Beyond the 'diminished self': Challenging an array of objections to emotional well-being in education

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With early school leaving prevention being an agreed European Union headline target of 10% across the EU by 2020, emotional-relational dimensions to education are gaining renewed attention in European education policy. Against this backdrop, prominent criticisms of an emotional well-being agenda in education by Ecclestone and Hayes require further consideration. The key objective of this paper is to challenge and reconstruct six key arguments of Ecclestone and Hayes against emotional wellbeing in education. There is a need to move beyond paradigms of conceptual coherence that rest upon diametric oppositions – thought/feeling, healthy/sick, diminished/undiminished, optimism/pessimism, subject/negation of a subject, learning/therapy. It is argued that an emotional well-being agenda in education is a conceptually coherent one, once different levels of prevention and intervention are distinguished and the argument goes beyond flat, undifferentiated conceptions of 'therapeutic culture'. The Cartesian model supported by Ecclestone and Hayes to frame a 'diminished' self is but one selfhood. A more nuanced debate would focus on the strengths and weaknesses of different, pluralistic conceptions of selfhood. Their most substantive objections to an emotional well-being agenda in education concern deficit labelling and privacy and are important cautionary notes.

Keywords: emotions, well-being, selfhood, early school leaving

Introduction

With early school leaving prevention being an agreed European Union headline target of 10% across the EU by 2020, emotional-relational dimensions to education are gaining renewed attention in European education policy. This acceleration of focus on social and emotional dimensions to education remedies its earlier neglect

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in a European policy context (Downes, 2010, 2011), including its limited role in the EU Key Competences framework for Lifelong Learning (Downes, 2011, Downes & Cefai, 2016, Downes, Nairz-Wirth & Rusinaite, 2017) currently under review. While social and emotional education is an increasingly researched area internationally, as illustrated by Durlak et al.'s (2015) Handbook on this area and the OECD's (2015) review of social and emotional aspects to education, albeit as 'skills', the interplay between mental health promotion and early school leaving prevention is a rather newly emerging area in international research. In the US context, Freudenberg & Ruglis (2007) strongly advocate the importance of reframing early school leaving as a health related issue:

> Although evidence shows that education is an important determinant of health and that changes in school policy can improve educational outcomes, public health professionals have seldom made improving school completion rates a health priority…With a few important exceptions, health providers have not developed lasting partnerships with schools, nor have researchers provided the evidence needed to improve or replicate health programmes that can reduce school dropout rates (p. 3).

The term 'early school leaving' in EU policy includes all forms of leaving education and training before completing upper secondary education or equivalents in vocational education and training. It is focused on ages 18-24. A key issue for early school leaving prevention, highlighted in EU Council and Commission documents, is that of emotional supports for students at risk of early school leaving as a protective factor in a system that meets their needs.

Against a backdrop of increasing recognition at EU level of the importance of relational and emotional-well-being dimensions to education and for early school leaving prevention in particular, prominent criticisms of an emotional well-being agenda in education by Ecclestone (2004, 2007) and Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) require further consideration.

The aim of this paper is to defend and amplify focus on the role of emotional wellbeing in contexts of education due to its central importance for the EU2020 headline policy target on early school leaving prevention. To achieve this aim, the key objective of this paper is to challenge and reconstruct six key arguments of Ecclestone (2004, 2007) and Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) against emotional wellbeing in education.

Drawing on conceptual terrain across domains of philosophy, politics, psychology, history, sociology and theology, Ecclestone (2004, 2007) and Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) set out an array of objections to an acceleration of focus on emotional well-being in UK educational contexts, with a pervasive concern that there is a lack of conceptual coherence to this whole area. While there are multiple different strands to Ecclestone and Hayes' argument, focus for current purposes is on the following ones that can be summarised as follows (Table I):

Table I. Brief Overview of EU Policy Context regarding Emotional Supports for Early School Leaving Prevention

Argument 1. That a "diminished self" (Ecclestone 2007, p.467) or "diminished subject" (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009, p. 380) is being constructed as a pervasive assumption regarding human subjectivity though "never directly articulated at policy levels" (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009, p. 380); this leads to "underlying diminished images of human potential and resilience" (Ecclestone 2007, p. 467)
Argument 2. That curricular subjects are being eroded by a well-being focus
Argument 3. That there is "an *ad hoc* array of therapeutic interventions...associated with emotional well-being" in education (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009, p. 371)
Argument 4. That a new deficit labelling in terms of "emotional vulnerability" (Ecclestone 2007, p.455) is occurring, in the British educational system; this labelling takes place within a framework of "individual pathology" (Ecclestone 2007, p. 467)
Argument 5. That the "powerful cultural narrative" (Ecclestone 2007, p. 456) of emotional vulnerability rests on a vague "pseudoscientific" (Ecclestone 2007, p.467), "slipperiness of concepts" (Ecclestone 2007, p. 461), such as emotional intelligence, well-being, emotional literacy and self-esteem
Argument 6. That the privacy of the individual is being subverted by the powerful gaze of the state through an emotional well-being agenda

The EU Council Recommendation (2011) on early school leaving, adopted by every EU country with the exception of the UK Conservative/LibDem government, acknowledges the need for:

> Targeted individual support, which integrates social, financial, educational and psychological support for young people in difficulties. It is especially important for young people in situations of serious social or emotional distress which hinders them from continuing education or training. (p.6)

The Commission Staff Working Paper (COM, 2011) further develops this issue:

> Solving problems at school cannot be done effectively without tackling the range of problems that put children in difficulty, which can include drug or alcohol use, sleep deficits, physical abuse and trauma. Some of the most successful measures have been those which provide a holistic solution by networking different actors and so support the whole person. (p.26)

The Commission's Thematic Working Group report (2013) explicitly reiterates the importance of emotional supports, against the backdrop of a relational environment:

> Those who face personal, social or emotional challenges often have too little contact with education staff or other adults to support them. They need easy access to teachers and other professionals supporting their educational and personal development. (p. 21)

Again here the role of the teacher is envisaged as a holistic one which clearly goes beyond a Cartesian compartmentalisation between reason and emotion, so that academic considerations cannot be simply divorced from the relational.

The ET2020 European Commission Schools Policy Working Group messages' (2015) holistic focus places a central emphasis on learners' wellbeing for inclusive education to prevent early school leaving:

> In addition to creating a safe and welcoming environment, schools can also play an important role in detecting situations of bullying, victimisation, violence or abuse happening within and outside school…A wide range of activities, support and counselling, including emotional and psychological support to address mental health issues (including distress, depression, post-traumatic disorders), should be available to learners in the school and where applicable, in connection with local agencies and services. (p. 12)

The Commission Communication (COM, 2011) on early school leaving incorporates a whole school focus on this issue, referring to the need for "Whole school measures aim at improving the school climate and the creation of supportive learning environments" (p.7). As Moule (2012) highlights, most efforts to promote cultural competence in teachers requires development of self-awareness in the teacher.

These perspectives lie in stark tension with the six arguments against an emotional wellbeing in education agenda proposed by Ecclestone (2004, 2007) and Ecclestone and Hayes (2009).

Challenging a 'Diminished Self' (Ecclestone 2007) View of Social and Emotional Education
Argument 1

Ecclestone (2004) is explicit in her defence of the Cartesian *cogito*, as she criticises "languages, symbols and codes [that] privilege individualism and emotion as the main justification for actions and behaviours and downplays rationality, encapsulated by a shift from the Cartesian maxim 'I think therefore I am ...'" (p. 120). Again her later work conceptualises in terms of a Cartesian split between reason and emotion in describing "the turn towards the emotional…and away from the intellectual" (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009, p. 380). This Cartesian view treats emotions as irrational, in diametric oppositional terms to reason. Ecclestone and Hayes' favouring of the Cartesian 'cogito' as a version of self invites a cognitivist view of selfhood and needs to be named as such. Such a Cartesian, cognitivist self, underpins the liberal humanist education model that Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) view as being eroded; this Cartesian self is far from being the only horizon of possibility with regard to subjectivity and selfhood. Though they refer to alternative frameworks fleetingly such as those of Althusser's structuralism and a version of feminism, at times Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) seem to view any movement from this one Cartesian version of selfhood as an attack on selfhood as such, when repeating their concern with "the attack on the human subject" (p. 382 -3). A false dichotomy is being

presented here between the human (Cartesian) subject and a negation of the human subject; this paves the way for Ecclestone's (2004) framing of diametrically opposed alternatives of 'learning or therapy', reason or emotion.

A more nuanced debate here for Ecclestone & Hayes' (2009) "shaping cultural and educational accounts of the human subject" (p. 379) would focus on the strengths and weaknesses of different conceptions of selfhood. For example, Carol Gilligan and her colleagues (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990) advocate a more relational conception of selfhood, focusing on assumed connection between self and other as an ethic of care. Focus within this understanding of self is on relationship and voice.

While this understanding of self and other has much to recommend it, weaknesses in this approach go beyond critique of Gilligan's (1982) claim that this relational self is more strongly associated with females (Kasworm 1984). An educational concern with this understanding of subjectivity, highlighted in Downes (2012), is that choices made in reliance on interpersonal assumed connection may be misguided (see examples of choices to initially take heroin in an Estonian context and to engage in human trafficking in the Baltic States, as based on interpersonal relational dynamics). Such relational choices may be simply beholden to cultural conformity. A key issue here is how to develop intellectual resources in education to foster independent judgment and to resist conformity to cultural conditioning, whether by specific others in relation or by wider environmental, cultural forces.

Interrogation of a *plurality* of conceptions of subjectivity for educational contexts would obviously need to include the influence of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning framework. Receiving empirical support in early childhood contexts (Landry et al. 2000; Tamis-LeMonda et al. 2001) *inter alia*, Vygosky's (1978) model of self as learner mediated through social interaction and scaffolding by others offers an interpersonal conception of self as a learner that stretches boundaries beyond the relative isolation of the detached Cartesian knowing subject.

A plurality of conceptions of self and subjectivity is possible. The Cartesian model supported by Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) is but one selfhood, with both strengths and weaknesses. A stronger argument for Ecclestone & Hayes' purposes would be to identify strengths of this Cartesian conception of self in relation to the education system, as well as to recognise its weaknesses, and to argue for why these strengths are more important relative to the strengths and weaknesses of other versions of subjectivity. The strengths (and weaknesses) of other versions of subjectivity cannot be simply evaded from acknowledgment, through what Lakatos (1970) would term a 'monster barring' type argument that denies all force to counterarguments. Recognition of a plurality of conceptions of self with relevance for the education system is not tantamount to advocating a flat postmodern relativism of selves.

Ecclestone (2007) frames human need for emotional well-being, vulnerability and relationality in pejorative terms as a 'diminished self', a reduction or even negation of selfhood. Even accepting that all observation is theory-laden (Duhem 1905; Popper 1959), this characterisation is far from being an empirical statement; it is an evaluative preconception. A view of the human subject as needing love, attention, concern, respect, support and voice is scarcely a diminished one; an argument could be made to the contrary, that a

conception of self as being independent of these needs is a diminution of subjectivity. The Cartesian self can itself be treated as a diminished, 'split' self, as a fractured, disconnected subject.

Challenging a View that Places Curricular Wellbeing Themes as being Opposed to Academic Subjects

Argument 2

Glasser's (1969) work on constructivist approaches to education challenges a Cartesian split between reason and emotion, seeking an emotional bridge to relevance. In other words, engaging with emotions is with a view to strengthening construction of meaning for the student to relate material to his/her life world. Similarly, Bruner (1990) challenges a narrowly cognitivist, information processing paradigm as neglecting construction of meaning. While Bruner (2002) emphasises the role of stories, of narrative psychology, for meaning construction in education, this story-telling necessitates emotional features of such narratives. Emotions can facilitate meaning construction, including in a culture relevant fashion, rather than simply being treated as opposed to intellectual concerns. On this view, a concern with emotions at the level of teaching methodology and curricular pedagogical content is complementary to and facilitative of intellectual engagement.

Whereas Ó Breacháin & O'Toole (2013) raise concerns with the attenuation of a well-being focus in an Irish primary curricular context, due to the influence of the OECD Pisa focus on literacy and maths, Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) offer examples in a UK context where "the emotional outlook, attributes and skills associated with learning are as, or more, important than subject content" (p. 377). They cite examples such as Weare's (2004) view that traditional subjects, such as the arts, English and history, can encompass a focus on emotions, as well "the latest review of the primary curriculum by Jim Rose [that] recommends less subject teaching and more personal development and well-being" (p. 377). Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) cite a further example of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) which challenges the assumption that education is "primarily about the development of the mind", treating this as a "misunderstanding" so that "academic or intellectual aspects" would not have a "higher status" than other dimensions of "the body, the heart and the soul" (Johnson et al., 2007, p.69-71).

A number of distinct positions need to be disaggregated here. Emotional dimensions, what Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) term rather generically as "the emotional outlook" (p. 377), are a) a means to the end of intellectual engagement and learning (such as in Glasser's 1969 emotional bridge to relevance); b) emotional well-being is a strategic goal of itself in the curriculum *and* a means to an end of intellectual engagement and learning; c) emotional well-being is a major end of itself for curricular approaches (as well as a means), equal with more traditional academic learning; d) emotional well-being is an overwhelmingly dominant end of itself for curricular approaches which subordinates more traditional academic learning to this end, so that more traditional academic learning becomes a means to this end.

It appears that Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) adopt a position *in extremis* of rejecting a role for emotional well-being as both a means and an end of itself. In response to the other extreme of Johnson et al., (2007), Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) treat emotional well-being, "the emotional outlook" (p. 377), as being neither a means or an end for education, as part of a wider wholesale rejection of the importance of emotional-relational dimensions to school and classroom climate, whether for student motivation, learning,

mental health or well-being. Again their position appears to be an implicit retreat into a narrow cognitivism, with education being viewed as a processing of information rather than learning as a construction of meaning. A conflation of means and ends appears to recur here, where the student is treated largely in instrumental terms as a passive means to acquisition of prepackaged curricular knowledge. Neither is a specific developmental focus taken by Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) on changing needs of children and young people to argue for distinctive calibrations across the curriculum regarding these issues in response to the age of the student.

Ecclestone & Hayes' (2009) curricular concerns are further open to critique against the backdrop of meta-analytic reviews of social and emotional education which specifically highlight that social and emotional education brings improved outcomes also for academic performance. Social and emotional education (SEE) embraces a range of holistic approaches emphasising awareness of emotions, caring and concern for others, positive relationships, making responsible decisions, resolving conflict constructively and valuing the thoughts, feelings and voices of students (see also Brackett, Elbertson, & Rivers, 2015; Weissberg et al., 2015). A meta-analytic study of more than 213 programmes found that if a school implements a quality SEE curriculum, they can expect better student behaviour and an 11-point increase in test scores (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Guilotta, 2011). The gains that schools see in achievement come from a variety of factors — students feel safer and more connected to school and academic learning, SEE programmes build work habits in addition to social skills, and children and teachers build strong relationships. A further challenge to Ecclestone and Hayes' (2009) curricular concerns emerges as an implication from Sklad et al.'s (2012) meta-analysis of school-based, universal programmes concentrated on ones that promote development rather than prevent specific problems such as bullying. This meta-analysis also observed significant gains for academic achievement associated with SEE.

Challenging an Undifferentiated View of Social and Emotional Education to Argue for its Conceptual Coherence

Argument 3

Ecclestone (2007) highlights the need for conceptual coherence to avoid a kind of melting pot of approaches to emotional well-being that do not allow for difference and distinction in need and goals:

> Political discourses around emotional well-being are [...] responding to different, often contradictory ideas: the mental health problems of a minority of children, young people and adults; the growing unhappiness of all children and young people; the need to remedy assumed emotional deficiencies of certain families or groups of young people; motivating people to learn more effectively, thereby achieving better educational results; making people feel good about themselves; encouraging the claimed social, economic and personal benefits of being emotionally literate or intelligent; promoting social inclusion for those with mental health problems. (p. 461)

This perspective is reiterated by Ecclestone & Hayes' (2009) view that "policy, practice and research fields in this area [of emotional well-being] are conceptually incoherent" (p. 374). Ecclestone's (2007) account of a fusing of different levels of intervention may be apt as an empirical description of undifferentiated approaches to emotional well-being in some educational contexts. However, it appears to ignore basic distinctions that are well recognised in health discourse that require further acknowledgment in education discourse.

Three widely recognized prevention approaches in public health involve universal, selected and indicated prevention (Burkhart, 2004; Reinke, Splett, Robeson, & Offutt, 2009). Differentiation of these levels is frequently neglected in education contexts. Universal prevention applies to school, classroom and community-wide systems for all students. Selective prevention targets specialized group systems for students at risk of, for example, early school leaving or mental health difficulties. Indicated prevention engages in specialized, individualized systems for students with high risk of early school leaving or mental health difficulties. Thus, for example, a US wide three-tier model for providing a continuum of supports for positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) estimates that 10-15% of students will not respond to universal school-wide interventions; with such students benefitting from increased structure and contingent feedback (Reinke et al., 2009). This US PBIS model across a range of over 6,000 schools, focusing on disruptive behaviour, estimates that 5% of students do not respond favourably to universal or selected interventions and thereby require intensive intervention support, i.e., indicated prevention (Reinke et al., 2009). While the percentages may be culture relative and context specific, the framework of distinguishing the three prevention levels is a fairly standard one in health discourse that could address some of Ecclestone's (2007) concerns above. Some limited distinctions are noted in Ecclestone & Hayes' (2009) article between "specialist interventions for those diagnosed with behavioural and emotional problems" and "generic interventions" (p. 374), adding also a level of system of emotional support services as well as curricular, pedagogical and assessment levels.

It must be emphasised that this differentiated focus on emotional well-being and levels of prevention and intervention operates against the backdrop of a *multidisciplinary* approach to these issues, rather than placing the teacher as the sole or dominant professional in this matrix of intervention levels (Edwards & Downes 2013). Much of Ecclestone's (2007) concerns described above can be met with greater clarity and focus on where the teacher is to operate in relation to a network of other professionals – to delimit what is and is not their appropriate role in a given system of supports. A multidisciplinary approach to emotional well-being does not maroon the teacher on an island – the teacher is neither a fortress to buttress against engagement with emotional well-being issues nor to drown in these issues through being overwhelmed by them in isolation from others

It is important also to distinguish three different levels in relation to mental health and emotional well-being for education. There is a role for a teacher at the level of a) well-being and mental health promotion and b) stress prevention, but it arguably goes too far to place the teacher in a role as a therapist (Downes 2003). Ecclestone's (2004, 2007) accounts do not distinguish these differences and operate against the backdrop of an assumption of an undifferentiated homogeneity to therapeutic approaches in education. Well-being and mental health promotion tend to focus on present lived experience of emotion rather than

delving into past trauma or historical narratives in relation to experience that are more the terrain of therapeutic concern beyond the remit of the teacher. Similarly, whereas a therapeutic approach may tend to interrogate family relations and other personal relationships, this boundary can be upheld through a teacher adopting a well-being and mental health promotion and stress prevention approach but not a therapeutic one. The teacher is frequently the agent of the state with most sustained intensity of interaction with children and young people. This extensive duration of interaction places an onus on them to recognise their influence on children and young people's well-being and self-image, as this influence is unavoidable, for good or ill. The teacher fosters a communicative culture in the classroom that is not neutral for children and young people's well-being.

It can be concluded that the list of various priorities for emotional well-being are far from being "contradictory", as Ecclestone (2007, p. 461) claims, once well-recognised distinctions in levels of intervention are given further recognition from public health discourses for education contexts. Thus, this is not an argument for less influence of emotional well-being issues in education; rather it is an appeal for more multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary awareness, especially between health and education discourses to foster further conceptual coherence, and between professionals across such disciplines. It is also an appeal for a more differentiated approach to understanding emotional well-being levels of prevention and intervention in education contexts – one that moves beyond sweeping generalisations about "fads, the therapeutic turn in education" (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009, p. 385).

Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) seem to share, with Scott (2008), a view that treats an emotional well-being paradigm for education as one that is undifferentiated from teaching as therapy. This generic attribution of a "therapy culture" (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009, p. 382) reduces all to the level of indicated prevention, i.e., chronic need.

Acknowledging the Need to Avoid Deficit Labelling and to Take a Systemic Focus beyond one of Individual Pathology

Argument 4

This argument operates through a dual lens, a concern with an *individual* pathologising approach and additionally with a deficit labelling approach. These are important concerns but are not equivalent. Attention will first be focused on the *individual* pathologising perspective on emotional well-being.

Once the distinction is recognised between universal, selected and indicated prevention approaches to mental health and emotional well-being, combined with a framework for teachers that distinguishes therapy from mental health promotion and stress prevention, a key step can be met to challenge a view of emotional well-being issues as leading to "individual pathology" (Ecclestone 2007, p. 467). A universal prevention focus concentrates on *system* level changes *beyond the individual*, wider than the curricular aspects to a universal approach noted by Ecclestone & Hayes 2009, as "generic" (p. 374) interventions. Furthermore, it can highlight not so much pathologies of the system but areas where school systems may need to reform and develop their practice. One such area is a view of classroom climate generated by the teacher as a communicative culture, as a communicative system of relations with distinctive features.

Some accounts of students refer to relations with teachers - especially alienating authoritarian communication from teachers - as a factor in their leaving school early (Cefai & Cooper 2010; Hodgson 2007). This issue of preventing authoritarian teaching has also been highlighted in a recent report on inclusive systems for the European Commission (Downes et al., 2017). Teacher professional development in relation to classroom management is a key strand that moves beyond individual pathology in an emotional well-being agenda for education, as well as for an early school leaving prevention strategy; it is a shift beyond blame to either student or teacher to re-envisage the issue as a system level problem of communication (Downes, 2014).

The second concern here of Ecclestone (2007) regarding deficit labelling is one, however, that merits particular attention. Deficit labelling concerns have been raised elsewhere through labelling students as 'disadvantaged' (Spring, 2007), through constructing non-western cultures reductively as the 'other' (Said 1978) and also in reducing people to being a conglomeration of signs and symptoms (Laing, 1959). This deficit labelling issue is especially pertinent given the reductive agenda in some US contexts to treat social and emotional learning in terms of "character development" (Elias et al., 2015, p. 33) to be assessed by teachers. A social constructionist concern with construction of labels is also related to a view of such labels as being culturally conditioned.

A potential high watermark of a concern with emotional well-being in education is the publication of attachment style checklists for use by primary teachers and in preschool settings in a UK context, by Golding et al., (2013a, 2013b). Golding et al., (2013a) seek to provide a checklist rather than formal assessment guide to young children's attachment styles. Detailed attachment profiles of children who are viewed as insecure ambivalent, insecure avoidant and disorganized-controlling are provided. These are combined with specific recommended interventions for each coping style for primary teachers and preschool professionals. Though Ecclestone has tended to direct her critique at Rogerian humanist psychology and positive psychology, more than attachment theory, attention will be given to this example as it illustrates a range of Ecclestone's (2007) legitimate concerns with regard to a labelling and individual pathology judgment, whether of a child or family, as part of an emotional well-being in education agenda. However, it will be argued that despite these important concerns, they do not negate the potential significance of a sensitive, informed and proportionate approach to engaging with young children's emotional well-being in education contexts.

In reviews of Golding et al.'s (2013a, 2013b) books on attachment, Downes (2013a, 2013b) highlights a concern as to whether such an attachment checklist invites not only an intrusive judgment by primary teachers of parents' parenting skills but additionally whether it invites them to make judgments regarding attachment histories which are neither verifiable within the scope of their work nor even, in principle, observable. Even if a child displays repeated features of, for example, ambivalence or avoidance, it is a major inferential leap for the primary teacher to produce a causal conclusion that these features are due to the attachment bonding problems with the child's parents. This concern applies *a fortiori* to primary teachers making causal inferences based not on the actual parenting interactions in early childhood but on the child's later behaviour in a different environment than home. A principle of proportionality arguably needs to be

adopted here – the children can be helped with important supportive strategies even without such a global judgment on whether their emotional needs derive from attachment issues or otherwise.

The complexity of these issues, not only for contexts of childhood poverty and early school leaving prevention, would need to encompass recognition of other reasons as mediating variables for a child's coping state, construed as anxious or avoidant. Other mediating factors may include going to school hungry, language delay issues, trauma unrelated to attachment issues, introverted temperament, cultural differences or loss of sleep.

The opportunity of these attachment checklists of Golding et al., (2013a, 2013b) is as a guide to meaningful supportive strategies for the children, rather than as a categorization of attachment styles, even when characterized more loosely as a checklist than an assessment. A danger exists that preoccupation with modes of partially informed categorization could blur teachers' relationality and also respect for engaging with vulnerable parents without judgments and preconceptions. Ecclestone's (2007) deficit labelling concern is an important cautionary note here.

Challenging a View of Emotional Vulnerability as Pseudoscientific

Argument 5

A limb of Ecclestone's (2004) critique of emotional well-being rests on an attempted deconstruction of self-esteem proffered by Emler (2001). Moreover, a key concern of Humphrey et al., (2007) regarding emotional intelligence does require acknowledgment, namely, that there are no independent agreed criteria for understanding emotional intelligence. A similar criticism has been made of Craik and Lockhart's (1972) notion of 'depth of processing' in cognitive psychology, that there is again no independent measure of depth (Eysenck & Keane, 1990); however, this does not mean that cognitive depth of processing is a mere chimera. Yet without entering these debates here and recognising also the value-laden, constructed features of terms such as 'happiness' (Suissa, 2008), a more minimalist, yet vital conception of emotional well-being can be defended, namely, that there are a range of issues contributing to student *lack* of well-being that the education system can, must and frequently does address.

A related argument to that of impoverished construct validity of core concepts of emotional well-being is propounded by Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) here, namely that there is insufficient empirical evidence available with regard to the existence of key dimensions of emotional well-being; they are "lacking a convincing evidence base" (p.374). Major meta-analytic reviews would challenge such a claim. For example, Durlak et al.'s meta-analysis (2011) highlights SEE benefits, for outcomes on attitudes, positive social behaviour, conduct problems, emotional distress, as well as academic performance. Sklad et al.'s (2012) meta-analysis found that SEE programmes showed statistically significant effects on social skills, anti-social behaviour, substance abuse, positive self-image, academic achievement and prosocial behaviour. Programs had moderate immediate effects on positive self-image, pro-social behaviour, academic achievement and anti-social behaviour, improving each by nearly one half a standard deviation.

Apart from such meta-analytic review evidence, a more minimal argument that can be made for current purposes is to highlight the importance of the emotional well-being agenda in education, is to foreground a concern with *lack* of well-being. Without needing to defend an absolutist understanding of well-being, focus for current purposes is on identifying aspects of a relative lack of well-being, both an individual's relative lack of well-being in an education context and more generally.

There is ample empirical evidence to support this agenda to prevent student *lack* of well-being with regard to the impact of bullying on physical and mental health, as well as educational engagement and performance, including early school leaving (Downes & Cefai, 2016; Jimerson, Swearer, & Espelage, 2009). For example, Van der Wal, de Wit & Hirasing's (2003) large scale research on 4,811 children aged 9 to 13 in schools in Amsterdam, observed that depression and suicidal ideation are common outcomes of being bullied in both boys and girls. Bentall & Fernyhough (2008) observe that bullying may increase the risk of paranoid delusions by affecting the way that individuals appraise unpleasant experiences. In a US context, Cornell, Gregory, Huang and Fan (2013) conclude from their research that, although a correlational study cannot demonstrate a causal effect, their findings are consistent with the hypothesis that a climate of teasing and bullying exerts a negative influence on students that contributes to the decision to drop out of school.

Swearer et al., (2010) conclude from their international review that:

The research suggests that the majority of school-based bullying prevention programs have had little impact on reducing bullying behavior. Bullying will be reduced and/or stopped when prevention and intervention programs target the complexity of individual, peer, school, family, and community contexts in which bullying unfolds (p. 43).

This conclusion offers some support for Ecclestone & Hayes' (2009) concern with an overemphasis on the school for emotional well-being, in so far as it seeks to engage wider systemic contexts that also include the school but are not confined to the school. However, this systemic approach is *not* supportive of an argument to largely omit the school from these emotional well-being concerns.

Research in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* highlights growing evidence of the long-term effects of detrimental experiences in childhood. Keyes et al. (2012) conclude that research suggests that the onset of psychiatric disorders across the life course in nearly a third of cases is attributable to adverse childhood experiences. Emotional neglect was the most commonly reported childhood maltreatment in their US study. They go so far as to observe "the pernicious mental health consequences of childhood maltreatment for mental health across the life course […] the prevention of maltreatment, particularly childhood abuse, may have broad benefits for many common mental disorders" (p. 112).

In similar vein, Read & Bentall's (2012) review concludes:

The range of mental health outcomes for which childhood adversities are risk factors is […] broad. It might be quicker to list those *not* predicted by childhood adversity. Those that *are* include: in childhood – conduct disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and oppositional defiant disorder; and in adulthood – depression, anxiety disorders (including

generalized anxiety disorder, phobias and posttraumatic stress disorders), eating disorders, sexual dysfunction, personality disorder, dissociative disorder and substance misuse. (p. 89)

A meta-analysis of 28 longitudinal studies found that school bullying doubled the risk for depression an average of 7 years later, even after controlling for numerous other risk factors (Ttofi, Farringon, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011).

It is difficult to see how Ecclestone and Hayes can reject the importance of these key issues for lack of well-being in education and more generally. An argument suggested by Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) is that accounts of students' experiences are merely 'circular logic' because they are mere passive cultural mouthpieces for a well-being agenda in "emergence from a therapy culture" (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009, p. 380). This runs the risk of being dismissive of students' own accounts of their lived experiences of school.

Acknowledging the Importance of Privacy Concerns

Argument 6

Though not explicitly drawing on Foucault's (1977) work on technology of power in a surveillance society, Ecclestone (2007) is accentuating the need for vigilance regarding power relations that disempower people, through either condescending attitudes of professionals or a construction of a dependency culture where people are treated as not being able to live independently of professionals. This argument for cultural and educational empowerment is somewhat resonant with a Freirean (1972) suspicion of teachers as all-knowing professionals depositing their knowledge into heads of people supposed to know nothing. Ecclestone's (2007) point here serves as a valuable and important cautionary note rather than a damning indictment of a well-being in education agenda, 'discourses and interventions around themes of emotional well-being enable governments to draw private spheres of life into the realm of public power' (p. 463). It is notable that Durlak et al.'s (2015) '*Handbook on Social and Emotional Learning*' does not address any privacy issue.

This issue of encroachment of State power upon individuals and families requires acknowledgment in relation to a number of issues. It has previously been highlighted in relation to attachment theory in developmental psychology, as leading to the expansion of the domain of relevant interests of the State regarding childrearing (Morrison, 1995); this can also have positive consequences such as its influence on the establishment of the concept of maternity and paternity leave. This power is manifested also with regard to the attachment checklists proposed by Golding et al., (2013a, 2013b), discussed above. Here there is a need to clarify the role of parental consent to such checklist observations being made, the scope of the confidentiality of such checklist information, including the sensitivity of teachers to overcoming social class biases in their adoption of such a checklist.

Another area of concern regarding privacy is the scope of some models of multidisciplinary teams working in and around schools. For example, the Netherlands, Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BEST) in schools (4-18+) offer an important focus on early intervention, integrating educational services and health and human services, for the purposes of enhancing emotional well-being, development, positive behaviour and educational attainment. According to Van Veen (2011), there has been successful

implementation of this model in 21 pilot regions (primary schools networks, secondary schools, further education), with impact and positive outcomes in most regions (achievement, well-being, support/services delivery and school careers). BEST professionals as part of these multi/interdisciplinary teams include: school student services coordinator (plus mentor, teacher and other school specialists), social worker, youth care office, school health care, truancy officer, police, including also special education, educational support services, family support services (pedagogical-medical) and substance abuse (drugs/addiction) services. A *caveat* here with regard to the importance of multidisciplinary teams in and around schools for early school leaving prevention is in relation to privacy concerns with state power, where the police are members of such teams. The role of the police here may be problematic in gaining trust of many families alienated from the system. Parental concerns with the sharing of confidential data, for example, with schools, have been raised in an Irish context (Downes, 2004). This highlights the need for confidentiality protocols in educational contexts and with multidisciplinary teams.

Conclusion

Interrogating this array of objections to emotional well-being in contexts of education, from the influential work of Ecclestone (2004; 2007) and Ecclestone & Hayes (2009), it can be concluded that an emotional well-being agenda in education is a conceptually coherent and important one, once different levels of prevention and intervention are distinguished and the argument goes beyond flat, undifferentiated conceptions of "therapeutic culture" (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009, p. 382). An emotional well-being agenda, supported through multidisciplinary teams linked with schools, is a key issue for early school leaving prevention.

It needs to be recognised that the Cartesian cognitivist self is not the only credible version of subjectivity for influence in the education system. The most substantive objections of Ecclestone (2004; 2007) and Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) to an emotional well-being agenda in education are in relation to issues of deficit labelling and privacy (aspects of Argument 4 & 6); these serve as important cautionary notes.

It is notable that Ecclestone and Hayes set up much of the terms of debate in crudely dichotomous terms. Thus, Ecclestone (2004) juxtaposes a "healthy to a sick self" (p. 120), "positive individualism" with a negative "diminished self" (p. 122), "learning or therapy" (p. 112); Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) offer a binary split between "the turn towards the emotional' as being 'away from the intellectual" (p. 380), while Ecclestone's (2007) conclusion conceptualises in terms of an "optimism about human potential" (p. 467) being eroded by a purportedly pessimistic shift towards a diminished self.

There is a need to move beyond paradigms of conceptual coherence and conceptions of education systems that rest upon the establishment of an Archimedean point of diametric, mirror image inverted oppositions– thought/feeling, healthy/sick, diminished/undiminished, optimism/pessimism, subject/negation of a subject, learning or therapy – to resist criticism of frameworks which do not fit neatly into this chain of diametric structured relations (Downes, 2012). The preoccupation with sustaining such diametric oppositions is a precursor to the wider attempt of Ecclestone & Hayes to bolster a diametric split between health and education in relation to emotional well-being, as part of a Cartesian diametric split between reason and emotion underpinning their 'diminished' self.

Ecclestone's range of concerns is best read as a cautionary note for focus and boundaries in relation to the wider cultural tide of concern with emotional well-being in education, rather than as a rejection of the legitimate and vital role of emotional well-being in education systems, across different system levels of intervention and age groups, especially for early school leaving prevention policy concerns. In Heller's (1978) account of Renaissance society in Europe, she describes an epoch marked by "a quickening of the pace" (p. 186) compared with the Middle Ages. Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) are correct in identifying the quickening of a cultural tide of emphasis on emotional well-being in education that has eroded traditional lines in the sand for education. Their critique is apt to the extent that it is a call for new lines in the sand to be developed to encompass a focus on emotional well-being in education. This article has argued that such contours are available, necessary and possible – and central to the EU level strategic policy priority of early school leaving prevention.

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