

Title: What Makes Me? Age-related development of core capacities and their implications for child well-being and development practices

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Understanding the age-related development of capacities is fundamental to a child's timely and effective expression of their own rights, as well as informing best practices for stakeholders working with children – from policymakers through to education and health practitioners, and beyond. Yet age-related evidence on the evolution of innate capacities for living and learning throughout childhood is limited. Article 5 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that the agency of the child themselves, in relation to how they exercise their own rights, is dependent on their evolving capacities. Capacities which are also foundational skills for child development, and to which all practitioners, and policy actions for children, should be attuned.

Acknowledging the lack of evidence on age related development of children's core capacities, and the interaction of such capacities throughout childhood, this paper seeks to inform the conference theme of 'Child well-being development practices', and sub-theme 'Early childhood and adolescent development and education' by presenting a review of global literature across nine core capacities of: 'Discerning patterns', 'Embodying', 'Empathizing', 'Inquiring', 'Listening', 'Observing', 'Reflecting', 'Relaxing' and 'Sensing'.

The presentation will introduce a meta-analysis of findings from nine quality-assured, systematic, and narrative literature reviews of recent experimental evidence on how children develop and apply these skills, and how they link to child well-being outcomes across the child's life course. The findings provide a wealth of evidence to show how these capacities matter for child well-being, develop at different ages – though always in early childhood – and evolve in different, sometimes non-linear, trajectories throughout childhood. The study also highlights how social and demographic conditions can result in unequal development of innate skills amongst children, and results in recommendations for what caregivers, practitioners and policymakers can do (and when!) to promote and protect the evolving capacities of all children.

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