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Dalton Education, wellbeing, cooperation, independence, social and emotional development

René Berends, Dalton international 2022

In this paper I summarize point by point how teachers in modern Dutch Dalton schools think and act on the theme of well-being.

1. Happiness

Dutch children are among the happiest in the world. International research shows this, although problems like loneliness increased in Corona time. Also the number of burn-outs and even the number of suicide attempts is growing. Children are also increasingly concerned about major social and political problems in the world.

2. Basic needs

Well-being is of course first and foremost about meeting basic needs. This includes eating, sleeping, drinking and affection. These basic needs are essential for the health and well-being of children.

3. Conditions for learning

There are also important conditions for well-being if we talk about learning at school.

a. Safety

Safety is one such condition. Schools should be safe environments to practice living, working and learning. Only when the school is safe (and also is experienced as safe), do children dare to experiment. That's necessary. Learning is a process that involves trial and error. Making mistakes is a 'must', you could say. If you don't feel safe, kids won't take the risks that come with learning.

Safety is therefore not just a physical safety. We must of course prevent accidents from happening, but learning and development do involve trial and error.

b. Trust

Trust is also a condition for learning. Children need to feel that they are trusted.

c. Respect

Respect is also such a condition. It is a fundamental right of all people, but especially for children, to be who they are: whatever your gender, age, background, handicap, abilities. It also includes having your own opinion. It does apply that you also offer other persons the same space to do so.

d. Bullying

For the well being of children it is also important that there is no bullying. In the Netherlands it is mandatory for all schools to have a protocol against bullying. And used programs must be proven effective anti-bullying programs.

It is sometimes a discussion within Dalton schools whether such programs are strictly necessary and whether the practice of Dalton education does not already ensure that children learn to respect each other.

e. Worrying

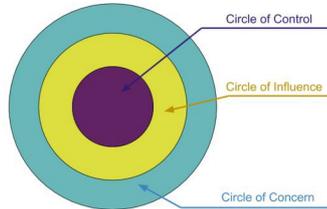
Well-being also means that children should worry as little as possible. We cannot always keep worries away from them – think of parental illness –. But it is a pedagogical task for parents and teachers not to let this worrying become unnecessarily large.

Above all, don't let children worry unnecessarily about problems that they can't control.

You can find support for your educational practice in this model.

Think about:

- The circle of control
- The circle of influence
- The circle of concern



4. Mindset



Also important is Carol Dweck's theory about fixed and growth mindsets. This mindset theory helps children to attribute success and failure to the right causes.

5. International rights of Children

The International Rights of Children are important. It also provides teachers with a framework for their thinking and teaching.

6. Self-determination

In the context of education we use the Self-determination Theory of Deci & Ryan. Once the basic needs of eating, drinking, sleeping and affection are met, autonomy, relatedness and competence are essential for every child.

By taking these needs into account in your interaction, your classroom management and also in your instruction, you can give children sufficient challenge, support (trust) and give them confidence (trust).

7. Dalton principle 'interaction of group life'

Well being is also related to the Dalton principle 'interaction or group life'. Children needs others (and the world) to develop themselves as a person. You develop yourself as a person with and in relation to others and the world.

Sociality does not only mean that opportunities are offered to work together and to learn from and with each other. It is also about the school as a community, having fun together, celebrating together, organizing parties together, playing sports and making music and helping each other. So it is important for sociality that children have friends. They need peers to identify themselves. Peers also provide important social experiences.

8. Inner equilibrium

We can also find tools for well-being in Parkhurst's book Education on the Dalton Plan. She talks about an 'inner equilibrium', which is necessary and desirable for learning processes.

9. Motivation

An interesting resource for well being in education is the overview that is published by prof. Dr. Monique Boekaerts of literature on motivational psychology in education. It is a handy downloadable booklet.

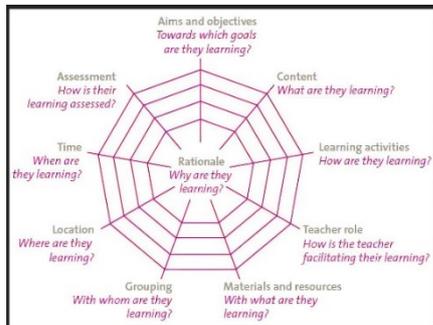
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10. Student voice and ownership

In Dutch Dalton education a lot of attention is currently being paid to Parkhurst's rationale of

giving children a voice in their own development. It's about student voice. Children learn not for the teacher's sake but for themselves. And if we want to stimulate that, it is important to work on ownership.

In the Netherlands, the model of the 'Curricular Spider Web' by prof. Dr. Van den Akker is often used for this. Ownership of your own learning leads to children gaining more and more control over themselves and their environment.



Student voice also means that children contribute to

development in classroom management and in innovation of education in schools and in innovations outside schools.



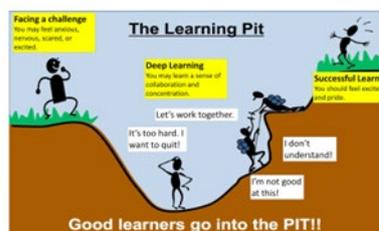
Meetings are held in every Dalton class; every Dalton school has a student council and often Dalton children do very well in elections for, for example, the children's museum director or the children's mayor of the city. That children can talk about anything and everything shows Parkhurst herself in what you could call her second career. She interviewed children about all kinds of pedagogical topics.

Dalton schools pay attention to building opinions on arguments, building arguments on facts and pay attention to multi-perspective thinking.

11. Social and personal interest in education

Well-being also requires paying attention to the importance of education. After all, there is a social interest, but also a personal interest for the child in education. The school is also a place where you can learn what you want to learn. This means that there must be space for working on your own goals, your own ambitions, interests, talents and ideas.

12. Insight into own learning



Well-being can also be stimulated by giving children insight into how learning processes occur. For example, this model of 'the learning pit' is used in many schools.

13. Being of value

It is also important that children are given the opportunity to experience themselves as being 'of value'. This can be done by having teachers provide the learning content in such a way that subject matters appeals to them, that they are addressed, cannot look away, that they can show

a form of commitment. That is the essence of the fearless human being. It is a form of proactive, entrepreneurial action.

14. Arithmetic and language skills

Finally, it is of course also important for well-being that children are sufficiently proficient in arithmetic and language skills. This helps to become self-reliant and independent. This is also a way in which they build self confidence.