An engagement-based school experience as a premise of Wellbeing

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Abstract

In the challenge of providing a quality education to all students, one of the main driving forces of change is the teacher and his/her attitudes; the need to address inclusion and participation of everyone therefore affects the teaching and the organization of the School.

In response to this –within the context of the formation of the European POSitivitiES project and based on the perception that students were more receptive after a session of yoga performed at a Navarre school– we evaluated the impact of practicing mindfulness on some key processes in schools: from activities inherent to the curriculum content to personal development. It originates in the dissemination of results between the teachers, at the classroom micro-system level and at the school micro-system level. We concluded that individual wellbeing, of the students and the teachers, improves relationships between components of the Educational Institution, improves commitment and engagement and allows pedagogical practices from the flow.

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Keywords: wellbeing; mindfulness; academic processes; positive institution; educational quality.

1. Introduction

Quality Education was established as an objective in the Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) for the 2015-2020 cycle; two of the four European priority strategic areas and objectives established refer to promoting quality in education and wellbeing, since they are not considered objectives achieved by its predecessor, the ET2010 work program:

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Improving quality and efficacy of education and training (Strong support for teachers, trainers, directors of teaching centers and other educational staff and Sustainable investment, quality and efficacy of education and training systems).

Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship (Inclusive Education, Equality, Non-discrimination and Promoting civic competences).

Addressing that improvement and effectiveness of education requires a change in behavior and school organization. Individual wellbeing, developed at a positive institution, is the cog necessary for a quality education, for a quality education system: An education where healthy students are motivated, where competent teachers use active pedagogies and work on relevant curriculum content, and under systems where good government and equitable allocation of resources ensure a Quality Education.

Based on these premises, we analyze the relationship between levels of mindfulness of the child and the skills involved in attention, working memory, sustained attention and emotional balance at a school in Navarre (Spain). This is to confirm or deny a “feeling” to enhance the practice of teaching.

2. Fundamentals. Well-being, implications for education

The objective at the school is the culture of psychological health, wellbeing, the impact is seen not only in academic results but also in physical and mental health, coexistence and the academic satisfaction of teachers and students. “Building a learning environment as a social environment and not just physical is essential for the curricular praxis” (Grundy, 1991, p.161).

The “expansion and growth” theory of B. 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. 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.

Therefore, wellbeing should be reflected in classroom programs and we should “train” the studies in these skills, designing relevant training objectives, timely initial assessment, development, formative assessment, and self-, hetero- and co-assessment. Likewise, the Center’s Educational Project should explicitly reflect this objective of wellbeing in relation to all academic agents.

In the academic day-to-day, teachers address wellbeing to varying degrees, within the framework of the current policy/legislation. Various studies verify the importance of attention to wellbeing and to the application of positive psychology in education (Furlog, Gilman & Huebner, 2009). At the micro-system/meso-system level, some experiences have been reported in Spain aimed at primary and secondary education (Arguís, Bolsas, Hernández & Salvador, 2010). Currently, applied research has been conducted primarily in the United States in secondary education (Boniwell & Ryan, 2012) and university education (Kurtz, 2011; Marks, 2011; Kim-prieto & Oriano, 2011; Kranzler & Gillham, 2006). Nevertheless, the scientific knowledge should be transferred to a greater extent to research-action in the schools (Scott Huebner & Hills, 2011). An example of school organization that pursues wellbeing is the project described in this article.

But, in a multidimensional system such as that of education, the different educational agents must also be mediators between policies and classroom pedagogy/practice to bring to it greater quality and equity.

Therefore, this mediation between policies and the classroom requires a deep reflection in the schools regarding quality. Quality, because of it comes from business models, does not have a model that addresses the wellbeing of teachers (the quality model pertains to the management team and goes no further), which clearly distinguishes between social quality and quality of development, between quality social and organizational quality. A thorough review of the different reference architectures beyond the classroom; at the *sayings level (how is it reflected in the vision and definition of operating educational quality at the center?), *doings level (how is it articulated in quality management currently implemented at the educational center?) and *relatings level (how is the policy transferred to classroom pedagogy/practice and the school organization?).
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