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The relation between adolescents' participation and well-being

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Health is not created in a vacuum but in the relationship between individuals and their surroundings. Settings like school, is therefore an important arena for adolescents since they spend the majority of their waking hours there. Earlier research has been particularly focused on risk factors related to mental illness in children and youth, rather than what promotes and strengthens their well-being. Studies from our research show that participation is a key factor for pupils positive health and well-being. With use of participatory visual methods we enable adolescents to put their eyes on, for them, critical aspects for well-being, discuss these issues together and make proposals to decision makers about change. In order to gain understanding of the needs and values of new generations, adolescents need to be made a part of the development of their own everyday environment. This is also in line with article 12 in the UN Convention on rights of the child. Photovoice, a participatory research method and other visual methods I have used, enable adolescents to reflect on physical and social aspects in their school environment and in the community by taking photos or record cell-films. The method, photovoice, will be described and early results will be presented from studies about well-being among students at vocational programs at high school.

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