

ESF 2026 SUMMARY REPORT: Evaluating Global Educational Curriculum Systems - Toward an Integrated Model of Ecosystemic Flourishing

Executive Summary

Education systems across the world are undergoing significant transformation. There is growing recognition that traditional models - focused primarily on academic attainment and economic productivity - are insufficient to address the complexity of contemporary challenges. New approaches have emerged, incorporating wellbeing, competencies, sustainability, and global citizenship. However, as with national and city wellbeing frameworks, these developments remain largely **fragmented rather than integrated**.

This report applies the **Ecosystemic Flourishing (ESF) Framework** to global educational curriculum systems, extending the analysis presented in the ESF 2026 Wellbeing Frameworks Report.

The key findings are:

- Strong progress in human development and wellbeing domains
- Increasing recognition of cultural identity and values
- Limited integration of ecological systems as lived experience
- Near absence of regenerative economic thinking
- Persistent fragmentation across system levels

Central conclusion: Flourishing in education is not achieved through isolated curriculum reforms, but through the alignment of systems across domains and levels.

Introduction: The Evolution of Educational Thinking

The global shift beyond narrow educational models mirrors the movement beyond GDP described in the wellbeing report.

Historically, education systems have prioritised:

- standardisation
- knowledge transmission
- workforce preparation

More recent reforms have introduced:

- social and emotional learning
- competency-based education
- sustainability education

- wellbeing frameworks

Yet these innovations often operate in parallel rather than as a coherent whole. The result is a system that is evolving - but not yet integrated.

The ESF Evaluation Model Applied to Education

The ESF Framework evaluates systems across four interdependent domains :

- Natural Environment
- Circular and Regenerative Economics
- Cultural Values and Identity
- Human Capacities and Potential

Each system is scored out of 20, reflecting the level of integration across these domains.

Section A: Global ESF Top 25 – Educational Curriculum Systems

Table 1: ESF Global Top 25 (Education Systems and Approaches)

Rank	Country / System	ESF Score (20)	Positioning Summary
1	Bhutan	18	Fully integrated wellbeing, culture, and ecology
2	New Zealand	17	Strong relational and Indigenous integration
3	Costa Rica	17	Ecological and wellbeing alignment
4	Finland	16	Whole-child, trust-based system
5	Canada (British Columbia)	16	Competency and identity-led
6	International Baccalaureate	16	Global integrative framework
7	Wales	15	Future-oriented systemic redesign
8	Scotland	15	Holistic but transitional
9	Japan	15	Strong relational and moral culture
10	Norway	15	Wellbeing and outdoor learning
11	Sweden	15	Equity and child-centred
12	Denmark	15	Play-based and relational
13	Netherlands	14	Autonomy-driven and diverse
14	Estonia	14	Future skills and adaptability
15	Singapore	14	Expanding beyond performance model
16	Australia	14	Increasing wellbeing integration
17	Ireland	14	Strong early years focus
18	Germany	13	Strong vocational pathways
19	France	13	Centralised reform model
20	South Korea	13	High attainment, emerging wellbeing
21	United States (selected models)	13	Innovation within fragmentation
22	UAE	13	Rapid reform toward future skills
23	Chile	13	Equity and wellbeing reforms
24	England	12	Performance-led, limited integration
25	China	12	Academic strength, emerging reform

Section B: Key Findings from the Global Analysis

1. Strength in Human Development

Most systems have made significant progress in:

- wellbeing
- social-emotional learning
- competencies

This represents a major shift toward the ESF domain of **Human Capacities and Potential**.

2. Emerging Cultural Awareness

Many systems now include:

- identity
- belonging
- global citizenship

However, deeper engagement with worldview, meaning, and spirituality remains limited.

3. Weak Ecological Integration

Environmental education is widely present but:

- often theoretical
- rarely experiential or relational

4. Absence of Economic Transformation

The **Circular and Regenerative Economics** domain is almost entirely absent.

Education systems still largely prepare learners for:

- participation in existing economies rather than:
- transformation toward regenerative systems

Section C: System Levels in Education

As identified in the wellbeing report, flourishing depends on alignment across system levels.

National Level

Defines:

- curriculum frameworks
- assessment systems
- policy priorities

Regional Level

Acts as:

- integrator of policy and practice
- key leverage point for change

Local and School Level

Shapes:

- lived experience
- relationships
- learning environments

Section D: The Systemic Misalignment

A parallel to the national-city gap identified in the wellbeing report is clearly visible in education:

- policy defines intention
- practice determines experience

When these are not aligned:

- learning becomes fragmented
- outcomes become inconsistent
- impact is reduced

Toward an Integrated Educational Model

An ESF-aligned system would:

- balance all four domains
 - integrate inner and outer development
 - embed ecological understanding
 - include regenerative economic thinking
 - align system levels
 - prioritise early development
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Concluding Assessment

Education systems globally are:

- evolving rapidly
- expanding conceptually
- but remaining structurally fragmented

The central ESF insight remains: Flourishing emerges not from isolated improvements, but from systemic alignment.

Flourish Project, 2026

Appendix A: ESF Evaluation Methodology for Education Systems

1. Conceptual Foundation

The ESF Framework is an **integrative architecture**, not a competing model. It evaluates the extent to which systems align across four interdependent domains :

- Natural Environment
 - Circular and Regenerative Economics
 - Cultural Values and Identity
 - Human Capacities and Potential
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2. Scoring Framework (0–20)

Each system is assessed across four domains:

Domain	Score Range	Criteria
Natural Environment	0–5	Ecological integration, lived nature connection
Circular & Regenerative Economics	0–5	Economic systems understanding and transformation
Cultural Values & Identity	0–5	Identity, meaning, values, worldview
Human Capacities & Potential	0–5	Holistic development and wellbeing

Total Score: /20

3. Data Sources

Evaluation draws on:

- national curriculum frameworks
 - policy documentation
 - international comparative studies
 - ESF-aligned qualitative analysis
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4. Interpretation Bands

Score	Category
17–20	Highly Integrated
14–16	Moderately–Highly Integrated
11–13	Moderately Integrated
8–10	Partially Integrated
0–7	Minimally Integrated

5. Key Analytical Principles

a. Integration over inclusion

Presence of a domain is not sufficient. The key question is whether domains are **systemically integrated**.

b. Lived experience vs policy intent

Evaluation distinguishes between:

- formal curriculum design
- real-world implementation

c. Developmental depth

Systems are assessed for their recognition of:

- early childhood
- relational development
- inner life

6. Limitations

- Comparative data varies across countries
- Implementation differs within systems
- Scores represent **indicative positioning**, not absolute ranking

About the Flourish Project

The Flourish Project was established in response to a growing recognition that many of today's most pressing challenges - educational, ecological, social, and economic - cannot be addressed in isolation. Its work brings together insights from developmental psychology, systems thinking, ecology, wellbeing science, and cultural studies to explore how more integrated conditions for human and planetary flourishing might be created. Through the continuing development of the Ecosystemic Flourishing (ESF) Framework, the Project seeks to support a wider transition from fragmented models of progress toward approaches that recognise the deep interdependence between people, communities, economies, and the living world.

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