
The Foundations of Flourishing School Communities in the Context of Positive Education Programs

Bachene Hamza *

University of Algiers 2 – Abou El Kacem Saâdallah – (Algeria), hamza.bachen@univ-alger2.dz

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Abstract:

This study conducts a meticulous analytical review of existing literature on positive psychology and its practical applications within the educational sector. It highlights the pivotal role of schools as enabling institutions that enhance personality characteristics, human virtues, and overall student well-being. Schools are ideal environments for nurturing students' intellectual capacities while fostering a broad spectrum of character strengths and competencies. By activating and cultivating these traits, educational institutions can significantly enhance the well-being of their communities and proactively address potential mental health challenges students. This transformation is facilitated through the integration of curricula crafted by leading researchers in the domain of positive education, supported by robust empirical evidence, thus reflecting the substantial contributions of positive psychology within a sustainable, flexible educational framework designed to maximize individual achievement and long-term prosperity.

Keywords: Positive Psychology; Positive Education; Well-Being; Character Strengths; Flourishing.

*Corresponding author

1. Introduction

In the contemporary educational landscape, there is a burgeoning awareness of the necessity for a holistic approach to student development that prioritizes happiness and overall well-being. This paradigm shift is a response to the alarming increase in mental health issues among the youth, underscoring the imperative to adopt preventative strategies that address these concerns proactively, rather than merely responding to worsening mental health statistics.

This evolving perspective has catalyzed the formulation of curricula and initiatives aimed at elevating happiness, well-being, and the cultivation of character strengths. These initiatives are collectively termed Positive Education programs, predicated on the understanding that students' daily interactions with peers and educators are fundamental to their mental health and are pivotal areas for applying positive education principles.

Globally, schools have embraced and integrated the principles of positive education into their curricula through varied and innovative programs tailored to the diverse needs of their student populations. For example, Geelong Grammar School in Australia has infused all aspects of its educational framework with positive psychology principles through specific, targeted programs. Similarly, Anthony Seldon at Wellington College in the UK has launched several initiatives focused on teaching happiness, equipping students with the tools to cultivate their joy independently. In New Zealand, Wellington School enables students in grades 10 and 11 to engage in bi-weekly 40-minute sessions over two years, focusing on well-being skills that empower them to navigate and influence their personal growth and prosperity effectively (as cited in Oades, & al, 2011, par. 6).

This research seeks to clarify the essential elements of both conventional education and positive education, which are based on the methodologies derived from positive psychology that are applied within supportive educational structures. Throughout this paper, the terms Positive Education and positive education will be utilized interchangeably, reflecting their confluence in focusing not only on character building and the inculcation of virtues and morals but also on the imputation of knowledge and academic skill development. These dual objectives are encapsulated within the Positive Education models proposed by Seligman and substantiated by the positive outcomes associated with positive psychological approaches.

2. Problem Statement

The field of Positive Psychology was established to explore the strengths, virtues, and capabilities that empower individuals to thrive and sustain their psychological equilibrium. There is compelling evidence suggesting that positive strengths are instrumental in individual development across various stages of life, including childhood. These strengths can be nurtured and augmented through positive family environments and educational systems. Seligman emphasized that "child-rearing is about identifying and maximizing aspects of strength and assisting children in finding contexts where they can exercise these strengths and virtues to the fullest extent possible" (Bachene & Berrazouane, 2018, Abstract). These mechanisms are pivotal in facilitating the flourishing of individuals in psychological, social, and educational dimensions.

Leading researchers in Positive Psychology, such as Seligman (2000), have articulated "a framework for Positive Educational Practices (PEP) within the educational process, considered an innovative approach in planning and interacting with individual student cases or with small groups of schoolchildren. This framework applies the core principles and orientations of the Positive Psychology movement, focusing primarily on how to facilitate the flourishing and well-being of students" (Al-Asmi, 2015, p. 2). This perspective is reinforced by Peterson's (2006) viewpoint that educational institutions should broaden their scope beyond mere academic instruction to also promote good character traits and well-being; thus, enhancing the role of schools as they cater to a wide demographic of children and adolescents. The research and interventions in these settings are designed to enable this demographic to achieve optimal mental health, academic success, and lifelong growth and prosperity (Bachene & errazouane, 2020a, pp. 63-64). Given that fostering positive mental health early in life is essential for children's developmental trajectories, it serves as a critical pathway to adult well-being. Nonetheless, despite these encouraging outcomes, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 10% to 20% of young people globally suffer from mental health disorders, and the vast majority does not receive appropriate care for these issues. As a result, these problems frequently continue into adulthood, negatively impacting their ability to live satisfying lives.

In this regard, Seligman and his colleagues (2009) underscored the critical need to invest in schools as they represent a joint environment for children and adolescents. Schools provide a unique opportunity

to reach this demographic and implement interventions that significantly enhance the well-being of individuals and school communities on a large scale (quoted from Bachene & Berrazouane, 2021, p. 39).

This proposition acknowledges the substantial and impactful role schools play, emphasizing the necessity for serious and dedicated investment in educational goals. This includes adopting curricula founded on scientifically grounded best practices, particularly those that focus on exploring and developing positive traits, character strengths, virtues, and overall well-being. Such curricula aim to help school children experience happiness, engage in meaningful interactions, form good relationships, and achieve positive outcomes. Seligman has referred to this integrated approach as Positive Education, which Larson (2017) characterizes as an educational trend that merges academic learning with character development and well-being, drawing upon the science of well-being and happiness (Larson, 2017, p. 6).

Accordingly, numerous scholars support the adoption of Positive Education programs. This methodology integrates Positive Psychology's tenets with distinguished educational practices and pedagogical frameworks to enhance optimal growth and thriving in educational settings. The appeal of Positive Education is rising alongside a growing awareness of the pivotal role schools serve in fostering well-being and the inherent connection between well-being and academic achievement. Seligman (2011) posits that "Positive Education, akin to traditional education, is dedicated to the cultivation of academic skills, enriched curricula that nurture well-being and bolster mental health." Thus, Positive Education is characterized as the application of Positive Psychology strategies to bolster and uplift individuals within their educational communities towards flourishing. The fundamental goal of Positive Education is to promote flourishing and positive mental health throughout the educational community (as referenced in Norrish, et al., 2013, pp. 147-148). This methodology not only enhances students' academic skills, as evidenced by research from Berkowitz and Bier (2004) and Lickona (1993), but also aligns with Positive Education initiatives in classrooms, as illustrated by the study (Seligman, & al., 2009).

This document offers a detailed exploration of what Positive Education encompasses. It details how the application of Positive Psychology can aid schools in boosting and cultivating peak performance among students and staff by creating educational programs that uphold and maintain the well-being of the entire school community.

3. Objectives of the study

- Highlight growing momentum that the Positive Psychology movement has gained.
- Discuss the foundations on which the process of Positive Education is built, considering it a sustainable and flexible framework aimed at achieving flourishing.
- Emphasize the importance of Positive Education, considering it an educational approach that blends academic education with the development of flourishing in school communities.
- Highlight the achievements of Positive Education programs from real-world experiences and field studies.
- Expanding upon the discussion of mental health, it is pivotal to highlight the significance of positive psychological interventions throughout the educational process.

4. Importance of the study

This study underscores the active role that schools play in fostering individuals and flourishing communities, even amidst increasing global challenges and obstacles. Schools serve as critical platforms for preparing children for adulthood, enabling them to enhance happiness and well-being within school communities by adopting programs based on Positive Education. These programs aim to create flourishing school communities that promote the holistic development of their students.

5. Precursors to the Emergence of Positive Education Programs

In contemporary times, schools in developed countries and globally are witnessing a surge in psychological and mental disorders, including suicides, as noted by (Robson-Kelly, 2018). Additionally, high levels of negative emotions prevalent in these settings can adversely affect students' participation in school activities, potentially leading to increased risks of school dropout and various forms of antisocial behavior, as highlighted by (White & Kern, 2018); (Bachene & Berrazouane, 2020b). Consequently, several researchers have emphasized the urgent need to bridge the gap between what schools teach and what children genuinely need, What contributed to the emergence of positive education programs.

The foremost objective of Positive Education is to bolster flourishing and positive mental health across the school community, an aim underpinned by the research findings of the Positive Psychology movement. These findings illustrate increased prosperity in facets such as positive mental health, adaptive performance, and Positive Education. This strategy seeks to merge Positive Psychology's core principles with distinguished educational practices and frameworks to enhance overall development and well-being

in schools, acknowledging the fundamental relationship between well-being and academic achievement (Norrish, et al., 2013, p. 147).

It is noteworthy that many researchers and thinkers have paved the way for integrating Positive Psychology techniques into the classroom. Although the field of Positive Education is relatively new, it is rooted in a long historical tradition. John Dewey (1916) was among the first to advocate for Positive Education. He viewed schools as primary institutions for fostering democracy and emphasized the importance of enhancing learners' ability to absorb and creatively process information. Dewey introduced the concept of Constructivism, suggesting that learners should take information and mold it according to their capabilities and perspectives, challenging the traditional view of education where teachers directly transmit knowledge to students. Maria Montessori (1988), the pioneer of the Montessori educational system, endorsed principles that resonate with Positive Education, notably emphasizing creativity—a key character strength identified in the VIA classification by Peterson and Seligman (2004). Within the Montessori system framework, children are granted the freedom to choose how they learn, a concept known as self-directed learning. This method involves providing materials that allow children to engage in practical training, potentially fostering creativity and nurturing a genuine interest in learning. This approach encourages children to express themselves through education rather than feeling compelled to learn solely for the sake of compliance (quoted from Positive Education, 2023, par. 1-2).

Helen McGrath (2009) highlighted the evolution of Positive Psychology in Australian education during a seminar. She traced its origins to the 1970s focus on self-concept, its expansion in the 1990s to include social skills programs, and its early 21st-century shift towards resilience-building initiatives. This period also saw the development of anti-bullying programs and efforts to enhance student well-being and values through social and emotional learning programs (as referenced in Oades, et al., 2011, par. 2-3).

Seligman traced the roots of Positive Education back to research conducted in (1992), which investigated the connection between pessimism in school children and their susceptibility to depression, akin to how pessimism affects adults. This research showed that prolonged exposure to negative events fosters pessimism, a significant risk factor for depression and poor academic outcomes, especially among children aged 8-11 years, similar to the correlation between smoking and lung cancer. These findings prompted Seligman and his colleagues to create the first preventive program for children in Pennsylvania in the winter of (1990), marking the inception of Positive Education (Seligman, 2017, p. 8).

The overarching aim of Positive Education programs is to promote flourishing and positive mental health within educational settings. This is achieved by fostering positive behaviors and dedicated educational strategies that enhance engagement in learning and creativity, thereby inducing a psychological flow state in students that leads to exceptional academic achievement and fulfillment.

6. The Need for Positive Education Programs in Light of the Prevalence of Psychological Disorders

Many researchers have emphasized that modern curricula and learning strategies should help students acquire skills for managing situations and solving problems. However, schools currently tend to have an atmosphere of stress and pressure with poor mental health, which, as demonstrated by the study (Robson-Kelly, 2018), has affected student participation in school activities and led them to failure and subsequently school dropout (as cited in White & Kern, 2018, p. 4).

The study by Robson-Kelly (2018) indicated that teachers in the United Kingdom face increasing amounts of stress and that children and youth, as explained by Keyes (2002), suffer from poor mental health. According to a study by Green and others (2005), one in ten children/youth in the United Kingdom aged five to 16 years has been diagnosed with mental or psychological disorders (Robson, 2018, pp. 1-2).

The rising rates of mental illness and suicide have increased awareness and the need for a better understanding and more significant support for mental health among students within educational institutions and classrooms. This can only be achieved by enhancing the well-being of students and their engagement in positive academic, health, and social behaviors. The Positive Education model, stemming from the findings of positive psychology, integrates these insights into educational processes.

Seligman (2011) describes Positive Education as akin to traditional education but enhanced curricula that bolster well-being and mental health, as per Norrish, et al. (2013, p.148). This approach elevates traditional educational methods by incorporating elements that foster "flourishing," a state of elevated well-being. Positive Education melds Positive Psychology's principles with superior teaching methods and tools to boost students' performance and flourishing within educational settings. This methodology aligns with the prevailing belief among parents and educators that enhancing well-being and character development is crucial, and even central, to educational outcomes. As such, teaching well-being in schools is essential for three primary reasons: 1/ as an antidote to depression, 2/ as a means to increase life satisfaction, and 3/ as a tool to improve creative thinking. As most children and adolescents

attend school, it provides an opportunity to access and enhance their well-being on a broad scale (Seligman & al, 2009, pp. 294-295).

However, it is worth noting that the curricula followed by some schools in implementing Positive Education principles vary. Examples of Positive Education in action include the curricula at KIPP Academies in the USA, CorStone's work with adolescent girls in disadvantaged Indian communities, Geelong Grammar School in Australia, and Wellington College in the UK, which demonstrate the practical application of these theories (White, & Murray, 2015, p. 15).

The Gross National Happiness (GNH) program in Bhutan, this kingdom in the Himalayas was the first to implement the comprehensive national happiness project, where Wochu Lower School in Paro educates students about the value of enjoying good mental health. In the classroom, alongside academic curricula, students learn meditation to achieve mental relaxation and peace, and they are taught fundamental human virtues such as altruism, environmental respect, and community service. This philosophy promotes happiness and spiritual well-being over material progress. Meanwhile, Lerchenfeld School in Hamburg, Germany, teaches students how to feel happy; this subject is taught in more than (100) German schools. Happiness is considered a necessary gain to cope with school stress and pressures (Euronews, 2014, para.5). Therefore, we observe that there is diversity in the educational systems that deal with the topic of well-being and happiness, as most of these school systems focus on building teaching programs that include a positive educational curriculum.

Numerous nations have strategically integrated the identification of personal strengths into their educational curricula as a mechanism for student empowerment. In Singapore, for instance, the curriculum incorporates citizenship education, equipping students with essential life skills including emotional management, resilience, and effective goal-setting. Annually, students dedicate between 60 and 75 hours to mastering these competencies. Likewise (2014) South Korea legislated the Strengths-Based Education Promotion Act, mandating that all levels of schooling—from kindergarten through high school—educate students on cultivating "strengths and human capabilities." This initiative compels schools to contribute to an annual report that shares insights with teachers, policymakers, and the broader community, providing actionable recommendations to enhance student well-being. Consequently, numerous private schools in Dubai have instituted specialized departments and programs focused on

student well-being, complemented by comprehensive training for educators in positive education principles (Al-Mulla, 2021, par. 9-10).

Building on this foundation, educational institutions that have embraced positive education frameworks have divulged extensive insights regarding the tangible outcomes and success narratives from a diverse array of schools globally. This underscores that such positive educational programs transcend cultural boundaries, challenging the notion that they are merely Western cultural artifacts. There is escalating support for curricula that are not only positive but also purpose-driven, fundamentally aimed at fostering constructing personal resilience. These curricula prioritize the development of character strengths and overall well-being within environments geared toward empowerment.

7. Schools as Empowering Institutions

"Implementing the educational principles brought by the positive psychology movement, and activating them appropriately in the school learning environment, can prevent many psychological, academic, and social problems that students face during their educational journey. It also stimulates their abilities for self-directed and collaborative learning, achieving a state of flow that leads to mastery discovery, and problem-solving [...] which confirms that positive psychology plays a reinforcing role in the educational environment and promotes the mental health development of learners. These principles, as a whole, represent educational methods and practices that support positive education and aim to achieve happiness and human well-being in a rapidly changing world" (Al-Aswad, 2018, p. 3).

Peterson advocates for the implementation of positive psychological interventions not only at the personal level but also institutionally, suggesting schools function as 'Enabling Institutions' He argues that cultivating virtues across all members collectively contributes to the creation of 'The Good School' which not only promotes academic success but also moral development. He calls for schools to advance beyond simple pedagogy, fostering an environment where the educational process mitigates rather than introduces punitive measures, thus reducing bullying, substance misuse, and other negative behaviors (p. 69). He also encourages school administrations to step outside the traditional authoritative framework in dealing with students, while adopting curricula and practices that foster good character traits and well-being (Bachene & Berrazouane, 2020a, p. 66).

Research indicates that the school climate and prevailing culture are generally linked with the well-being and mental health of students, meaning that relationships with peers and staff in schools fundamentally affect their mental and psychological health, mandating that schools must create an environment that promotes well-being and prosperity. Focusing on this is particularly important for adolescents, as adolescence is a pivotal stage of development with lifelong effects. This age is seen as a critical pathway for the onset of mental illnesses as indicated by Paus et al (2008); Sawyer (2007) notes that reports of mental health disorders, particularly depression and anxiety, are remarkably high. Therefore, preventive measures against these health disorders are essential, along with efforts to build solid foundations of good health and instill well-being, which can contribute to academic skills development. For instance, Suldo and others (2011) found that students who exhibited higher levels of well-being also achieved higher academic performance and had lower absenteeism rates. In the same vein, studies by Fredrickson and others (2001; 2005) have shown evidence that positive emotions are linked to creative thinking, while negative emotions restrict focus and narrow the scope of attention. This suggests that programs enhancing well-being and prosperity not only complement but enhance academic development (as cited in Norrish, & al., 2013, pp. 149-150).

For schools to effectively enhance student well-being, improve academic performance, and actively foster good character traits, it has been necessary to evolve traditional academic curricula. Therefore, a curriculum that focuses on enhancing character strengths is best as it seeks to promote optimal academic performance through daily practices that engage individuals in the educational-learning process. Educational frameworks that focus on strengths uphold core pedagogical values that bolster positive student behavior and achievements, as well as fostering individual strengths (Bachene, Berrazouane, & Ben Aichouba, 2022, p. 74).

Dewey (1938) posited that education's goal is to help each person reach their fullest potential, an idea that resonates with strength-based educational strategies. Thus, teaching based on Character Strengths involves educators recognizing the best ways to develop the strengths that characterize them, using these in their interactions with students, and discovering and identifying students' Character Strengths to apply them in the learning process, aiming to reach levels of personal excellence previously unattained.

Thus, adhering to these principles of education based on Character Strengths and enhancing well-being will enable the identification of practices that improve the performance of both teachers and students.

8. Psychological Variables that Achieve Psychological Empowerment and Promote Personal Immunization in the Framework of Positive Education Programs

Enabling themes push individuals to exhibit their strengths in certain situations, which contributes to enhancing virtues. Family opportunities, secure communities, political stability, and democratic principles enhance character strengths and virtues through the influence of mentors, role models, and supportive peers (Carr, 2005, p. 56). Therefore, enabling institutions such as schools can build virtues by adopting curricula that improve and develop character strengths (Benninga, et al, 2006). Consider that the experiences students receive in the educational setting can build character and that good schools promote and nurture positive social relationships, fostering a model of justice, fairness, caring, and respect (p. 451).

The psychology of human strengths and virtues represents a relatively new union of concepts in positive psychology. Virtues are psychological processes aimed at developing thinking and practices toward perfection within an ethical framework. They represent an orientation toward life, as they build goals and enhance behaviors that benefit both the individual and society. Virtues are fundamental pillars that define the context of good character, as they represent the readiness and will to act ethically, through various pathways called character strengths. These strengths, characterized by a distinctive array of positive traits in thoughts, emotions, and actions, emerge from a dynamic interaction between one's biological and psychological makeup and external elements like a stable social backdrop and quality education. The development and activation of these traits elevate happiness, well-being, and performance quality; they are essential pathways to cultivating virtues (Bachene, Berrazouane, & Ben Aichouba, 2022, pp. 29-31).

Seligman (2002) affirmed that "every person has several strengths that are his imprint. These strengths glorified can lead to success in life, as they are practiced every day at school, work, and even in leisure" (as cited in Rashid & al, 2013, p. 95). Seligman (2002) stated that each person possesses unique strengths that define them and, when cultivated, lead to success across various life domains including education, work, and leisure (as cited in Rashid & al, 2013, p. 95). Peterson and Seligman identified twenty-four measurable human strengths, organized into six key virtues: Courage, Justice, Humanity,

Temperance, Transcendence, and Wisdom. These virtues are both universal and historically rooted (see Bachene, Berrazouane, & Ben Aichouba, 2022; as cited in Hausler, & al, 2017b, p. 2).

Research in positive psychology shows that utilizing character strengths correlates with higher well-being and fewer psychological issues. Weber & Ruch (2012) demonstrated the significance of these strengths in educational settings, noting their positive impact on student satisfaction, academic skills, classroom behavior, and overall educational achievement (p.317).

Character strengths can be considered components of well-being, as a study by Quinlan et al (2012) indicated that well-being can be increased by enhancing character strengths. Park and colleagues (2004) also recognized that character strengths are potential starting points for increasing well-being (as cited in Hausler, & al, 2017a, p.1).

Theoretical and empirical frameworks in positive psychology have solidified the link between well-being, character strengths, and educational outcomes, suggesting that these elements enhance academic achievement through enriched teaching methods and extracurricular engagements. Weber & Ruch (2012) emphasized the influence of character strengths on youth development in educational settings, noting that traits like love of learning, zest, gratitude, perseverance, and curiosity are associated with greater life satisfaction in students. Similarly, traits such as hope, love of learning, perseverance, and open-mindedness are tied to the higher academic self-efficacy, while intellectual character strengths (like self-regulation, perseverance, and love of learning) predicted academic success, demonstrating that positive classroom behavior is associated with specific character strengths, which are relevant to both subjective outcomes (such as life satisfaction at school) and objective outcomes (such as academic performance), and are also linked to positive behavior in the classroom (p. 317).

Therefore, the psychological variables based on activating character strengths and enhancing well-being in the context of civil institutions (schools) are of great importance, as they play an active role in building character traits, which together achieve optimal performance indicative of a thriving school community.

9. Elements of Flourishing in the School Community

Seligman's flourishing theory, a core aspect of Positive Psychology, posits that well-being assessable through flourishing is the principal aim of this field (see Bashan and Ben Aichouba, 2023).

Introduced in (2011) Seligman's PERMA model outlines well-being elements widely embraced in educational practice.

Seligman (2011) formulated the theory of flourishing based on his earlier theory of Authentic Happiness (2002), which consisted of three components: (1) Positive Emotion (i.e., joy, pleasure, Subjective Well-Being (SWB), Hedonia), (2) Engagement (i.e., flow, vitality, eudaimonia, Psychological Well-Being (PWB), life satisfaction, and autonomy), and (3) Meaning (i.e., purpose in life and relationships). These three components of the Authentic Happiness theory were further developed in Seligman's five-element PERMA model, which includes: Positive Emotions (P); Engagement (E); Relationships (R); Meaning and Purpose (M); and Accomplishment (A). These five unique elements of well-being are measurable (as cited in Lai, & al., 2018, p.2), allowing for a holistic assessment of well-being and providing a multidimensional understanding of the components that collectively form flourishing. This achievement is realized through optimal performance based on the use of character strengths as a fundamental and supportive framework for the well-being model, activated and developed through participation in school activities. This model includes four pivotal processes that bolster the effective, lasting implementation of Positive Education, emphasizing the need to:

- **Learn It:** Educational staff, serving as role models, partake in extensive training to embed Positive Education practices in their personal and professional lives. Comprehensive support for staff well-being equips them with necessary life skills under Positive Education paradigms. Schools also host workshops to update staff and students alike, and engage parents in learning about Positive Psychology, fostering a community of practice through seminars and journal clubs, aiming to cultivate a pervasive culture of well-being (Norrish, & al., 2013, p. 150; Booth, 2017, p. 16).
- **Live It:** By adopting appropriate behaviors in interactions with others and among students, volunteer processes at the school level help embed a culture of well-being within the school community. Some of the strongest practices at the school level leverage gatherings and events to build character strengths like displays that develop the strength of gratitude, as well as periodic projects in various activities that cultivate the strengths of kindness and generosity, following an approach that the whole school adopts. Parents are also invited to participate in training programs lasting several days to develop their understanding of Positive Education and personal growth (Norrish, & al., 2013, p. 151; Booth, 2017, p. 16).

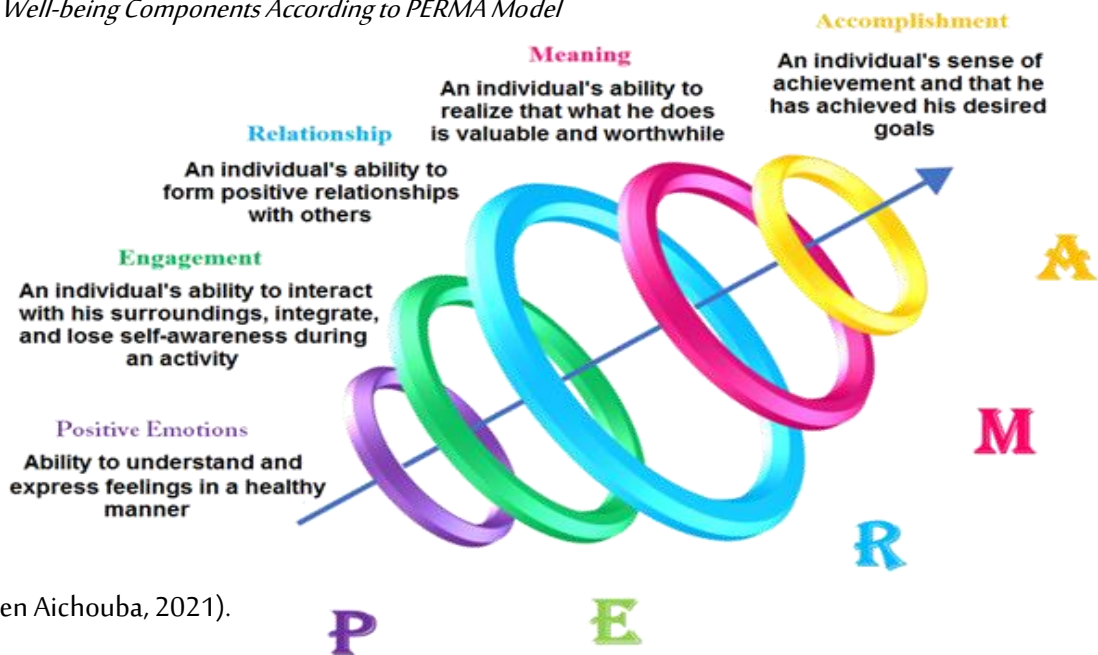
- **Teach It:** Educating students on the elements of Positive Education enables them to grasp the core principles and actively engage in thinking, exploring, and applying knowledge and skills essential for thriving. Positive Education imparts its curriculum through two primary methods: 1/ **Explicit Teaching:** This approach involves structured lessons on Positive Education, similar to conventional classes like math or history, specifically targeting grades 5 to 10. Notable programs, such as the Penn Resilience Program and the Strath Haven Program, focus on promoting student well-being and encouraging deep personal reflection on how these teachings intersect with their personal lives. 2/ **Implicit Teaching:** This method integrates well-being concepts throughout the academic curriculum, linking Positive Psychology with traditional subjects to maintain educational integrity. For example, in history classes, students might study genealogy through interviews with family members about their character strengths. In art, they could interpret the concept of "flourish" through creative projects, and in geography, they explore how the physical environment influences community flourishing. These teaching strategies are complemented by the integration of mindfulness practices in daily classroom activities, which support cognitive development (Norrish, & al, 2013, p. 150; Booth, 2017, p. 16).
- **Embed It:** This is achieved through continuous training and ongoing improvement of skills, which illustrates that the vision promoted by positive education programs is intended to create a comprehensive school environment and a community that achieves well-being. Focusing on the strengths of personality supports all the aforementioned efforts, identified by the Values in Action (VIA) Inventory developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004). These are recognized as a set of character traits that are universally esteemed and hold moral value. From a strengths perspective, according to Wood et al (2011), everyone possesses unique capabilities that can aid them in flourishing and optimal performance. Govindji et al (2007) and Linley et al (2010) found that individuals who utilize their strengths report increased levels of vitality and well-being, as well as progress in achieving their goals. Furthermore, using strengths after experiencing stressful events has been shown to enhance resilience, as noted by Peterson and Seligman (2003). Studies by Park and Peterson (2008) and Rashid et al (2013) have indicated that building and developing children's strengths supports the enhancement of their well-being and healthy growth (Norrish, & al, 2013, p. 152; Bott, 2017, p. 16).

10. Areas of Well-Being Within Positive Education Programs

Education within positive education programs relies on the PERMA model framework for positive performance, which recognizes that well-being involves a high level of work across a range of psychosocial.

Geelong Grammar School (GGS) in Australia is one of the success stories that adopted a positive educational program starting from (2008). All students, teachers, and staff underwent training programs to familiarize themselves with well-being strategies and how to apply them in the school environment and their personal lives. Students attended these classes regularly, which focus on enhancing relationships, building positive emotions, fostering resilience and mindfulness, developing strengths, and promoting a healthy lifestyle. In (2014) the school inaugurated the Institute of Positive Education, marking a pioneering step as the world's first research and training center focused on positive education. To date, over 10,000 educators from more than 600 schools and institutions worldwide have engaged in these programs, impacting over 250,000 students globally (Bott, 2017, p. 15). Within this framework, the model addresses six pivotal well-being domains in an integrated and thorough manner.

Figure (1) Well-being Components According to PERMA Model



Source: (Ben Aichouba, 2021).

The methodology of (GGS) within the framework of positive education programs based on the PERMA model for well-being relies on care and finding positive ways to move forward, as well as adopting compassion and tolerance in its philosophical and practical methodology. This can be defined as a "relationship-building" approach, where the school has replaced the "discipline policy" with a "policy of

kindness, tolerance, and reform" The goal is to mend all relationships affected and influenced by mistakes and misjudgments, to forge a new path forward, using all the tools of positive education; considering that all humans are fallible and the way mistakes are handled can enhance well-being.

A study by Vella-Brodrick and her team from the University of Melbourne (2014-2016) addressed the effectiveness of the positive education program at GGS, which showed promising results, including reduced levels of anxiety and symptoms of depression among the students, as well as increased self-efficacy, satisfaction, and optimism. This highlighted the overall success of this educational approach (cited from Bott, 2017, pp. 16-17). Thus, the positive education programs based on the PERMA model of well-being have provided greater depth and a broader scope of education that supports the flourishing of Geelong Grammar School (GGS) in several areas as follows:

10.1. Positive Emotion (P)

This domain emphasizes the importance of nurturing and expecting positive emotional experiences, along with developing resilient responses to negative emotions (Norris, & al, 2013, p. 152). For instance, Ladd (1990) notes that "when students experience emotions associated with lack of belonging, rejection, isolation, sorrow, anger, and loneliness, they are more likely to deviate from school rules and standards, and are more prone to developing negative perceptions of school, such as school refusal, fear of school, or dropping out at an early age" (cited in Al-Asmi, 2015, p. 6). Hargreaves (2000) views teaching as inherently emotional, arguing that a sterile classroom atmosphere is counterproductive. A closer, emotionally enriched interaction between teachers and students enhances the teacher's ability to recognize and support students' potential and talents (as cited in Simel Pranjić, 2018, p. 579).

Therefore, educational settings should facilitate students' capacity to form positive emotional experiences and foster feelings of joy, gratitude, hope, and inspiration, which are crucial for achieving personal goals. Studies indicate that positive emotions significantly benefit mental and physical health, enhance social connections, and improve academic performance. (Cited from Bashene & Berrazouane, 2021, p. 43). Focusing on positive emotions is more than just smiling; it's the ability to maintain optimism that helps individuals adapt to life's fluctuations and remain hopeful, viewing the past, present, and future from a constructive positive perspective. This type of positive emotion is crucial as it helps individuals enjoy everyday tasks in their lives, strive to meet challenges, and continue to stay optimistic about outcomes (Anwar, 2020, pp. 8-9).

At Geelong Grammar School, the tenth-year positive education curriculum introduces students to Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (2001). This program teaches students to recognize the significance of fostering positive emotions while balancing them with negative ones through exercises that enhance positivity in diverse settings and scenarios. The program emphasizes accepting all emotions as natural and crucial components of life, promoting a holistic understanding of emotional health (cited from Bachene & Berrazouane, 2021, p. 43).

10.2. Engagement (E)

The Engagement (E) domain focuses on fostering deep involvement in activities that not only capture attention but also drive optimal performance. This includes living a life filled with interest and curiosity, which aids in achieving goals with enthusiasm and determination. Research supports that engagement correlates strongly with well-being, learning outcomes, and the attainment of significant goals. This concept ties closely to the 'flow' state, which describes deep immersion and peak experiences during challenging activities that well-match an individual's abilities (Norris, & al, 2013, p. 153).

Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular (non-classroom) activities. As teachers observe particular potentials and talents in students, it is essential to encourage them to participate in various events, meetings, scientific conferences, and school projects. Such activities propel them to engage more, which can immerse them in activities that may create feelings of happiness and increased activity, reflecting on their intelligence, skills, and capabilities. Teachers play a vital role in nurturing this engagement, thereby helping students realize their potential. Doyle (2008) notes that encouraging such engaging activities can foster feelings of success and personal empowerment, boosting confidence and expanding students' abilities. Stanton and colleagues (2016) confirmed that these types of purposeful and practical activities enable students to apply their knowledge and talents effectively because their learning experience becomes richer, more valuable, and enjoyable (as cited in Simel Pranjic, 2018, p. 581).

Therefore, the engagement domain within the positive education model at Geelong Grammar School focuses on enhancing the psychological state of flow, self-care, and utilizing distinctive strengths. As an example of developing this understanding Wesson and Boniwell (2007) argue that a strengths-based approach can trigger this flow state, enhancing the recognition of personal capabilities, thereby improving the alignment of skills challenges. At Geelong Grammar, before a second-term camping trip, sixth-year students discuss the 24 character strengths in groups, exploring their applications and

strategizing on their use to navigate and thrive in camp activities. This method facilitates self-efficacy and aligns student activities with their values and interests, enhancing their engagement and ability to tackle challenges (cited from Bachene & Berrazouane, 2021, pp. 43-44).

10.3. Accomplishments (A)

This domain focuses on developing individual potential and competencies through striving to achieve valuable goals, with the motivation to persist and succeed in significant life areas despite challenges and setbacks. Hendren, Weisen, and Orley (1994) suggest a bidirectional relationship flourishing and positive accomplishment with mental and psychological health, which is considered a necessary condition for effective learning processes (as cited in Norrish, & al, 2013, p. 153).

Having goals and ambitions in life can facilitate achievements that provide a sense of accomplishment value. Individuals should set realistic and achievable goals; merely the effort put towards achieving these goals can grant a sense of satisfaction. Accomplishing milestones in life is crucial as it drives us towards flourishing and success, and having clear life goals, even small ones like reading for an hour each day, and striving to achieve them is essential for well-being and happiness. Achieving accomplishments boosts self-esteem and pride and strengthens self-confidence, which motivates further effort and continuous accomplishment. Moreover, this confidence assists in facing challenges. Most importantly, setting goals and making the necessary efforts to achieve them is as significant as reaching them (Anwar, 2020, par. 16-18).

At Geelong Grammar School, the curriculum incorporates Dweck's theories of intelligence, which distinguish between two mindsets: 1/ a fixed mindset, viewing intelligence and talents as static traits, and 2/ a growth mindset, considering these attributes as expandable with effort and persistence (as cited in Norrish, & al, 2013, p. 153). In this context, Hurlock (1925) studied the effect of praise and blame in the classroom and found that praise significantly positively affects individuals within classrooms, providing them with a stimulus to continue and progress over the long term. Praise had an impact on children regardless of age, ability, and gender. Henderlong and Lepper (2002) endorsed Hurlock's view that praise is more beneficial in enhancing children's intrinsic motivations. Studies have shown a positive correlation between praise and self-confidence and improved academic performance levels. They affirmed that praise increases personal beliefs in an individual's ability to perform specific tasks; it supports the Cognitive Evaluation Theory, which posits that praise improves an individual's perspective on performance

outcomes and that the positive atmosphere resulting from praise contributes to achieving effective results (Positive Education, 2023, Theoretical Approaches, pp. 3-4). Dweck (2006) emphasizes that the type of praise given—focusing on effort "You worked hard" rather than inherent ability "You are very smart"—plays a crucial role in fostering a growth mindset. This principle is supported by research from Mueller and Dweck (1998). At the school, faculty and staff undergo targeted workshops to deepen their grasp of these concepts and their broad implications. These sessions include reflections and discussions on applying strategies to promote growth mindsets among students, with specific training on delivering feedback that supports this developmental perspective (as cited in Norrish, & al, 2013, pp. 153-154).

10.4. The Domain of Positive Meaning (M)

Defined by Steger (2012), positive meaning encapsulates a sense of direction, connection to something larger than oneself, and the belief that one's life holds value and purpose. This domain underscores the importance of life's significance, offering individuals a framework to perceive their actions and existence as meaningful. Studies by Boyle and colleagues (2009) and Steger (2012) have linked the presence of positive meaning with improvements in physical health indicators and increased life satisfaction (as cited in Butler & Kern, 2016, p. 3). True happiness is also associated with having a meaningful life, as seen when children participate in activities like distributing gifts or food at a shelter, helping the homeless, or volunteering to clean up parks. Such activities extend beyond living for oneself, bringing achievements, and enhancing the principle of well-being. Parents who passionately dedicate themselves to doing something beyond their personal lives teach their children the value of existence (Anwar, 2020, par. 13). Thus, helping others and the community has intrinsic value, providing a strong rationale for focusing on the domain of positive meaning within schools.

Service to others has been shown to imbue life with meaning and significance, which Post (2005) links to improved mental and physical health outcomes among students. Ryan and Deci (2001) highlight that managing a sense of meaning is crucial for optimal health. Purpose in life, as Ryff and Keyes (1995) note, provides a central focus and direction, associated with better physical health, higher life satisfaction, and stronger social connections, all of which guard against depression and risky behaviors. Altruism and spirituality are identified as avenues to a meaningful life, fostering well-being. At Geelong Grammar, tenth-year students are encouraged to reflect on their life's purpose through stories of influential figures

like Viktor Frankl, and Elisabeth Murdoch driving them to explore deep personal meaning. Engaging in community service further nurtures their character development (as cited in Norrish, & al., 2013, p. 154).

10.5. The Domain of Positive Relationships (R)

This domain focuses on developing social and emotional competencies essential for forming meaningful relationships with oneself and others. Strong relationships, whether brief or long-term, with peers, family, or strangers, are vital for happiness and mental well-being. According to this model, constructive contact and effective teamwork can vitally contribute to achieving happiness at home among family members [...] It encourages children to make friends and display a desire to be trustworthy and dependable friends. Parents who have a consistent circle of friends in their lives over the years serve as good role models to encourage children to form relationships with others (Anwar, 2020, p. 12). Haeganuer and Volet (2014) emphasize the importance of a positive and close relationship on an academic level that should be characterized by closeness, care, connection, safety, trust, honesty, fairness, respect, openness, and accessibility to a teacher, which can directly and positively affect the quality of learning and teaching. It should be noted that in this type of relationship, the teacher does not threaten the students' autonomy but treats them as responsible and creative partners in the educational process. In this way, teachers and students together can achieve a creative teaching process, where all participants can discover and develop their positive capabilities (as cited in Simel Pranjić, 2018, p. 579).

Stewart and colleagues (2004) support these views, seeing that supportive school relationships are linked to well-being and resilience in children and adolescents. Myers (2000) noted that social relationships are a significant predictor of well-being, and Wentzel and Caldwell (1997) found that social support for the student aids in improving achievement outcomes. At Geelong Grammar, the practice of Active-Constructive Responding (ACR), as outlined by Gable and Reis (2010), trains staff and students to enhance social bonds by attentively and supportively engaging with others' positive news. This approach not only fosters positive interactions but also amplifies the emotional benefits derived from shared experiences, contributing significantly to building supportive community networks (as cited in Norrish, & al., 2013, p. 155).

10.6. The Domain of Positive Health (H)

According to Norrish, & al., (2013), this domain aims to help individuals develop a sound knowledge base from which to establish health-supportive habits that benefit physical and psychological health throughout life.

In the Geelong Grammar model, health is framed as the practice of sustainable habits that promote optimal physical and psychological well-being, crucial for effective learning as emphasized by the World Health Organization (2011). Studies show that students who excel in both mental and physical health tend to achieve higher academic performance. Moreover, instilling positive health behaviors during adolescence can lead to lasting benefits and prevent future health issues. The Positive Education program specifically focuses on enhancing resilience among ninth graders, as outlined by Gillham et al. (2007), by equipping them with cognitive, behavioral, and social problem-solving skills. This includes fostering an optimistic explanatory style and addressing negative thoughts, along with creating alternative solutions to challenges (as cited in Norrish, & al., 2013, pp. 155-156).

These six components collectively form a holistic view of well-being, allowing schools to understand and enhance it more systematically, thereby making schools more prosperous.

11. Commentary

Currently, schools are perceived as institutions whose role extends beyond academic proficiency to "preparing the whole child," as Huitt (2010) notes. The focus on schools as a means to prepare youth for adulthood is a distinguishing feature of advanced countries, which are experiencing a decline in social indicators despite advances in their economies and increasing wealth. This approach has catalyzed the development of positive psychology, a field dedicated to building theoretical models for a fulfilling life, which can be applied in educational settings and beyond to facilitate the practical application of positive psychology principles. Positive education programs aim to cultivate resilience and promote thriving within the school context.

These programs enhance the ability of children, adolescents, parents, and educational institutions to engage in positive thinking develop wellbeing skills, and prepare and implement interventions aimed at increasing optimal performance for the benefit of employees and students. This foundational approach promotes flourishing in future generations, highlighting the importance of positive education as it mobilizes the entire community to educate children.

Several works have justified adopting a positive approach to education. Positive education serves as a preventive measure against early-age depression, increases life satisfaction, enhances learning, creativity, social cohesion, and citizenship, and boosts self-awareness and emotional intelligence. These benefits could lead to long-term advantages as youth transition into adulthood. These initiatives contribute to a school culture marked by trust and care, which correlates with academic success and enhances both physical and psychological safety, reducing behavioral issues. By shifting the focus from treatment to prevention, these programs improve psychological wellness in educational settings.

At Geelong Grammar School (GGS), positive education curricula integrate well-being principles with traditional academic training, nurturing students' social, emotional, moral, and intellectual growth. Programs like the Penn Resilience Program are instrumental in teaching students how to manage daily stressors, thereby preventing depression, anxiety, and feelings of despair. These efforts bolster flourishing, optimal performance, and gratitude, leading to improved life satisfaction, self-esteem, and optimism, which in turn enhance learning outcomes and academic performance.

The replication of the (GGS) experience and its implementation by numerous schools worldwide has highlighted empirical evidence proving the therapeutic effectiveness of positive psychology and positive education interventions. Positive education has transformed the way schools handle education, providing a deeper and broader scope for education; schools in a constantly changing society must assume new roles that support, protect, and empower students to strengthen relationships, build positive emotions, enhance resilience, and explore the meaning and purpose in their lives. GGS's commitment to positive education has demonstrated that schools can and should regard health, well-being, and prosperity as vital as traditional academic learning.

12. Conclusion

This research paper offers a comprehensive vision for the potential application of positive psychology in education. This direction has garnered increasing interest, presenting a compelling case for exploring the relationship between positive psychology and educational practices. The growing body of research has facilitated the development of preventive and positive intervention programs in education, which is particularly crucial given the numerous challenges currently facing the educational mission. Advances in positive psychology have enriched our comprehension of the processes that broadly improve well-being, providing new opportunities for societal benefit. Schools play a critical role in disseminating

positive psychology concepts among a wide range of young individuals, effectively promoting both psychological and physical health within communities. As Geelong Grammar School approaches its fifteenth year of implementing positive education, ongoing evidence underscores the program's success. The school's ethics and culture have been significantly reinforced through the application of positive education, setting a precedent for a sustainable and adaptable framework aimed at enhancing the prosperity of school communities.

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