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**A TEACHERS' OBSERVATION TOOL FOR CRITICAL AND**  
**SELF-REFLECTIVE PROCESSES ON POSITIVE PEDAGOGICAL**  
**PRACTICE**

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*Abstract*

Positive Pedagogies concept emerges as a line of educational innovation turning to positive psychology arena, with the aim of reflecting on the meaning of well-being in education. Positive Pedagogical Practices enhanced quality of teaching and learning experiences because they are focused on students' satisfaction and engagement, in order to provide meaning of learning processes, well-being, and school satisfaction on students. On the other hand, educational innovation and critical and reflective action-research processes shall be participated by both teachers and educational researchers. The role of teachers has evolved from teaching as an executing figure of curriculum, to participating in education as a researcher, and reflective figure. Teachers can contribute to action-research processes by applying observation tools for critical reflection on their educational practices. Teachers need to develop competences and tools to manage the boosters of quality and positive learning experiences in classrooms. This paper proposes a tool for teachers to observe their practices, and thus, reflect and improve classroom management based on Positive Pedagogies. The teachers' observation tool developed for that purpose, follows an holistic approach of the learning experience, and considers cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social aspects of pedagogical practices.

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**Keywords:** Action-research, classroom management", flow, positive education, positive pedagogies, well-being.



## **1. Introduction**

The teachers' observation tool is a result of a reflection phase as part of an investigative practice on educational innovation organized by positive pedagogical practices. The research methodology follows participative and collaborative action-research cycles in which researchers and teachers take part. It is an innovation process, a continuous improvement process articulated by shared reflection on teachers' training actions, and on teachers' practice at classroom. At this point of the research, it is proposed to develop a tool for teachers to observe and self-reflect on the positive classroom management practice.

## **2. Problem Statement**

### **2.1. Educational political strategies**

International, European, and National educational politics explicitly refer to personal and social well-being (DOCE, 2014; OECD, 2009, 2014; MECD, 2016). Such educational strategies lead to scholar model that must be coherent with the ongoing social-technological changing context, shall be oriented in human (being) development, aim to teach students on virtuous and ecological growth, to give their best, and to contribute with significance to a sustainable, equalitarian, and pacific society (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2014). According to this, school education focus on autonomy, self-regulation, and self-determination, to reach personal, collective, and social development. This is coherent with the bio-psycho-social human development, which positive psychology refers as optimal functioning and well-being.

Educational innovation processes should be articulated in order to transfer this kind of politic educational strategies referred to well-being, in educational and scholar well-being. And it can be reached through the implementation of innovative pedagogical actions in schools and classrooms.

### **2.2. Positive Pedagogies for implementation of Educational well-being**

Positive Pedagogies concept emerges as a line of educational innovation turning to positive psychology arena with the aim of reflecting on the meaning of well-being in education. Positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) gather knowledge on optimal functioning, subjective well-being, psychological and social well-being, flow experience, self-determination, character strengths, as well as physical, psychological and social benefits from: mindfulness practice, positive emotions, engagement, optimism, hope, gratefulness, and meaning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Fredrickson, 1998; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Keyes, 2002; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Thus, it turns into theoretical framework under which positive pedagogical practices can be properly developed. Positive Pedagogies are shaped to find innovative lines for improving school and classroom working environment with a positive understanding (VV.AA., 2016).

Positive pedagogical practices enhance quality of teaching and learning experiences because they are focused on students' engagement, optimal functioning, self-regulation, autonomy, in order to provide meaning of learning processes, well-being, and school satisfaction on students. Regarding positive pedagogies, teachers act as learning experience facilitators, and manage holistic experiences, which integrate motivational, physical-emotional, cognitive, and social aspects.

Teachers can be trained to acquire professional competences to manage learning experiences in the classroom under a Positive pedagogical framework. The European project "Positive Psychology applied to

European Schools” is a practical example for application of Positive pedagogies. A teachers’ training program on positive psychology was implemented in 30 schools of 3 countries -Spain, Italy, and Denmark-. Around 500 teachers and professionals on school education enrolled the course (Albertin & Ventura-Traveset, 2016). Action-research processes based on the teachers training on positive psychology, points out that teachers develop competences and implement positive strategies to manage pedagogical actions and to boost quality and positive learning experiences in classrooms. Teachers contribute to the action-research through reflection on the training process, and thus, teachers contribute to knowledge on how to improve the teaching and learning experience and transform it into a well-being and growth experience.

### **2.3. Action-research processes in educational innovation**

Interpretative and comprehensive research is applying in educational innovation, as a research focus on knowledge, reflection, and transformative work of the school reality, through the participation in that reality (Carr & Kemmis, 1988; Santos, 2008).

We consider for this research, some action-research assumptions that qualify investigative processes as: a) Participative, regarding a searching of solutions through a learning collective process, raising awareness, raising relevance of subjective from a critical perspective, overcoming beliefs and research in which the theory prevails over practice (Fals-Borda, 1989; Freire, 1973); b) Collaborative, regarding it emerges to foster research processes in which researchers and teachers collaborate for solving shared situations and problems (Carr & Kemmis, 1988); c) Critical, regarding the permanent and cyclic action-reflection processes to improve educational practices, searching new knowledge on the practice from the practice itself, considering the researcher role of teachers, and the awareness-raising in both individual and collective practice (Carr & Kemmis, 1988; Elliot, 1990; Kemmis & Taggart, 1988).

Teachers’ role has evolved from a curricular executor figure, who adopts innovation, to a researcher, reflective, and self-manager figure, who participates in the research process (Zufiaurre, 1994, 2007). Education practice improvement requires that teachers provide with their comprehension of teaching, and both theory and practice improvement are shaped from researchers and teachers collaboration (Carr & Kemmis, 1988). Collaborative, participative and reflective action-research needs methodologies and tools with which to explore the real context in which educational actions happens, and in which teachers and researchers collaborate, at the time they integrate theory and practice (Rodriguez-Sosa, 2005).

## **3. Research Questions**

### **Teachers role in action-research processes**

Collaborative actions between teachers and researchers can provide tools which facilitate the research role of teachers in action-reflection steps of research. Educational and school change occurs when teachers participating in innovation programs should act from a technical and practical interest, but mainly, and moreover, from an emancipative interest (Grundy, 1998). Teachers observation tools make easier teachers to evolve -following the analysis of interest theory of Habermas (Kemmis, 2009; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008)- from a technical or quantitative interest, and from a practical or interpretative interest on innovation, to an emancipative and critical interest.

The development of a teachers' observation tool aims to shed light on these facts about how teachers can contribute to action- research processes by applying observation tools for critical and reflective review of their own pedagogical practices.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

### **4.1. Facilitating Teachers role as Researchers**

The objective of developing an observation tool for reflective-action on the teaching practice, is to facilitate self-reflective enquiry on school -social- situations, in order to improve comprehension and meaning on these practices, and on the real situations in which they happen (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). Observation tool allows teachers to learn from personal experience after a reflective-action process. Thus, participative teachers in school innovation, with emancipative interest, are at the same time, both knowledge receiver and producer (Santos, 2008).

The observation tool is also, a tool to acquire professional competences for participative, collaborative and critical-reflective action-research in school innovation.

### **4.2. Enhance awareness on teaching practice allows to transform practice in praxis**

Collaboration between researchers and teachers in action-research, leads to improve a teachers' training program in positive psychology, and to introduce a positive pedagogies-based teaching practice (Albertin & Ventura-Traveset, 2016). The innovation process should henceforth be oriented to improve praxis. To transform praxis means to be aware of the praxis in the moment that teaching practice is taking part (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). Thus, to facilitate an observation tool aims to boost teachers' reflection on their positive pedagogical practices through critical reflection on real practices in the classroom. The observation tool aims to improve the teachers' training program, regarding the development of awareness on positive pedagogical practices, as well as this practice can evolve towards praxis.

## **5. Research Methods**

### **5.1. Action-reflection cyclic process**

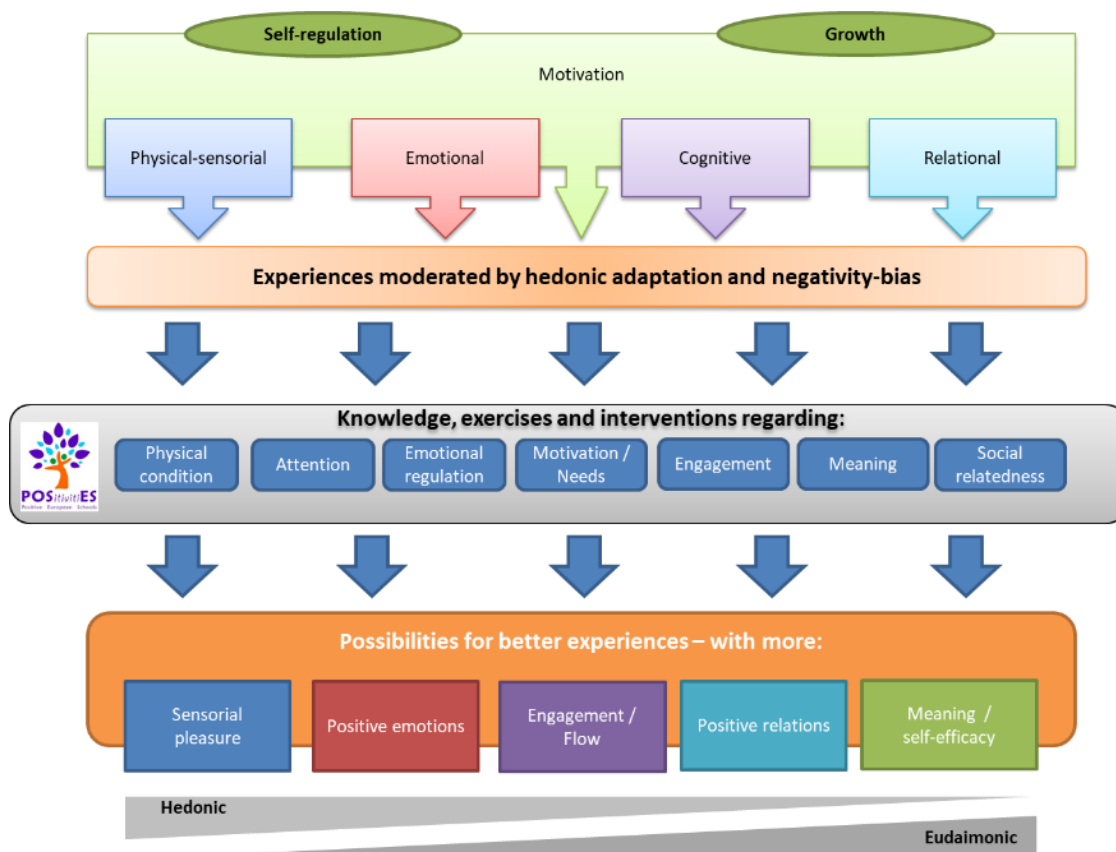
The proposal for an observation tool arises from critical reflection participative actions within an innovation process. Some consecutive critical-reflection phases take part within teachers' training process. As a result, the training action on positive pedagogies improves teachers' knowledge on this innovative educational issue. Training methodology implies reflection on knowledge, but also, reflection on personal and professional experiences. New concepts comprehension, meanings integration, motivation for improvement, motivation for school change, and personal transformation towards a positive teaching approach have been validated throughout the research process.

Previous action-reflection phases in the research, demonstrate that teachers acquire personal and professional competence for well-being approach in teaching. They dispose personal resources, pedagogical tools, and array of positive didactical activities for teaching in classroom. But, at this point of the teaching improvement process, teachers demand guidelines and tools to transform practice in praxis.

## 5.2. Reflection on theory-practice model on positive pedagogies and reflection on the learning process

A consecutive critical-reflective phase carries on, regarding the theoretical-practical model on positive pedagogies (Fig 01) that has previously been validated as a teachers' training program. This critical-reflection phase is focused on possibilities to present the foundations that conformed the positive pedagogies teaching model in a set of guidelines which facilitate awareness on the own teaching practice, while the practice is taking part in the classroom.

Complexity of the experience, and thus, of teaching experiences in the classroom, require a kind of attentional ability and observation based on what happens regarding the personal experience, the individual experiences of students, and the group experience. Based on positive pedagogies model, we propose an observation tool to be applied as a main scheme for the observation of the positive teaching practice in the classroom.



**Figure 01.** Positive Pedagogy Model. Source: Positivities European Project

The critical-reflective action is supported by a set of questions regarding the learning process of teachers and linked to the goals of the innovation process: a) Why am I within this innovation and learning process?; b) How was the learning experience using this innovative methodology?; What kind of learning experience do I wish for students?; d) How do I act to facilitate this kind of teaching-learning experience?; e) Have I assimilated and integrated positive pedagogies in praxis?; f) Which aspects of my teaching experience could I improve to manage a learning optimal experience?; g) How can I be sure that I am doing what I want to do, that I am in the right direction towards the improving objectives?

A proposal of teachers' observation tool (TOT) is developed according to positive pedagogical practices. This tool allows teacher to observe the learning experience from a holistic approach, noticing and managing cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social aspects of pedagogical practices. The TOT includes the four aspects that conform an experience and should be observed. The tool describes a set of guidelines that teachers can consider facilitating and managing an optimal experience in the classroom. The guidelines are linked to some learnings and resources included within the training program and to learning objectives of participating teachers in positive pedagogies program.

## 6. Findings

The Teachers' Observation Tool includes a set of guidelines which are structured following the four factors of the experience:

**Table 01.** Teachers' Observation Tool for Positive Pedagogical Practices: Physical-Emotional factors

Physical category	Attributes	Indicators
Physical	Classroom Environment	-I prepare an adequate physical environment in the classroom attending e.g.: space, temperature, furniture, materials, water, noises, light, music, ... - I try everybody feel a safe, and supportive environment (without fears, worries by abilities, results, attitudes,)
	Body	- Students are free to move and find an adequate place - I introduce movement and relaxing activities - I appeal to body awareness (posture, fatigue, discomfort)
	Body-Mind Balance	-I prepare spaces for resting, relaxing, concentration.
	Nature	-Connection with nature is present through images, videos, activities
Contentment	Positive Emotions	-I communicate positivity through verbal expression, body expression, behavior, gestures, ... -I feel pleased, interesting, content, enthusiastic, relaxed -I transmit positive emotions with my attitude and the language I use
Emotional Regulation	Strategies for emotional regulation	-I introduce techniques for regulation of attention and emotions -I pay attention to learning of emotions regulation from real situations -I try students can learn that a positive attitude and positive emotions are important in learning process

**Table 02.** Teachers' Observation Tool for Positive Pedagogical Practices: Cognitive factors

Cognitive category	Attributes	Indicators
Flow	Facilitators	-I give importance to the process in tasks and activities -I try to turn students' motivation towards intrinsic motivation: I include their personal interests, I consider their personal objectives, ...

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-I propose challenges adequate for different abilities and levels</li> <li>-Tasks are proposed as a sequence of consecutive simple and achievable tasks</li> <li>-Tasks are proposed in a flexible way, attending different abilities, learning styles, and multiple intelligences</li> <li>-Small achievements are praised, and reinforced by positive feed-back</li> <li>-There is an on-going debate on the learning process, tasks, in a constructive, positive, resolute way</li> <li>-We encourage the desire to learn, to ask questions</li> </ul>
Competence Self-efficacy	Sense of competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tasks allow students to apply their abilities and strengths</li> <li>-Tasks are flexible, so students can decide how to deal with or approach it</li> <li>-I perceive students' interest by learning and acquire competences and abilities</li> <li>-I facilitate students to reach their objectives</li> </ul>
Growth	Progress towards objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-I boost students to set their challenging, but realistic, goals</li> <li>-Students are boost to develop learning contents</li> <li>-We share and appreciate achievements, regarding cognitive learning, emotional and social learning</li> </ul>

**Table 03.** Teachers' Observation Tool for Positive Pedagogical Practices: Social factors

Cognitive category	Attributes	Indicators
Positive Relationships	Positive Communication/ Positive language	-I enhance positive language for students to learning positive and effective communication
	Attitudes and Abilities for Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-I plan classroom activities for students to know each other while they work together</li> <li>-I implement methods that enhance to help others</li> <li>-I feel students trust each other, they count on them.</li> <li>-Activities are planned for students to enjoy working, participating and learning together</li> <li>-I perceive students enjoy working together</li> <li>-Cooperative learning activities are present in a regular basis</li> </ul>
Social Support	Ask for help/ Offer support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-I facilitate a safe a supportive environment for students to express openly and in freedom</li> <li>-I offer help, and dedicate time to listen to students (as individuals and as a group)</li> </ul>
Social integration	Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-We appreciate and value contributions of students to the group</li> <li>-We come to agreement on the group goals, activities, and rules</li> </ul>

**Table 04.** Teachers' Observation Tool for Positive Pedagogical Practices: Motivational and Meaning factors

Meaning Category	Attributes	Indicators
Satisfaction	Achievements	-We appreciate achievements, we celebrate them, we enjoy the obtained satisfaction
Autonomy	Self-regulation of learning processes	-I facilitate/boost -with communication, methods, tasks- that students work with autonomy, and self-regulate their work -I pay attention to work on self-knowledge -Students participate on making decisions -I allow students to propose, design tasks, activities, evaluations -Students self-evaluate their work -We appeal, and apply strengths like persistence, optimism, integrity, self-esteem, critical thinking, which enhance autonomy
Meaning	Significance and Value of learning objectives	-We discuss and reflect on the utility, value, application, meaning of learnings in our personal and social life -We discuss and reflect on the commitment and belonging sense to school and community -We express values, strengths, virtues through practice and behavior -I encourage a critical and reflective attitude on their work, on what is done in school, and its connection to their motivations, the world and the society

The next action is to apply the result of this reflection, this observation tool. Teachers proceed in a next phase to apply the tool regarding the implementation of their personal resources, methodological tools, and didactical activities based on positive pedagogies. The application of this tool can be agreed by teachers and researchers or can be applied with flexibility and autonomy. It can also be applied as an isolated tool or combined with other tools, p.e. with a teaching-learning diary.

The positive pedagogical model scheme has evolved to a TOT, that is presented as a tool for reflection, based on the raising-awareness of the personal teaching experience. When moving from individual to social is mediated by participative and collaborative process, then reflection is transformed in learning and knowledge, with which teachers can improve their praxis.

## 7. Conclusion

The challenges of next action-reflection phases are to find ways for applying this tool in an easy and motivational way, so teachers become conscious of presencing in the learning experience. Presencing in teachers can lead to presencing in students, and to a change in students' learning experience (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2005).

Teachers can be motivated with this tool, because, in fact, it represents a schedule tool for classroom management, planning, activities design, and even evaluation. This scheme can be also applied as an observation tool of the group learning process, or even as an evaluative and reflection tool for students. In this way, this tool can also facilitate a 360° degree feed-back. And thus, counting also with the participation



and reflection of students in the research process. The proposed TOT mediates the emancipatory action-research, and thus, it improves educational practices, teachers and students can explore and improve classroom practices, the school improves the practices that constitute the curriculum (Carr & Kemmis, 1988).

The implementation of this TOT within our research process, arise new questions about flow experiences in classroom. The use of this scheme as a tool for facilitating optimal learning experiences should lead to students' satisfaction in classroom. Thus, when classroom management is regulated by these positive pedagogies scheme and guidelines, it proceeds to measure the relation between positive classroom management and students optimal learning experience, or flow in the classroom. This TOT opens new methodologies to measure teachers' teaching experience and students' learning experience as a way to explore flow and engagement in school (Jimerson, Campos, & Grave, 2003; Mesurado, 2010; Salanova, Bakker, & Llorens, 2006).

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