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WELL-BEING IN SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONS: ASPECTS TO
CONSIDER

Yolanda Alonso-Martirena (a)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Public University of Navarre (UPNA), Navarre Government fellowship, Arrosadia Campus, Pamplona-Iruña,
alonso.martirena@unavarra.es. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0325-034X>

Abstract

When entering school life and dealing with schools, the need for attention to well-being emerges, since a climate of safety, acceptance and cooperation is a necessary condition of any teaching and learning process. School is important for social interaction and to develop social and emotional values. But school practices never stand-alone. They are embedded within, and linked to, other infrastructural aspects. So, all of this can be seen in school organizations where the organizational climate promotes well-being. Therefore, educational objectives must undertake to commit to individual wellbeing and must give us the guarantee of individual well-being (balance, harmony), satisfaction and positive emotions. Well-being mediated by teachers, management teams and other school agents. But can we think of a pedagogical organizational system to deal with nested systems? Motivation, expectations and sharing experiences with positive meaning are variables that narrow down the significance of the school climate; all in an organizational culture. Thus, these key aspects in a positive organization require an explicit commitment of all agents, as well as requirements appropriate to the capabilities, a meaning that motivates and is consistent with the values, and an organization that ensures positive social relationships. We are forced to unite, together, for “well-being” in a positive school atmosphere, to push the “quality” of education.

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1. Introduction

Among the criteria for selecting an educational center for their children, parents usually consider important or very important aspects related to the school climate, even above the criterion of performance. Aspects such as certainty that the school environment is pleasant and dynamic, etc. (OECD, 2016, p.10)

Nowadays, the states also recognize the importance of promoting the well-being of children and adolescents in their school environment, an objective that is gradually being integrated into educational policies. It is necessary to give our young people the same opportunities to achieve success in their studies, but it is equally essential that they are satisfied and happy with life. That is a common concern of parents all over the world (MECD, 2017). Consequently, educational institutes must promote compromises for well-being and must give us a guarantee about individual well-being (balance, harmony) satisfaction and positive emotions at positive institutions.

A positive vision of well-being requires developing new approaches and strategies (Keyes and López, 2002; Costa and López, 2006). Ill-being and well-being, and more broadly illness and health, are relatively independent, and require different methods of research and action (Vázquez and Hervás, 2009; Keyes and Waterman, 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to promote among professionals a greater awareness toward evaluation and intervention practices that promote the growth and development of well-being (Hopper, 2007).

However, these objectives of well-being marked in educational policies, and in the requirements of parents, are developed in the schools. Schools which are nested organizations mediated by teachers; teachers who need help for this requirement (Comenius Multicultural Project, 2014). Hence the need to define the aspects to consider in the organization of the school, an organization where these well-being objectives are undertaken.

This article aims to define the key aspects of a school organization that ensures an adequate social environment, to a) illuminate and emphasize the aspects to consider in the school organization, to ensure the necessary well-being to allow maximum student learning performance, and b) transfer knowledge of positive psychology to the environment of pedagogical practices, in our case the school environment, as a tool to achieve it.

2. The question: well-being

Dealing with well-being from the field of health, historically, has had a deficit-based approach, rather than focusing on its preventive aspect and development of individual and collective capabilities.

However, the World Health Organization has demonstrated interest in comprehensively limit the concept of health, a concept that includes that of well-being, and an interest in developing actions that promote well-being (WHO, 1948, 1986; WHOQOL Group, 1994).

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Health is a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. It is a positive concept, emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities (WHO, 1986).

In summary, beyond deficiencies, complete mental health requires deepening and expansion of theoretical models of well-being. It requires its own instruments and strategies for analysis of the processes (in the school institution, in our case), that supplement current interventional tools. As the three-tiered model of Seligman (2002).

The three-tiered model (Ibid), rather than a model of well-being, is a descriptive proposal of a structure for research in well-being. It summarizes the dimensions conducive to well-being in three tiers: *the Pleasant Life, which includes experiencing positive emotions about the past, present and future *the Good Life, which involves the implementing personal strengths to develop maximum optimal experiences, to develop flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and *the Meaningful Life and objectives beyond personal ones.

2.1. At school

The “expansion and growth” theory of Fredrickson (1998, 2001) states that positive emotions have an immediate effect on our cognitive abilities and the development of resilience. They also play an important role in the improvement of resources for overcoming adverse situations (Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004). The child’s positive adaptation entails those positive emotions. Various studies verify the importance of attention to wellbeing and to the application of positive psychology in education (Furlong, Gilman, & Huebner, 2009; Arguís, Bolsas, Hernández, & Salvador, 2010; Boniwell & Ryan, 2012; Kurtz, 2011; Kim-prieto & Oriano, 2011; Kranzler & Gillham, 2006). However, the child’s positive adaptation depends, in part, on the degree to which the contexts of socialization are organized for optimal development. Baker and Maupin (2009) indicate in their works the direct relationship between academic satisfaction and warmth and trust in the interpersonal relationships providing emotional support between teachers, students and peers. So, these studies develop into the demand for research that analyzes the needs for a Positive school organization.

2.2. At the Positive Organization

The study of emotions within organizations is a key work factor (Barsade and Gibson, 2007). According to Lazarus (1991), emotional processes determine the personal significance that we give to an event; a subjective experience, with conscious or unconscious significance, which triggers a diversity of responses.

Positive Organizational Psychology (POP) lets us describe, explain and predict optimal functioning in these organizational contexts, as well as optimize and strengthen the quality of work-related and organizational life. However, the difference processes that occur in the organization require analysis of the positive phenomena that come from both the person and the context. Thus, POP considers two approaches to Positive Psychology from variables of individual well-being, Positive Organizational Behavior (POB), and variables of group well-being, Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS), which allow us to validated situations developing in all spheres.

- **Positive Organizational Behavior (POB)**

Positive Organizational Behavior (Luthans, 2002; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) focuses on the study and application of strengths and psychological capacities that can be developed and effectively managed for performance improvement in the workplace. Positive behavior is conceptualized from a micro

level, from individual psychological qualities and their influence on performance. Thus, individual well-being is affected by *attention focused on the activity *intrinsic motivation and *efforts, difficulties, satisfaction. From a perspective of human resources in organizations, beyond the more stable personality traits, we focus on characteristics that can be created, developed or modified.

From a human resources perspective, Positive Psychological Capital considers the health of the worker, including well-being, as a company goal or objective; for this, it focuses on the personal capabilities and strengths that can be modified to improve organizational operation. The basic characteristics that define it are: *self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997, p. 3), *hope, based on the interaction between objectives, control and pathways (Snyder, Feldman, Taylor, Schroeder, & Adams, 2000), *optimism that, related to confidence and persistence (Carver and Scheider, 2002), *resilience or strength toward adversity (Luthans, 2002) and *engagement defined as the positive affective state of fullness, which is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption or concentration at work (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 73).

They are personal resources that promote flexibility, creativity and openness to innovation. And for their proper development and management, they need to strengthen meta-cognitive competencies, self-esteem, psychological empowerment, professional development and work resilience.

This vision develops the resistance of the worker to situations of conflict and improves efficiency, but always accompanied by the necessary organizational changes (Garrosa and Carmona, 2011).

- **Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS)**

As a complement to POB, we must consider the positive aspects of the scholarship of the organization, by considering Positive Organizational Scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn, 2003).

At a group level, in an organization, organizational scholarship is equated to the so-called organizational culture: external and internal factors and conditions that can affect the organizational focus and strategy; these include behaviors, beliefs and values shared by the members of an organization, which are determined by *the rules in place, the structure of the organization (communications system, dependent relationships, etc.), *the management style, *and the individuals who make up the organization and the interactions they have.

The climate of an organization is a dynamic system and influences the perception individuals have of the organization. It is a collective way of perceiving day-to-day reality: the perceived subjective effects of the formal system, the informal style of managers, and other important environmental factors on the activities, beliefs, values and motivation of people who work in a particular organization (Litwin & Stringer, 1968) governs the motivation and manifestation of this motivation, i.e., the commitment (Toro & Cabrera, 1998); satisfaction will be an affective consequence and well-being will occur in an organizational climate that produces satisfaction.

3. Method for analysing well-being at school organization

We must focus on the variables that narrow down the meaning of school climate: *Motivation, *Expectations and *Sharing experiences with positive significance. But... how we can make it at school organization? can we think of a pedagogical organizational system to deal with nested systems?

We analyze school organizational systems from different ecological levels: micro-, meso-, exo-, chrono- and macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979); from influences, interactions and interrelations between the members and the connected systems

- Micro: Proximal interactions of systems (student-teacher)
- Meso: Interrelated systems, School context (teacher teams, Guidance Departments, etc.)
- Exo: Systems not directly interrelated, space for regulations and standards (definition documents of centers such as Educational Program of the Center, Tutorial Action Plan, etc., inspection, etc.)
- Chrono: Influence of external constraints (School Models, Learning Programs, etc.)
- Macro: Dominant structures, values, beliefs and socioeconomic practices (legislation, administrative organization, etc.)

Therefore, if optimal psychological functioning is not a predictor but rather a consequence, we must establish the aspects of the school organization that lead to the development of what is defined by Seligman (1999) as optimal human functioning. It demand for research that analyzes the needs for a Positive school organization.

4. Results: instruments to analyse the well-being at school

For an analysis of well-being in the school, it is first necessary to analyze the way well-being has been established at the school institution; whether it is explicit and how it is reflected from the perspective of difference ecological levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Different aspects must be considered at different levels:

- macro and chrono: legislation and rules,
- exo: the center's documents (the Center's Educational Project should explicitly reflect this objective of wellbeing in relation to all academic agents), faculty documents, etc.

And analyze whether the explicit commitments are defined with precision, whether they are subject to revision, whether they respond to a solid and systematic framework of competences and if that framework is subject to international standards.

But beyond these documents, at a meso and micro level, we cannot forget that the school institution, the school where we act, is made up of individuals with expectations, motivations, attitudes and needs that must be known and recognized by the organization, since they directly influence the action.

At a meso level, group relations in the school are important. Group processes include the following types of characteristics:

- Cognitives: group learning, mental models, inter-knowledge and distribution of skills and abilities, group climate (common vision of objectives, participation, safety, innovation, etc.), confidence.
- Motivational/affective: cohesion (toward tasks and toward other members of the group), emotions, efficiency (efficiency for work and group strength), conflicts (in work and relations)
- Focused on action and group behavior: explicit and implicit coordination (time synchronization and adjustment, planned or unplanned), cooperation and contribution to the team without reduction in individual effort, communication.

This requires Effective communication, Immediate feedback, Clarity of goals, Balanced/confronted abilities and challenges, and Social support.

At a micro level, as described above, it will be necessary to strengthen meta-cognitive competencies, self-esteem, psychological empowerment, professional development and work resilience.

The school must focus the organization on the process that combines positive psychological capacities and a developed organizational context, which will result in an increase in self-awareness of capacities and self-regulation of positive behaviors, and in the promotion of positive self-development.

5. Conclusions

Taking into account the obligatory fulfillment of well-being, we need sharing, cooperating and working together for well-being. Promoting environments in which the flow of the situation and people ensures that we have a climate of safety, necessary in the first years of schooling, and a climate of acceptance and cooperation, when we socialize throughout compulsory education. This necessarily leads us to organizations where flow and engagement are unavoidable conditions. Ensuring fluid environments channels us toward proposals from Positive Psychology. How do I feel sharing and cooperating? How can I manage the work together? How do we relate and communicate in an interactive framework? (Mind, body, character and personality).

In the sphere of organizational strategies, Positive Organizational Practices cultivate personal and organizational virtues, and contributed and strengthen personal realization, collective well-being and Organizational efficiency. It pushes movements in educational practices, in what and how we work, in shifting interrelations. And it will ensure a consistency in the three constitutive characteristics to developing positive educational actions: *what we say (cultural discourse), *what we do (material-economics) and how they are related (social and political) (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008); we cannot forget that development of a committed, coherent and meaningful life can be more important than a pleasant life in establishing well-being (Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005).

In conclusion, to prepare a “social capital” in the school, development must be considered at all levels together: emotional, cognitive, individual, interpersonal and social. It is here that we see that education quality is and can be cognitive, emotional, physical and relational; with healthy and motivated students, where processes are undertaken by reliable, confident teachers and applying active pedagogies, with relevant curricular content developed in a context with clearly defined strengths and values.

In a context that references how institutions are or can be Positive Institutions, the conditions that predetermine how a Positive Educational Institution is constructed and the constitutive aspects related to how it operates, we arrive at five substantive fields that determine Positive Educational Practices: *Well-being is an explicit goal; there is an explicit commitment. *Teacher training and support is continuous, *Comprehensive attention is given to learning and to teaching styles, *There is follow-up and measurement of outcomes of the practice, well-being and *Strengths and values are comprehensively defined.

We must consider all of these aspects at a level of individual well-being, in a positive institution, to ensure a quality education.

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