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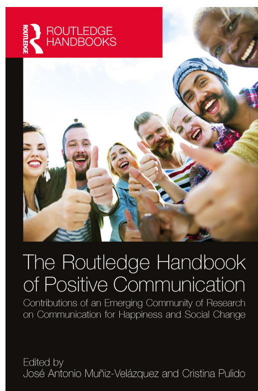

The Routledge Handbook of Positive Communication Contributions of an Emerging Community of Research on Communication for Happiness and Social Change

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The Real Happiness in Education

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THE REAL HAPPINESS IN EDUCATION

The Inclusive Curriculum

Isabel Lopez-Cobo, Inmaculada Gómez-Hurtado, and Mel Ainscow

Currently, the discourse that proposes taking actions to ensure students are happy in schools is becoming more prevalent. This discourse has provoked numerous reactions among academics. In certain educational contexts, a misunderstanding has arisen concerning happiness because the latter has been restricted to a single expression, namely, hedonic happiness. This restriction has caused schools, with good intentions but mistaken means, to promote the segregation of students based on race, disability, or academic performance. This separation is justified by appealing to the assumption that students must be happy, while often neglecting eudemonic happiness, which is associated in contrast with functions of a higher-order and achieved in the long-term.

The literature supports the understanding that such discriminatory practices, as well as this way of understanding education and organizing the educational system, cause serious damage to the strengths of the human being that were recognized by Peterson and Seligman (2004). Hence, the alternative agreed on by the scientific community is the use of school inclusion to facilitate the development of all students.

Throughout this chapter, we demonstrate the intimate link between the principles of the inclusive school and the cultivation of the strengths of the human being. Based on scientific evidence, we defend a curriculum that enhances these strengths in the classroom and improves academic performance through a commitment to an inclusive curriculum based on inclusive principles that encourage students to achieve true happiness by harnessing their own potentialities (Seligman et al., 2009).

Inclusive Education

School inclusion emphasizes the positive value of differences, which are considered to further human development. It also values diversity as enriching for students. We require an educational model based on respect of differences and for human rights, a model that effectively embeds a culture of diversity within a framework of democracy, coexistence, and humanization (López Melero, 2004).

As Murillo and Hernández (2011) observe, the concept of school inclusion or inclusive education has undergone great advances since its inception. Thus, whereas the inclusion process was initially associated with integrating students with disabilities into the general classroom, it has been enriched with a new vision focusing on the differences of students in educational processes,

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whether the differences derive from race, gender, social class, ability, language, or belonging to a cultural minority.

Currently, happiness and common well-being are commonly spoken about, but achieving them entails a commitment to social and educational inclusion that includes all individuals in our society. O'Brien (2010) states: "Sustainable happiness is happiness that contributes to individual, community, or global well-being without exploiting other people, the environment, or future generations." To achieve this goal, we must fight for more equitable educational systems that defend non-exclusive policies and practices and attend to the characteristics of all students (Ainscow, 2016a); that is, we must aspire to build schools that offer everyone a place and that can develop the strengths of the human being to achieve the common goal of happiness.

Thus, a key challenge for 21st-century schools is providing appropriate educational responses to address the diversity of skills, cultures, or motivations of students (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Shellinger, 2011). Such a response should be coupled with inclusive practices aimed at addressing the requirements of all students, regardless of their characteristics, and fostering communication links between all parties involved in teaching-learning processes, namely, students, teachers, families, and communities.

Inclusive education is supported by the principles of the Declaration of Salamanca (Booth, Ainscow, & Dyson, 1998). It seeks to mitigate the influence of exclusionary tendencies and negative assessments of difference by adopting a perspective based on the belief that methodological and organizational changes can provide a twofold answer, specifically, helping students with difficulties and improving the abilities, expectations, and social skills of all other students (Ainscow, 2006). The benefits of inclusive education are numerous and affect classroom diversity. To name a few benefits, we can highlight benefits most closely linked to the social field, such as the foundation of the development of human strengths, similar levels of self-esteem among the entire student body (Ntshangase, Mdikana, & Cronk, 2008), and improved participation and interaction in the classroom (De Boer, Timmerman, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2012). Such benefits do not affect only students because, according to Ortiz González and Lobato Quesada (2003), the concept of an inclusive school has positive repercussions in three areas: the conception of individual differences, the quality of education, and the social development of students. Therefore, school inclusion is not neutral and is achieved through the full consideration of all stated factors (e.g., organization, culture, community). Thus, its principles must be present at its core to propel the organization and operation of the inclusive school, promoted by individuals who exercise leadership functions and direct teamwork with all individuals who belong to the school (Ainscow, 2001b), as well as create collaborative networks between schools that increase educational attainment and reduce the achievement gap between struggling students and their classmates Ainscow (2009).

These ideas are considered a paradigm of organization (Ainscow, 2001a; Dyson & Millward, 2000) that supposes a new perspective centered on analyzing barriers within school's systems that block student participation and learning (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), a phenomenon that Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006) call "school improvement with attitude."

Thus, school inclusion is defined as a process designed to respond to the diversity of characteristics and needs of all students, toward establishing quality education for all (Murillo & Hernández, 2011, p. 17). Undoubtedly, in many countries, inclusion remains associated with the inclusion of students with special educational needs. However, a diversity of students is increasingly assumed (Ainscow, 2007), and policies, cultures, and educational practices that promote any type of exclusion are rejected (Parrilla & Susinos, 2004, p. 196). Therefore, we assume a philosophy based on effective education for all (Arnáiz, 2002), premised on an educational model that goes beyond school integration because this philosophy implies adopting a new attitude toward all students (Jiménez Martínez & Vilà Suñé, 1999, p. 171).

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Numerous investigations support the development of inclusive schools for achieving more equitable systems that address student needs and guarantee the universal right of all children to receive a quality education (Ainscow, 2016a, 2016b; Ainscow & Messiou, 2016; Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, & West, 2016; Ainscow, 2015; Echeita & Navarro, 2014; Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, & West, 2013; Dison, 2007).

We advocate a new type of school, concerned with educating all students and interested in their development according to their personal characteristics and the qualities of their environment. This type of school would be open to diversity and would be the fruit of the commitment and reflection of the members of the entire educational community who intervene and work in it (Pujolàs Maset, 2001). Such a school would help students attain happiness.

Principles of the Inclusive School

Based on the theoretical foundations discussed above, we understand the inclusive school as embodying the following necessary and sufficient principles to direct education (Ainscow, 2009, p. 1):

- Increase student participation, reducing student exclusion in the curriculum, culture, and local communities of the school.
- Restructure school cultures, policies, and practices to ensure they respond to the diversity of the students.
- Encourage the presence, participation, and self-realization of all students vulnerable to exclusion, understanding that inclusion does not apply only to students with special educational needs.

Ainscow (1999) argues that progress toward more inclusive educational systems requires shifting from educational practices based on traditional perspectives of special education to perspectives focused on developing "effective schools for all."

Hence, we consider that becoming inclusive is an uninterrupted process (Booth, Ainscow, & Dyson, 1997, 1998; Booth, 1996; Ainscow et al., 2006; Ainscow, 2009) in which different factors, such as educational policies, the organization of supports, and the leadership of the center, interact.

We also emphasize the importance of considering the following characteristics or assumptions when understanding what we mean by inclusive education (Ainscow, 2012, p. 40):

- Inclusion applies to all children and young people in the school.
- Inclusion emphasizes presence, participation, and school outcomes.
- Inclusion is an ongoing process.
- Inclusion and exclusion are closely linked such that inclusion implies an active struggle against exclusion.

Therefore, an inclusive school should continuously change because the inclusive framework activates a process that demands continuous vigilance (Ainscow, 2012, p. 40). Muntaner, Rosellón, and De la Iglesia (2016, p. 36) consider that inclusive schools promote the consolidation of inclusive practices that imply a series of indicators, namely, understanding difference as natural to each person (the positive value of difference); recognizing the richness of diversity; and managing heterogeneous groups and inclusive practices that satisfy at least three conditions: guaranteeing the presence, participation, and learning of all students.

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Inclusive Education for Achieving Happiness

Positive education is considered by Seligman et al. (2009) as not only an educational model that strives for habitual competences in the educational system but also a pedagogy exemplifying a broader perspective on fostering the happiness of the individual.

If we analyze different investigations, we will find that the main contribution of positive psychology coincides with several basic principles of inclusive education. For example, positive psychology considers that achieving happiness and well-being requires prioritizing the construction of the strengths and virtues of the human being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Sheldon & King, 2001; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Similarly, the foundations of the inclusive school confer a positive value on the characteristics of all students and promote the realization of the student's potential (Muntaner et al., 2016; Ainscow, 2005; Arnáiz, 2003).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) set forth a classification of strengths and virtues involving 24 strengths that are divided into six virtues considered universal. These strengths, with their corresponding virtues, can be cultivated in schools (Seligman et al., 2009) to establish an inclusive curriculum that fulfills the needs of all students, thus improving resources (Ainscow, 2012) and favoring the development of an inclusive school.

Seligman et al. (2009) introduce positive education in schools to strengthen different competences through a common inclusive curriculum premised on building strengths because the authors consider three important reasons that justify this type of education.

Bahona, Sánchez, and Urchaga (2013) praise the possibilities of Positive Psychology in the educational field and share their experiences concerning programs implemented with favorable results by Seligman et al. (2009), such as the Pen Resilience Program (PRP) and the Strath Haven Positive Psychology Curriculum, in addition to the ongoing Geelong Grammar School project, as well as programs created in Spain, namely, the Happy Classrooms Program (Programa Aulas Felices) (Arguís Rey et al., 2011) and the Educational Program for emotional and moral growth (Programa educativo de crecimiento emocional y moral, PECEMO) (Alonso & Iriarte, 2005). Apart from these programs, Bahona, Sánchez, and Urchaga (2013) also cite other researchesthat corroborates solidly the claim that well-being improves learning and that positive attitude increases attention, creative thinking, and holistic thinking capacities.

To delve more deeply into analyzing the points of contact between positive education and the inclusive school, we could start with the lessons of Ainscow (2012, pp. 39–49) to review the lessons of each educational model and confirm that they share a dual objective that becomes one: to admit diversity to find happiness. The first lesson is specifying the components of inclusive education to develop inclusive schools and create policies and practices to achieve this goal in the school environment. Likewise, we must emphasize the necessity of developing human strengths in the classroom so that the curriculum proposed by the school administration is not reduced to academic content but admits all components that can support the overall development of students.

Another basic task to promote an inclusive school entails revitalizing available human resources and changing the attitudes of professionals to overcome barriers to participation and learning. Valverde, Fernández, and Revuelta (2013), supported by Nias (1996), defend this ideal based on their study of the importance of teachers' emotions in constructing teaching and learning processes (Zembylas, 2005). In this way, teachers would exhibit a more positive attitude as they develop more of their strengths, which would in turn directly impact learning.

The third lesson, consistent with Ainscow (2012), involves using different forms of evidence available in the classroom. That is, the application of different methods, didactic and organizational, and resources would be another effective way to encourage teachers to develop more

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inclusive practices. Hence, to include programs in the classroom that cultivate the strengths and virtues identified by Seligman (2002) would not constitute merely another initiative or teaching method to improve learning but would imply teachers developing their own content, none other than the strengths themselves (Seligman et al., 2009).

The use of additional pedagogical support for addressing students' needs requires careful planning by and adequate training of the individuals committed to this task. This lesson links the importance of developing specific programs that help promote the strengths of the human being to happenings in the classroom. Crucially, all professionals must be involved with students to perform these programs.

Inclusive schools may assume different forms, but they all embrace an organizational culture that positively values student diversity, a feature compatible with Positive Education, which seeks to develop the strengths of the human being and abandon ideas that adopt negative perspectives of the person (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Finally, in inclusive schools, the role of school leaders is to collaborate to promote an inclusive culture, which involves considerable effort in communication and interrelation with our remaining classmates. Hence, a high degree of well-being is necessary, as well as strengths and virtues for developing an inclusive leadership (Ryan, 2003, 2006). Thus, Essomba (2007) believes that inclusive leadership implies that the leader situates human relationships at the center of action, above strategies and resources. The leader must also perceive the educational community as an open system of interdependent and complex relationships to guide transformation toward the social environment, so it does not remain confined to the classroom.

Likewise, relations between schools and the community, networking, social networks, and the mass media greatly influence the implementation and effects of emotional education (Bisquerra, 2016). Additionally, Seligman (2002) states that positive emotions should predominate in every educational space, thereby promoting feelings of gratitude, forgiveness, enjoyment, and optimism, among others. To foster inclusive schools that address the diversity of student requirements, we must, as Seligman (2002) asserts, promote positive emotions, which demand positive attitudes that favor an educational model that enlists all children, as they all have a right to education. Attitudes are, therefore, fundamental factors for developing inclusive schools (Jiménez Martínez & Vilà Suñé, 1999).

In 2010, Bisquerra noted that happiness in education is more interesting as a process than as a product, with the priority being to discern how, through learning, one can learn to be happy. To achieve this discernment, the school must aim at the happiness of the student by focusing on well-being, understanding it as not only an antidote to depression but also a means to increase life satisfaction, an aid for stimulating learning and creative thinking (Seligman et al., 2009)—in other words, human flourishing.

Finally, we must remember that language "is essentially involved in all academic subjects" and that communication provides the basis for all other actions and achievements. Therefore, incorporating a diversity of voices into the classroom would help improve the acquisition of the desired language and tone. Further developing this idea, we can note that effective communication is the main means of conducting a dynamic assessment of shared understanding because communication entails more than using language to exchange information. In fact, communicating involves interpreting emotions, understanding contexts, combining and adjusting ideas, as well as cultivating creativity through listening and interpreting the *other's* message. The inclusion of dialogue in the classroom therefore facilitates the appropriation, co-construction and transformation of one's thoughts, helping individuals grow as people and with the community (Mercer, 2013). In this sense, we can also speak of fully positive communication in the classroom.

In 1978, Vygotsky had already highlighted that the level of potential development is determined by the ability to solve problems under the guidance of an adult or in collaboration with peers. The

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benefits of interactions with diverse students in the classroom extend beyond cognitive improvements, positively influencing emotional development and well-being (Whitebread, 2012).

The brain's sociality (RSA, 2010) enables a constant orientation toward the *other* and toward meaning-making during the interaction to improve the student's abilities. Starting from the theory of the mind, we can observe that the brain not only allows us to make predictions regarding our or *another's* emotional state but also helps us make assessments about the type of knowledge we share with another person, enabling us to judge their levels of understanding. Interaction with different students helps continuously refine one's judgments, values, and knowledge, but above all, it encourages the understanding of the *other* (Jeong & Chi, 2007), which affects the comprehension, in brief, of oneself, which is greatly relevant to eudemonic happiness.

In summary, inclusive education and enhancing quality dialogs between equals are not only useful for acquiring skills and improving academic performance. They also form a backbone in the development of human strengths and therefore in helping students achieving hedonic and eudemonic happiness, students who, as adults, can live a full and flourishing life.

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