

Facets of primary and secondary school students' wellbeing during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative analysis of Austrian and Italian educational policy

Denis Francesconi¹

*University of Vienna, Department of Teacher Education,
Centre for Teacher Education, Vienna (Austria)*

Barbara Gross

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Faculty of Education, Bolzano (Italy)

Evi Agostini

*University of Vienna, Department of Teacher Education and Department
of Education, Centre for Teacher Education and Faculty of Philosophy and
Education, Vienna (Austria)*

Summary: The coronavirus pandemic has revealed the limits of current social and educational structures. In most countries, COVID-19 has compromised the wellbeing of students, but also of their families and teachers. During the first wave of the pandemic, school systems all over the world had to respond quickly and appropriately to the systemic shock it represented, and countries put a variety of different policy measures in place to tackle its extensive impact. The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is a critical perspective and the policy framework is the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); it provides a qualitative analysis of selected educational policies deployed by Italy and Austria to support the wellbeing of school pupils. The two countries deployed different education governance and emergency management strategies, in particular during the first wave of the pandemic. We applied our theoretical and policy frameworks to qualitative content analysis of educational policy documents from February to the end of August 2020, aiming to evaluate the responses to crisis of different education systems and potentially to support their improvement. The overall research question was: How did educational policies in Italy and Austria support students' wellbeing during the

1 Denis Francesconi, denis.francesconi@univie.ac.at

first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic? The results confirm that the Italian and Austrian systems had different strategies to support wellbeing and put different initiatives in place. However, educational policies in both countries, and especially Italy, had a stronger focus on the physical wellbeing of individual students during the period under study, and tended to neglect social wellbeing. The paper concludes by reflecting on the opportunities presented by this emergency for school systems to position wellbeing (in the broader sense of eudaimonic wellbeing) at the centre of educational policy.

Keywords: wellbeing; quality of life; SDGs; qualitative policy analysis; COVID-19

1. Introduction: COVID-19 and wellbeing

In the blink of an eye, hundreds of thousands lost their lives (WHO, 2020) and millions of people their jobs (Tcherneva, 2020). While all members of the society may be affected at an individual level, COVID-19 is an amplifier of existing systemic inequalities, injustices and insecurities. The literature is in general agreement on the correlation between income inequality and health and social problems (Rowlingson, 2011). The consequences of the pandemic for personal and social wellbeing are thus likely to hit the most vulnerable and marginalized hardest (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2020a). COVID-19 has heightened the precarious financial situation and compromised the personal and social wellbeing of millions of members of the society (Fickermann & Edelstein, 2020; Tcherneva, 2020; Wanberg et al., 2020).

In their initial attempt to contain the spread of the virus at the beginning of the crisis around February 2020, many countries closed their schools. In the longer term, school closures can reduce wellbeing and give rise to inequality (Armitage & Nellums, 2020). As pointed out by a special OECD survey (2021), by 16 March 2020 about half of the 33 countries with comparable data had fully closed at least some primary and secondary schools. It is of particular note in this context that countries with the lowest educational performance tended to close their schools completely for longer periods during the first wave of the pandemic. At the same time, countries with similar infection rates and PISA performance (e.g. Poland, Sweden, England, France and Austria) had a range of policies on school closures (OECD, 2021).

COVID-19 has also highlighted the critical role played by parents in supporting students' learning and wellbeing. Children from socio-economically and culturally disadvantaged milieus in particular had – and still have – an increased need for adult support during and after lockdown (Carretero Gomez et al., 2021; Pelikan et al., 2021). In this regard, it is important to be aware that not all parents had the necessary prior knowledge and/or linguistic competence to provide their children with the support they required (Kelly et al., 2021).

The impact of COVID-19 on schools – and especially with regard to the risk that it poses to the wellbeing of students – has been addressed in a significant number of studies in the two countries that are the subjects of the present study (for Italy e.g. Caffo et al., 2020; Fiorin et al. 2021; Mascheroni et al. 2021; Save the Children, 2020, 2021; for Austria e.g. Hascher et al., 2020; Helm et al. 2021; Huber & Helm, 2020; Huber et al., 2020; Lindner et al., 2021; Pelikan et al., 2021; Schwab & Lindner, 2020). However, these contributions analyse wellbeing primarily from the psychological, medical and sanitary perspectives. In contrast, our paper provides a critical pedagogical comparison of educational policies in Italy and Austria and considers how educational policies supported the wellbeing of students in primary and secondary schools during the first wave of the pandemic. Because of different educational governance and emergency management strategies adopted by Italy and Austria during the first wave of the pandemic – as we show later in the text, Italy was hit harder by the pandemic, suffered more losses and shut down the educational system for longer than Austria (Health Europe, 2021; EC, 2021) – we are particularly interested in those countries' educational policy response regarding students' wellbeing between February and late August 2020. The aim of our analysis of policy during the first wave of the pandemic is to critically evaluate the response of the education systems in Italy and Austria, and potentially contribute to their improvement, to ensure they are better prepared for crises in future and to work towards a more just education system that promotes the wellbeing of all. The paper reflects in particular on the concepts of eudaimonic wellbeing and quality of life as defined by the Quality of Life Movement (Francesconi et al., 2021b), which takes a broader approach to wellbeing than the health-focused conception that dominated public discourse during the pandemic and continues to dominate it.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Quality of life and SDGs

Our theoretical framework is critical pedagogy as it relates to personal and social wellbeing and quality of life (Francesconi et al., 2021b; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Simovska, 2015; Suissa, 2008). This enables us to give specific attention to the deconstruction of primary institutional discourses, narratives, and established values. The Quality of Life Movement (Francesconi et al., 2021b; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Stiglitz et al., 2019) is a relatively recent and heterogenic institutional and academic movement that promotes a socio-economic and ecological approach to quality of life. It is a perspective that situates wellbeing as an issue that goes beyond health and moves beyond

the purely economic and financial conception of societal wealth represented by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) towards the broader concept of quality of life. This concept defines wellbeing holistically as a social, psychological, economic and ecological construct that is highly dependent on cultural, geographical and historical values, and is therefore a good framework for investigating and tackling social issues such as inequality and poverty in education, and systemic wellbeing.

The work of Nussbaum and Sen (1993) in particular describes the socio-economic approach to wellbeing, referring to Aristotelian, eudaimonic, wellbeing. Eudaimonic wellbeing is not directly concerned with a healthy lifestyle per se. Instead, it relates to ethics and the normative idea that wellbeing is a life task, an existential aspiration and a virtue (Francesconi, 2018); further, it implies care for the community and social justice. Eudaimonia is interpreted as a meaningful, existential, programmatic will or intention, which guides present and future action to promote individual and collective self-realization (Francesconi, 2018).

We combined this approach with the policy framework provided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Agenda 2030 goal no. 4, namely quality education (UN, 2015). Target 4.5 aims to ensure that by 2030 all learners acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including education for sustainable development and lifestyles. In addition, target 4.a focuses on building and enhancing education facilities to ensure that they are sensitive to individual needs and provide learning environments that are safe, non-violent and inclusive for all. The global crisis could and should kick-start efforts to achieve the SDGs by creating a more just and healthy world (UN, 2020a).

However, the UNDP (2020) data dashboards reveal huge disparities between countries' ability to cope and recover. So far, as the UN worldwide report underlines, "The pandemic abruptly disrupted implementation towards many of the SDGs and, in some cases, turned back decades of progress" (UN, 2020b, p. 5). Disruptions to healthcare could reverse decades of improvement: school closures kept 90% of all students out of school, reversing years of progress on education; older people, people with disabilities, children, women, migrants, and refugees are being hit hardest by the pandemic (EC, 2021; FRA, 2020; OECD, 2021). With regard to implementation of the SDGs, Italy is currently ranked 30th and Austria 7th out of 166 countries in the SDG Index, (UN, 2020c, p. 26). In addition, a COVID-19 index has been compiled on the management of the pandemic in the individual countries; here, Italy is in the 29th place and Austria in the 16th (ibid., p. 20).

The combination of the two frameworks allows us to look at the systemic responses of national educational macro agents through their policies, and simultaneously apply critical analysis to their discourses. A critical perspective

allows us to go beyond a simple description of inequalities in education and wellbeing, identify and critically discuss institutional discourses, and reveal and interpret the prevalence of the health-based over the socio-ecological conception of wellbeing.

2.2. Educational inequalities and wellbeing

Different policy measures, national legislation and public investment in the education system may amplify existing inequalities in schools. Although general government expenditure on education is not the only factor determining the quality of education, it still needs to be considered. While Sweden and Denmark invest 6.9% and 6.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) respectively in education, Austria spends only 4.8% and Italy only 4% on the sector (Eurostat, 2020). Of the 30 countries studied, Italy invests the lowest percentage of total government expenditure in education (8.2%), and Iceland the highest (17.4%). UNESCO (2020b) assumes that COVID-19 will lead to further cuts in government expenditure on education, having greater consequences for education than the financial crisis of 2007–2008 (UNESCO, 2020b). While lockdown brought loss of freedom and presented a risk to the personal and social wellbeing of all children, the pandemic has further widened the education gap. According to the large-scale PISA 2018 study, 9% of 15-year-old students do not have a quiet place to study in their homes (OECD, 2019).

All around the world, educational institutions have closed buildings and campuses both to students and to non-essential staff in an effort to prevent them from contracting the virus and to protect their health. These decisions have had monumental repercussions for the delivery of teaching, the provision of student services, social relationships and, importantly, wellbeing. Students' personal and social wellbeing have been at the centre of public and academic debate from the beginning of the pandemic (e.g. Caffo et al., 2020; Hoffman & Miller, 2020; Van de Velde, Buffel, Bracke, Van Hal, Somogyi, Willems, & Wouters, 2021; Wanberg et al., 2020). Schwartz and colleagues found that in Alberta, Canada, student stress levels were well above critical thresholds for 25% of their sample, and females and older adolescents (aged 15–18) generally reported higher stress levels than males and younger adolescents (aged 12–14; Schwartz et al., 2021). Furthermore, Carretero Gomez and colleagues' study in five European countries (Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Italy and Poland) confirms that the pandemic has undermined the assessment and evaluation of students' psychological wellbeing (Carretero Gomez et al., 2021); this makes it more difficult to monitor the situation and pick up critical cases. So far, studies from both Italy and Austria are aligned with these findings. They observe a general deterioration in students' wellbeing and difficulties with

reaching out to and monitoring students, both at schools and at universities (Caffo et al., 2020; Meda et al., 2021; Villani Pastorino et al., 2020; Lindner et al., 2021; Hascher et al., 2020; Pelikan et al., 2021). Compromised wellbeing has also been shown to pose significant risk of increases in school dropout rates. Research in Italy, for example, has underlined that young people are suffering from reduced social contact and a general loss of wellbeing as a result of distance learning. 28% of secondary school students state that since the lockdown during the first wave of the pandemic, at least one of their classmates has stopped attending classes altogether (Save the Children, 2021).

At policy level, the OECD (2020d) has proposed that schools should give priority to wellbeing. Indeed, the OECD expects that the COVID-19 crisis will lead to lasting changes in education (2020b). The pandemic has highlighted that schools are not only crucial as education providers, but also as places that respond to socio-emotional needs and support the personal and social wellbeing of vulnerable students (Colao et al., 2020). In this sense, scholars and institutions suggest that schools should increase their ability to become safe spaces for all students, providing psychological support, responding to socialization needs and creating a sense of community (Colao et al., 2020; OECD, 2020d).

3. Materials and methods: Qualitative content analysis

We adopted an inductive-deductive qualitative content analysis methodology and applied it to institutional policy documents (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Mayring, 2004; 2014; Pandey, 2019). As is standard for deductive qualitative content analysis, we referred to previous research findings, theories, and conceptual frameworks relating to the phenomenon under investigation when determining our focus (Armat et al, 2018; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2014), namely support for school students' wellbeing. This category was derived from previous theoretical and empirical studies, which have highlighted its relevance in Italy and Austria (e.g. Fiorin et al., 2021; Kelly et al., 2021; Mascheroni, et al., 2021, Meda et al., 2021; Hascher et al., 2020; Helm et al., 2021; Pelikan et al., 2021). Data analysis was undertaken on the basis of this category; it then informed the creation of subcategories, codes, and units of meaning as the analysis progressed. Major subcategories that emerged reflect three different facets of wellbeing that had an impact on equal educational opportunities for students: (1) systemic and organizational response to wellbeing; (2) concepts of wellbeing based on health and sanitary issues; (3) COVID-19 as an opportunity to foreground wellbeing. This paper thus sheds light on these categories, which are in line with the trends evident in the growing body of international literature and institutional policy regarding the impact of the pandemic on students' personal and social wellbeing.

Two different researchers undertook separate content analyses, one for the Italian documents, one for the Austrian documents, developing independent dictionaries on the “units of meaning” (Campbell et al., 2013). To ensure reliability of the qualitative coding, the research team agreed on rules to guide the units of analysis by size and constantly evaluated the extent to which they were making similar coding decisions when assessing text characteristics. A third researcher subsequently revised all the results and discussed them with the research team in order to homogenize and further refine them.

The research material consisted of policy documents. We collected and analysed all available Italian and Austrian educational policy documents published during the first wave of the pandemic, from February 2020 to the end of August 2020, anticipating differentiated findings on how school students' wellbeing was fostered. In order to collect our data, we first ran an exploratory search within the main sources for policy in the two countries, namely institutional websites, archives, and governmental, parliamentary and other repositories. From this first exploratory phase and an initial scan of the policy documents, we selected all policy documents with explicit or implicit mention of the main category, wellbeing. The documents selected are listed in Table 1.

Table 1:

Policy documents analysed. Acronyms used: AT: Austria; IT: Italy; I: Decrees; II: Communications. See detailed documents list in the appendix.

| Italy | Austria |
|---|--|
| 16 Decrees of the President of the Council of Ministers (first issued February 23, 2020, last issued August 7, 2020): ITI.1–16 | 7 Decrees of the National Council and 11 Decrees of the Federal Minister of Education, Science and Research (first issued March 15, 2020, last issued July 31, 2020): ATI.1–18 |
| 50 Communications of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (first issued February 8, last issued August 29, 2020): ITII.1–50 | 54 Communications of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research (first issued March 12, last issued August 17, 2020): ATII.1–54 |

4. Results: Educational policies with a focus on primary and secondary school students' wellbeing during the first wave of the pandemic

Our results show different dynamics and content of the systemic responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy and Austria with regard to wellbeing. Starting from the main category of wellbeing, we developed three aspects to describe the policy documents: (1) systemic and organizational response to wellbeing; (2) concepts of wellbeing based on health and sanitary issues; (3) COVID-19 as an opportunity to foreground wellbeing.

4.1. Italy

4.1.1. Systemic and organizational response to wellbeing

During the first wave of the pandemic, schools were closed and educational excursions suspended from February 23, 2020. This was justified by the assertion that priority had to be given to the safety and physical health of students, teachers, families and the wider community (ITI.1–5, 10–11). In addition, limitations on sport and outdoor activities affected young people's psychophysical wellbeing, even if the limitations related to extracurricular education or extra-school activities (ITI.2–6, 9–12, 14, 16). Attempts to introduce practical measures to improve organization and the logistics response to the pandemic included the purchase of up to three million desks to ensure the school year could begin safely – in particular, up to 1.5 million traditional single-seat desks and up to 1.5 million innovative mobile seats with wheels (ITII.44) – as well as the reduction of geographical disparities in education (ITII.42), and funding to upgrade school buildings (ITII.11) such as the 30 million Euros allocated to local authorities (ITII.25, 39). The latter measures, however, have no immediate or short-term impact since it can take months or years to upgrade buildings.

The systemic and organizational response to wellbeing also includes the reopening of schools. The Italian government decided to continue with remote teaching and learning until the end of the 2019/20 school year and planned to reopen schools in September 2020 (ITII.26–27, 30, 35); such a long closure had an impact on students' personal and social wellbeing (Caffo et al., 2021; Meda et al, 2021; Save the Children, 2020, 2021). To ensure all sanitary and health conditions were met to allow schools to reopen in September, the government allocated 1.6 billion Euros (ITII.39) with a specific focus on the following aspects: sanitized and safe schools, more space to ensure social distancing, additional workshop teaching, flexibility, and priority for preschool children (ITII.46) and pupils with disabilities (see also ITII.29), as documents state that these groups suffered most from the closure. In addition, it was planned to resume face-to-face schooling – in compliance with the infection prevention measures contained in the Technical Document, which was drawn up by the Scientific Technical Committee and approved on 28 May 2020 – with an emphasis on the need to achieve a balance between the complex issues of safety (containing the risk of infection), the socio-emotional wellbeing of students and school employees, the quality of learning environments and processes, and respect for constitutional rights to health and education (ITII.46).

4.1.2. Concepts of wellbeing based on health and sanitary issues

4.1.2.1. Individual and social wellbeing

Communication document ITII.13 specifically highlighted the importance of safeguarding the wellbeing of individual students, but it also mentioned

the need to foster community spirit throughout the school, illustrating the attention to socio-ecological wellbeing that the systemic approach to the pandemic gave rise to. It was also noted that students' wellbeing might be enhanced by online teaching. Teachers were thus invited to provide a "listening ear" for children's and young people's worries, fears, and any other emotional states (ibid.).

In different regions, online services providing psychological support to students, parents, teachers, school heads, and other school staff were introduced as soon as the initial repercussions of the pandemic and the lockdown for individual wellbeing became apparent. For example, in the Province of Bolzano, in April 2020 the "...Parliamone" ("...Let's talk about it") online counselling service was set up (Amministrazione Provincia Bolzano, 2020). At the national level – based on a special agreement between the Ministry of Education and the National Council of Psychologists – funding was provided for psychological support when schools reopened in September, in order to help students cope with feelings of insecurity, stress, fear of infection, difficulty in concentrating, and isolation (ITII.47). The ministry planned to provide support to reopening schools in Italy in the form of 8,000 psychologists to counsel students, teachers, and parents experiencing trauma and distress as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. The policies provided for a total of 125 hours of psychological counselling per school, an average of 18 hours per month for both collective interventions for the school community and individual guidance for students, teachers, and families to support resilience.

4.1.2.2. Physical wellbeing

Even though individual and social wellbeing was given a certain priority through the provision of online counselling services during the first wave, and especially in the planning of schools' reopening, it is notable that – again perhaps due to the barriers presented by school infrastructure – physical wellbeing (i.e. health and safety provision) was the centre of attention and the social wellbeing of students, particularly the facilitation of social contact, was accorded secondary importance. The subordinate role played by this aspect of wellbeing in Italian educational policy was evident from the limited efforts to reopen schools once other institutions had reopened and as economic activities were gradually resumed. As already mentioned, educational structures and buildings in Italy were to some extent ill-equipped to deal with emergencies, and this posed a major challenge for national bodies. In this regard, along with the preventive health and hygiene measures required to enable schools to open (ITI.16), a number of organizational and infrastructure measures had to be put in place to enable schools to operate with the necessary safeguards, for instance, physical distancing in classrooms and flexible reorganization of learning environments. This may also have

contributed to the decision to leave schools closed until the summer break in June – although some regions introduced an emergency service in mid-May for children whose parents had to work – and only to reopen them in September at the usual start of the school year.

4.1.3. COVID-19 as an opportunity to foreground wellbeing

Study of the decrees issued by the President of the Council of Ministers and communications from the Ministry of Education revealed that higher priority was given to students' physical health by minimizing exposure to potentially dangerous social interactions, while lower priority was given to support for individual students' wellbeing. In Italy – and this may have been influenced not only by the circumstances of the pandemic but also by the general difficulties the country's economy is facing – the resumption of economic activities was prioritized over other fields, such as the provision of face-to-face schooling, with repercussions for students' psychosocial wellbeing.

However, taking an optimistic view, nearly all the documents analysed explicitly or implicitly stress that despite the difficulties associated with the resumption of school activities, the situation might represent an opportunity to redesign the school system as part of a more general coordinated initiative. The hope that this crisis could mark the turning point for the future of national school systems is a desire that is widely expressed these days and shared by many governments and institutions (OECD, 2020b). As far as Italy is concerned, the overall aim would hence be to place schools and students' wellbeing at the centre of the political agenda, or at least to significantly increase the attention paid to it, as it is of crucial importance for enabling both society and the economy to flourish. Whether this effort will take a health-oriented or quality of life-based approach to students' wellbeing remains hard to predict at present.

4.2. *Austria*

4.2.1. Systemic and organizational response to wellbeing

Schools were closed from March 16, 2020, by order of the Austrian government, and partially opened by the end of May, starting with graduate classes and primary schools. The study of official Austrian education policy documents revealed a particular focus on avoidance of overburdening families. Parents and legal guardians were offered the opportunity to take up care at school sites, regardless of their professional background (ATII.23). A special care period of up to three weeks was introduced to help individuals provide family care (ATI.4). In addition, children who could not be looked after at home were authorized to continue to attend school – an emergency school

service – supervised by selected teachers (ATII.9–10). Furthermore, families who were struggling financially were granted additional funds, for example via the Third COVID-19 Law of 4.4.2020, which allocated 30 million Euros as family funds (“Familienhärtefonds”) (ATI.2–5, 14, 17–18). However, the Austrian Anti-Poverty Network criticized the fund eligibility requirements for excluding 80,000 children living in socially precarious situations, and for not protecting their personal and social wellbeing (FRA, 2020).

Due to COVID-19, all school events were cancelled until the end of the 2019/20 school year. In order to relieve schools and parents of these costs, the Austrian Government set up the COVID-19-School Event Cancellation Hardship Fund (ATI.13, ATII.52). In addition, contributions and fees for certain schools and student accommodation were suspended for the duration of the closures (ATII.25). The government has been increasing the total budget for schools; experts agree that this is a strong signal of its intention to continue the national fight against poverty. Together with other nations, Austria has committed itself to meeting the UN target of dedicating 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) to development activities. This goal has not so far been achieved. Despite more investment, it is still unclear if the commitment to providing comprehensive development assistance can be delivered (Oead, 2020).

4.2.2. Concepts of wellbeing based on health and sanitary issues

4.2.2.1. Individual and social wellbeing

At the beginning of the first wave of the lockdown, the Ministry of Education sent an official and public letter to teachers, asking them to maintain regular and structured contact with their students through existing and new (digital) communication channels. If additional support was needed to establish these channels, the Ministry promised to provide financial aid (ATII.23). Although not explicitly stated, it can be concluded from the analysis of policies that one aim of these actions was to increase students' psychophysical wellbeing.

The relevance of psychophysical wellbeing in Austrian policy was also evident from the efforts made to reopen schools as soon as possible and the many, often detailed, communications between the Ministry of Education and schools about the introduction of new processes (e.g., ATII.2–3, 20, 40). As soon as possible, teaching began operating in shifts to ensure that all students could attend class (ATII.30–31, 35).

Moreover, teachers were instructed that all students showing signs of psychological or social problems – although the meanings of the terms were not explicitly explained – had to be contacted without exception. Social

workers were instructed by the Federal Ministry to contact pupils showing signs of problems in the current situation and whom schools had not managed to reach since the beginning of the emergency (ATII.23–24). School premises were also made available to local associations for group activities to promote personal and social wellbeing (ATII.49–50).

4.2.2.2. Physical wellbeing

While on the one hand the Minister of Education's communications to teachers mentioned their heavy workload, they also asked them to continue to provide support during the Easter holidays for parents and guardians working in critical infrastructure. Schools were therefore also kept open during the Easter week for 6–14-year-old pupils (ATII.17, 27) and teachers belonging to risk groups were mentioned in protected categories (ATII.38). Not least for this purpose, policy documents also stress that hygiene guidelines must be observed by all (ATII.48). In terms of health and physical wellbeing, hygiene guidelines played a prominent role in communications with schools (ATII.33, 37, 48). A letter from the Minister of Education was also sent specifically to school doctors, requiring them to help in other health and care facilities if they were not able to perform their regular duties as school doctors in federal schools. The Ministry of Education gave them the opportunity to apply for special leave to allow them to be available free of charge in areas where medical support was urgently needed. School doctors' salaries continued to be paid by the Ministry of Education (ATII.13). These measures illustrate the government's health-related commitment to supporting students' wellbeing.

Finally, in the context of physical wellbeing, it is also important to mention limitations on physical education classes and outdoor activities during the first lockdown. When schools reopened, most only allowed exercise and sport outdoors, with exceptions for pupils on athletics or skiing courses, pupils on approved programs for competitive athletes and for federal sports academies (ATII.42).

4.2.3. COVID-19 as an opportunity to foreground wellbeing

Study of the decrees issued by the National Council and from the Federal Minister of Education, Science and Research and from the Communications of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research revealed that professional support for students' physical wellbeing was given higher priority than support for their psychosocial wellbeing. Indeed, nearly all of the Austrian documents analysed underline the increased awareness of and attention given to the issue of students' wellbeing, as well as paying considerable attention to the wellbeing of parents and teachers. Furthermore, the documents give hope that the priority accorded to students' individual and social wellbeing will be sustained beyond the pandemic and will become a structural asset

of the Austrian education system, in line with the OECD recommendations (2020b).

Table 2:

Summary of key findings on aspects of wellbeing in Austrian and Italian education policy documents during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic

| Aspects of wellbeing | Italy | Austria |
|---|---|---|
| Systemic and organizational response to wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 23/02/2020: School closure until the end of the 2019/2020 school year – Suspension of educational excursions – Limitations on sport and outdoor activities – Purchase of desks – Upgrading of school buildings – 1.6 billion Euros invested to ensure good sanitary and health conditions in schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 16/03/2020: School closure and step-by-step reopening before summer break – Events were cancelled – Care provided at school sites – Introduction of special care periods for family care – Emergency school service – Extra family funds – Implementation of COVID-19-School Event Cancellation Hardship Fund |
| Concepts of wellbeing based on health and sanitary issues | <p><u>Individual and social wellbeing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Focus on wellbeing of individual students and community spirit – Support for students with disabilities – Online teaching and role of teachers as “listeners” – Psychological support through online counselling services <p><u>Physical wellbeing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Limited opportunities for physical exercise and sports – Decision to keep schools closed to ensure integrity and physical health of students – Comprehensive (preventive) health and hygiene measures | <p><u>Individual and social wellbeing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maintenance of regular and structured contact with students through existing and new (digital) communication channels – Introduction of shift teaching – Special care for students with psychological or social problems – Efforts of local associations to undertake group activities <p><u>Physical wellbeing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Limited exercise and sport activities – Protection of students belonging to risk groups – Comprehensive and rigorous introduction of hygiene guidelines – Additional deployment of school doctors |
| COVID-19 as an opportunity to foreground wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clear support for individual students' wellbeing, the school community, teachers, and families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clear support for individual students' wellbeing as well as for the wellbeing of their parents and teachers |

5. Discussion and Conclusions: Aspects of wellbeing

Based on the descriptions above, the aspects we have developed are discussed in more detail below.

5.1. Systemic and organizational response to wellbeing

In terms of systemic response, Italy and Austria took different action in relation to the beginning and the duration of school closures. Italy shut down schools between the end of February and the beginning of March 2020. There were considerable regional differences in Italy, for example in Lombardy schools closed on February 23. In Austria, the shutdown started somewhat later, on March 16, 2020, and was applied to the entire country. The Italian system did not then reopen schools during the first wave, while Austrian schools did reopen before summer break. However, it is necessary to consider the context in which the educational systems were situated: in contrast to Austria, the number of deaths in Italy increased rapidly, especially between February 21 and the end of March 2020 (Alicandro et al., 2020), and this has led to more severe restrictions and policy measures such as longer school shutdowns than in Austria.

Teaching began on the basis of shifts to ensure that not all Austrian students were attending classes at the same time, starting with core subjects, and then adding ancillary subjects such as physical education. From May 4, 2020, Matura students and all graduating classes in the VET sector were back in school, followed, on May 18, by pupils at primary schools, lower secondary (grammar) schools (AHS), New Middle Schools (NMS), special schools and all vocational middle and higher schools classes with a shortened year of instruction. These were followed by classes at the polytechnic schools, the AHS upper cycle and all other classes at VET schools and colleges on June 3, 2020.

In this context, it is also necessary to consider the logistic and structural conditions of the Italian school systems, such as school buildings and infrastructure, which hampered support for emergencies or safe reopening. A relevant example in this context is the purchase of thousands of new mobile school desks, which were intended to facilitate the ergonomic reorganization of school classes and spaces when schools reopened. This was a policy aimed at supporting the reopening and reorganization of the school system. However, as has been shown, given the impossibility of reopening schools until September, educational systems in Italy faced major organizational challenges in finding a flexible, fast and safe response to the pandemic.

In both countries, there was systematic and structured collaboration between students and their families and a range of professionals, including psychologists or social workers. Together, they tried to improve the physical and even psychophysical wellbeing of the students.

5.2. Health and sanitary-based concept of wellbeing

As set out in the theoretical discussion, a socio-economic conception of wellbeing includes health but it is not limited to it (Francesconi et al., 2021b). A broader vision is required in order to escape from health-centred policies of wellbeing. However, looking at the sanitary emergency during the first phase of the pandemic, both countries' initial reaction to the pandemic was of necessity based on a strong sanitary response. Initially, there was little or no pedagogical intention of adopting a comprehensive approach to wellbeing, despite the fact that from the very beginning it was clear that the impact of the pandemic was going to go beyond the sanitary dimension: the lack of face-to-face social contact between students affected the wellbeing of students in many countries. During the first wave, policies to support wellbeing in schools were largely derived from or based on the health and medical sector, rather than the educational sector, as previous research has already demonstrated (e.g., Kelly et al., 2021). In Austria, social workers were also brought in to help vulnerable students, but were not given a specific pedagogical mandate, while in Italy psychologists were included in teams to help at-risk-students. Our analysis has also shown that the Austrian system primarily, specifically and explicitly characterized wellbeing in terms of hygiene; an aspect that was not treated in the same manner in the Italian policy documents. This again is in line with the sanitary conception of wellbeing that is so essential during the pandemic, but has limitations because it partially excludes or neglects the pedagogical response and strategy. Our analysis, however, shows that policy documents in Austria put a stronger focus on the psychophysical wellbeing of students than those in Italy and that both countries – although to different extents – made some effort to support the health and wellbeing of families and teachers. From this, it can be deduced that the wellbeing of individual students was not only directly addressed, but also that attempts were made to support the social wellbeing of students through care for the wellbeing of the school community, and of the teachers and parents around the students. In Italy, the concept of wellbeing was related more to a general sense of safety and health promotion. The focus was mainly on the students themselves rather than systemic or social wellbeing. In both countries, policies required that student wellbeing had to be monitored and supported through regular online contact.

5.3. COVID-19 as an opportunity to foreground wellbeing

Our data show that the focus of wellbeing policies is in line with trends in the growing body of international scientific literature on wellbeing. The OECD (2021) confirms that one unexpected effect of the pandemic is the increased awareness of and attention given to the issue of students' wellbeing, which has become a top priority in many countries. Further assessment is needed

to establish whether this priority will be sustained beyond the pandemic and will become a structural asset of the Italian and Austrian education systems. The OECD also suggests that the crisis should be considered an opportunity to establish a new culture of wellbeing in schools (OECD, 2020d). This is in line with the general aims of the Quality of Life Movement (Francesconi et al., 2021b). In this context, and in order to move beyond the sanitary reactions to the pandemic towards an educational concept of eudaimonic wellbeing (Francesconi, 2018), it will be crucial for the future of schools to plan and implement changes in the curriculum that put a stronger focus on personal and social wellbeing and self-care. This can be achieved through workshops, focus groups, personal and pedagogical coaching and other methodologies fostering socialization and self-reflection, as well as by ensuring that students understand the past and current emergency and any future crisis, and that they are equipped with the requisite tools to take care of themselves and their environment. From this perspective, both Italy and Austria have demonstrated their commitment to improving students' wellbeing during the first wave of the pandemic – by considering the past and present social and economic conditions that impact educational institutions in each context. However, more has to be done in the post-pandemic era.

5.4. Concluding remarks

The limitations of this study relate to the design of the research and consist in geographical and temporal constraints. Geographically speaking, the sampling in our study has included only two European countries and is therefore limited. Further studies of other (European) countries would deepen the understanding of the responses of national school systems. The temporal limitation consists in our decision to focus only on the first wave of the pandemic and not on the entire period. This decision was driven by the strategic planning of our research. We wanted to ensure we were relying on a closed set of policy documents and not on documents that were still being modified or released. Here again, further studies of the second wave and the ongoing development of the pandemic would be helpful. This paper contributes to improved analysis of what happened during the first wave and can assist the development of better responses to similar educational emergencies in the future. Both the Italian and Austrian school systems can learn from this pandemic and then can put in place the necessary systemic changes (Francesconi et al., 2021a).

The present study is relevant for education policy and systems researchers for at least two reasons. First, while there are a vast number of studies investigating the psychophysical effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on school students, there are far fewer publications dealing with education policy. Second, the methodological approach we adopted in this paper –

the qualitative content analysis of policies – remains rare in investigations of the impact of the pandemic. For these reasons, our study represents an opportunity to expand the knowledge of the scholarly community on this topic. We believe that once the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic lessens, it will be necessary to reflect on the partial transfer of educational policies on wellbeing from the health and medical sector to the educational sector, in line with the theoretical assumptions of the critical and pedagogical approach to wellbeing and with the Quality of Life Movement (Francesconi et al., 2021b; Simovska, 2015; Suissa, 2008; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993).

In conclusion, based on the data provided in this paper and the latest literature, we recommend that governments and educational institutions introduce more agile strategies for education in order to ensure more adequate and prompt responses to potential future crises, especially where the personal and social wellbeing of all individuals within the education sector are concerned, from students to teachers and parents. Systemic crises require systemic responses and the engagement of collective and distributed agency needs to be reinforced to ensure systemic resilience (Francesconi et al., 2021a). However, in order to move beyond state policy, it will be necessary to open a discussion about how school systems and institutions should use this crisis as an opportunity to learn about wellbeing and rethink some of their policies and practices in order to move from a mere sanitary to a fully eudaimonic conception of wellbeing.

References

- Alicandro, G., Remuzzi, G., & La Vecchia, C. (2020). Italy's first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has ended: no excess mortality in May. *Correspondance*, 396(10253), E27-E28, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)31865-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)31865-1)
- Amministrazione Provincia Bolzano (2020). *News. In Provincia di Bolzano 31 scuole italiane hanno attivato la didattica online*. http://www.provincia.bz.it/formazione-lingue/scuola-italiana/news.asp?aktuelles_action=4&aktuelles_article_id=640391&news_action=4&news_article_id=637367
- Armat, M. R., Assarroudi, A., Rad, M., Sharifi, H., & Heydari, A. (2018). Inductive and deductive: Ambiguous labels in qualitative content analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(1), 219–221.
- Armitage, R., & Nellums, L. B. (2020). Considering inequalities in the school closure response to COVID-19. *The Lancet. Global Health*, 8(5), e644. [https://10.1016/S2214-109X\(20\)30116-9](https://10.1016/S2214-109X(20)30116-9)
- Caffo, E., Scandroglio, F., & Asta, L. (2020). Debate: COVID-19 and psychological well-being of children and adolescents in Italy. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 25(3), 167–168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12405>
- Campbell J, Osserman J., & Pedersen O. (2013). Coding in-depth semistructured interviews: problems of unitization and Intercoder Reliability and agreement. *Sociological Methods and Research* 42(3), 294–320.

- Carretero Gomez, S., Napierala, J., Bessios, A., Mägi, E., Pugacewicz, A., Ranieri, M., Triquet, K., Lombaerts, K., Robledo Bottcher, N., Montanari, M., & Gonzalez Vazquez, I. (2021). *What did we learn from schooling practices during the COVID-19 lockdown?* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <https://10.2760/135208, JRC123654>
- Colao, A., Piscitelli, P., Pulimeno, M., Colazzo, S., Miani, A., & Giannini, S. (2020). Rethinking the role of the school after COVID-19. *The Lancet Public Health*, 5(7), e370. [https://10.1016/S2468-2667\(20\)30124-9](https://10.1016/S2468-2667(20)30124-9)
- Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 62(1), 107–115. <https://10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x>
- Eurostat (2020). *Government expenditure on education*. Government expenditure on education – Statistics Explained (europa.eu).
- EC/European Commission (2021). *Coronavirus: European Solidarity in action*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/coronavirus-european-solidarity-action_en
- Fickermann, D., & Edelstein, B. (Eds.) (2020). “Langsam vermisste ich die Schule..” Schule während und nach der Corona-Pandemie. *Die deutsche Schule. Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft, Bildungspolitik und pädagogische Praxis. Supplement 16*.
- Fiorin, I., Ianes, D., Molina, S., & Venuti, P. (Eds.) (2021). *Oltre le distanze. L'inclusione ai tempi del Covid-19*. Erickson.
- FRA (2020). *Coronavirus pandemic in the EU –Fundamental Rights Implications*. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/at_report_on_coronavirus_pandemic-_may_2020.pdf
- Francesconi, D. (2018). Eudaimonic Wellbeing and Education. In Galvin, K. T. (Ed.). *Routledge International Handbook of Wellbeing*. Taylor and Francis Books. <https://10.4324/9781315724966-30>.
- Francesconi, D., Symeonidis, V. & Agostini, E. (2021a). FridaysForFuture as an Enactive Network. Collective Agency for the Transition Toward Sustainable Development. *Frontiers in Education*, 4(636067), 1–10. <https://10.3389/fe-duc.2021.636067>
- Francesconi, D., Tarozzi, M., Bykachev, K., Välimäki, T., Turunen, H., & Simovska, V. (2021b, forthcoming). Quality of Life Policies: Historical Overview of the Movement and Challenges for the Future of Education. *Policy Futures in Education*.
- Kelly, P., Hofbauer, S., & Gross, B. (2021). Renegotiating the public good: depoliticising education in the response to Covid-19 in England, Germany and Italy. *European Educational Research Journal*, 1–26. doi: <https://webservices.scientificnet.org/rest/uisdata/api/v1/blobs/publications/5656>10.1177/14749041211030065
- Hascher, T., Mansfield, C., & Beltman, S. (2020). *Teacher wellbeing during Covid-19 pandemic*. University of Bern, University of Notre Dame Australia, Curtin University.
- Health Europe (2021/March). *Role of crisis management and civil protection in COVID-19 pandemic*. <https://www.healtheuropa.eu/role-of-crisis-management-and-civil-protection-in-pandemic/106430/>
- Helm, C., Huber, S. G., & Loisinger, T. (2021). Was wissen wir über schulische Lehr-Lern-Prozesse im Distanzunterricht während der Corona-Pandemie? – Evidenz aus Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 24, 237–311. <https://10.1007/s11618-021-01000-z>

- Hoffman, J. A., & Miller, E. A. (2020). Addressing the Consequences of School Closure Due to COVID-19 on Children's Physical and Mental Wellbeing. *World Medical and Health Policy*, 12(3), 300–310. <https://10.1002/wmh3.365>
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288. <https://10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Huber, S. G., & Helm, C. (2020). COVID-19 and schooling: evaluation, assessment and accountability in times of crises – reacting quickly to explore key issues for policy, practice and research with the school barometer. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 32, 237–270. <https://10.1007/s11092-020-09322-y>
- Huber, S. G., Günther, P. S., Schneider, N., Helm, C., Schwander, M., Schneider, J. A., & Pruitt, J. (2020). COVID-19 – Aktuelle Herausforderungen in Schule und Bildung. Erste Befunde des Schul-Barometers in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz. Waxmann. <https://www.waxmann.com/index.php?eID=download&buchnr=4216>
- Lindner, K.-T., Letzel, V., Tarini, G., & Schwab, S. (2021). When home turns into quarantine school – new demands on students with special educational needs, their parents and teachers during COVID-19 quarantine. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 36(1), 1–4. <https://10.1080/08856257.2021.1874153>
- Mascheroni, G., Saeed, M., Valenza, M., Cino, D., Dreesen, T., Zaffaroni, L. G., & Kardefelt. Winther, D. (2021). *Learning at a Distance: Children's remote learning experiences in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Innocenti Research Report UNICEF. Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence. <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/learning-at-a-distance-childrens-remote-learning-experiences-in-italy-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf>
- Mayring, P. (2004). *Qualitative content analysis. A companion to qualitative research*, 1(2), 159–176.
- Mayring, P. (2014). *Qualitative content analysis: theoretical foundation, basic procedures and software solution*. https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/39517/ssoar-2014-mayring-Qualitative_content_analysis_theoretical_foundation.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-2014-mayring-Qualitative_content_analysis_theoretical_foundation.pdf
- Meda, N., Pardini, S., Slongo, I., Bodini, L., Agostino Zordan, M., Rigobello, P. Visioli, F., & Novara, C. (2021). Students' mental health problems before, during, and after COVID-19 lockdown in Italy. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 134, 69–77.
- Nussbaum, M., & Sen, A. (Eds.) (1993). *The Quality of Life*. Oxford University Press.
- Oead (2020). *Entwicklungszusammenarbeit in der (Corona-) Krise?* <https://oead.at/de/aktuelles/artikel/2020/07/entwicklungszusammenarbeit-in-der-corona-krise/>
- OECD (2019). *Results from PISA 2018*. https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_ITA.pdf
- OECD (2020b). *Key policy responses from the OECD*. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/>
- OECD (2020d). “Trends Shaping Education 2020 Spotlight 21: Coronavirus special edition: Back to school”, *Trends Shaping Education 2020*. <http://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/Spotlight-21-Coronavirus-special-edition-Back-to-school.pdf>

- OECD (2021). *The State of School Education: One Year into the COVID Pandemic. Preliminary Results – March 2021*. OECD Publishing. <https://10.1787/201dde84-en>
- Pandey, J. (2019). Deductive approach to content analysis. In J. Pandey (Ed.), *Qualitative techniques for workplace data analysis* (pp. 145–169). Hershey: IGI Global.
- Pelikan, E. R., Lüftenegger, M., Holzer, J., Korlat, S., Spiel, C., & Schober, B. (2021). Learning during COVID-19: The role of self-regulated learning, motivation and procrastination for perceived competence. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 24, 393–418. <https://10.1007/s11618-021-01002-x>
- Rowlingson, K. (2011). *Report: Does income inequality cause health and social problems? University of Birmingham, Joseph Rowntree Foundation*. https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/15970/1/ijRF_nequality-income-social-problems.pdf
- Save the Children (2020). *Riscriviamo il futuro. L'impatto del coronavirus sulla povertà educativa*. https://s3.savethechildren.it/public/files/uploads/pubblicazioni/limpatto-del-coronavirus-sulla-poverta-educativa_0.pdf
- Save the Children (2021). *Riscriviamo il futuro. Dove sono gli adolescenti? La voce degli studenti inascoltati nella crisi*. https://s3.savethechildren.it/public/files/uploads/pubblicazioni/riscriviamo-il-futuro-rapporto-6-mesi_1.pdf
- Schwab, S., & Lindner, K.-T. (2020). Auswirkungen von Schulschließungen und Homeschooling während des ersten österreichweiten Lockdowns auf Bildungsgleichheit, *Wirtschafts- und sozialpolitische Zeitschrift WISO*, 4, 20, 49–63.
- Schwartz, K. D., Exner-Cortens, D., McMorris, C. A., Makarenko, E., Arnold, P., Van Bavel, M., Williams, S., & Canfield, R. (2021). COVID-19 and Student Well-Being: Stress and Mental Health during Return-to-School. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 20(3), 347–351. <https://10.1177/08295735211001653>
- Simovska V. (2015) Wellbeing in Schools: A new transformative or tyrannical educational concept? *Professor Inaugural Lecture, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University*.
- Stiglitz, J., Fitoussi, J., & Durand, M. (2019). *Measuring What Counts: The Global Movement for Well-Being*. New York: The New Press.
- Suissa J. (2008) Lessons from a new science? On teaching happiness in schools. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 42(3–4), 575–590.
- Teddle, C., & Sammons, P. (2010). Applications of mixed methods to the field of educational effectiveness research. In B. P. M. Creemers, L. Kyriakides, & P. Sammons (Eds.), *Methodological Advances in Educational Effectiveness Research* (pp. 115–152). Routledge. https://rufiismada.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/methodological_advances_in_educational_effectiveness_research__quantitative_methodology_series_.pdf
- Tcherneva, P. R. (2020). *The Case for a Job Guarantee*. John Wiley & Sons.
- UNDP (2020/April). *COVID-19: New UNDP data dashboards reveal huge disparities among countries in ability to cope and recover*. https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2020/COVID19_UNDP_data_dashboards_reveal_disparities_among_countries_to_cope_and_recover/
- UNESCO (2020a). *COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response*. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

- UNESCO (2020b). *Policy Paper 41. COVID-19 is a serious threat to aid to education recovery*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373844/PDF/373844eng.pdf.multi>
- UN/United Nations (2015). *Sustainable Development Goals*. https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E
- UN/United Nations (2020a). *UN news*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063022>
- UN/United Nations (2020b). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf>
- UN/United Nations (2020c). *Sustainable Development Report 2020. The Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19*. https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2020/2020_sustainable_development_report.pdf
- Van de Velde, S., Buffel, V., Bracke, P., Van Hal, G., Somogyi, N. M., Willems, B., & Wouters, E. (2021). The COVID-19 International Student Well-being Study. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 49(1), 114–122. <https://10.1177/1403494820981186>
- Villani, L., Pastorino, R., Molinari, E. Anelli, F., Ricciardi, W., Graffigna, G., & Boccia, S., (2020). *Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being of Italian University Students*. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3679896> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3679896>
- Wanberg, C. R., Csillag, B., Douglass, R. P., Zhou, L., & Pollard, M. S. (2020). Socioeconomic status and well-being during COVID-19: A resource-based examination. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 105(12), 1382–1396. <https://10.1037/apl0000831>
- WHO/World Health Organization (2020). *WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard*. https://covid19.who.int/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI3YjB9NfF6gIVGSwYCh1ktQQHEAAYASAAEgLQhfD_BwE

Aspekti blagostanja učenika osnovnih i srednjih škola tokom prvog talasa pandemije kovida-19: kvalitativna analiza obrazovne politike u Italiji i Austriji

Denis Francesconi²

Univerzitet u Beču, Odeljenje za obrazovanje nastavnika, Centar za obrazovanje nastavnika, Beč (Austrija)

Barbara Gross

Slobodni Univerzitet Bocen-Bolcano, Pedagoški fakultet, Bolcano (Italija)

Evi Agostini

Univerzitet u Beču, Odeljenje za obrazovanje nastavnika I Pedagoško odeljenje, Centar za obrazovanje nastavnika i Filozofsko-pedagoški fakultet, Beč (Austrija)

Pandemija virusa korona razotkrila je granice trenutnih struktura društva i obrazovanja. U većini zemalja, pandemija kovida-19 ugrozila je kako blagostanje učenika, tako i blagostanje njihovih porodica i nastavnika. Tokom prvog talasa pandemije, obrazovni sistemi širom sveta morali su brzo i na odgovarajući način da reaguju na sistemski šok nastao usled pandemije, a države su primenile niz različitih mera kako bi se izborile sa njenim velikim uticajem. Teorijski okvir od koga polazimo u ovom radu je kritička perspektiva, a kao okvir politike korišćeni su Ciljevi održivog razvoja Ujedinjenih Nacija. Ovaj okvir omogućava kvalitativnu analizu odabranih obrazovnih politika koje su primenile Italija i Austrija kako bi podržale blagostanje učenika. Ove dve zemlje koristile su različite strategije upravljanja obrazovanjem i vanrednom situacijom, posebno tokom prvog talasa pandemije. U radu primenjujemo naš teorijski i politički okvir na kvalitativnu analizu sadržaja dokumenata obrazovne politike od februara do kraja avgusta 2020. godine, sa ciljem da procenimo odgovore na krizu različitih obrazovnih sistema, kao i da potencijalno podržimo njihovo poboljšanje. Opšte istraživačko pitanje bilo je sledeće: Kako su obrazovne politike u Italiji i Austriji podržale blagostanje učenika tokom prvog talasa pandemije kovida-19? Rezultati potvrđuju da su sistemi u Italiji i Austriji primenili različite strategije da bi podržali blagostanje, kao i da su sproveli različite inicijative. Međutim, obrazovne politike u obe zemlje, a posebno u Italiji, više su se usmerile na fizičko blagostanje učenika tokom perioda koji smo analizirali, često zanemarujući društveno blagostanje. U zaključku se diskutuje o mogućnostima koje je vanredna situacija pružila školskim sistemima da stave blagostanje (u širem smislu blagostanja kao eudajmonije) u središte obrazovne politike.

Ključne reči: blagostanje; kvalitet života; ciljevi održivog razvoja; kvalitativna analiza politike; COVID-19

2 Denis Francesconi, denis.francesconi@univie.ac.at