

## Wisdom as 'Expertise in the Fundamental Pragmatics of Everyday Life'

### The Berlin Paradigm

The Berlin Wisdom paradigm was developed through an ongoing project to test wisdom out in an experimental, empirical manner. In other words, what does it look like, sound like, can we measure it in any way? The research, by Baltes and colleagues (e.g. Baltes and Smith 1990), has involved asking people to consider certain situations or scenarios aloud, with their replies rated against key dimensions. If you were to consider the situation wisely, you would be demonstrating awareness and ability across five key areas, outlined below. These areas have stood up well to date for this kind of applied wisdom.

### Five Wisdom Factors

1. Rich factual knowledge about life - on topics such as human nature, behaviour and development and social norms
2. Rich procedural knowledge about life - for example, having processes for decision making through weighing up pros and cons, including emotional content.

These two factors are regarded in the paradigm as necessary but not sufficient. They are complemented by:

3. Life span contextualisation, for example knowledge of different life stages, and the impacts of significant events/periods of life
4. Value relativism and tolerance, appreciating difference and having sensitivity
5. Understanding that not everything is certain, and having ways to deal well with, or live with, uncertainty.

### Being Wise

It is clear from this research and other work in the area that the behaviour and capabilities of individuals are important. The above may be a good start if you'd like to expand your own 'WQ' through personal experiment and/or coaching (see [http://www.irvingallan.com/coaching\\_and\\_supervision.phtml](http://www.irvingallan.com/coaching_and_supervision.phtml)). Baltes et al (2005) also comment on the continuing relevance of 'ancient' theories of wisdom, suggesting that individual and collective well being cannot exist separately from each other, for wisdom to be present.

The complexities introduced by collective behaviours and the small amount of research focusing on corporate or organisational wisdom are among the drivers for the current study. Please contact [julie@irvingallan.com](mailto:julie@irvingallan.com) if you would like to be involved.

**'Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom.'** Walter Benjamin

### References

- Baltes P, Gluck J, Kunzmann U (2005) *Wisdom: its structure and function in regulating lifespan development*. In Snyder C R and Lopez S J (Eds) *The Handbook of Positive Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Baltes P, Smith J (1990) *Towards a psychology of wisdom and its ontogenesis*. In Sternberg R J (Ed) *Wisdom. Its Nature, Origins and Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press