

# What has mentoring to do with wellbeing?

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# This presentation

- Based on the premise that mentoring and befriending aim to support / enhance the wellbeing of children and young people, through the provision of a supporting relationship

## Aims to

- Examine different understandings of wellbeing
- Examine ways of working with wellbeing
- Relate to models of mentoring and befriending
- Raise some theoretical questions about nature of mentoring and befriending interventions

# Wellbeing

Ubiquitous

Invoked in contexts of emotional literacy, resilience, self esteem, social skills, citizenship, voice, employability, social justice, creativity, achieving, flourishing.....



'Good things this way' (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008).

Always seen as positive

Malleable meaning appeals across interagency boundaries.

Floating signifier?

Or 'slippery elision of constructs'? (Ecclestone and Hayes 2009)

# Overlapping discourses of wellbeing (adapted from Ereaut and Whiting 2008)

- **Physical health promotion**
  - Lifestyle choices
- **Psychological** - 'how I feel'
  - Social and emotional literacy (understanding and managing emotions)
  - Often construed as a set of skills that can be learnt
- **Care**
  - Ethos, relationships, rights
  - Adult provision for childhood wellbeing
- **Flourishing** – 'how I live'
  - Linked to Aristotle's notion of eudaimonia or leading a life you have reason to value (Sen 2009)



# Biesta (2010)



3 different related functions of education:

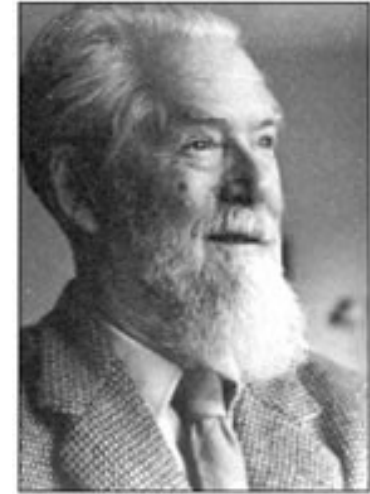
- **qualification** (skills, knowledge and dispositions that allow a person to *do* something),
- **socialisation** (teaching individuals how to adopt norms, values and ways of doing things)
- **subjectification** (providing opportunities for unique qualities of individuals to come 'into presence' )

Socialisation and subjectification are both functions of education

**BUT**

**Socialisation without subjectification is anti-educational**

## John MacMurray (1942)



- Saw humans as ‘deeply situated communal beings whose personhood is steeped in mutuality’
- Distinguished between
  - Functional relationships (instrumental / purpose limited to the activity that defines the relationship)
  - Personal relationships (help us to become ourselves. Purpose of relationship not defined by activities)
- 2 sorts of relationships depend on each other, but not always easily separable
- BUT, according to MacMurray ‘the functional life is for the personal, the personal life is through the functional life’
- YET, very often this is not the case, and the personal life can become subservient to the functional.
- ‘If the personal life cannot control the working life it will have to fetch and carry for it’

# Michael Fielding (2007)



In target driven environments, soft sounding discourses of wellbeing often disguise more hard-edged agendas (personal for the functional)

High performance organisations increasingly achieve their ends by ‘managerial reconstruction through the simulacra of care’

Students enhance their contributions by ‘carefully managed “ownership” of what others desire for you’

The use of ‘seductive technologies’ such as learning styles, emotional intelligence, personal targets and so on form the framework for this approach.

Fielding argues for approaches based on negotiation between adults and young people, which have the (eudaimonic) wellbeing of the young people as a goal, not an instrument (functional for the personal).

# Typology of mentoring

Horizontal continuum of mentoring and befriending ( Befriending Network Scotland 2005). Scale of 1-6

1. Befriending	3-4. Befriending /mentoring	6. Mentoring
Informal social support, with objective of forming trusting relationship. Other outcomes may occur – no set objectives.	Starting point is relationship of trust. Volunteer develops objectives with client over time. Subject to negotiation and review.	Framed around objectives set at the start. Based on good relationships although this may be less central.

Question arises – whose objectives, and how are they selected?



# Some questions for mentoring

- To what extent does mentoring confuse / conflate personal relationships with functional relationships? What are the consequences?
- When is mentoring seeking to socialise young people into a particular 'shape' and when is it seeking to help them explore themselves and to pursue what they view as a valuable life?
- Does mentoring seek to influence the emotions and feelings of young people, and if so for what purpose?
- What are the ethical dilemmas in mentoring and who is responsible for addressing / monitoring them?

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