lesson on resolutions she used puppets to help explain how to resolve disputes. Thereafter, the children were encouraged to complete a worksheet rather than use the puppets themselves to enact a scene. On further examination of the children's project books it was apparent that numerous worksheets had been completed and this appeared to be a popular activity for this Area of Learning. The project book contained mainly worksheets with titles such as, 'write about feelings', 'write about what to do when upset', and 'write about things you are good at'. According to Morris (2009) the teaching of well-being should not involve worksheets but involve experiential learning, playful opportunities, drama and role-play which are constructivist pedagogical approaches rather than transmissive, traditional approaches to learning, such as worksheets. Key findings from the three-year evaluation of the Foundation Phase reported that, "discussions with practitioners suggest that some teachers are 'afraid' to let go of traditional formal pedagogies" (Waldron et al. 2014, p.3). The evaluation also found an association between lower well-being in children and the use of worksheets[46] (Taylor et al. 2015). This suggests that a closed and controlled pedagogy and the use of worksheets might not always be the most appropriate pedagogical approach for young children.

With the introduction of the Foundation Phase in 2008, one may have seen more constructivist pedagogical approaches being adopted in classrooms. However, the 342 hours of observations that took place between 2013 and 2014 for this PhD were generally dominated by whole class or small group work and directed and initiated by an adult. Children were often sitting at tables engaged in and completing various tasks.

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[46] The Leuven 5 point scale was used to measure well-being.

6.6 Mixed feelings about a specific teaching programme

Practitioners were asked during focus groups and individual interviews whether they were aware of and/or implemented any specific programmes to promote and support well-being. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme (see 2.4.1) was frequently mentioned by practitioners, but they had mixed opinions about it. Six practitioners responded positively about the programme because of its structured nature. As well as the fact that it could be used with very young children and those in Key Stage two who are aged between 7-to-11 years. One Year 2 teacher said, *"SEAL is useful as it can be targeted at specific children"* (Year 2 teacher, Number 3, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). Other positive comments related to children having the opportunity *"to speak out and discuss things like emotions and things that are going on at home"* (Reception teaching assistant, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). Another practitioner said, *"I think SEAL sort of explains to Reception about feelings and things, and perhaps they might relate to that"* (Reception teaching assistant, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). The following positive comment refers to the relevant topics which children can relate to. For example, the teacher said:

> *I quite like SEAL, I've got to be honest because it gives you a topic and it's from the child's perspective and they can relate well to it. It's a weekly thing and we have resolving conflict this week and we are looking at a scenario and the children are discussing how they will resolve that situation. So they are trying to use their own reasoning and verbal skills and working together, it sort of helps. I like it, it works for me in this classroom and it works with the children if something happens and we'll say what about when we learnt about this, what did they do? It's at their level and that's important really so I think it does work quite well for them* (Reception teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview).

In addition to positive comments about the SEAL programme, there were also negative ones. For example, one teacher objected to the explicit teaching of social and emotional skills for children who do not appear to need it, or for those children who might not benefit from it. The teacher said:

> *Unless there are specific problems with children then do we really need to teach SEAL, because at the moment we are teaching SEAL and we're also having little groups going out for SEAL. Really those groups that go out would need it because they are having intervention because their personal and social development or whatever is not as good as what it*

should be so that's needed (Year 2 teacher, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview).

Another negative comment was expressed about the SEAL programme but for a different reason to the teacher above. This teacher said:

> *I'm not a great fan of SEAL, because um, can you teach somebody certain things, but can you teach somebody to be nice…it's really really hard because when you look at your class, SEAL will work for the vast majority but SEAL will not work for your children that you really need SEAL to work for, because that is almost that child's personality, that is almost their mind set and no matter how much you do - let's all be good friends and good friends do this, they are not going to do it. But in terms of teaching children to be nice, all round good friends and accept disappointment and learn what's fair and unfair I don't find it works. Because the ones that take to SEAL would have taken to it whatever you did, and the ones you really want to accept all those things and learn all those things they don't anyway in spite of SEAL, they still don't learn it* (Year 1 teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview).

This teacher believes that intervention programmes such as SEAL will never work for those children who really need it on the basis that they have fixed personalities and mind sets. However, Thomas and Harri-Augustein (1985; cited in Fontana, 1995) state that "the notion of permanence in any area of human psychology is a handicap to our understanding…this handicap is particularly damaging when it comes to assessing and working with children" (p.208). Therefore, it could be argued that a permanent, fixed view of children may restrict what type of help and support practitioners provide.

Another teacher expressed a negative comment about the SEAL programme and said:

> *personally for me I think it's too wordy, I don't think it's simple enough and you've got to read too much to find out what little activity you've got to do, which is time consuming when there's a million and one other things to do. Instead of it being quite simple - these are the activities, this is what you could do…* (Year 2 teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview).

Similarly, Hallam (2009) conducted an evaluation of SEAL and found that, "teachers felt overwhelmed by the volume of material and this created stress and increased workload leading to inappropriate implementation of the programme" (p.318).

Finally, another teacher said that *"life into a lesson, doesn't work"* (Year 2 teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, focus group) about the SEAL programme. Furthermore, lessons about life and the SEAL programme were also raised in a conversation during field-work by one of the Reception teachers at Ashbourne Primary. The conversation highlights how one teacher associates divorce and death with well-being teaching. For example, the teacher explained how the topic of divorce and death came up during a SEAL lesson but as it was not the main focus of the lesson the teacher felt she could not pursue it. On reflection after the lesson the teacher said, *"I felt strongly that it should have been discussed"* and then she went on to say, *"we don't get taught to teach this stuff and some parents wouldn't like it, I can imagine"*. This conversation raises important questions, such as who should deliver lessons about life events, such as death and divorce? Should it take place in the home or school environment, or both? To what extent can schools develop, promote and/or teach what it is to be human, particularly when this teacher feels ill equipped in approaching certain topics?

The next field-work example highlights a conversation that took place between a teaching assistant and a Year 2 child. The conversation shows that the teaching assistant avoids the child's comment who said; *"I don't think I want children Miss"*, and the teaching assistant replied, *"I don't think we need to talk about that now"*. Perhaps practitioners are lacking in confidence and unsure about what topics to openly discuss with young children, whereas this is not the case with more traditional Areas of Learning, such as Mathematical development.

As well as positive and negative comments about SEAL there were other perceptions about its unsuitability for certain groups of children, such as those with additional learning needs and very young children. One teacher said:

> *as a school, SEAL is a programme we use and I was given the different units last year to use but I couldn't use hardly any of it. With these children so much of it is to do with circle time and to do with discussion and like some of the children they find difficulty in speaking, it's the turn taking aspect, it's the understanding of the concepts and the things you are trying to ask them about. If you ask some of ours what's your name, what did you have for dinner they can't answer the simple ones. SEAL*

doesn't have any relevance to them at all (Observation teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview).

Another teacher said: *"we do try and implement SEAL in our chatty groups. However, we don't follow it rigidly… it's got to be at a much lower level then for our children"* (Nursery teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview). Similarly, another teacher expressed some concern about its unsuitability for younger children and said: *"SEAL I would say is a bit older but we adapt it"* (Nursery teacher, Ashbourne Primary, focus group).

Clearly, there are mixed opinions about the non-statutory SEAL programme and both schools are utilising it as a way of delivering PSDWBCD discretely. It seems that practitioners view SEAL as something that is beneficial for those children that need it and time-wasting for those children who do not need it. The Year 2 teacher in Ashbourne Primary who covers PPA time, explained during a brief conversation that when she was a full-time class teacher she would often abandon some of the SEAL activities because they would simply take up too much of her time. She said *"you can see how it gets forgotten or missed"*. Alternatively, the teacher continued to say that by having an adult specifically allocated to delivering SEAL would help to ensure that certain children receive explicit/targeted teaching and that this was a positive move. On another occasion during field-work the same teacher explained that she had been asked to abandon SEAL in her PPA role and instead had to prepare the children for the Year 2 compulsory comprehension tests. The teacher was asked by the researcher *"do the tests take priority then"? "Yes definitely"* replied the teacher. Instances like these were found in Crow's (2008) research who explored the role of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) mainly in secondary schools but found that practitioners often find it difficult to think of PSHE as a credible subject in the curriculum. PSHE often appears to be implemented in schools as cross-curricular, discretely timetabled or simply omitted altogether. Crow (2008) highlights an important point made by Ofsted[47] which states, "Personal, Social and Health Education has low status in schools, weaknesses in planning and assessment practices…patchy monitoring…and an

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[47] The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills which inspect providers across education, children's services and further education and skills in England.

inconsistency of delivery in schools" (p.44). A similar picture could be emerging for PSDWBCD within the Foundation Phase.

In summarising the discussion about well-being practices, they mainly relate to providing the appropriate conditions in supporting and promoting well-being, rather than teaching it discretely. It is important to highlight that very similar practices are operationalised amongst practitioners in both schools even though they work with children in different socio-economic contexts. Despite the taken-for-granted truths that some practitioners have about well-being which has been discussed in Chapter 5 they do not seem to enact this understanding in practice. For example, Chapter 5 demonstrated that there was a perception amongst some practitioners about poorer children displaying lower well-being and affluent children displaying higher well-being. Therefore, one might expect to see different practices being operationalised in the classroom; practices which cater for children's individual needs and circumstances, but this is not evident in the two schools. This finding is important because there may be children from affluent backgrounds who have lower well-being who go unnoticed which also impacts on their rights[48]. On the other hand, there may be children from poorer backgrounds who have higher well-being and do not reach their full potential because practitioners take-it-for-granted that they require support. It could be argued that children are not being given the targeted support that they need, and their time at school is not being utilised as effective as it could be.

Similarities in practices which occur in both schools highlight two points. Firstly, it verifies practitioners' perception of well-being which is something they cannot always influence and secondly, similar practices in both schools might correspond with practitioners' uncertainty about promoting and supporting well-being which indicates a training and development need for the profession.

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[48] For example, Articles 6, 19, 24, 27, 29, 32, 36 and 39 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

6.7 Perceived concerns about the curriculum

The majority of practitioners communicated three concerns when they were asked about what aspects of their practice may influence children's well-being. Firstly, they are concerned about the introduction of literacy and numeracy tests, secondly, they feel there is a limited amount of time to implement an overloaded curriculum, and thirdly, they feel there are some unrealistic expectations placed upon them and children. These concerns are now discussed in turn.

Concerns about testing young children were communicated by the following practitioners. For example, one teacher said; "*I worry about children being pressured to do tests and meet targets and not having enough play*" (Reception teacher, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview). Another teacher stated:

> *I think we could be well undermining their well-being with these tests. I don't think tests do children's well-being any good what so ever. I don't think testing is a great influence on their well-being to me…* (Year 1 teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview).

The perception of an overloaded curriculum and the feeling of not having enough time to implement it were also perceived as something that could influence children's well-being. For example, one teacher said:

> *I want to say time constraints, because there's so much you have to get through and I just feel like sometimes I'm just rushing them you know… I feel like I'm constantly right, next, next rather than taking the time to consolidate what they have done* (Year 1 teacher, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview).

Some practitioners expressed concern about having too much structure in the day because of the overloaded curriculum, and this limits the time they have to talk to children about issues that matter to them. Concerns about limited time to implement the curriculum could be related to the fact that the early years curriculum in Wales consists of a total of 196 skills across seven Areas of Learning. Therefore, practitioners become overwhelmed with the amount of skills they need children to develop, together with the expectation of delivering an integrated code.

Concerns about children's well-being might also be related to the raising standards agenda in Literacy and Numeracy from the Welsh Government and the introduction of tests. Currently, in Wales "the Minister for Education and Skills has made raising standards of Literacy and Numeracy in schools a priority" (Welsh Government, 2013c, p.2). In September 2013, the Welsh Government introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) to be embedded throughout the curriculum much like the strong integrated message for PSDWBCD. This suggests that certain Areas of Learning are privileged within an integrated code.

Other concerns that were thought to influence children's well-being relates to an unrealistic expectation of getting children to achieve Outcome 5 in seven Areas of Learning. One teacher said:

> I think that children are not being treated as children, I think everything is so much target led and data driven and x number of children have got to be this level and that level…for our children it is farcical that they have to be Outcome 5 at the end of the Foundation Phase, especially when they come in and they can't speak and they are in nappies and they can't go to the toilet and feed themselves. It's a lot to make up in a very short time (Observation teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview).

A different teacher in the same school also said:

> schools are ruled by data and performance and I think this certainly impacts on the expectation of children to be a particular level at a particular time and not allowing children to develop comfortably, and I feel that although we try and fight against it, I think I'm quite strong in fighting against it lower down the school but I feel upper Foundation Phase are very pressurised, and I do think that pressure on the curriculum impacts on children's well-being because the staff feel under pressure to perform… (Reception teacher, Redwood Primary, individual interview).

The following teacher refers to all three challenges such as, testing children, unrealistic expectations and limited time which may influence well-being. She said:

> I mean workload, when there's lots and lots of things to be done, there's lot of you know, not so much for us in Reception but as they go through the school and the tests and the pressure and the worry and concern and as much as everybody tries to make it light, the workload is still there and things need to be done. You know targets to be met. Time is a massive one, and that's hard sometimes because some children do require a lot of

support to maintain that well-being (Reception teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, individual interview).

As well as a perceived unrealistic expectation in getting children to meet targets and achieve Outcome 5 in Areas of Learning, there was also a perceived unrealistic expectation placed upon schools to help combat societal problems. According to Myers (2012) schools are often seen as a panacea to combat social and health inequalities and are being used to "prevent future problems" (p.410). One teacher said; *"for 3-to-7 year olds, we are expected to do more and more, there is anti-social behaviour and problems in society and everything is coming down to us to deal with"* (Year 2 teacher, Number 1, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). Another teacher said; *"there is increased pressure on schools to do other things that parents should be expected to do"* (Year 2 teacher, Number 2, Ashbourne Primary, focus group). Clack (2012) asserts that;

> …schools in particular, become places where what has gone wrong or might go wrong in socialisation or upbringing can be put right or pre-empted…education becomes the arena for addressing by the back door a whole host of societal ills (p.502).

This may explain why the Welsh Government included PSDWBCD as an Area of Learning in the curriculum for its youngest children. However, Myers (2012) argues that part of the problem in making schools more responsible and accountable is due to an overestimated crisis discourse of certain concerns, such as the rise of mental health problems, unhappy children and the perception that childhood is eroding. Similarly, Ecclestone and Hayes (2009b) suggest that recent reports on children's mental health were over-pessimistic. In 2012, Ecclestone (2012) claimed that large organisations such as the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Children's Fund also contributed to creating a crisis of childhood. These concerns whether real or perceived raises the important role of research and how it can help to firstly, identify and alleviate tensions/uncertainties around a range of topics relating to children and young people. Secondly, research can investigate reality versus perception with the aim of providing more robust empirical evidence. In relation to this study, research can help to improve the evidence base about well-being and education.

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6.8 Summary of findings

This chapter discussed how practitioners go about operationalising their knowledge and understanding of well-being in practice that was discussed in Chapter 5. Evidence indicates a resemblance between practitioners' hesitations and uncertainty about the nature of well-being, and their hesitations and uncertainty about how to promote and support children's well-being. Practitioners' understanding of well-being as an irreducible understanding of the concept resembles their broad-brush viewpoints of operationalising well-being. The various ways of interpreting the nature of well-being corresponds with the various ways in which practitioners interpret the delivery of well-being in curriculum policy. Three different types of well-being practices correspond with an understanding of 'well-being as a by-product/outcome', and an understanding of 'well-being that is a reducible construct'. This chapter shows that practitioners who work with children from different socio-economic backgrounds operationalise well-being in very similar ways. This reflects their understanding of well-being that is associated with a child's home background and their belief that well-being is something they cannot always influence.

Applying Bernsteinian (1977; 1982) concepts such as 'classification' and 'framing' demonstrated that more often than not well-being is weakly classified and weakly framed – particularly in comparison with other Areas of Learning. However, 'at times' well-being is also strongly classified and strongly framed. This is significant because the message in policy advocates an integrated curriculum code for the seven Areas of Learning. This raises questions about the practicality of implementing an integrated curriculum code. Bernstein (1982) suggests that the 'integrated code' is more ideological and theoretical in nature rather than existential in practice. Therefore, to some extent the evidence discussed in this chapter supports this concern.

This chapter also discussed practitioners' perceptions about the current challenges of operationalising well-being in the Foundation Phase, and how they may negatively influence children's well-being. The three challenges that practitioners currently face are the introduction of literacy and numeracy tests by the Welsh Government which could be viewed as a way of moving away from the integrated code. Other challenges included limited time to implement a

full curriculum, as well as some unrealistic expectations placed upon children and schools in meeting curriculum Outcomes and responding to dealing with societal problems. This raises the following question: do practitioners experience any further challenges when capturing well-being in a curriculum that is presented as the integrated code? The following chapter explores this question and aims to understand more generally how practitioners go about capturing well-being.

7 Primary school practitioners' perceptions and experiences of capturing well-being

7.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrated that practitioners hold different understandings about well-being and they operationalise different well-being practices with young children. These practices are mainly integrated but sometimes well-being is discretely delivered, despite the policy direction which advocates an integrated code. According to Bernstein (1982) assessment within the integrated code tends to have less explicit, measurable outcomes whereas the collection code is associated with discrete teaching of subjects and more measurable outcomes. However, since 2008, as previously discussed teachers are required to make a judgement about children's Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity (PSDWBCD). They are expected to provide a score between one and six[49], and this statutory requirement takes places at the end of the Foundation Phase when a child is seven years old (Welsh Government, 2014a)[50]. The Welsh Government state that "the outcomes set out the expected standards of children's performance…" (WAG, 2008a, p.2) and they "describe the type and range of achievements characteristic of children within the Foundation Phase…" (WAG, 2008a, p.43).

It could be argued that the Foundation Phase Outcomes portray a typical, universal child which appears to homogenise children (Basford and Bath, 2014). It could also be argued that the current approach to assessment is more in line with the 'collection' code rather than the 'integrated' code which is advocated in policy. For example, Bernstein (1982) states in a collection code "the learner has to collect a group of favoured contents in order to satisfy some criteria of evaluation" (p.158). This contrasts with the integrated approach which is advocated in the policy. Therefore, the broader aim of this chapter is to

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[49] Each of the six Outcomes for PSDWBCD are presented to practitioners as one paragraph with approximately six to eight pre-determined criteria statements (see Appendix 3, p.268).
[50] There is also a statutory requirement to assess two other Areas of Learning: Mathematical Development and Language, Literacy and Communication Skills.

understand how practitioners go about capturing[51] well-being in the early years curriculum.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the way children's well-being is assessed has not kept pace compared with the importance placed upon supporting and promoting well-being, and the way in which adult well-being is measured (Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011). Chapter 2 also concluded that very few measures are available for capturing children's well-being particularly in education (Pollard and Lee, 2003; NICE, 2008; Mayr and Ulich, 2009; Watson et al. 2012). Therefore, this chapter aims to examine what tools practitioners use to assist them in this process. In addition, there is limited empirical evidence about practitioners' perceptions of various assessment tools (White et al. 2013). Basford and Bath (2014) claim that "the early childhood education practitioner has very limited opportunity to exercise their own values and beliefs" (p.4), which supports the rationale for conducting two workshop-based focus groups[52].

7.2 Uncertainty about capturing well-being

Practitioners were encouraged to describe how they capture children's well-being during the focus groups and individual interviews but there was some uncertainty expressed amongst the following practitioners. As with all aspects of well-being, there was considerable hesitation. They said: *"it is hard to measure well-being. You can't really measure well-being can you?"* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 1 teacher, individual interview). Another said: *"It's just how do you assess it?"* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 1 teacher, Number 2, individual interview). Similarly, one more teacher said: "*but how do we track it?"* (Redwood Primary, Nursery teacher, individual interview). Another said: *"it's not measurable is it and yet we have to report on Personal and Social Education in the Foundation Phase"* (Redwood Primary, Observation teacher,

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[51] For the purpose of this chapter, 'capturing' broadly refers to assessing, measuring, documenting, and/or evidencing.
[52] Practitioners explored four different tools in the workshop-based focus groups.

individual interview). What is noteworthy about this teacher's response is the reference to Personal and Social Education (PSE) rather than PSDWBCD.

A similar finding emerged in Chapter 6 (see 6.5.5) where PSDWBCD appeared in various ways in school documents, which may indicate that it is not securely regarded by practitioners as an Area of Learning. In addition to this, field-notes show that on-entry assessments of children into Nursery and Reception classes (3-to-5 year olds) in both schools include an Area of Learning called 'Personal and Social Development' rather than PSDWBCD. Personal and Social Development was an Area of Learning in the Desirable Outcomes framework which was replaced by the Foundation Phase in 2008 so it should not be appearing. This example further suggests that PSDWBCD may not be securely regarded in its own right as an Area of Learning despite being introduced in the curriculum eight years ago. Similarly, another teacher said: *"PSE is so wide and so broad that we can't narrow it down as to what to put in the assessment file"* (Redwood Primary, Nursery teacher, individual interview) which is another example of PSE being communicated. This response resembles the teacher's understanding of well-being as an 'irreducible construct'.

Practitioners were also asked during the individual interviews about their awareness of specific tools to capture well-being. However, 13 out of the 14 practitioners found it difficult to recall tools even though it is a statutory requirement to assess children at the end of the Foundation Phase. One teacher mentioned a specific tool and said:

> *I went on a well-being course and it was like a traffic light system and we had to observe the child and give red, amber or green. You looked at the child at an activity and you looked at their engagement and motivation and then you were supposed to repeat it at the end of the year* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 1, Number 2, individual interview).

The teacher above refers to the Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS) which is an observational tool for measuring children's well-being and involvement. It is described in more detail in Chapter 2. Generally, there is very limited awareness amongst practitioners about specific tools to capture well-being. There are two possible explanations for this, firstly a lack of tools available for use in education (Pollard and Lee, 2003; NICE, 2008; Mayr and Ulich, 2009; Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011; Watson et al. 2012). Secondly,

there are various challenges associated with capturing young children's well-being which have been discussed in Chapter 2. Even though practitioners demonstrate some uncertainty and a lack of awareness about specific tools, when they engage in discussions about capturing well-being they explain different ways of going about this process. These are now discussed at length.

7.3 Different tools in use to capture pre-determined criteria

Practitioners in both schools mainly use four different types of tools to capture PSDWBCD. Firstly, a paper-based checklist with pre-determined, fixed criteria, secondly, a digital form with pre-determined, fixed criteria, thirdly via evidence in weekly planning and classroom activities such as worksheets and fourthly, by observing children spontaneously. The following examples show that the majority of tools practitioners use to capture PSDWBCD are functions of criterion-referenced assessment (Blenkin and Kelly, 1992). This form of assessment is typically defined as "assessment which aims to discover whether the learner knows, understands or can do a pre-determined thing" (Torrance and Pryor, 1998, p.153). However, Overall and Sangster (2006) highlight that criterion-referenced assessment is somewhat limiting and is an indicator;

> that at the time when the topic was addressed the pupil showed an ability to engage with the subject. This is no guarantee that the pupil will remember it or be able to transfer the information to a new situation (p.144).

Another criticism of criterion-referenced assessment is stated by Basford and Bath (2014) who suggest that expected learning outcomes and behaviours and "the idea of making judgements to determine whether a child's development is either 'normal' or 'typical' immediately produces their opposite" (p.5). In other words, criterion-referenced assessment is more inclined to contribute to identifying the 'abnormal' child and increases the deficit view, which in turn contributes to policies that address children's deficiencies (Basford and Bath, 2014). Conversely, in a more positive light criterion-referenced assessment helps to identify at an early stage the skills and abilities they require to see them progress through their education.

7.3.1 Paper-based forms

The first checklist example which was used in Nursery and Reception classes at Redwood Primary consists of a sheet of paper containing information about the children's names, Area of Learning, Learning Outcome and Success Criteria (see Figure 8). It is used for activities and has two 'tick' options of 'accessed' and 'achieved'. The 'achieved' column also includes a space for additional comments. The following Teaching Assistant explains: *"it's ticked if they can do it and if they can't, um we 'dot' it and then we give it to Ann* [the Nursery teacher] *at the end of the week"* (Redwood Primary, Teaching Assistant, individual interview). During a field-visit the Learning Outcome on one of the sheets was 'being aware of dangers' but the Area of Learning was presented as 'Personal and Social' rather than PSDWBCD which further supports a previous point that practitioners may not conceptualise PSDWBCD as an Area of Learning. Figure 8 shows an example of the paper-based form used at Redwood Primary.

Figure 8: Example of a paper-based assessment at Redwood Primary (Nursery and Reception)

Area of Learning: Personal and Social Development		
Learning Outcome: Being aware of dangers		
Success Criteria: Names/points to dangers when cooking		
	Accessed (✓)	Achieved (✓)
Group 1		
Group 2		
Group 3		
Group 4		

The second example of a paper-based checklist which was used by the Observation teacher in Redwood Primary consists of a sheet of paper containing the Learning Outcome and columns for three ticks (see Figure 9). Once three ticks are present for each Learning Outcome the teacher uses a green highlighter pen to indicate that the child has achieved the Outcome. In other words, three ticks represent secure and consistent achievement of the Outcome. However, PSE is used for the Area of Learning rather than PSDWBCD which indicates that it may not be securely regarded as an Area of Learning.

Figure 9: Example of a paper-based assessment at Redwood Primary (Observation class)

Personal and Social Education			
Learning Outcome 2 (Taken from Local Authority Steps to Success)	(✓)		
Begin to help others when it does not conflict with their own interests.			
Begin to develop a sense of identity.			
Begin to develop a positive self-image.			
Begin to show care, respect and concern for others.			
Begin to recognise the relationship between feelings and actions.			
Begin to make choices of where to be and what to do.			
Interact with adults and other children.			
Expresses emotions through role/pretend play.			
Become aware of his/her own feelings and emotions and begin to identify with those of others.			
Whilst having preferences, begin to understand			

| the importance of healthy eating. | | | |
| Show care and respect for the classroom/home environment. | | | |

Another example of criterion-referenced assessment was observed during a field-visit one week before the autumn half-term holiday which consisted of a Numeracy test booklet. The booklet was given to Year 1 and Year 2 teachers of Redwood Primary by the Maths co-ordinator of the school who had obtained a copy from a Local Authority in England. The Year 1 teacher explained that they also have one for Literacy but not for PSDWBCD, which highlights that certain Areas of Learning are captured more regularly than others, and according to Bernstein (1977) some Areas are "afforded differential status" (p.87). The teacher also explained that the purpose of the Numeracy booklet was to find out what 'National Curriculum level' the children were achieving. As well as to prepare them for the Welsh Government statutory tests in Literacy and Numeracy that were due to take place the following term. During the field-visit observation the Year 2 teacher came into the classroom and said to the Year 1 teacher: *"he's coming out as a 2b"*. It could be argued that by referring to a child as '2b' is an indication that children are being perceived as an 'object' and would be described by Basford and Bath (2014) as being characteristic of a ritual of homogeneity.

The test booklets are forms of criterion-referenced assessment and they only capture that child's performance on that particular day. Therefore, to be more effective they should be used alongside other forms of assessment. The test booklet does not capture or acknowledge any contextual information and this was expressed by the Year 2 teacher during an individual interview when she said: *"you don't know what's gone on at the weekend and you are asking them to sit a test on a Monday morning, it seems unfair"* (Redwood Primary, Year 2 teacher, individual interview). This highlights a concern about the validity of standardised tests and only captures a child's 'unsupported' knowledge and understanding. Fleer (2002) calls this 'first level assessment' and suggests that it is often privileged, rather than 'second level assessment' which is about capturing what the child can do 'with support' (known as Vygotsky's (1978)

concept of the zone of proximal development). The Numeracy and Literacy test booklets are representative of static forms of assessment and are conducted out of context and are more Piagetian in nature than Vygotskian (Lunt, 1993; cited in Fleer, 2002).

Every Foundation Phase child in Redwood Primary has a 'Steps to Success' book. Each page includes one criterion which is evidenced by a photograph. It also includes a picture of a wand with a target which shows what the child needs to work towards. The 'Steps to Success' criteria have been compiled by the Local Authority. For PSDWBCD there are four separate sheets for each aspect of the Area of Learning (i.e. Personal Development, Social Development, Well-being and Moral and Spiritual Development). The well-being aspect has 65 pre-determined criteria which have been extracted from various sources; including the Foundation Phase Outcomes, the Four Counties Profile[53] and the All Wales Foundation Phase Child Development Profile[54]. The remaining criteria were decided upon by Local Authority stakeholders (see Figure 10). In total, there are 363 pre-determined criteria for PSDWBCD. The 'Personal Development' and 'Social Development' aspects of PSDWBCD have the most criteria which suggest that less emphasis is placed upon 'Well-being' and 'Moral and Spiritual Development' as skills to be assessed. A similar example was discussed in Chapter 6 (see 6.5.5) which showed that more emphasis had been placed on 'Personal and Social Development' than 'Well-being' skills in one of the teacher's planning.

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[53] This was in use before the Foundation Phase was introduced.
[54] This has been replaced by the Foundation Phase Profile.

Figure 10: 'Steps to Success' criteria for well-being produced by the Local Authority

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, WELL-BEING AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY – WELL-BEING

OUTCOME 1	OUTCOME 2	OUTCOME 3	OUTCOME 4	OUTCOME 5	OUTCOME 6
Feel safe and happy in the setting/school environment.	Begin to help others when it does not conflict with their own interests.	Recognise and take account of the feelings of other children and adults.	Can relate to members of the school community.	Explore and discuss the importance of a balanced and healthy diet.	Has a clear sense of belonging and is secure, in both school and the wider community.
Begin to interact and work alongside others.	Begin to develop a sense of identity.	Demonstrate care and respect for the rights and needs of all living things.	Have a clear understanding of simple emotions and why children feel like they do.	Demonstrate an awareness of the importance of exercise.	Is helpful to and supportive of others.
Observe and recognise the beauty and wonder of the world around them, with adult support.	Begin to develop a positive self-image.	Become aware of their own well-being and that of others, by demonstrating care and respect in a range of situations.	Can cope and deal with own feelings and recognise the feelings of others.	Begin to understand that some substances are harmful and some are beneficial e.g. medication.	Will take risks and try new things showing perseverance, and coping well with disappointment.
Dependent on familiar adults emotionally.	Begin to show care, respect and concern for others.		Demonstrate care and affection for others, when appropriate.	Value being healthy and are positive about the actions necessary to be healthy.	Demonstrate through actions and attitudes that he/she respects others and the environment.
Show enthusiasm and pleasure in own achievements.	Begin to recognise the relationship between feelings and actions.	Begin to understand that all living things should be treated with care, respect and concern.	Shows empathy [All Wales FPCDAP - 5c]	Understand that to keep his/her body healthy he/she will eat and drink appropriately.	Understand own feelings and express them in an appropriate way.
Begin to express feelings about events and incidents.	Begin to make choices of where to be and what to do.	Identifies own feelings and emotions. [All Wales FPCDAP - 3c]	Support, comfort and help other children when they are sad or upset.	Show respect for the feelings and needs of others and treat them with care and consideration.	Demonstrate appropriate self-control
Shows care for a favourite toy [All Wales FPCDAP - 1c]	Interact with adults and other children.	Demonstrate some control over their emotions.	Begin to develop an understanding that exercise and hygiene and the right types of food and drink are important for healthy bodies.	Have good self-control in most situations.	Contribute to his/her well-being and the well-being of others.
Start to express in simple terms how he/she feels.	Expresses emotions through role/pretend play [All Wales FPCDAP - 2c]	Is able to recover from disappointments [All Wales FPCDAP - 4c]	Recognise the changes that happen to his/her breathing, heart rate, appearance and feelings as he/she exercise.	Control emotions in a range of situations.	Respect his/her body and that of others.
	Become aware of his/her own feelings and emotions and begin to identify with those of others.	Become aware of the importance of healthy food and exercise for growth and development.	Explore and discuss food preferences and their role in a balanced diet.	Demonstrates control over own emotions [All Wales FPCDAP - 7c]	Understand that exercise and hygiene and the right types of food and drink are important for healthy bodies.
	Whilst having preferences, begin to understand the importance of healthy eating.	Ask for help when needed and be prepared to wait a short while before getting it.	Aware of healthy eating habits and can distinguish between foods that are healthy and those that are not.	In the main, he/she is able to control their emotions and cope with disappointment.	Know about dangers from the road, being near water, at home and in the environment.
	Show care and respect for the classroom/home environment.	Is willing to try new things, with support.	Recognise and begin to take responsibility for the need to care for living things in the environment.	Recognise what the environment has to offer and appreciate its beauty.	Know what to do or whom to go to when feeling unsafe.
			Enjoy caring for the environment, such as plants and pets.	Show respect for the needs of the environment and treat it with care and consideration.	Understand that medicines are taken to make them better, but that some drugs are dangerous.

Four Counties Baseline

All Wales Foundation Phase Child Development Assessment Profile

RED - FP outcomes

BLACK - STEPS BY LOCAL AUTHORITY

In addition to the 'Steps to Success' book, each child in Redwood Primary has a 'blue ring binder' which moves with the child as they progress through each year in Primary school. The purpose of the ring binder is to provide information to the next teacher about the child's achievements in 'Mathematical Development' and 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills'. This excludes five other Areas of Learning. To some extent the ring binder is a form of ipsative assessment where the child's progress is compared with their own previous achievements, rather than with their peers which is a form of norm-referenced assessment (Blenkin and Kelly, 1992). The Observation teacher explained, during a field-visit, that the blue ring binder includes a piece of Literacy and Numeracy work, but the school were currently unable to decide on how to record *"PSE"*. This is another example where PSE is communicated rather than PSDWBCD. This also reflects the ambiguous and complex nature of well-being. The Reception teacher also expressed some uncertainty and concern about the appropriateness of capturing PSDWBCD in the blue ring binder when she said:
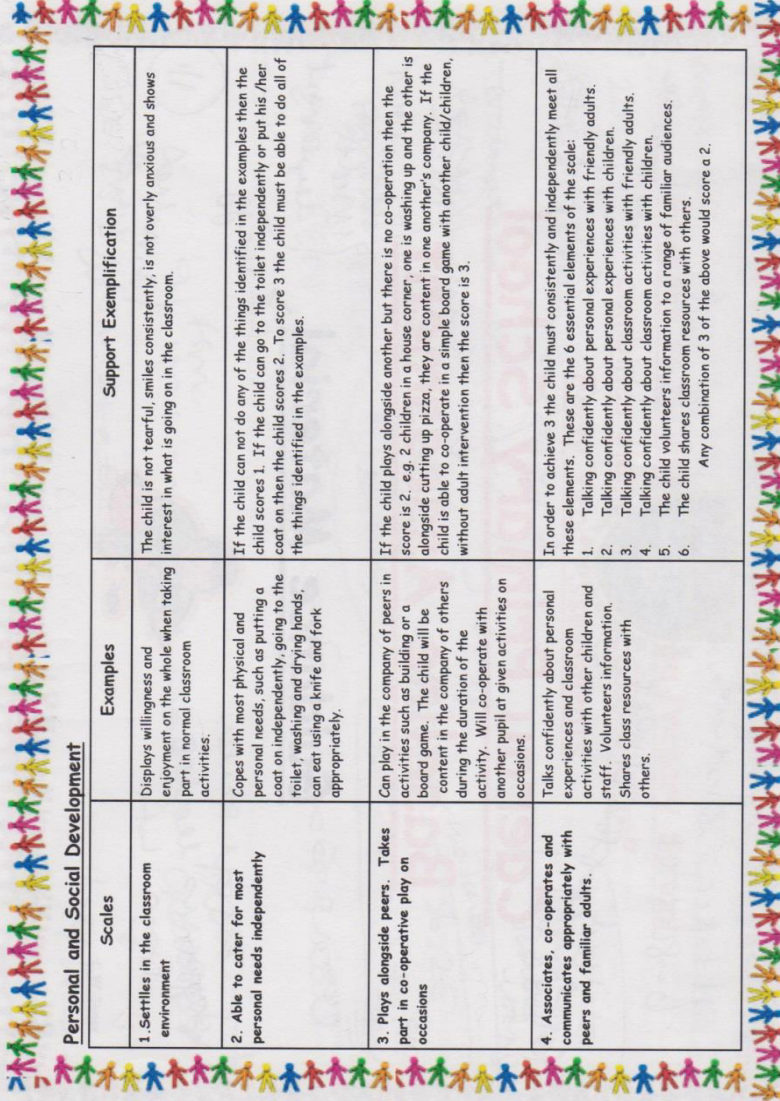
> *I made a point of saying that I don't want it to be just Literacy and Numeracy, but when we sat down and looked at it we thought what are we going to put in here to evidence it and what are we measuring it against… for this what do I use as my measure, how really do I decide on what Outcome level a child is? Do you on well-being? Do you say an Outcome 4? Is it relevant to say you are an Outcome 4* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher, individual interview).

This teacher raises two points. Firstly, two Areas of Learning are privileged and secondly, this is an unfair representation of the curriculum which presents a narrow view of a child's capabilities. She also expresses a concern that using a number may not be the most appropriate way of capturing well-being and may not be fit for purpose. Forgeard et al. (2011) explain that "a single number satisfies our craving for simple findings or conclusions, in spite of the complexity of the phenomena being studied" (p.97). This teacher indicates that well-being is a complex concept. However, it could be argued that assigning a number to a skill or well-being per se may be one of the most appropriate and effective ways "to satisfy the gatekeepers of regulation" (Basford and Bath, 2014, p.11). Conversely, Drummond (1995) argues that when teachers are expected to assign a score for example, between one and six to a child's skill, knowledge or

ability they are "being invited to reduce the complexity of each pupil's individuality… to a meaningless numerical scale" (p.86).

The on-entry assessment to Nursery and Reception classes at Redwood Primary also take the form of a checklist. 'Personal and Social Development' rather than PSDWBCD is assessed on-entry to school and there are four different criteria which are referred to as 'scales'. Practitioners score each scale, also known as a criterion, out of three. The school has produced guidance material and there is support exemplification for each scale. For example, the guidance for one of the scales states, "in order to achieve 3 the child must consistently and independently meet all these elements". Figure 11 shows the scales for 'Personal and Social Development'.

Figure 11: On-entry school assessment criteria for 'Personal and Social Development' in Redwood Primary

Personal and Social Development

Scales	Examples	Support Exemplification
1. Settles in the classroom environment	Displays willingness and enjoyment on the whole when taking part in normal classroom activities.	The child is not tearful, smiles consistently, is not overly anxious and shows interest in what is going on in the classroom.
2. Able to cater for most personal needs independently	Copes with most physical and personal needs, such as putting a coat on independently, going to the toilet, washing and drying hands, can eat using a knife and fork appropriately.	If the child can not do any of the things identified in the examples then the child scores 1. If the child can go to the toilet independently or put his /her coat on then the child scores 2. To score 3 the child must be able to do all of the things identified in the examples.
3. Plays alongside peers. Takes part in co-operative play on occasions	Can play in the company of peers in activities such as building or a board game. The child will be content in the company of others during the duration of the activity. Will co-operate with another pupil at given activities on occasions.	If the child plays alongside another but there is no co-operation then the score is 2. e.g. 2 children in a house corner, one is washing up and the other is alongside cutting up pizza, they are content in one another's company. If the child is able to co-operate in a simple board game with another child/children, without adult intervention then the score is 3.
4. Associates, co-operates and communicates appropriately with peers and familiar adults.	Talks confidently about personal experiences and classroom activities with other children and staff. Volunteers information. Shares class resources with others.	In order to achieve 3 the child must consistently and independently meet all these elements. These are the 6 essential elements of the scale: 1. Talking confidently about personal experiences with friendly adults. 2. Talking confidently about personal experiences with children. 3. Talking confidently about classroom activities with friendly adults. 4. Talking confidently about classroom activities with children. 5. The child volunteers information to a range of familiar audiences. 6. The child shares classroom resources with others. Any combination of 3 of the above would score a 2.

Similarly, the on-entry assessment to Nursery and Reception classes at Ashbourne Primary also take the form of a checklist. It consists of eight criteria for 'Personal and Social Development' (see Figure 12b) rather than PSDWBCD. The teacher is expected to place a 'tick' or a 'cross' to indicate whether the criteria is achieved or not.

Figure 12: On-entry school assessment criteria for 'Personal and Social Development' in Ashbourne Primary

New Inn Primary School

Baseline Assessment

Name_____ Date of Birth_____

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills.

Oracy

Speaks clearly	Listens to instructions	Engages in conversation with peers	Engages in conversation with adults
Raises hands to answers questions	Joins in group discussions	Joins in class discussions	Listens to the ideas of others
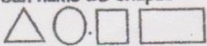
Reading

Can recognise own name	Is able to recognise the sounds made by some letters	Can blend letters to read	Can read some words

Writing

Make marks on a page (emergent writing)	Writes recogniseable letters	Can write own name	Can write other words

Mathematical Development

Can recite to	Can recognise numbers	Can accurately count objects to	Can order numbers to
Can name 2D shapes △ ○ □ ▭	Can name colours – Y W	Can identify big and small by direct comparison	Can order 3 items according to size
Can order 5 items according to size	Can sort objects by 1 given criteria	Can sort objects by 2 given criteria	Can sort objects by own criteria
Can copy a repeating pattern of 2	Can devise a repeating pattern of 2	Can copy a repeating pattern of 3	Can devise a repeating pattern of 3

Figure 12b: On-entry school assessment criteria for 'Personal and Social Development' in Ashbourne Primary

Personal and Social Development

Can cater for own needs eg use toilet independently and wash hands	Is able to put on own coat	Is able to fasten up own coat	Is able to dress and undress for PE
Plays alone	Plays co-operatively with other children	Shares resources and takes turns	Follows rules and displays appropriate behaviour

Physical Development

Makes marks on paper	Draws simple pictures	Holds pencil correctly – RH/LH	Is able to cut around a simple shape
Can pedal and steer	Can throw and catch a large ball		

Any additional information

Completed by _____ Date_____

What is significant about both schools is that despite the different number of criteria and scoring system, both schools fundamentally capture two skills on-entry to school in relation to 'Personal and Social Development'. Firstly, they capture a child's ability to cater for their personal needs and secondly, their ability to play co-operatively with others. They do not formally capture well-being per se or any other aspect of PSDWBCD. Therefore, it could be argued that a somewhat narrow assessment is carried out in terms of PSDWBCD when a child enters school. However, a counter argument to this would be to ask whether there is any benefit in capturing other aspects of PSDWBCD, and to what extent is the information useful? Narrow assessments of PSDWBCD demonstrated by both schools suggest that practitioners feel they only need to know whether a child can cater for their personal needs and play co-operatively. Secondly, it could be an indication of a limited understanding of the distinct features of PSDWBCD.

Another type of checklist tool which is used by teachers at Ashbourne Primary for children throughout the Foundation Phase is called 'the continuum' (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: The Continuum tool used in Ashbourne Primary

Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity Continuum.

Name _____

Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3
• Dependent on adults emotionally. • Beginning to express how they feel in simple terms. • Respond to social greetings. • May have a tantrum when frustrated but are learning that some behaviour is unacceptable. • Beginning to role play on their own or in parallel with other children often near an adult. • May need assistance with everyday personal skills but are keen to help. • Show knowledge of familiar care routines.	• Like to help adults and peers but not when it conflicts with their interests. • Demonstrate affection for other children and may play with them. • Willing to share toys and take turns when supported by an adult. • Becoming aware of their own feelings and emotions and are beginning to identify with those of others. • Trying to be independent but sometimes need assistance. • Beginning to develop an awareness of personal safety in particular dangerous hazards.	• More independent learner. • Able to cope with changes to routines. • Recognise and is increasingly sensitive to the needs of others. • Beginning to recognise appropriate behaviour for different situations and respond to reason. • Beginning to understand that all living things should be treated with care, respect and concern. • Demonstrates some control over emotions and will adopt the standards of behaviour of adults that are close to them. • Able to cater for most personal needs independently.

Outcome 4	Outcome 5	Outcome 6
• Will taken part in co-operative play independently. • Able self-control and is able to wait for needs to be met. • Able to concentrate on a task and have definite likes and dislikes. • Support, comfort and help other children when they are sad or upset. • Becoming aware of the similarities and differences between themselves and others. • Recognises cultural differences and diversity. • Enjoy caring for the environment such as plants and pets. • Aware of healthy eating habits and can distinguish between healthy and unhealthy foods.	• Associate, communicate and co-operate appropriately with peers and familiar adults. • Seek help when necessary. • Recognise and express feelings appropriately. • Respect others and value their achievements. • Clear understanding of right and wrong. • More aware of , beliefs and views of others. • Understand the concept of fair play and rules and why we have rules. • Understand the consequences of their actions and take responsibility for the decisions they make. • Able to control their emotions and cope with disappointment. • Understand that to keep their bodies healthy they need to eat and drink appropriately.	• Are able to control their emotions. • Begun to form friendships. • Idol/hero figures are significant in their play and lives. • Understand that people have different preferences, views and beliefs. • Understand how they should relate to others morally and ethically. • Able to see things from other children's and adults' points of view. • Competent with identifying problems and coming up with solutions to solve them. • Demonstrate skills of perseverance, concentration and motivation. • Demonstrate appropriate self-control. • Understand how they can improve their learning and are reflective.

The Foundation Phase Outcomes which contain between six to eight pre-determined criteria are presented in the six boxes on the continuum tool. Every child is allocated a sheet and every half term[55] teachers are expected to highlight the criteria they feel the child has achieved. During field-work the Nursery teacher briefly explained the process of using the continuum and said: *"I take the sheet home every half term and highlight it in front of the television"*. This response implies that the assessment is quick and easy to carry out and possibly requires little thought and is based upon the teacher's judgement, rather than the input from other practitioners who work with the children. Furthermore, this particular teacher appears to draw upon very little evidence, for example from observational notes or the child's work to inform the judgement.

When most of the criteria are highlighted on the continuum for each Outcome the child scores Outcome 1a. If approximately half of the criteria are highlighted the child scores Outcome 1b, and if only a few criteria are highlighted then the child scores Outcome 1c. The teachers refer to these as 'sub-levels'. For example, a child could score Outcome 1a at the end of one term and then score an Outcome 2c at the end of the next term. The following teacher said:

> *every term we have to give the children a level on Maths, Literacy and this area* [PSDWBCD]… *each child ideally is supposed to go up one sub-level a term, but that's just a general expectation from the Local Authority* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 1 teacher, Number 1, individual interview).

The Foundation Phase Leader in Ashbourne Primary explains more about the sub-levels and said:

> *you need to give them an Outcome every term and then you need to constantly track them to make sure that they are making one sub-level of progress every term… that is your definite pressure, that you as a teacher feel you need to get them to an Outcome. Even now you are looking at your more able and by the end of the year in order for them to be Outcome six in Year 2 they need to be here by the end of Reception, and here by the end of Year 1. So you've constantly got that in your mind and children are not little robots that go along like this and it is pressure, we have no choice* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 1 teacher, Number 2, individual interview).

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[55] Approximately six to eight weeks.

The Foundation Phase Leader says that children are not little robots, indicating that progress and development is not linear. She expresses a similar view to a teacher at Redwood Primary who seems frustrated and uncomfortable in assigning Outcomes to children, which Basford and Bath (2014) call a strategic act. Basford and Bath (2014) suggest that early years practitioners are forced to carry out 'strategic' rather than 'authentic' acts in order to satisfy policy demands and there is tension between the two. A different teacher commented on the continuum tool and feels that any kind of assessment tool for children which makes practitioners say "yes they can" or "no they can't", which is an example of a strategic act, is too simplistic and restrictive in nature. She said:

> I mean it's not easy the way it is, because we have just got the continuum for them and then the continuum is just the Outcomes which has been set by the framework and they are alright. But it is either yes they can or no they can't and Personal and Social Education is just like yep, yep and it's a general assessment of them as a person (Ashbourne Primary, Year 2 teacher, individual interview).

The teacher is suggesting that the current form of assessment tool may not be fit for purpose and is inadequate in some way. This quote is also significant because the teacher communicates Personal and Social Education rather than PSDWBCD. This argues the point that practitioners do not regard PSDWBCD as an Area of Learning.

7.3.2 Digital forms

Both schools utilise digital forms of assessment tools. For example, Redwood Primary use a computer software package called 'Incerts' and Ashbourne Primary use an App called '2Build a Profile'. The two commercial products include criteria from the six Foundation Phase Outcomes for PSDWBCD which have been mentioned in the introduction to this chapter (see also Appendix 3, p.268). The 'Incerts' tool provides practitioners with an opportunity to track children's achievements of the Outcomes by recording 'beginning to', 'developing' or 'achieved' for each criterion. Teachers also have the option of producing information for end of year reports, more commonly known as summative assessment, and they can make comparisons between children which characterises norm-referenced assessment (Blenkin and Kelly, 1992).

The '2Build a Profile' package is similar in nature to Incerts which includes Foundation Phase Outcome criteria and characterises criterion-referenced assessment (Blenkin and Kelly, 1992). But it also gives practitioners the option of uploading photographs and adding virtual post-it-notes as evidence for achievement of the Outcome. It is marketed on the 2Simple website as;

> the multi-award winning app for gathering observations on the go. It improves the quality and consistency of formative assessment, while also saving educators hours of record keeping time (2Simple, 2015, para.1).

In essence, both commercial packages are digital forms of criterion-referenced assessment (Blenkin and Kelly, 1992).

Redwood Primary also utilise a second digital tool which is an electronic version of the 'Steps to Success' book. The tool is an adaptation from a story App which was developed by a Teaching Assistant. The school first piloted the ebook in 2013 in Nursery and Reception classes and due to its success the tool is used throughout the Foundation Phase to capture PSDWBCD. It also captures the other six Areas of Learning. It is similar in nature to the 2Build a Profile tool used in Ashbourne Primary but it is considerably cheaper, and practitioners can upload video clips in addition to photographs. Children can also draw images immediately onto the App using a device such as an Apple i-pad and it provides more opportunities for children to be actively involved in the assessment process. One Reception teacher said: *"I think the ebook shows the actual child, not just a paper record, it actually gives evidence. It should be different"* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher, individual interview). Another practitioner talked positively about her ebook experience with parents and said:

> *the ebook is for the parents to have in the end, and I do think that it's fantastic… Mum and Dad just sat there and I was showing them a couple of pictures and I said um, what do you think of this? And I just pressed it and I could see Mum and Dad just filled up…. we had the tissues and everything* (Redwood Primary, Reception Teaching Assistant, individual interview).

The positive comments about the ebook in relation to providing evidence of the 'actual child', and a child with talents, strengths and idiosyncrasies suggest that this particular type of tool is more personalised and pays slightly more respect to the child than paper-based methods. It could be argued that the ebook also has more socio-cultural characteristics, such as a participatory process where

both child and adult become actively involved, and the assessment is a shared process as opposed to more traditional approaches where the adult stands back, observes and selects a number to describe a child's progress or ability (Basford and Bath, 2014), which can often be viewed as the one 'number' fits all approach. However, curriculum frameworks such as the Foundation Phase make it challenging for practitioners to "recognise that children are individual and potentially idiosyncratic learners" (Basford and Bath, 2014, p.2). According to Hurst and Lally (1992, p.60) "assessment that is personalised has an element of empowering the child in it". Children in Year 1 and Year 2 of Redwood Primary also use digital cameras to record their work which to some extent is another example of empowering a child and is socio-cultural in nature. This approach "acknowledges the competence of children and gives them agency" (Pyle, 2012, p.3).

In addition to arguing that digital tools provide slightly more opportunities to empower children and tend to be more socio-cultural in nature, there is another benefit of using digital tools. This is explained by the following practitioner who states:

> *I see a difference when we record them on the i-pad from the start of the year to the end. You see a difference in them on your videos don't you - how much they talk, how much they are coming out of themselves that's what I've noticed* (Redwood Primary, Reception Teaching Assistant, focus group).

The practitioner is referring to ipsative assessment in the quote above which is defined as;

> assessment of a pupil not against norms (based on performance of his/her peers) or against criteria (derived from particular conceptions of subjects and/or of education) but against his/her own previous levels of attainment and performance (Blenkin and Kelly, 1992, p.12).

It is suggested that this method of assessment focuses on children's strengths and capabilities. In other words it focuses on their positive development and progress and takes a more personalised approach. According to Mayr and Ulich (2009) it is only in the last few years that a shift has taken place from the deficit model in assessment to a focus on positive development. The deficit model is defined here by focusing on what children cannot do and comparing

their development, skills, and/or abilities to developmental norms and/or their peers.

Another example of a tool used in Nursery and Reception classes at Redwood Primary that empowers children, is the recent introduction of a talking photo album. This provides evidence of Foundation Phase Outcome criteria in the visual and audio form. On the initial observation of the talking photo album the researcher noticed that three Areas of Learning were included: namely 'Mathematical Development', 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' and 'Knowledge and Understanding of the World'. The talking photo album excluded PSDWBCD and three other Areas of Learning. This raises three points; firstly, some Areas of Learning are privileged and have different status (Bernstein, 1977) and secondly, that some Areas of Learning might be considered easier to capture. Thirdly, it might indicate that some Areas of Learning are delivered more frequently and therefore more evidence is available. The researcher asked one of the practitioners during field-work: *"do you have PSDWBCD anywhere in the album?"* and the Teaching Assistant pointed to a photograph and replied *"well that's that - making choices".* This reply suggests that PSDWBCD is integrated throughout the curriculum which corroborates with findings in Chapter 5 about the common perception amongst practitioners that well-being should be integrated across the curriculum. During the second field-visit which occurred two weeks later, the Teaching Assistant called the researcher to the talking photo album and said: *"you will be impressed, come and have a look in our photo album".* Then on the second observation, 'Religious Education' (RE) and 'Personal and Social Education' (PSE) had been included but not PSDWBCD. This reinforces a previous point that PSDWBCD as it is presented in the curriculum is not securely regarded and conceptualised in the same way as others Areas of Learning.

7.3.3 Worksheets

The third tool described by practitioners as a way of capturing well-being is via evidence in their weekly planning and classroom activities such as, worksheets. These are also functions of criterion-referenced assessment. The following teacher said: *"we do a worksheet on feelings and talk about it orally first, then*

record it" (Redwood Primary, Year 1 teacher, individual interview). Evidence from field-notes show that children taking part in the Time to Talk programme[56] in Redwood Primary also completed numerous worksheets.

More evidence of worksheets existed amongst Year 2 children in Ashbourne Primary who had three exercise books; one for 'Mathematical Development'; one for 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' and one called a 'project' book. The project book consisted of completed work linked to the other five Areas of Learning. On observation during a field-visit the project book contained mainly worksheets and the ones relating to PSDWBCD were entitled: 'write about feelings', 'write about what to do when upset', and 'write about things you are good at'. The drawback of using worksheets to capture well-being or any other aspect of the Area relies heavily on a child's ability to be able to read and write. It is not flexible or creative in nature but it may be easier and quicker to implement. Alternatively, more child-led socio-constructivist approaches might be better suited to younger children, for example, drama, story-telling, artwork or puppetry. These types of alternative functions of assessment involve more open, flexible, creative ways of recording where children are involved more as 'initiators' as well as 'receivers' of assessment (Torrance and Pryor, 1988). The outcomes also tend to be more unpredictable and are associated with the integrated curriculum type (Bernstein, 1977). Hurst and Lally (1992) state that for younger children;

> the process involved is more important than any end result and the child's creativity, persistence, resourcefulness and problem solving ability are more significant than the application of existing knowledge and skills (p.56).

It is argued that worksheets privilege the end result and only show part of a picture. Learning outcomes of worksheets tend to be more predictable, and they are often associated with a collection type curriculum (Bernstein, 1977). The dominant place of worksheets in evidencing well-being and PSDWBCD indicates that knowledge is regulated, controlled by the adult and predictable (Bernstein, 1977).

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[56] A programme to develop oral and social interaction skills for 4-to-6 year olds.

7.3.4 Observation

The fourth tool described by some practitioners as a way of capturing well-being is via observation which involves talking and listening to children, and/or informal conversations between practitioners about their observations of individual children. The following teacher also highlights the importance of spontaneous observations and explains that you often capture aspects of a child's learning and development you are not looking for. The teacher said:

> *sometimes you can catch them playing if you are lucky and video them with the i-pad. Or you might hear them saying something particularly nice to someone else and you might think - oh you didn't think they got that but they have, and especially when they take it out of context when it's something you've been doing, and suddenly you think 'ah' it's the transferring of skills* (Redwood Primary, Observation class teacher, Individual interview).

This teacher talks positively about spontaneous observations which also depict criterion-referenced assessment. Similarly, another teacher talks about the importance of observation as a tool to capture PSDWBCD and said:

> *we do quite a lot of observations with this because it's quite a hard area to assess effectively. Yet you could look at it and say yes they can do that, but how do you know they can do that. If you are going to find out you need to sit and you need to spend time with them and it's not something you can really tick off of an afternoon. It's something you have got to observe over time* (Ashbourne Primary, Reception teacher, Number 2, individual interview).

The teacher above also highlights that criterion-referenced assessment is not always something that comfortably fits with capturing well-being in the curriculum when she said: *"it's not something you can really tick off".* She also raises the point that observing an Area like PSDWBCD takes time.

To summarise, practitioners use four different types of tools which generally typify criterion-referenced assessment to capture PSDWBCD in the curriculum. There is evidence to suggest that practitioners are capturing 'Personal and Social Development' more than PSDWBCD. The various tools involve checklists, precise planning and quantitative evaluation (Torrance and Pryor, 1998). The tools focus on the Outcome and are known as the product-oriented type of assessment (DeVries et al. 2002). In other words, the curriculum

dominates assessment and the child is required to meet and fit curriculum norms. It is curriculum-led and practitioners are required to undertake strategic acts to satisfy policy expectations (Basford and Bath, 2014).

Practitioners respond to policy expectations by relying on criterion-referenced assessment which focuses on capturing states of knowledge, and this is one way of upholding social order and control (Bernstein, 1982). It is also more aligned with the collection code as opposed to the integrated code (Bernstein, 1982). Basford and Bath (2014) explain that "this approach typifies conformity to the scientific discourse of empiricism and positivism that has been present in… practice for some time" (p.5). They further explain that the current policy expectation assesses the Outcome of an end product, as opposed to adopting a more socio-cultural perspective which is nested "into learning as a cultural tool to help children build their ideas and capacities" (Basford and Bath, 2014, p.7). However, as it stands practitioners experience various difficulties when capturing children's well-being. One explanation for this could be related to the integrated code which is advocated in policy but is juxtaposed with assessment requirements that are more closely aligned with the collection code. The following difficulties that practitioners experience are discussed next.

7.4 Encountering difficulties when capturing well-being

Four main difficulties emerged when practitioners engaged in discussions about capturing well-being within PSDWBCD in the curriculum. Firstly, practitioners feel ill-informed about the purpose and rationale of capturing well-being in the curriculum. Secondly, practitioners are concerned about the multiple interpretations of Foundation Phase Outcomes and issues regarding reliability and validity. Thirdly, they are concerned about evidencing well-being appropriately in relation to other Areas of Learning. Fourthly, practitioners feel there is a general expectation from various stakeholders to capture other Areas of Learning more frequently in the curriculum.

The *first* difficulty that some practitioners report and encounter is feeling ill-informed about the purpose and rationale of capturing something like well-being in the curriculum. For example, one teacher said:

> the 2Build a profile app is good, but the effectiveness of that, is what's going to happen and what's the purpose of it?   That's the important thing, where's that going to, where's that going to go next (Ashbourne Primary, Reception teacher, Number 1, individual interview).

Similarly, another teacher from the same school said: *"you can highlight things on the continuum[57] but it has to have a purpose…"* (Ashbourne Primary, Reception teacher, Number 2, individual interview). Both teachers share concerns about the purpose of assessing well-being. Similarly, another teacher agrees, but she is also concerned about providing an Outcome for PSDWBCD. In addition, she has another concern about whether Year 3 teachers (a) consider the Outcome, or (b) are interested in it. The Year 2 teacher said:

> *Personal and Social is not a subject in Year 3, it will be sent to Year 3 but they won't look at it because that Area of Learning doesn't continue in Key Stage 2. It doesn't then… it's just reported, but they don't do anything about it. Um, unless obviously there's a problem with the child, but I don't think they look at it to be honest. They will have the overall Outcomes for the Literacy and then try and convert it into Levels for Key Stage 2 and it doesn't always tally up and they reckon we lie anyway…* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 2 teacher, individual interview).

The teacher above seems frustrated, and suggests that Year 3 practitioners may not be interested in PSDWBCD Outcomes because she states the Area of Learning does not continue into Key Stage 2. However,

> Personal and Social Education (PSE) forms part of the basic curriculum for all registered pupils aged 7 to 16 at maintained schools…the PSE framework is the key document which schools and colleges should use to review and develop existing PSE provision. It builds upon the Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity Area of Learning in the Foundation Phase… (WAG, 2008f, p.3).

Therefore, Year 3 practitioners have a statutory obligation to be interested in PSDWBCD Outcomes. The aim of Key Stage 2 is to build upon this Area. Furthermore, PSE continues as part of the basic curriculum, so when the

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[57] See Figure 13.

teacher asserts that *"Personal and Social is not a subject in Year 3"* this indicates a misunderstanding and/or some sort of confusion about whether PSE is a subject in its own right. Secondly, it may indicate that PSDWBCD is not securely conceptualised in the same way as other subjects in the curriculum. One explanation for PSE not being regarded as a credible subject might be to do with the way in which the delivery is conveyed in policy. For example, the PSE framework states; "PSE comprises all that a school or college undertakes to support and promote the personal and social development and well-being of its learners" (WAG, 2008f, p.5). This approach to the delivery suggests a very broad-brush, ambiguous view of operationalising it.

The *second* difficulty that practitioners report and encounter is the many different ways in which the Foundation Phase Outcomes can be interpreted, as well as a concern about making an accurate and sound judgement. One teacher explains:

> *it's quite vague on times. I think that is something we need to address as a school, that somebody might be ticking a box for something that they may have interpreted in a different way…there should be consistency throughout Wales* (Redwood Primary, Year 2 teacher, individual interview).

Another teacher points out that interpreting the Outcomes is a very subjective task, and suggests that the terms used by 'Incerts' are also ambiguous. She said:

> *I thought Incerts would be better, but it's not specific enough sometimes because then you think do I tick this one or do I not… you might have children who come from another class and it has been ticked and you think they can't do it, but you can put notes and I have undone some things… these are airy fairy 'beginning to' and 'developing', and at what point does 'beginning' become 'developing the ability' – it's so subjective. At least it's something that gives you a measure…* (Redwood Primary, Observation teacher, individual interview).

Even though this teacher recognises there might be a weakness to the Incerts tool, she suggests it is the best they have at the current time. Another teacher said that interpreting the Outcomes is not straightforward and therefore, she either guesses or seeks help and advice from other practitioners to help make a sound judgement. The teacher said: "*some of the sentences are very difficult to even understand, I don't know what it means, you just guess. We work it out*

together…" (Ashbourne Primary, Nursery teacher, focus group). To address reliability in assessment, both the Nursery and Reception teachers of Redwood Primary conduct Wellcomm[58] language assessments on different occasions, for example, in the same week with the same children so they are able to compare their findings. Even though this does not directly relate to PSDWBCD it highlights teachers' awareness of subjective interpretations and in an attempt to control for this they adopt inter-rater agreement.

Table 15 provides evidence which shows that some of the Foundation Phase Outcome criteria are perceived as ambiguous in nature, flawed in some way, difficult to interpret and decontextualised. Seven follow-up interviews took place with teachers after the focus group tool workshops to ascertain their perceptions of these Outcomes by using a snapshot well-being tool. The teachers were asked to think about a child when reflecting on the criteria.

Table 15: Teachers' perceptions about Foundation Phase Outcome criteria for PSDWBCD

Foundation Phase Outcome criteria from PSDWBCD (WAG, 2008a):	**Teachers' perceptions:**
Outcome 1 criterion They have started to express in simple terms how they feel and respond to social greetings.	*"She can do this but it may not be relevant when she responds"* (Redwood Primary, Nursery teacher).
Outcome 2 criteria Children have become aware of their own feelings and emotions and are	*"But there are two parts to this Outcome. The child I'm thinking about is aware of their own*

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[58] Wellcomm is a GL Assessment product. It is a speech and language toolkit for screening and intervention in the early years.

beginning to identify with those of others.	*feelings but they are not beginning to identify that with others"* (Redwood Primary, Observation teacher).
They are trying to be independent but sometimes need assistance.	*"In his personal needs no, but in his work yes"* (Redwood Primary, Year 2 teacher).
They demonstrate affection for other children and may play with them.	*"These are two different things though"* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher).
Outcome 3 criterion Children have become more independent in their learning and are able to cope with the change to routines.	*"Well this depends on context"* (Redwood Primary, Observation teacher).
Outcome 4 criteria Children will take part in co-operative play. They are able to concentrate on a task.	*"This depends on context and time. You know how long do they mean"* (Redwood Primary, Observation teacher). *"Well this depends. He can do this in Maths"* (Redwood Primary, Observation teacher). *"Yes when they are his own interests and when he is making lists"* (Redwood Primary, Year 2

	teacher).
	"Yes when something interests him but it depends on the task" (Redwood Primary, Nursery teacher).
They are becoming aware of the similarities and differences between themselves and their peers, and recognise cultural differences and diversity.	*"Yes she is aware of differences but may not always articulate the difference"* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher).
Outcome 5 criteria Children associate, co-operate and communicate appropriately with peers and familiar adults.	*"This is potentially six Outcomes, because they may do these things with peers but not adults and vice versa"* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher).
They have grasped the concept of fair play and have an understanding of rules and why they are there.	*"This one means they might grasp and understand fair play but it does not mean they carry it out, does it?"* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher).
In the main they are able to control their emotions.	*"Emotions, what does that mean? Upset and sad or angry?"* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher).

They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and are more aware of other people's feelings, views and beliefs.	*"There are two different Outcomes here"* (Redwood Primary, Nursery teacher). *"These are two different things"* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 1 teacher). *"They can understand right and wrong but can't act it"* (Ashbourne Primary, Nursery teacher).
Children have a greater understanding of the consequences of their actions and take responsibility for decisions that they make.	*"To what degree"* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 1 teacher).
Outcome 6 criteria They demonstrate appropriate self-control.	*"In regards to what?"* (Redwood Primary, Observation teacher). *"Does this mean for his learning or his behaviour?"* (Redwood Primary, Year 2 teacher).
They are able to demonstrate skills of perseverance, concentration and motivation.	*"If it interests her"* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher).
They have begun to form friendships	*"He has formed friendships but I*

which are very important to them.	*don't know if they are important to him"* (Redwood Primary, Nursery teacher).

The *third* difficulty that practitioners report and encounter is evidencing well-being appropriately, in relation to other Areas of Learning. In other words they discuss the reification of well-being. Practitioners are concerned about showing and finding 'concrete' evidence for PSDWBCD which implies an understanding of well-being as an abstract concept. Gasper (2010) suggests that it is very common for abstract concepts such as well-being to be reified. The following teachers in Ashbourne Primary explain that the digital App called '2Build a profile' was purchased in an attempt to help capture PSDWBCD. But the following teacher questions the validity of photographs within the tool and said:

> *I think one of the reasons we went down the 2Build a profile route was to evidence the Personal and Social because it is more photographic evidence. But then, even then how can a photograph show you understand fair and unfair or right or wrong. I mean how do you assess what's good, bad, right, wrong, unfair, caring and inconsiderate, it's hard to assess…?* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 1 teacher, Number 2, individual interview).

Another teacher from the same school feels there is limited 'concrete' evidence for PSDWBCD but the 2Build a Profile App helps to address this. She said: *"generally, I do like 2Build a profile because there are things like especially personal and social you don't necessarily have evidence for. At least with that you've got evidence"* (Ashbourne Primary, Year 1 teacher, Number 1, individual interview). Another teacher feels that well-being is difficult to evidence. Therefore, she compares it to another Area of Learning within the curriculum which she feels is easier to evidence. The teacher said:

> *with Maths you've got evidence, you can see they can count to ten, yes they can order their numbers to ten, yes you know they can make sets. Well-being is more difficult… you have to really think about it, it isn't straightforward, and it's a really difficult Area to do well. That's when the 2Build a profile comes in, because you can add a photo and then you*

annotate (Ashbourne Primary, Reception teacher, Number 2, individual interview).

Similarly, teachers from Redwood Primary expressed some difficulty around evidencing PSDWBCD, and they compared it to other Areas of Learning in the curriculum which they consider easier to evidence. One teacher said: *"I think we track the Literacy and Numeracy more because it is easier to track, it's more measurable you know"* (Redwood Primary, Year 2 teacher, individual interview). Another teacher said: *"Literacy and Maths is easy to measure"* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher, individual interview). What is significant is the difference between practitioners' understanding of well-being and the challenges they perceive and experience in evidencing well-being. For example, Chapter 5 demonstrated that practitioners understand well-being as a by-product/outcome of other aspects, and they adopt a dominant objective indicator view[59]. This means that they should be able to evidence well-being in some way, but there is a disconnect between what they know and understand about well-being and their perceived challenges about capturing it.

The *fourth* difficulty that practitioners report and encounter is the perceived *emphasis* and *status* placed upon the frequent measurement of some Areas of Learning within the curriculum. Overall, practitioners feel that Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development are captured more frequently than PSDWBCD. One practitioner feels that Knowledge and Understanding of the World is the most frequently measured, and two other practitioners said Welsh Language Development. Only one teacher feels that the seven Areas of Learning should have equal weighting regarding assessment. She said: *"the PSE element of the curriculum in the Foundation Phase has got equal weighting to Literacy and Numeracy and Knowledge and Understanding of the World and everything else"* (Redwood Primary, Observation teacher, individual interview). This raises the question about why the Welsh Government decided to make the assessment of three Areas of Learning statutory at the end of the Foundation Phase rather than all seven.

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[59] This view is associated with various skills, achievements, developmental milestones, observable characteristics and cognitive ability to name but a few.

Teachers specifically refer to aspects of their work that take priority, and the types of tasks they describe mainly relate to 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' and 'Mathematical Development'. Practitioners feel that certain tasks restrict them from capturing not just PSDWBCD but other Areas of Learning. One teacher said that *"testing has taken over quite a bit"* (Redwood Primary, Year 1 teacher, individual interview). Another teacher explains: *"it's Maths and English, they are at the forefront"* (Redwood Primary, Year 2 teacher, individual interview). The following teacher feels that PSE rather than expressing PSDWBCD should have the same status as Literacy and Numeracy in the curriculum. She said: *"I think Literacy and Numeracy is tracked far more than PSE. Although, PSE should be the same really, it should be up there…"* (Redwood Primary, Nursery teacher, individual interview). The following teacher also feels that certain Areas of Learning are prioritised for assessment. But she also talks with some regret about her limited knowledge of children's friendships in the classroom. She explains:

> *yes, we definitely assess more Literacy and Numeracy. Gosh, I don't even know who their friends are. This one* [meaning PSDWBCD] *is really important but you know, there is so much focus on Literacy and Numeracy now* (Ashbourne Primary, Reception teacher, Number 1, individual interview).

Arguably, it may not matter whether teachers know about children's friendships but this response implies that the teacher has limited knowledge about certain aspects of the children in her classroom. When there is a strong emphasis on prioritising certain Areas of Learning and assessing children against expected, typical Outcomes there becomes a danger of homogenising children. Moreover, the priority and/or emphasis on assessing certain Areas of Learning does not help practitioners know about children's idiosyncrasies and individual talents and only provides a limited view of their development, skills and/or abilities. However, Baker (1998; cited in Basford and Bath, 2014, p.6) suggests that when too much emphasis is placed upon the individual and their talents in assessment, there is a danger of missing other abilities such as the way in which children work collaboratively in different situations. In other words, balanced assessments of young children should be carried out which capture what they can do on their own, with adults and with their peers.

The following teacher further highlights that other stakeholders are more interested in certain Areas of Learning, such as 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' and 'Mathematical Development', rather than PSDWBCD. This indicates that Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase curriculum do not have the same status. The teacher said:

> *I would definitely say Literacy and Maths because of the nature of the expectation of the school. This* [PSDWBCD] *is equally important but I would say certainly because that's what we are asked to present to people* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher, individual interview).

To summarise, the majority of practitioners communicate and experience various difficulties in the process of capturing well-being in the curriculum. They feel that assessment is not fairly implemented across the Areas of Learning, and there are six possible explanations for this. Firstly, because well-being appeared as an Area of Learning in 2008, and therefore practitioners feel more familiar with capturing longstanding Areas like 'Mathematics' and 'English' which have been present in the curriculum since 1988. Secondly, in 2013, the Welsh Government introduced statutory testing for seven year olds in Literacy and Numeracy with no requirement to test children in other Areas of Learning. Consequently, this requirement might influence more assessment in the Areas that are being tested. Thirdly, practitioners experience difficulty because they do not regard PSDWBCD in the same way in the curriculum as 'Mathematical Development' and 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' over the course of a child's education. This reason is further supported by the way in which practitioners frequently communicate PSE rather than PSDWBCD in relation to the curriculum. This reason is also supported by a strong practitioner perception that well-being should be integrated throughout the curriculum. Fourthly, the integrated code is advocated in policy but there is an assessment expectation which is more in line with a collection code curriculum (Bernstein, 1982) and this creates confusion and uncertainty. Fifthly, there are different understandings associated with well-being and this potentially leads to an uncertainty about which concept of well-being should be captured. Lastly, there are limited tools available to capture PSDWBCD as previously suggested in Chapter 2. Therefore, practitioners have a very limited repertoire of tools to

hand. The next section discusses the findings from two workshop-based focus groups which provided practitioners with an opportunity to explore various tools.

7.5 The usability of different tools

Various tools that are aimed at capturing young children's well-being have been discussed in Chapter 2, but in general there is limited empirical evidence about practitioners' perceptions of tools (White et al. 2013). Moreover, White et al. (2013) argue that "the usability of specific screening instruments from the perspective of those who have responsibility for administering the tool appears to be a neglected area of research" (p.88). Therefore, in order to improve the empirical evidence which could inform the future development of tools, as well as learning more about practitioners' understanding of well-being, two work-shop based focus groups lasting one hour took place with practitioners in each school. The findings from these workshop-based focus groups are discussed next.

Table 16 shows that practitioners have positive and negative views about four different tools. However, no positive views were reported about Roberts' (2010) observational tool and this is marked as a shaded area. Various comments within the table are marked with an asterisk and are further discussed later on. It should be noted that the practitioners were exploring the tools for the first time. Therefore, their views do not relate to first-hand use of them, apart from two practitioners who had previously used the Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS). In this case, negative comments 2 and 3 reflect this.

Table 16: Practitioners' views about four different tools

Name of tool	Views inclined to be positive	Views inclined to be negative
PERIK tool (Mayr and Ulich, 2009)	1: *"Quite quick for recording, not too time-consuming".* 2: *"Yes this would be quite easy to carry out".*	1: *"I don't' like the fact that there's an overall total. If people focused on that overall total they might miss something significant".*

	3: *"I wouldn't say useful for learning something new, but it might highlight it".*	*2: "So there is no future planning?"* *3: "With this one, if they scored high is there a programme or anything, it doesn't do anything else then?"* 4: *"Thinking of this one, if we did it on somebody like Lucy* [pseudonym] *who wouldn't be able to do these, it wouldn't necessarily mean her well-being is low".* *5: "Like this one gives you the results, but what do you do with it?"*
Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS) (Laevers, 2003)	1: *"What I like about it, you can see the highs".* 2: *"To me, it's useful for children you are concerned about but not necessarily the whole class".* 3: *"This reminds me very much of the NFER behaviour checklist that I used to use when they entered into Reception. You can use it in Nursery as well but the kind of comments are very similar… this is a really easy one to use".*	1: *"Because this doesn't take age into consideration, this is general isn't it. We are not looking at this in terms of ages. So if a child in Year 2 was doing that and a child in Nursery was doing that, how do you differentiate? You would expect a three year old to remain on task for less time, so how do you measure that? You might expect yours* [points to the Nursery teacher] *to be on task for 5 minutes and in Reception we would expect ours to stay on task for 10 minutes, so we wouldn't necessarily have the same judgment then would we based on Nursery to Reception…If you make a judgement based on Nursery or Year 2 then you would score it the same, but you would expect a*

		Nursery child to be different". *2: "A year of my life I will never get back and it didn't tell us anything".* *3: "It didn't tell us anything we didn't already know"*
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997; White et al. 2013)	*1: "As a teacher, straightaway that's easy and purposeful".* *2: "You wouldn't need any training on that, it's self-explanatory".* *3: "I think something like this one could be adapted".* *4: "You could send this to an educational psychologist as evidence. I like that it's quick. It also gives you an opportunity to record how a child's behaviour may impact on the other children and I like that"* *5:"It's very user-friendly and you can add up the score and things and it tells you if they are borderline or abnormal. It's handy and easy to use".* *6: "It's easy to score and you wouldn't need a lot of training".* *7: "You could do this one with any year group".* *8: "I quite like it, I think it's easy to fill in, it's just one questionnaire".*	*1: "There isn't a lot of space for you to make up your own notes on there".* **2: "It doesn't give you a summary of anything or what to do next. It doesn't really tell you what to do with the results at the end".* **3: "I don't think it tells you anything new about the child or what to do next or where you are going next".* **4: "What do you do with it afterwards?"*
Observational tool (Roberts,	No positive views reported	*1: "This is really heavy. You've got to really*

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2010)		*understand that. There's a lot of work to be done, it's time-consuming and you need to understand the codes. If I had to choose, I'm not saying it's not useful but it's quite deep. This would not be worthwhile. It's quite jargony as well, the bit I don't like about it is that you couldn't pick that up and if you wanted all of your staff to do it in the Nursery - would they know what those elements meant? It's not suitable for use as a pick up tool. It's not just training for us but it's training for support staff as well".* *2: "It's not easy to interpret is it. It's not flexible is it".* *3: "The idea of videoing and looking back and everything is great as that sort of observation is great. If you have the time to do it. Then you have to collect it all over a period of months. How can you collect that much information on 60 children in Reception over a period of months? I was thinking you might get the hang of it if you did it about fifty times. How can you do all of that with so many children. We've often said haven't we, that we'd love to have the time to sit and observe on a regular basis. This one is so time-consuming".* *4: "You would want proof of things that you feel they find difficult or they can't do and a test would do that*

		and this one doesn't".

Table 16 also shows that the majority of practitioners were mostly positive about the SDQ tool. The reasons they provide are ease of use, quick to complete, requires little training, adaptable for any age group, and provides information about borderline or abnormal behaviour. It is worth noting that only one practitioner said they liked the LIS tool because it focused on children's "*highs*" as in their strengths and capabilities, even though all four tools were designed to focus on children's positive development. In general, practitioners were positive about the PERIK and SDQ tool because they feel it would be quick and easy to use, whereas some feel that the observational tool would be time-consuming to use.

Four practitioners indicated that the time invested in using the LIS, SDQ and PERIK tools would not tell them anything new about a child. This finding was reported by practitioners in White et al. (2013) study who piloted the SDQ in one Scottish Local Authority in Glasgow as a transition tool for assessing well-being on-entry to school. The study was funded by the Scottish Government and set out to develop a consistent approach for pre-school establishments in identifying children's social and emotional behavioural disorders, which could impact on "academic attainment and school engagement" (p.87) in primary school. It could be argued that the focus of this research funded by the Scottish Government resembles a deficit perspective which supports the argument put forward in Chapter 5. Even though practitioners in White et al. (2013) study did not learn anything new about the children, they felt that is was encouraging and refreshing to be assessing aspects of 'social and emotional development' rather than always assessing abilities in 'Mathematics' or 'Language'. Participants in White et al. (2013) study also expressed a concern about whether primary school practitioners would pay much attention to the findings. In addition, practitioners were concerned about labelling young children too early at the start of their education when using the SDQ. In other words, children were being measured against criteria, which consist of some pro-social behaviours, but mainly deficit behaviours to ascertain if they were functioning as borderline

or abnormal. White et al. (2013) concluded that a tool should be accurate in measuring what it sets out to measure and the findings should be effective and useful for practice.

The findings in Table 16 reveal an emerging theme amongst practitioners which resembles a deficit perspective towards young children[60]. In other words, practitioners feel that the PERIK and SDQ tool seem to be lacking in follow-up programmes and/or ways forward. Arguably, in order to fix children's deficiencies and bring them in line with the expected, typical, universal child criteria. Haworth and Hart (2007) suggest that a deficit view of young children has existed since the Second World War and is still evident today. Furthermore, Basford and Bath (2014) suggest that when education systems focus on;

> the idea of making judgements to determine whether a child's development is either 'normal' or 'typical' immediately produces their opposites… such judgements also provide the means for classifying and identifying the 'abnormal' child… (p.5).

The argument suggested by Basford and Bath (2014) provides one explanation as to why practitioners were mostly positive about the SDQ tool. This is because it mainly sets out to capture borderline and abnormal traits which could be viewed as focusing too much on the deficit, and is a limitation of criterion-referenced assessment.

Findings from the focus group workshops also revealed that practitioners want more guidance and strategies about what to do once they have used the tool to bring children in line with expected criteria. They feel that the tools failed to answer the following questions: where do I go next? What happens now? What do I do with the information? This indicates that the 'tool developer' assumes that practitioners know what to do with the information. Or the tool developer has not considered what practitioners should do next and this could be a development area for future tools. The transcript extract below is taken from the Ashbourne Primary workshop which emphasises what practitioners think the tools are lacking:

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[60] Views which relate to a deficit perspective are marked with an asterisk * in Table 16.

Nursery teacher: *None of them really guide you or tell you what to do next.*

Year 1 teacher: *That's really what people want.*

Nursery teacher: *You want to know what to do.*

Year 1 teacher: *Yes, what activities will push that.*

Researcher: *When you say, what to do. What do you mean exactly?*

ALL: *Ideas and activities.*

Researcher: *So when you have information from the tool, do you want to know what to do with it?*

Reception teacher: *Yes. It's like the 'Time to Talk' programme. You do a screen at the beginning, then we've got a bank of activities that you can do, then you can assess that. We need something like that.*

It seems that practitioners want a tool that is relatively prescriptive which contains three parts; firstly, some sort of pre-screening/assessment and diagnostic component, secondly activities and/or a structured programme to address the deficiencies, and thirdly, some sort of post-assessment. A similar point was made by the following teacher who feels that tools need to provide follow-up strategies. Her view also reflects a deficit perspective. She said:

> *there's no point focusing on what they can't do if it doesn't give you the tools then to be able to rectify it or do something about it. So do they? If it highlights the things they can't do, are they going to give you things you need, or are you then going to go hunting because you need it all together don't you* (Redwood Primary, Observation teacher, focus group tool workshop).

This teacher feels that tools need to help practitioners rectify something and therefore should be comprehensively designed. She implies that it could be time-consuming to have to 'go hunting' and plan a way forward. However, it could be argued that it is the role of a teacher to 'go hunting', to seek advice and find the most appropriate ways forward for a child. Alternatively, many teachers' responses indicate that they want more direction once the tool has been utilised.

The workshop-based focus groups have also revealed some differences in cultural expectations of children. For example, the following teacher feels that the PERIK tool is aimed more at Year 2 children who are aged between 6-to-7

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years old. But the tool which has been designed by German researchers is aimed at 3-to-6 year olds. The teacher said:

> *going back to that German one, this would have to be more for Year 2 children, because a lot of the statements on here you wouldn't expect to see in a child in Reception. The statements are more applicable for older children, the expectation on here I think are higher, look - 'does not allow himself or herself to be put under pressure and holds an opinion that others do not share'. A Reception child could not do that* (Year 1 teacher, Ashbourne Primary, focus group tool workshop).

Even though the teacher in the above quote does not think a Reception child who is aged between 4-to-5 years would be able to hold an opinion that others do not share; Mayr and Ulich (2009) who developed the tool believe that they can. Another example which highlights the differences in cultural understandings of children is reported in the following response about the LIS tool:

> *looking at these in terms of well-being. I'm just thinking some of them; if you are talking about wriggles, throws objects, sucks thumb, more or less having tantrums here. Like in Nursery you would see that more than you would by the time they came through to Reception. You would accept these things more in Nursery than you would in Reception* (Redwood Primary, Reception teacher, focus group workshop)

The teacher implies that a tantrum is characterised by wriggling, throwing objects and thumb sucking. She also suggests that Nursery children tend to have more of them than Reception aged children, which implies an age and stage understanding but arguably this is not necessarily true. Another cultural expectation of children was also highlighted in a negative comment for the LIS tool, where one practitioner suggested that a three year old and a seven year old could score the same, but the score would not be representative of the child's age. The teacher sees this as a weakness of the tool. Different perceptions of children's expectations and capabilities are bound by culture (Prout and James, 1997), and "the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture" (Basford and Bath, 2014, p.7). Therefore, it could be argued that cultural expectations of children need to be taken into consideration when developing tools.

The other reason for exploring various tools with practitioners was to further investigate their understanding of well-being. However, this did not reveal anything new but it clarified two points about well-being that have been previously discussed in Chapter 3. Firstly, well-being is a complex concept and therefore a single number is too simplistic to represent well-being. Practitioners feel that a number is limiting and does not reflect the child's age for example, and does not 'justly' represent a child's ecology. Secondly, there is a lack of consensus about the meaning of well-being between the people who develop tools and the practitioner.

7.6 Summary of findings

This chapter discussed how practitioners capture well-being in the early years curriculum, and it examined what tools they use to assist them in this process. Evidence indicates that practitioners generally use four different tools to capture pre-determined criteria, for PSDWBCD within the Foundation Phase. These tools typify criterion-referenced assessment and are more aligned with a 'collection' code as opposed to an 'integrated' code which is the direction advocated in policy (Bernstein, 1982). The Outcome criteria which are presented to practitioners in the Foundation Phase are perceived as ambiguous in nature, flawed in some way, difficult to interpret and decontextualised. In addition to this, practitioners communicate and experience the following difficulties:

1. Practitioners feel ill-informed about the purpose and rationale of capturing well-being;
2. Concerns about the multiple interpretations of Foundation Phase Outcomes and issues regarding validity and reliability;
3. Evidencing well-being appropriately in relation to other Areas of learning;
4. Practitioners feel there is a general expectation to capture other Areas of Learning more frequently in the curriculum.

This chapter revealed practitioners' uncertainty about capturing well-being which corresponds with their uncertainty of the nature of well-being and the way in which it is operationalised. There is also a resemblance between the various ways of understanding well-being and the various difficulties practitioners experience in capturing well-being. In other words, practitioners encounter difficulties because they conceptualise well-being in various ways which are associated with at least four different dimensions. This indicates that different tools are needed to capture different dimensions of well-being. There appears to be some disconnect between their understanding of well-being and the challenges they perceive in capturing well-being. For example, if practitioners understand well-being as a 'by-product/outcome' and an 'objective indicator'[61] they should be able to evidence well-being in some way.

This chapter also discussed practitioners' views about various tools, and found that practitioners generally like tools that are quick and easy to use, which corresponds with the challenges and concerns they have about their practice which are discussed in sections 6.7 and 7.4. Furthermore, practitioners think that many tools are missing follow-up strategies and/or programmes to bring children in line with expected, typical, universal criteria. This suggests that practitioners have a tendency to adopt a deficit perspective of children due to the expectations placed upon them. Exploring various tools with practitioners also highlighted the cultural differences of children's abilities and skills which need to be acknowledged when developing tools. The following chapter summarises the key findings and discusses the conclusions, before suggesting ways of developing practitioners' uncertainty. It also discusses various policy recommendations and considers the future directions for well-being research.

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[61] This view is associated with various skills, achievements, developmental milestones, observable characteristics and cognitive ability to name but a few.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The central aim of this thesis was to explore how the concept of well-being is understood and operationalised in the early years curriculum through examining the implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales. The aim was achieved by considering the following research questions:

1. What do primary school practitioners (such as teachers and teaching assistants) know and understand about young children's well-being?
2. How is well-being operationalised in practice?
3. What tools do primary school practitioners use to capture well-being in the classroom and to what extent are they fit for purpose?

A qualitative inquiry approach was adopted to address these questions which involved capturing data via multiple methods (see 4.4.1), and using two primary schools as research sites (see 4.3.2). Thematic analysis was the main data analysis approach but content analysis was also applied (see 4.6.2). In order to authenticate and strengthen the key findings the analysis involved examining practitioners' understandings of well-being with their day-to-day practices. The analysis draws upon various Bernsteinian concepts (1977; 1982; 1990) such as, the 'integrated' and 'collection' code and associated concepts of 'classification' and 'framing', in order to understand how well-being is conceptualised and operationalised in the curriculum.

This chapter revisits the research questions and briefly summarises the key findings before explaining how the thesis contributes to the following three areas; firstly to understanding the implementation of Foundation Phase policy in Wales, secondly to understanding the nature of well-being in the early years and lastly, to understanding well-being in the curriculum more generally. Thereafter, various reasons are explored which explain why practitioners are uncertain about the nature of well-being in the early years curriculum. This is followed by discussing the short and longer term policy and practice implications of this study as well as future directions for research.

8.2 What do primary school practitioners (such as teachers and teaching assistants) know and understand about young children's well-being?

In general, this study finds that practitioners are hesitant and uncertain about articulating the nature of well-being. This reinforces the complex and ambiguous nature of well-being which is widely acknowledged and reported (Mayr and Ulich, 1999; Haworth and Hart, 2007; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Gasper, 2010; OECD, 2011; Dodge et al. 2012; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012; Soutter et al. 2012; La Placa et al. 2013). Chapter 5 shows that when practitioners engage in discussions about well-being they communicate various dimensions and thus various discourses are associated with the concept, such as the hedonic/mental states discourse, eudaimonic and needs-based philosophical discourses which explain why they are hesitant and uncertain. The analysis identified the following four dimensions:

1. Purpose:

   Well-being as a pre-requisite[62] *and* a by-product/outcome[63]

2. Concept:

   Well-being is an irreducible *and* a reducible construct[64]

3. Measurement:

   Well-being can be assessed through objective indicators rather than needing subjective evidence from the child

4. Curriculum:

   Well-being needs an integrated approach rather than discrete delivery

The four dimensions highlight that from the perspective of the practitioner, well-being has various interpretations. The 'purpose' and 'concept' dimensions are generally communicated equally, but practitioners favour certain positions within the 'measurement' and 'curriculum' dimensions. In terms of 'concept', the data and analysis reveal that the terms practitioners use to explain well-being are readily categorised into three different domains, such as 'social' well-being, 'emotional/psychological' well-being and 'physical' well-being. According to

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[62] As in a contributor to learning effectively.
[63] A positive or negative experience that is home and/or school related.
[64] (1) social well-being, (2) emotional/psychological well-being (3) physical well-being.

Statham and Chase (2008) these three domains are typically associated with young children. However, when content analysis was applied to various policy documents relating to young children and the curriculum, it emerged that social well-being is generally overlooked (see 3.3.2). This could be an indication that people who write and develop policy may not always have a 'secure' understanding of the nature of young children and their capabilities. A consequence of overlooking 'social' well-being in policy which is often associated with positive development and pro-social behaviours (Eisenberg, 2003; Fauth and Thompson, 2009) means there is little emphasis on developing altruistic behaviours in young children.

In terms of 'measurement', practitioners talk more frequently about objective indicators as a way of making judgements about a child's well-being. Objective indicators included a child's cognitive ability/skills in numeracy or literacy, their school attendance or positive and negative behaviours to name but a few. This study suggests that practitioners favour objective indicators over subjective evidence because there is a general feeling that young children are incapable, and not sufficiently expert in communicating a personal view of themselves, and their world around them. According to Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) and Soutter et al. (2012) the objective indicator understanding of well-being is the leading discourse amongst those who work with young children. But this thesis shows that the objective indicator discourse is not the leading discourse but rather one of many. In terms of 'curriculum', practitioners favour the integrated code of delivery for well-being and this is strongly perceived by practitioners, which corresponds with a strong integrated code which is advocated in Foundation Phase policy.

The study also finds that practitioners make a judgement about a child's well-being which is often based on an unwarranted assumption that is associated with a child's socio-economic background. Practitioners tend to believe that children from poorer backgrounds have poor well-being and children from more affluent backgrounds have good well-being. However, as outlined in Chapter 2 there is evidence that poor well-being and negative feelings of quality of life are also associated with those from affluent backgrounds. There is a possibility that some children may not get the required support they need to help them succeed

in school if practitioners continue to make judgements about a child's well-being based on unwarranted assumptions. Misunderstandings associated with well-being supports Desjardins' (2008) argument that many claims about well-being are based on assumptions which are unsupported with robust empirical data.

8.3 How is well-being operationalised in practice?

This study finds that practitioners are generally uncertain about how to operationalise well-being. Despite this a total of five different types of practices emerged from the data and analysis. They are:

1. Nurturing well-being practices
2. Classroom environment well-being practices
3. Whole school well-being practices
4. Children's well-being practices
5. Discrete teaching practices

'Nurturing', 'classroom environment' and 'whole school' practices are inclined to be embedded throughout the school day and occur as and when they are necessary. They relate to positive relationships and creating appropriate environments for children and they are not explicitly planned learning activities. In addition, they relate to a needs-based theory of well-being (see 3.2.3); in other words practitioners communicate various underlying conditions and contributing factors that promote and support well-being. This corresponds with their understanding of well-being as a by-product/outcome. 'Children's well-being practices' emerged from field-notes and demonstrate that children also enact well-being. This type of practice shows that young children are knowledgeable and capable, despite what some adults think. In addition, 'children's well-being practices' reveal how young children show empathy towards others and take care of their peers. In Bernstein's terms (1977) practices 1 to 4 are weakly classified and weakly framed.

The 'discrete teaching practices' are slightly different in nature to the others, in that they are planned activities which are discretely delivered and are strongly classified and strongly framed (Bernstein, 1977). It emerged that 'PSE' is

frequently used by practitioners as a way of interpreting 'PSDWBCD'. Practitioners were observed on some occasions explicitly teaching well-being related activities but they were not timetabled regularly as daily sessions. For example, 'discrete well-being practices' are implemented through the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme, circle time and worksheets. In Bernstein's (1977) terms, well-being is strongly classified and strongly framed but having said that, in comparison to other Areas of Learning such as 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' and 'Mathematical Development', it is weakly classified and weakly framed. These aforementioned Areas are strongly classified and strongly framed and are also delivered discretely, but they are timetabled on a daily basis, and have strong boundaries between them. Numerous examples from field-work observations show strong framing where the boundary is sharp, and practitioners have more control over the selection, organisation, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted (Bernstein, 1977). These findings are significant because they show that the integrated curriculum code which is strongly advocated in Foundation Phase policy is not currently being implemented in two primary schools which were used as research sites.

There is a strong emphasis in the policy that places PSDWBCD, one of seven Areas of Learning, at the heart of the Foundation Phase. The Welsh Government state that it should be integrated across the curriculum regardless of whether practitioners choose to integrate or discretely deliver the other Areas of Learning (WAG, 2008b). However, six of out 14 practitioners interviewed did not consider it to be the most important Area of Learning in the curriculum. Since the introduction of the Foundation Phase in 2008 the policy direction strongly emphasises play-based learning (Waldron et al. 2014), therefore, it is surprising to report that practitioners do not discuss or mention children's play as a way of operationalising well-being. Field-notes show that children are more than capable of operationalising well-being through unstructured play in the classroom (see 6.5.4), but this was not communicated or recognised by any practitioners in this study.

The study also finds that practitioners in both primary schools operationalise well-being in very similar ways, despite working with children in different socio-economic contexts. This enactment in practice corresponds with their belief that well-being is closely associated with a child's home background and is something they feel they cannot always influence.

The analysis also reveals that practitioners perceive three curriculum challenges that may influence children's well-being in a negative way. Firstly, they feel that the introduction of testing in 'Mathematical Development' and 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' is having a negative influence on child well-being; secondly they feel that there is limited time to implement an overloaded curriculum, and therefore practitioners feel pressurised into rushing children to complete tasks which could negatively influence a child's well-being. Thirdly, practitioners feel there are two unrealistic expectations placed upon them which could have a negative influence on child well-being; one relates to children meeting Outcome 5 in the Foundation Phase, and the second one relates to practitioners being expected to respond to societal problems.

8.4 What tools do primary school practitioners use to capture well-being in the classroom and to what extent are they fit for purpose?

The study finds that practitioners are uncertain about how to capture well-being. The analysis shows that four different tools are currently in use by practitioners in two different primary schools to capture well-being. The following four tools are generally characterised by criterion-referenced assessment:

1. Paper-based forms
2. Digital forms
3. Worksheets
4. Observation

Criterion-referenced assessment is described by Fleer (2002) as 'first level' assessment which focuses on what children can do 'without support', but it is rather narrow in nature and only captures part of a picture. Other forms of

assessment are available, such as 'second level' assessment which focuses on what children can do 'with support', and are often more socio-cultural in nature. This study reveals important findings about the perception of Foundation Phase Outcome criteria. For example, practitioners report that criteria are ambiguous and difficult to interpret. Practitioners also perceive and experience various difficulties when capturing well-being, which indicates that the current Foundation Phase Outcome criteria may not be fit for purpose.

The following difficulties and concerns are communicated by practitioners about capturing well-being:

1. Practitioners feel ill-informed about the purpose and rationale of capturing well-being;
2. There are concerns about the multiple interpretations of Foundation Phase Outcome criteria and issues regarding validity and reliability;
3. The challenge of evidencing well-being appropriately in relation to other Areas of learning;
4. Practitioners feel there is a general expectation to capture other Areas of Learning more frequently in the curriculum.

There are three possible explanations as to why practitioners experience these difficulties. Firstly, they believe that well-being should be integrated throughout the curriculum, which is the expectation in the policy, and they do not view well-being as an Area of Learning in the curriculum. However, there is also an expectation in the policy that requires practitioners to assess children, in line with a discrete curriculum type, and this makes the task of capturing well-being difficult. Secondly, practitioners experience difficulties because they conceptualise well-being in various ways, and possibly feel overwhelmed with the different interpretations associated with the concept. Therefore, they are not sure about which dimension or well-being domain to assess. Lastly, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, limited tools are available, especially for capturing young children's well-being in the curriculum. Therefore practitioners have a very limited repertoire of tools to draw upon. Various well-being assessment tools were explored with practitioners in two workshop-based focus groups. Findings reveal that practitioners prefer tools that are quick and easy to use

which could be related to the challenges they report about implementing the curriculum (see 6.7). In addition, they report that many tools are missing follow-up strategies and/or programmes to bring children in line with expected criteria.

8.5 Contribution of the thesis

The following section explains how this thesis provides a significant insight into three areas, firstly to understanding the implementation of Foundation Phase policy in Wales, secondly to understanding the nature of well-being in the early years and lastly, to understanding well-being in the curriculum more generally.

8.5.1 Understanding the implementation of Foundation Phase policy in Wales

The policy direction for delivering the seven Areas of Learning strongly advocates an integrated curriculum code. In other words, Areas of Learning should not be delivered in isolation. However, the direction is different in the 'Learning and Teaching Pedagogy' non-statutory document (WAG, 2008b) which aims to support successful implementation of the Foundation Phase. The non-statutory document suggests that practitioners can choose the 'integrated' code or 'discrete' delivery code. In addition, it states that;

> Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity should be an integral part of planning across all Areas of Learning regardless of whether a practitioner's planning is holistic, discrete or involves a combination of approaches (WAG, 2008b, p.15).

Therefore, in terms of PSDWBCD, there is clear direction about its delivery, but there remains some uncertainty about the curriculum as a whole and how the seven Areas of Learning are operationalised in practice. For example, if a discrete delivery code is implemented, it is not clear whether PSDWBCD should remain integrated or be delivered discretely. Any future documents may need to ensure that consistent guidance is presented about the delivery of the Foundation Phase. It is important that both statutory and non-statutory documents which aim to support effective implementation provide the same guidance.

In addition to different messages about the policy direction of delivering the Foundation Phase, this study finds that particular well-being domains are privileged in various policy documents relating to young children and the curriculum. Moreover, there is some inconsistency in how well-being domains are described. Chapter 3 (see Table 4) demonstrated that eight different domains are currently used in various policy documents relating to young children and the curriculum. For example, 'emotional well-being' is presented in the following ways: 'emotional well-being', 'health and emotional well-being' and 'well-being/emotional development'. Therefore, this thesis suggests that in order to provide clarity about the concept, which is frequently regarded as being complex and ambiguous, it is important to be consistent when describing the domain. Future policy documents that describe or mention well-being should aim to ensure that well-being domains are presented consistently.

In order to understand how well-being is operationalised in the Foundation Phase this study draws upon various Bernsteinian (1977; 1982; 1990) concepts, such as the 'collection' and 'integrated' code, and their associated concepts of 'classification' and 'framing'. The data and analysis demonstrate that the integrated code is not being implemented in the case study, and some Areas of Learning are more strongly classified and more strongly framed than others in practice. This raises questions about practitioners' knowledge and understanding of the integrated code in practice and also about its viability/application in practice. It could be argued that the integrated code is easier to write about in policy than it is to operationalise in practice. However, it could also be argued that if practitioners are knowledgeable about key features of their practice and have a secure understanding of curriculum delivery and pedagogical principles of working with young children, then the integrated code could be applied in practice.

Since the introduction of the Foundation Phase in 2008, the Welsh Government has introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) to be embedded into the curriculum to help raise standards in literacy and numeracy. The introduction of the LNF by the Welsh Government could be an indication that the integrated code is not working as had originally been envisaged,

particularly in terms of improving outcomes for all children. Key findings from the three-year evaluation of the Foundation Phase report that;

> the evaluation has found no evidence to suggest it has made any observable impact so far on reducing inequalities in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (based on the first three cohorts of over 1,500 pupils in Pilot schools who have since reached the end of Key Stage 2) (Taylor et al. 2015, p.3).

Bernstein (1982) raises questions about some of the assumptions underpinning the integrated curriculum code and suggests it may disadvantage working class children. Whitty et al. (1994) further argue that the integrated code raises questions about equal opportunities for all learners in the curriculum. Therefore, to some extent, findings from this thesis and evidence from the three-year evaluation support these concerns. This thesis suggests that from 2013, the policy direction is to ensure that three Areas of Learning are integrated as opposed to just PSDWBCD[65]. In other words, some Areas of Learning in a curriculum are delivered through the 'integrated' code and some Areas are delivered through the 'collection' code. However, this may present challenges for assessment purposes.

This study also shows that practitioners demonstrate a degree of uncertainty about the nature of well-being and how it should be operationalised and captured. This is an important finding because key findings from the three-year evaluation of the Foundation Phase also identified other important concepts which practitioners are uncertain about. For example concepts such as;

> formal and informal teaching; learning through play; continuous, enhanced and focussed provision; child-initiated, practitioner-initiated and practitioner-directed activities; and observation (Taylor et al. 2015, p.113).

This thesis suggests that well-being can be included in the quote above, which reports key findings from the Foundation Phase evaluation. Therefore, this thesis argues that practitioners are uncertain about many important concepts which relate to effective pedagogy in the early years and this needs addressing.

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[65] PSDWBCD, Mathematical Development and Language, Literacy and Communication Skills.

This study also provides some insight into Foundation Phase Outcome criteria that practitioners are expected to use at the end of the Phase to make a judgement about a child's progress and achievements. Practitioners in both schools feel that the Outcomes which are currently in place are ambiguous in nature, flawed in some way, difficult to interpret and decontextualised. Therefore, a more rigorous piloting process of educational outcomes for children in future policy-making may need to occur, in order to ensure they are fit for purpose.

8.5.2 Understanding the nature of well-being in the early years

As outlined in Chapter 3, very little research has been conducted around child well-being, particularly in terms of schools. But the recent work of Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) is an important contribution, where they searched five databases and reviewed 209 papers to provide some consensus about child well-being. Furthermore, Mashford-Scott et al. (2012) and Soutter et al. (2012) hypothesise that the objective indicator discourse is the most dominant discourse amongst practitioners working in the early years. But this thesis provides a specific insight into the concept of child well-being from the perspective of the practitioner, and reveals that the objective indicator discourse is not the leading discourse amongst practitioners. Moreover, the empirical findings reveal that at least four different dimensions are associated with the concept which reinforces its complex nature. This thesis also argues that this complexity is intensified from the perspective of a practitioner who is required to operationalise it in the curriculum.

Raghavan and Alexandrova (2015) also contribute to the discussion about child well-being and suggest that a theory of child well-being does not currently exist. They suggest it is unlikely that traditional philosophical discourses, for example, will straightforwardly be extended to children because they were not originally written with children in mind. However, this thesis set out to explore this claim and found that knowledge of early childhood development relates, to some extent, to existing discourses in philosophy and psychology. Therefore, this study proposes that a theory of child well-being is not an immediate concern

and may not be that helpful to practitioners who require information about operationalising well-being. However, a theory of child well-being may be useful in raising awareness of the conceptual nature in terms of young children and various related contexts. In addition, a theory may help to strengthen practitioners' understanding about the concept and alleviate some uncertainty.

In addition to providing an insight into the nature of child well-being from the perspective of the practitioner, this study contributes to sociological discussions about how practitioners understand early childhood. Adams (2012) proposes that investigating well-being may provide an insight into how practitioners perceive childhood. Therefore, in order to show that associations exist between understandings of well-being and understandings of childhood, the following discussion draws upon Dahlberg et al. (2007) five dominant discourses which adults often use to construct childhood. Dahlberg et al. (2007) claim that discourses 1 to 4 (below) characterise modernist perspectives, whilst discourse 5 characterises a postmodern perspective. The five dominant discourses of constructing early childhood are briefly described as follows;

Discourse 1: *The child as knowledge, identity and culture reproducer*. For example, a child is viewed as an empty vessel needing to be filled with knowledge, skills, learn values and trained to conform to school. Childhood is viewed as a progressive journey, preparing children and getting them ready for adulthood.

Discourse 2: *The child as innocent, in the golden age of life.* For example, children require shelter and need protecting from a corrupt world. Childhood is an innocent period of life and viewed as sentimental.

Discourse 3: *The scientific child of biological stages*. For example, this view focuses on the individual child, biological stages, and natural ladder like progression where children are measured by separate developmental areas. However, context tends to be overlooked.

Discourse 4: *The child as labour market supply factor*. For example, this view focuses on maternal care in the earliest years where the mother is the primary

carer. Mother's returning to work is viewed as harmful to a child's development despite limited convincing evidence.

Discourse 5: *The child as a co-constructer of knowledge, identity and culture*. For example, childhood is viewed as one of many important life stages. There is neither a natural nor universal childhood. Children are viewed as social actors, agents of change, and the voice of the child is advocated.

When practitioners adopt a dominant objective indicator discourse as identified in the 'measurement' dimension, this indicates that they construct early childhood as described in discourse1: *the child as knowledge, identity and culture reproducer,* as well as discourse 3: *the scientific child of biological stages*. Even though the majority of practitioners communicate the objective dimension of well-being when talking about well-being, some practitioners acknowledge the subjective dimension. This suggests that they may also construct childhood as in discourse 5: *the child as co-constructer of knowledge, identity and culture* (Dahlberg et al. 2007). This means that practitioners draw upon more than one conceptualisation of childhood, as well as more than one conceptualisation of well-being. Therefore, multiple understandings exist amongst practitioners. This provides one explanation as to why practitioners are hesitant and uncertain about articulating well-being and operationalising well-being.

8.5.3 Understanding well-being in the curriculum

As outlined in Chapter 2, well-being started to appear in the last 20 years or so as a subject Area of the early years curriculum in various countries, but there is little consensus about its meaning in relation to the curriculum (Coleman, 2009; Roberts, 2010; Statham and Chase, 2010; Soutter et al. 2012). Therefore, this study explored the nature of well-being in various curricula in Wales, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia, and revealed that well-being is presented in eight different ways:

1. a principle of practice
2. a skill
3. knowledge
4. an attitude

5. a disposition
6. an attribute
7. a capability
8. an outcome

These interpretations were categorised and used to develop a structural framework (see Figure 4) which incorporate the eight different interpretations from the four different curricula to show there are four possible inter-related meanings to well-being:

1. Well-being as a principle of practice
2. Well-being as a child's personal characteristics
3. Well-being as knowledge and a skill
4. Well-being as an assessed outcome

The framework shows that in the context of curriculum policy well-being has different meanings, and therefore describing and explaining well-being may not be a straightforward task for policy-makers.

As outlined in Chapter 2, very little research focuses on the explicit teaching of well-being, and current research evidence mainly relates to specific targeted intervention programmes of which there are mixed findings. This thesis reveals a total of five different practices in which well-being is operationalised, one of which relates to discrete delivery which is implemented through the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme, circle time and numerous worksheets. The overdependence of worksheets relies on children being able to read and write proficiently which could disadvantage some children. Three of the practices relate to integrated practices enacted by the practitioners such as, nurturing, classroom environment and whole school practices, and another practice to be observed was enacted by children themselves. The latter practice contributes to the argument suggested by Edwards et al. (2015) that;

> well-being education generated by educators according to young children's interests is potentially more meaningful to children than intervention approaches designed to change children's behaviour… (p.4).

Identifying various meanings of well-being within the context of the curriculum is significant, particularly when the Welsh Government propose to implement a 'Curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life' for 3-to-16 year olds from 2018 (Welsh Government, 2015b). The new curriculum includes six 'discrete' Areas of Learning and three 'integrated' areas, such as literacy, numeracy and digital competence. 'Well-being' is presented as one of six Areas of Learning called 'Health and Well-being' and is no longer associated with the integrated code (Welsh Government, 2015b). Therefore, this thesis contributes to understanding the concept of well-being and its delivery in the Foundation Phase and the findings would be useful in informing the future development of curriculum policy. In order to enrich discussions about well-being in the curriculum, a helpful information sheet which reports the key findings is provided in Appendix 10 (p.280).

8.6 Explaining why practitioners are uncertain about the nature of well-being in the early years curriculum

This section discusses the main influences which explain why practitioners find the concept of children's well-being difficult to define, operationalise and capture. The five main influences that broadly relate to practitioners' uncertainty are limited research about the nature of well-being in school contexts, limited tools to assess well-being, different interpretations of well-being, as well as professional development training and various policy issues.

Firstly, there is a general lack of research around the meaning of child well-being in school contexts which could influence practitioners' uncertainty, and explains their lack of understanding about what it means and how it should be operationalised in the classroom. Even though Spratt (2016) explored the meaning of well-being with primary and secondary school teachers and policy actors in the Scottish Government, no other research is known that reports well-being from the perspective of the practitioner. Furthermore, there is a lack of research that reports the well-being of young children from diverse backgrounds. For example, the well-being of children from poorer backgrounds is more commonly reported in comparison to children from more affluent

backgrounds. Therefore, a lack of knowledge and understanding leads to assumptions being made about the nature of well-being. This explains why some practitioners shared an unwarranted assumption about a child's well-being and their socio-economic background.

Secondly, limited tools are available to practitioners for assessing the well-being of young children which explains why they find it difficult to capture. This paucity occurs because the development of tools for children has not kept pace with tools that have been developed for adults (Fraillon, 2004; Wigelsworth et al. 2010; Humphrey et al. 2011). Therefore, practitioners draw upon tools they are familiar with and utilise what they have to hand in order to assess children's well-being. But in doing this, they encounter various difficulties.

Thirdly, practitioners find the assessment of well-being challenging because they interpret well-being in many different ways. For example, this study reveals that practitioners associate well-being with at least four different dimensions which reinforces its complex nature. Consequently, practitioners struggle to know what they are fundamentally assessing and Cigman (2008) suggests that, "to measure something is to claim to know something rather precise about that thing, and it is hard to see how one can do this without knowing what 'it' is" (p.546). In other words, practitioners find it difficult to measure well-being because they are uncertain about its precise nature.

Fourthly, the type, duration and quality of professional development training that practitioners experience during their 'initial' training of early years education may influence their level of understanding about important concepts, such as well-being. Also, the type and quality of 'ongoing' professional development training that practitioners experience once they have entered the profession will influence their thinking about pedagogical practice. Whilst this study finds that practitioners are uncertain about concepts such as well-being, the three-year evaluation of the Foundation Phase reports that practitioners are also uncertain and confused about other concepts, such as learning through play, observation, child-initiated and adult-directed activities (Taylor et al. 2015). It could be argued that these concepts should be at the core of practitioners' training. This raises questions about the type, duration and quality of training that

practitioners experience which enable them to deliver high quality early years practice.

Lastly, various policy issues may influence practitioners' knowledge and understanding of well-being and impact on their ability and confidence to operationalise this in practice. For example, this study reports that a range of well-being domains are presented in various policy documents and some domains are privileged over others, whereas social well-being is generally overlooked. This means that practitioners are not presented with a sound understanding of the concept at policy level and this leads to confusion amongst practitioners. Furthermore, there are mixed messages presented in policy documents about the implementation of the curriculum and whether it should be delivered via the 'integrated' code or the 'collection' code. Despite mixed messages in various documents, the statutory framework expects practitioners to implement the 'integrated' code for well-being in the curriculum. But there is an expectation in policy to assess children which is more closely aligned with the 'collection' code (Bernstein, 1982). Therefore, key aspects of the curriculum, such as skills, outcomes and assessment requirements are not constructively aligned. This raises questions about the capacity of the 'educational' expertise at policy level, particularly in relation to curriculum development for young children.

Since 2008, there have been numerous curriculum changes across the UK, particularly in early years education in Wales. For example, the changes include replacing the Desirable Outcomes framework with the Foundation Phase in 2008, and the introduction of a Child Development Assessment Profile (CDAP) in 2011 which the Welsh Government withdrew in 2012. The Early Years Development Assessment Framework (EYDAF) was developed in 2013, and the Foundation Phase Profile (FPP) was introduced in 2015. Further changes include the introduction of a national Literacy Numeracy Framework (LNF) in 2013, and the introduction of national Literacy and Numeracy tests for 7-to-14 year olds in 2014. Therefore, it could be argued that the 'fast' pace of curriculum change and the way in which the changes are communicated and understood may contribute to practitioners' uncertainty about operationalising and assessing well-being in the curriculum. Furthermore, the training that

practitioners receive in order to cope with the numerous changes might influence their ability to successfully implement the curriculum with confidence and certainty.

8.7 Short term policy and practice implications

This section considers two short term implications, one relates to developing practitioners' knowledge and understanding of concepts relating to early years pedagogy, and the other relates to various support mechanisms which practitioners need to help them overcome challenges they experience in practice.

The evidence from this study and the three-year evaluation concerning practitioners' uncertainty about a range of concepts relating to early years pedagogy has important implications for the future implementation of the Foundation Phase. Therefore, developing practitioners' knowledge and understanding via targeted training is needed around the following areas to ensure effective delivery of the Foundation Phase:

- Understanding the meaning of complex concepts and how they are operationalised in practice, for example well-being and pedagogy.
- Exploring different models of curriculum delivery for the seven Areas of Learning and embedding/integrating the LNF and PSDWBCD.   For example, the 'collection' code, the 'integrated' code, a combination of the two.
- Recognising the importance of play in the curriculum and their role in supporting children's learning and development.
- Understanding the importance of observation in learning about children's strengths and capabilities.

In order for practitioners to fully engage with the practical considerations of their work and to encourage reflection, the targeted training should incorporate an element of theory. This should help practitioners develop a secure understanding of their practice.

This study reveals that practitioners experience various challenges in operationalising the curriculum which also has implications for the future implementation of the Foundation Phase. Practitioners should, firstly, know where to seek help and advice and secondly, senior leaders/stakeholders should be well-informed and knowledgeable to support and mentor them. Therefore, it is vital that a variety of different support mechanisms are in place for effective curriculum delivery, and for senior stakeholders to be able to help practitioners overcome these challenges. One example of a support mechanism 'within' schools would be to have a high quality on-site professional development library where practitioners can access both theoretical and practical information. Another support mechanism 'within' schools would be to ensure there is an effective mentoring system for practitioners.

The previous section identified the fast pace of curriculum change, therefore it is crucial that schools have effective, confident leaders who can understand and communicate the changes to practitioners. Leaders should set out to create a rich professional space where school teams can reflect on finding a balance between satisfying policy demands (i.e. strategic acts), and staying true to what they know about early childhood development (i.e. authentic manoeuvres) (Basford and Bath, 2014). Effective leadership within schools should mean that practitioners have regular opportunities to engage in professional dialogue and be able to discuss their practice in a safe, supportive learning environment. Embedding the concept of reflective practice into 'initial' training and 'ongoing' professional development training would be worthwhile. Firstly, this would equip practitioners with the relevant skills needed to cope with various curriculum changes, and secondly, it would provide them with confidence to deal with various challenges they encounter in practice.

Practitioners should also feel supported and guided by curriculum documentation which is produced by the government. For example, practitioners need a strong rationale in policy to explain why they are being expected to assess well-being within PSDWBCD, as well as strategies and tools to support them with this process. Practitioners also need consistent messages in policy about the concept of well-being with a particular focus on

the clarification of well-being domains, as well as clear messages about the implementation of the Foundation Phase.

A different type of support mechanism which has been produced as a direct result of this study is an information sheet (see Appendix 10, p.280) which reports the key findings of this study, and aims to provide some consensus about child well-being in the context of an early years curriculum. It can be used as a way of reminding people of the key points to consider/think about when well-being enters the curriculum context.

8.8 Longer term policy and practice implications

This section considers the longer term implications relating to assessment in the curriculum and the characteristics of tools to assess children's well-being. Chapter 7 reveals that practitioners currently use criterion-referenced assessment tools to capture children's well-being. This is a form of 'first level' assessment which mainly shows what children can do 'without support', whereas 'second level' forms of assessment show what children can do 'with support'. This thesis suggests that practitioners should aim to operationalise first and second level forms of assessment in order to gain a more rounded perspective, rather than privilege certain types, such as criterion-referenced assessment which could limit what this tells them about children.

This thesis reveals that practitioners are unclear about the rationale for capturing well-being in the Foundation Phase. Therefore, the following principles of assessment could be shared more explicitly in policy, which in turn could help to provide more clarity for practitioners. The seven principles for conducting meaningful assessment are as follows;

1. Embed assessment in classroom activities
2. Use multiple sources to collect assessment evidence
3. Set time aside for systematic observation of children
4. View assessment as a process that takes place over time
5. Examine children's reasoning through their actions and words
6. Examine the curriculum through children's actions and words
7. Make assessment a collaborative endeavour
(Edmiaston, 2002, pp.56-62).

This thesis suggests that policy-makers, training institutions and practitioners have a role to play in ensuring that a variety of assessment methods are implemented with young children. One example would be the use of a shared assessment profile (Edmiaston, 2002) which is managed and owned by practitioners and the child themselves, and would be useful in addressing the seven principles above. The work that is chosen for the profile is selected collaboratively (Overall and Sangster, 2006) and it might include targets that the child is working towards because of the nature of the statutory curriculum. Also, parents could benefit from the shared profile and equally have an input. Ideally, this type of profile would be flexible, frequently used and viewed as integral to teaching and owned by a range of people including the child. It would represent the child holistically, honestly and as an individual in their own right. The aim is to avoid having identical profiles for a class of children and this type of profile is commonly known as a 'product-and-process oriented' type (Edmiaston, 2002). It includes many different ways of documenting children's learning and progress and is more suited to younger children because it represents children's development and progress as a 'process' rather than an 'event/end product' (Edmiaston, 2002).

Practitioners who participated in this study also raised concerns about the Outcome criteria for PSDWBCD in the Foundation Phase. They perceive the criteria as being ambiguous in nature, flawed in some way, difficult to interpret and decontextualised. This has implications on the reliability and validity of future assessments and questions whether the criteria stated in curricula are fit for purpose. In light of this finding, policy-makers may like to reflect on the way in which future criteria are developed and be explicit about this process. In other words, getting the 'criteria' correct in criterion-referenced assessment is vital if the information is going to be used to make judgements about children's progress and achievements; and if it is going to inform policy-makers about the successful implementation of their policies. Therefore, a rigorous piloting process would help to ensure that expectations are clearly communicated and curriculum Outcomes are realistic and achievable for all children.

In addition to exploring how practitioners operationalise well-being in the curriculum, various well-being assessment tools were explored with practitioners. This took the form of a workshop-based focus group and as a result of this exploration, as well as a review of tools for Chapter 2, the following characteristics have been identified which seem to be missing from current tools. In order to provide reliable and useful information about child well-being, future tools that are developed to capture and/or assess well-being may benefit from the following characteristics:

1. Focuses on both objective and subjective well-being data
2. Includes perspectives from parents and children as well as practitioners
3. Focuses on capturing children's strengths and capabilities (positive development)
4. Includes a schedule for practitioners to carry out systematic observations
5. Expectation to gather evidence in the form of a process portfolio
6. Opportunity to record contextual information
7. Includes multiple items (objective indicators)
8. Includes a rating scale component
9. Playful tasks which empower children
10. Captures different well-being domains
11. Dashboard approach to include a summary of well-being
12. Flexible and user friendly as well as easy to implement
13. Practical guidelines for practitioners in using the tool/suite of tools
14. Suggestions about ways forward after using the tool

Over the longer term, it would be useful to ascertain the benefits of these characteristics and the way in which they complement each other. Cultural differences about children's capabilities also emerged when exploring various tools with practitioners. Therefore, this thesis suggests that people who develop tools need to acknowledge that different understandings exist about children's capabilities, and this should be taken into consideration when developing tools so they can be used effectively.

8.9 Future directions for research

This section briefly considers the future directions for research, in terms of establishing consensus about the conceptual nature of well-being, ways of capturing child well-being and future methodological considerations for researching well-being.

8.8.1 The conceptual nature of well-being

This study reveals various understandings of well-being from the perspective of the primary school practitioner, but little is known about how well-being is understood from parents, children or across cultures. In addition, this study reveals that practitioners share one unwarranted assumption about well-being and a child's socio-economic background. It is argued that this is a potential misunderstanding reported by practitioners. Chapter 2 argued that many claims are made about well-being in policy but there tends to be limited empirical evidence to support these claims. Lastly, the study briefly discussed the gaining momentum of young children's subjective well-being and education. Therefore, the following suggestions are possible ways forward in developing an understanding of the nature of child well-being:

- ➤ To further understand the nature of well-being in different educational contexts and from children and parents.
- ➤ To identify any additional misunderstandings about the concept of well-being from primary school practitioners.
- ➤ To establish consensus about the nature of well-being in education and other related contexts, as well as across cultures because well-being is often compared across countries.
- ➤ To explore the various policy claims about well-being and education.
- ➤ To explore the relationship between rights-based pedagogy and children's subjective well-being.

8.8.2 Capturing well-being

This study explored the nature of well-being from a historical and contemporary context to further understand child well-being. Chapters 2 and 3 revealed that

objective well-being is often favoured in policy and little is known about how subjective well-being data can complement objective data and vice versa. Chapter 2 revealed that limited tools exist for capturing children's well-being but specifically their subjective well-being. The empirical findings reported in Chapter 7 argue that digital tools are more effective in empowering children than paper-based methods. Therefore, the following suggestions highlight how the development of measures for child well-being can begin to match those which are developed for adult well-being:

- ➢ To explore ways in which objective and subjective well-being data can be utilised to inform policy.
- ➢ To explore and develop appropriate and effective ways of capturing young children's subjective well-being, for use in policy, research and classroom practice.
- ➢ To investigate the role of digital tools in assessing well-being in schools.

8.8.3 Methodological considerations for researching well-being

This study adopted a qualitative approach to understanding the concept of well-being and conducted research in two primary schools which to some extent limits how far the findings can be generalised. Therefore, adopting a mixed method design across more schools would provide a more in-depth insight into the nature of well-being, and begin to understand how objective and subjective data complement each other.

Thematic analysis was the main data analysis approach adopted for this study and a large amount of data was collected via multiple methods, such as focus groups, interviews, documentation and observations. However, the use of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) for the purpose of analysis may have accelerated the process of generating codes and themes. In addition, it would have been easier to navigate the data corpus to establish patterns, and to confirm understandings and misunderstandings of well-being.

Unstructured narrative observations were carried out for this study, but Chapter 6 reveals that five different types of well-being practices are currently in use in early years classrooms which are enacted by adults and children. Therefore, there would be scope for adopting an ethnographic study of well-being practices to identify any further types.

8.10 Concluding comments

This thesis aimed to explore how well-being is understood and operationalised in the Foundation Phase. It contributes to curriculum policy and practice by raising awareness of the different understandings associated with the concept of well-being and one potential misunderstanding shared by some primary school practitioners. This thesis also reveals that practitioners are hesitant and uncertain about articulating the nature of well-being as well as operationalising and capturing well-being. The findings show that the policy direction for delivering the Foundation Phase is generally operationalised differently in practice. This suggests that describing well-being for curriculum policy purposes is not a straightforward task, but having said that interpreting and operationalising curriculum policy for practitioners is not a straightforward task. In other words, this thesis has highlighted that policy-makers *and* practitioners are often faced with challenging tasks. This raises an important point about policy-makers understanding the role of practitioners, and practitioners acknowledging the role of policy-makers.

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Appendix 1: Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity, Area of Learning

Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity

Skills

Personal development

Children should be given opportunities to:
- become independent in their personal hygiene needs and to be more aware of personal safety
- express and communicate different feelings and emotions – their own and those of others
- show curiosity and develop positive attitudes to new experiences and learning
- take risks and become confident explorers of their indoor and outdoor environment
- experiment with new learning opportunities, including ICT
- become independent thinkers and learners
- develop an awareness of what they are good at and understand how they can improve their learning and use feedback to improve their work
- concentrate for lengthening periods
- value the learning, success and achievements of themselves and other people.

Social development

Children should be given opportunities to:
- be aware of and respect the needs of others
- take responsibility for their own actions
- consider the consequences of words and actions for themselves and others
- develop an understanding of the behavioural expectations of the setting/school and understand that rules are essential in an ordered community
- develop an understanding of what is fair and unfair and to be willing to compromise
- form relationships and feel confident to play and work cooperatively
- value friends and families and show care and consideration
- appreciate what makes a good friend
- develop a positive self-image and a sense of belonging as part of different communities and have an understanding of their own Welsh identity
- develop an awareness of different cultures and the differing needs, views and beliefs of other people in their own and in other cultures
- treat people from all cultural backgrounds in a respectful and tolerant manner
- develop an understanding of the diversity of roles that people play in different groups and communities
- begin to question stereotyping.

Range

Throughout the Foundation Phase, children should be given opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding through being involved in a range of experiences including:
- activities in the indoor and outdoor learning environments
- different types of play and a range of planned activities, including those that are child initiated

- activities that allow them to adopt a range of roles, including leadership within a small group, paired learning or working within a team
- different resources such as those in print and interactive forms
- activities that allow them to become independent learners
- activities that allow them to use their senses, to be creative and imaginative

Moral and spiritual development

Children should be given opportunities to:
- respond to ideas and questions enthusiastically, sensitively, creatively, and intuitively
- communicate about what is good and bad, right and wrong, fair and unfair, caring and inconsiderate
- communicate and reflect on the decisions made in stories, situations or personally, suggesting alternative responses
- respond personally to simple imaginary moral situations giving reasons for decisions made
- use stories or situations to raise questions about why some things are special
- express ideas and feelings creatively, explaining why they are significant
- talk about the choices available to individuals and discuss whether the choices available make a decision easier or more complex
- ask questions about how and why special things should be treated with respect and respond personally
- ask questions about what is important in life from a personal perspective and from the perspective of others.

Well-being

Children should be given opportunities to:
- value and contribute to their own well-being and to the well-being of others
- be aware of their own feelings and develop the ability to express them in an appropriate way
- understand the relationship between feelings and actions and that other people have feelings
- demonstrate care, respect and affection for other children, adults and their environment
- develop a growing interest in the world around them and understand what their environment has to offer when playing alone and with others
- understand and recognise the changes that happen to their bodies as they exercise and describe the changes to their breathing, heart rate, appearance and feelings
- develop an understanding that exercise and hygiene and the right types of food and drink are important for healthy bodies
- ask for assistance when needed
- develop an understanding about dangers in the home and outside environment
- understand that medicines are taken to make them feel better and that some drugs are dangerous.

- activities that allow them to communicate their ideas, values and beliefs about themselves, others and the world
- activities that allow them to solve problems and discuss outcomes
- activities that allow them to begin to understand how they can protect the environment and become environmentally friendly in their everyday lives
- activities that allow them to feel safe and secure and feel that they are valued

- activities that contribute to their own safety
- activities that allow them to make healthy choices and to develop and understand their own bodies and how to keep them safe and healthy.

Appendix 2: Research proposal submitted in 2013
Title

Towards a common understanding of a complex concept: an exploratory study investigating and capturing children's social and emotional well-being in Foundation Phase classrooms (3-to-7 year olds).

Summary of research project

This study is a 3 year PhD project funded by the ESRC (October 2012 to October 2015) and linked with a project entitled 'Evaluating the Foundation Phase' (a curriculum for 3-to-7 year olds in Wales) funded by the Welsh Government. The study design is primarily going to be an exploratory small scale qualitative comparative case study examining the concept of well-being within two schools of different socio-economic status (SES). The research will be designed in two stages.

Stage one of the study will consist of building a strong partnership with two schools and establishing a positive working relationship with all participants. This stage will involve gathering multiple perceptions of well-being from practitioners (primarily teachers and teaching assistants) to discover what they understand by well-being and ascertain how they document and assess it in the Foundation Phase (Nursery through to Year 2). Initially this will be conducted informally in focus group interviews where practitioners will be asked to write down (collaboratively on a large body template) what they think well-being is. One to one semi-structured interviews will also be conducted. Stage one will also involve observations in the different classes to understand how well-being is supported and promoted in the classroom.

Stage two of the study will consist of using the findings from stage one to a) identify what domains and perspectives of well-being exist in their responses and b) facilitate the development of new or existing tools in capturing well-being in the classroom. This stage will involve piloting two tools that have different characteristics where children and parents will be invited to become participants.

Aims

To demonstrate and argue that the concept of children's social and emotional well-being (SEWB) is complex in both theory and practice.

To explore and develop tools that capture children's SEWB in Foundation Phase classrooms.

Research questions

1) How is well-being understood, documented and assessed by Foundation Phase practitioners in two different schools and how is it embedded in the classroom?

2) What characteristics are present in new or existing tools that make them more reliable in capturing a specific domain of SEWB?

3) What barriers exist in developing new and existing tools that capture domains of SEWB?

Appendix 3: Foundation Phase Outcomes for Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity

Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity Outcomes

Foundation Phase Outcome 1

Children are dependent on familiar adults emotionally. They have started to express in simple terms how they feel and respond to social greetings. Children may have a tantrum when frustrated but are learning that some behaviour is unacceptable. They have begun to role play on their own or in parallel with other children, often near a familiar adult. Children may need assistance with everyday self-help (personal) skills but are usually keen to help. They show knowledge of familiar care routines.

Foundation Phase Outcome 2

Children like to help adults and peers but not when it conflicts with their interests. They demonstrate affection for other children and may play with them. When supported by an adult, children are willing to share toys and materials and will take turns. Children have become aware of their own feelings and emotions and are beginning to identify with those of others. They are trying to be independent but sometimes need assistance. They are beginning to develop an awareness of personal safety in particular dangerous hazards.

Foundation Phase Outcome 3

Children have become more independent in their learning and are able to cope with change to routines. They recognise and are increasingly sensitive to the needs of others. They are beginning to recognise appropriate behaviour for different situations and respond to reason. They are beginning to understand that all living things should be treated with care, respect and concern. They demonstrate some control over their emotions and will often adopt the standards of behaviour of adults that are close to them. They are able to cater for most personal needs independently.

Foundation Phase Outcome 4

Children will take part in cooperative play independently. They increasingly show self-control and are able to wait for their needs to be met. They are able to concentrate on a task and have definite likes and dislikes. Children support, comfort and help other children when they are sad or upset. They are becoming increasingly aware of the similarities and differences between themselves and their peers, and recognise cultural differences and diversity. Children enjoy caring for the environment such as plants and pets. They are aware of healthy eating habits and can distinguish between foods that are healthy and those that are not.

Foundation Phase Outcome 5

Children associate, cooperate and communicate appropriately with peers and familiar adults and seek help when necessary. They recognise and can express their feelings appropriately. They respect others and value their achievements. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and are more aware of other people's feelings, views and beliefs. They have grasped the concept of fair play and have an understanding of rules and why they are there. Children have a greater understanding of the consequences of their actions and take responsibility for decisions that they make. In the main, they are able to control their emotions and cope with disappointment. They understand that to keep their bodies healthy they will need to eat and drink appropriately.

Foundation Phase Outcome 6

Children have learned that they can and often do control their emotions. They have begun to form friendships which are very important to them, and idol/hero figures are significant in their play and lives. They understand that people have different preferences, views and beliefs and have an understanding of how they should relate to others morally and ethically. Children have moved on to be able to see things from other children's and adults' points of view. Children are competent in identifying problems and coming up with solutions to solve them. They are able to demonstrate skills of perseverance, concentration and motivation. They demonstrate appropriate self-control. Children understand how they can improve their learning and can be reflective.

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Appendix 4: Focus group questions

Issue/topic	Possible questions
Definitions (participants to scribe on large paper)	Using words/terms, what do you think well-being is/about? What words would you associate with well-being?
Knowledge & understanding	How do you think a child gets/achieves high w/b What are the advantages of children having high well-being? What contributes to low w/b? What are the disadvantages of a children having low w/b?
Classroom/school context	How would you describe a child as having high w/b in this school? How would you describe a child as having low w/b in this school?
Supporting Promoting Developing	How is w/b supported in this school? Are there any specific programmes in place that promote w/b? SEAL – any thoughts/feelings?
Documenting Evidencing Assessing	Describe how you track progress/evidence throughout the year with regards to the AoL: Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity? Are there any strengths or weaknesses or general feelings to the way it is evidenced or documented in this setting? How are assessments and judgements usually made about this AoL?
Clarification/conclude interview (participants to scribe on large paper)	Now that we have had a discussion, read the WAG statement – what does it mean to you? Can you add anything further?

Concepts

Implementation

Assessment

Appendix 5: Semi-structured interview schedule

Date of interview: Time: Name of interviewee:

Role in school: Years in practice:

Issue/topic	Possible questions	Possible follow-up questions	Probes
Definitions Knowledge & understanding	What words do you associate with w/b? How would you describe a child with high/low w/b? Since the introduction of the FP, do you think about children's well-being differently?	What do mean exactly? Any examples?	
Supporting Promoting Developing Teaching Role of w/b	How do you think you support/promote children's w/b in the classroom? Are you aware of any specific programmes that promote w/b? Does this school implement specific strategies to promote or develop w/b? Do you think there are any threats/opportunities to developing/promoting children's w/b? Do you teach well-being as a stand-alone component of PSDWBCD? (show framework)	Develop w/b? Promote w/b? SEAL, PATHS, time to talk? How successful do you think they have been? Do you think it should	Can you give any examples? Can you tell me any more about them?

	(CTs)	be/can be taught?	
  Evidencing Assessing	Describe how you track progress/evidence throughout the year with regards to the AoL: Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity? (CTs) Are there specific tools used to measure/capture children's PSDWBCD? (CTs, HTs)	Is this the main way? Are you aware of other ways? Any further improvements needed?	Go on...
Status/position Significance in relation to other AoL	Do you track any other AoL more than PSDWBCD? (CTs, HTs) In your opinion, what is the most important AoL? Are there AoL that have more priority in this school? If you could rank the AoL in order of significance/importance – how would you rank them? (use additional sheet)	Why do you think this is the case?	
Clarification/conclude interview	Can you clarify your definition of w/b? Do you want to add any further information?		

Schedule template taken from: Thomas, G. 2009. *How to do your research project*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Appendix 6: Ethical approval letter

Cardiff School of Social Sciences
Director Professor Malcolm Williams
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol Caerdydd
Cyfarwyddwr Yr Athro Malcolm Williams

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

28th May 2013

Our ref: SREC/1069

Alyson Lewis
PhD Programme
SOCSI

Dear Alyson

Your project entitled *"Towards a common understanding: an exploratory study investigating and capturing children's social and emotional well-being in Foundation Phase classrooms (3-7 year olds)"* has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence the project.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored every 12 months and it is a condition of continued approval that you complete the monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Tom Horlick-Jones
Chair of the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

cc: E Renton
        Supervisors: C Taylor & S Waldron

Appendix 7: Project information for participants

Alyson Lewis (PhD Researcher)

School of Social Sciences

2nd Floor, 1-3 Museum Place

Cardiff, CF10 3BD

lewisak@cardiff.ac.uk

07875 472461

01443 414837

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Understanding and capturing well-being in the Foundation Phase

Participant information sheet (practitioners)
September 2013

You are being invited to take part in an exploratory research study which is designed in two stages. Before you decide to take part you need to know the purpose of the study, what it will involve and what will happen with the findings. Please read the following information carefully and do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions (contact details above).

Aims of the project

1) To demonstrate and argue that the concept of children's social and emotional well-being (SEWB) is complex in both theory and practice.
2) To explore and develop tools that capture children's SEWB in Foundation Phase classrooms.

Why is this study important?

- Insufficient research has been conducted about well-being in schools & multiple definitions exist…
- Governments & the media oversimplify complex issues such as well-being and childhood…
- Researchers, practitioners & policy-makers tend to work in isolation…
- Tools to capture young children's well-being are very limited & underdeveloped…
- In 2011, the Welsh Government claimed that well-being as a concept is not new but the focus on understanding, reporting and assessing well-being is a new phenomenon…
- CDAP has been withdrawn, a review of assessment tools took place in 2012 and there is a reporting procedure currently being developed for September 2014…
- It is compulsory for practitioners to record Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity and report on it at the age of 7…

What is the purpose of the study?

Stage one will focus on exploring and discovering how well-being is understood, assessed and documented in two primary schools in different areas from Nursery through to Year 2. Stage one will help to establish a particular domain of well-being and ascertain whether different domains are associated with different age groups. Another reason for carrying out the study is to evaluate

existing tools that aim to capture well-being and to develop new tools. The findings from stage one will help to facilitate the development of tools for stage two. Therefore, stage two involves more direct work with children in the Foundation Phase where existing tools will be implemented with different characteristics to evaluate what makes tools reliable.

What will the study involve?
- Regular communication, collaboration and interaction will be required between the researcher and school practitioners.
- Short interviews (approximately 20 minutes) with teachers, teaching assistants and parents from Nursery to Year 2 to gather multiple perceptions.
- Practitioners to complete a (quick) reflection task at the end of each term.
- Observations will be carried out in each classroom to discover how well-being is supported and promoted (8 in total over two terms). *Schools to negotiate.*
- No preparation will be needed by the practitioners.
- Pilot of tools in classes in the Summer term involving children and parents.
- Distribution of consent forms to parents for children to take part.

What is the value of me taking part?
You will get an opportunity to reflect on your practice, engage in professional dialogue and ask questions. Documenting and assessing this particular area of the Foundation Phase can be very time-consuming but you will have the benefit of a researcher working closely by, trying to develop and implement a tool that is reliable, robust and easy to administer. This may be particularly helpful for you at a time when the reporting procedure is currently being developed by the Welsh Government and changes are not expected to be put in place until September 2014. There is also the opportunity of your Foundation Phase team coming together and sharing thoughts, concerns and queries. No judgements or assessments will be made about practitioners or the schools taking part. The study is purely exploratory.

What will happen to data gathered & who will have access to the findings?
All electronic data such as interview transcripts, observation data and the findings from the well-being reflective task will be stored on the Cardiff University network which is password protected. All information will be anonymous and only the researcher and Cardiff University staff and project supervisors will view the data. Findings may be used for the publication of academic journal articles and conference presentations. This research project has also been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University. Information will not be shared with Estyn or the Local Authority that could be identified as coming from your school.

What if I change my mind?
You decide whether to take part and you can withdraw from the study at any time by informing the researcher. You will have at least one week to consider

whether you want to be part of the interviews, classroom observations or termly reflection task.

About the researcher
Alyson first trained as a Nursery Nurse in 1995 and then graduated from Swansea Institute of Higher Education in 2001 with a BA (Hons) Primary Education with QTS and worked for seven years as a Nursery and Reception teacher in Cardiff. In 2009 she completed an MSc Econ in Early Childhood and was awarded Distinction of which her research involved gathering perspectives on outdoor play. Nursery and Reception children were participants of the study as well as practitioners and parents. Alyson also trained as a Forest School Leader in 2008 and has provided quality outdoor sessions for Nursery, Reception and Year 5 children. In 2003, she became involved in the Effective Early Learning (EEL) project and completed her EEL training. *Her preferred approach to research is applied that is working closely with practitioners in trying to develop and enhance aspects of practice.*

May I take this opportunity to thank you for reading the project information and hope that you would like to become involved. If you have any other questions you can contact the project supervisor Professor Chris Taylor on TaylorCM@cardiff.ac.uk

I look forward to working with you.

Best Wishes,

Alyson Lewis
PhD Researcher

Appendix 8: Project information for parents/carers

Alyson Lewis (PhD Researcher)

School of Social Sciences

2nd Floor, 1-3 Museum Place

Cardiff, CF10 3BD

lewisak@cardiff.ac.uk

07875 472461

01443 414837

Parent/Carer Information sheet
September 2013

Your child's primary school has been invited to take part in an exploratory research study over the next year. All this means is that a researcher from Cardiff University will be based in Foundation Phase classrooms (Nursery through to Year 2) capturing daily classroom activity (by making notes). The researcher wants to understand what it is like for children and practitioners working there.

The aims of the project are to better understand children's social and emotional well-being and to develop appropriate tools to capture this. To meet these aims, the researcher needs to spend a considerable amount of time over the next year based in the school, absorbing school life.

Alyson (the researcher) is an experienced early years teacher and now works as an educational researcher and has satisfied the required Criminal Records Bureau checks. All information will be anonymous and only the researcher and Cardiff University staff and project supervisors will view the data. Findings may be used for the publication of academic journal articles and conference presentations. This research project has also been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University.

If you would prefer for your child not to be included in the observations, please complete the **opt-out slip** below. If you are happy for your child to be included in the study then you do not have to do anything. You are also able to opt out of the study at any time over the next year by contacting the researcher.

Thank you for reading the information, if you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me or the project supervisor Professor Chris Taylor on TaylorCM@cardiff.ac.uk

Best Wishes,

Alyson Lewis
PhD Researcher
****
You only need to complete this **opt-out slip** if you **DO NOT** want your child to be included in the observations for the research study.

I am aware of the research study and I DO NOT want my child to be included in observations or field notes (***tick if you want to opt-*** ☐ ***out***).

Parent/Carer Name:…………………………………………………………..

Child's Name:…………………………………………………………………..

Child's Class:………………………………………………………

Appendix 9: Participant consent letter

Alyson Lewis (PhD Researcher) School of Social Sciences 2nd Floor, 1-3 Museum Place Cardiff, CF10 3BD	CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRIFYSGOL CAERDYD	E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL	lewisak@cardiff.ac.uk 07875 472461 01443 414837

Understanding and capturing well-being in the Foundation Phase

Participant consent form

Name of Researcher: Alyson Lewis
Cardiff University
School of Social Sciences

Please read the following statements and indicate with a tick √ if you are happy to proceed and take part.

Consent statements	Tick
I have read the participant information sheet and feel clearly informed about the project.	
I have had time to consider whether I want to take part in the study and ask questions.	
I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time by informing the researcher.	
I understand that this study involves interaction and collaboration with the researcher for the duration of the study.	
I understand that data collected may be used in publications and other disseminations.	
I agree to take part.	

……………………………………………………….
Name of participant

………………………………………………………
Date

…………………………………………………..
Signature

Appendix 10: Summary of the research findings

Key findings from a study about children's well-being in the curriculum

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

You might be interested in the findings if...

✓ You want to know what well-being means from the perspective of a practitioner working with young children

✓ You are thinking about how to promote and support children's well-being

✓ You are developing curriculum policy and writing about well-being

✓ You are thinking about researching children's well-being and defining the concept

Where did the study take place?

In two primary schools in South Wales, a total of ten classrooms.

How was data collected?

Via eight group discussions, 18 practitioner interviews, 342 hours of classroom observations.

Practitioners' interpretations of well-being:

◆ Well-being as a 'pre-requisite' to developing a range of skills

◆ Well-being as a by-product/outcome (a positive or negative experience at home and/or school)

◆ Well-being is an 'irreducible' concept

◆ Well-being is 'reducible' to three domains (types): 'social' well-being, 'emotional/psychological' well-being and 'physical' well-being

◆ Well-being can be assessed through 'objective' indicators

◆ Well-being as 'subjective' evidence from the child

◆ Well-being as an 'integrated' curriculum approach

◆ Well-being as a subject to 'discretely' deliver

> Consider the evidence because mixed findings exist about whether targeted programmes improve well-being.

> Consider the evidence because assumptions are made about children's well-being.

Promoting & supporting well-being is implemented in the following ways:

⇒ Nurturing well-being practices

⇒ Classroom environment well-being practices

⇒ Whole school well-being practices

⇒ Children's well-being practices

⇒ Discrete well-being practices

Inter-related meanings of well-being in various early years curricula:

◆ A principle of practice

◆ A child's personal characteristics, attributes, traits

◆ Well-being as knowledge and a skill

◆ Assessed curriculum outcome

Curriculum policy and well-being:

◊ Clear and consistent messages are needed about an 'integrated' and 'discrete' curriculum delivery

◊ Consistent description of well-being domains

◊ Consideration of capturing children's subjective well-being

Appendix 11: Example of coded transcript – screenshot

Interview schedule for staff (class teachers CTs, TAs)

Date of interview: 28.1.14   Time: 3pm – 3.25pm   Name of interviewee: JS

Role in school: Rec CT   Years in practice: 14

Issue/topic	Possible questions
Definitions	What words do you associate with w/b?
Knowledge & understanding	CT: happy, settled, makes friends, used to routines, happy at home, good health, good self-esteem, I try to create that in the classroom, meet their needs, washing their hands is one thing. Having a sense of belonging, caring about others and sharing. It's everything, goes through it all.
	How would you describe a child with high/low w/b?
	CT: high): they are mature, good stage in their development, they interact with other children, they have a happy home background and stable this contributes to everything. They are confident and plays well. Having good speech this is really important as they need this to interact.
	CT: low): they don't have family support, they are tired, exhausted and are not good with routines.
	Since the introduction of the FP, do you think about children's well-being differently?
	CT: I don't think the FP has changed anything. Although I have said to you before, we have more staff now but still have more to do. Years ago I managed to do more. I know this is off track but my mum went to boarding school at eleven and has mental health problems and I wonder if it has anything to do with her going to boarding school. I worry about my children's well-being, my youngest is in private nursery and I worry about the long term impact on her well-being. My son is in year 2, highflying school, well-being is great as a person, he's happy, makes friends, content sociable but academically he's not where he should be. We do work with him at home and try really hard. Like my husband's school gets extra money but like my class here I have 3 on FSM so I'm never going to get any more money.
Supporting	How do you think you support/promote children's w/b in the classroom?
Promoting	CT: SEAL lessons are specific I usually do them on a Monday afternoon, at the beginning of the week I try and get readers

Comment [H1]: EWB
Comment [H2]: SWB
Comment [H3]: PD 1b
Comment [H4]: EWB
Comment [H5]: Function of home
Comment [H6]: HD
Comment [H7]: EWB
Comment [H8]: PWB, skills
Comment [H9]: Belonging
Comment [H10]: EWB, SWB
Comment [H11]: Function of education
Comment [H12]: Knowledgeable
Comment [H13]: SWB
Comment [H14]: Function of the home
Comment [H15]: SWB
Comment [H16]: CWB, SWB
Comment [H17]: Home dyad
Comment [H18]: PWB
Comment [H19]: PD 1b
Comment [H20]: SWB, EWB
Comment [H21]: Becoming
Comment [H22]: Home dyad
Comment [H23]: Affiliation - SES
Comment [A24]: Specific activity/programme
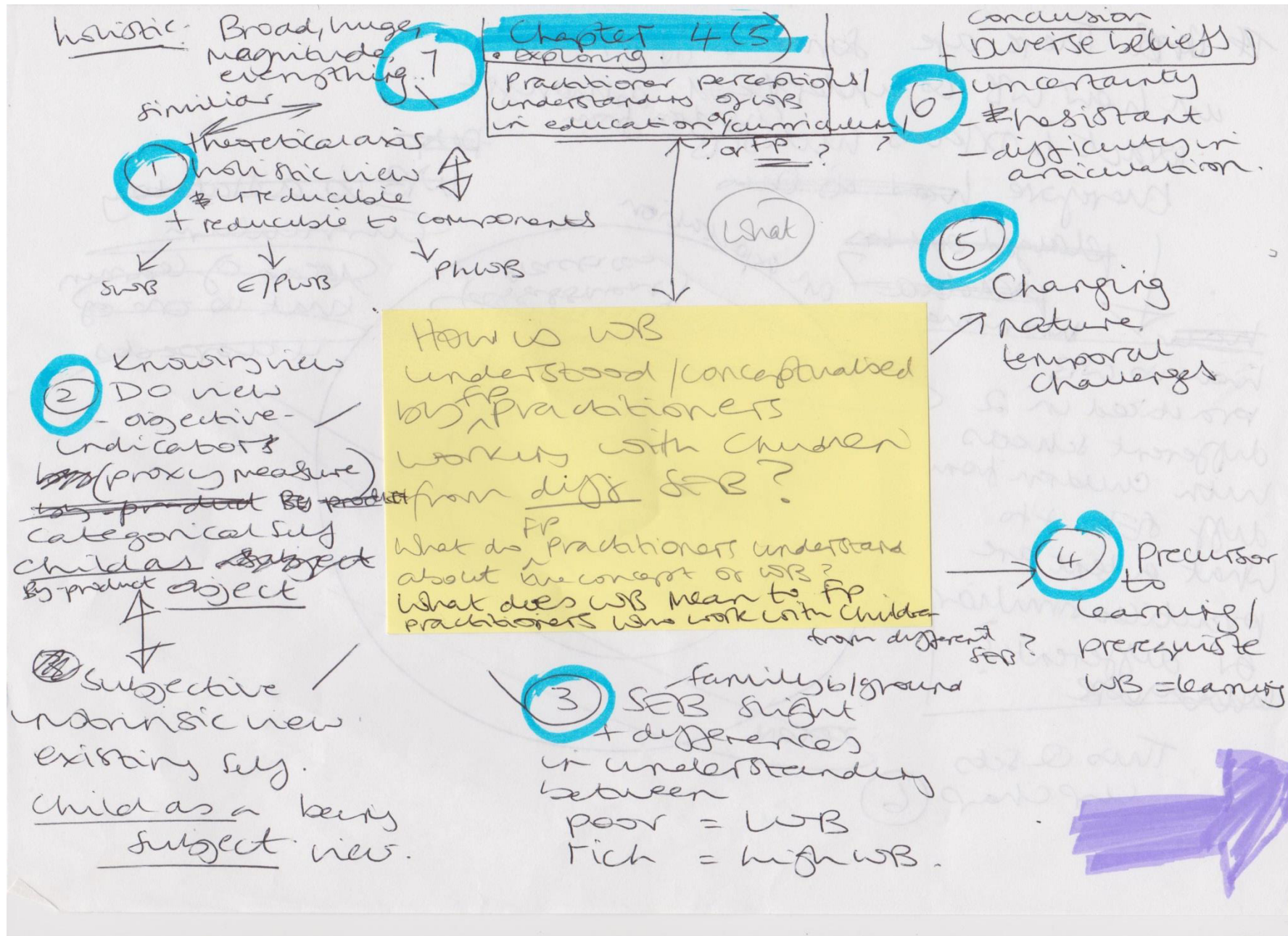Comment [A25]: Specific programme/activity
Comment [H26]: EWB doing
Comment [A27]: Assembly –
Comment [H28]: PD 1c

870   80%

Appendix 12: Example of thematic map

Appendix 13: Identifying emerging similarities and differences between the themes - screenshot

Chapter Five: key findings	Chapter Six: key findings	Chapter Seven: key findings
Chapter title: **Practitioners' understanding of young children's well-being in the early years curriculum**	Chapter title: **Operationalising well-being in the early years curriculum: perceptions and practices**	Chapter title: **Capturing the well-being of young children in the early years curriculum: describing and discussing tools**
1: Practitioners are hesitant when articulating what well-being means and find it difficult to define and explain 2: Various ways of conceptualising young children's well-being 3: Taken-for-granted truths about children's well-being and their socio-economic background 4: Common perception that well-being should be integrated across the curriculum rather than taught discretely	1: Practitioners are hesitant and uncertain about promoting and supporting children's well-being 2: Various well-being practices communicated and observed 3: Dominant integrated curriculum practices communicated and enacted/observed 4: Some explicit well-being teaching activities communicated and enacted 5: Various ways of interpreting well-being in curriculum policy 6: Similarities in practice between two schools with different socio-economic contexts 7: Perceptions of current curriculum challenges and how they may influence children's well-being	1: Practitioner uncertainty of capturing well-being and limited awareness of specific tools 2: Different tools to evidence pre-determined curriculum criteria for PSDWBCD 3: Reported difficulties in capturing well-being in the curriculum

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