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Happiness for our kids in schools: A conceptual model

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Abstract

Since we know happiness, motivates individual activities, raises awareness, strengthens creativity and facilitates social relationships. So happiness is the important key in educational system, but not a clear program exists for creating happiness for the students in schools. The purpose of this study was try to present a conceptual model for creating happiness in Iranian elementary schools that through review of literature and previous studies, was presented. Four major categories were defined in this respect, namely: phisical, social-emotional, individual and instructional factors. Further study is suggested to examine the degree to which these categories are implemented in schools.

Keywords: Happiness; Elementary Schools; Students.

1. Introduction

One of the problems in educational system is the presence of happy schools. Although it is really an old problem but it has not been studied seriously up to now. There are many low-excited students who are not interested in school and sometimes they have hidden escape feeling. It means that they do not escape from school nor they are absent but take part in classes with indifferent feeling and therefore no more progress as a result.

Although there is no difference among schools from the perspective of superficial forms and official duties there are still a lot of differences by deep investigations. While in some schools you may observe students' great interests to take part in classes, in some others you may witness students going to classes by force. Such varieties in school environments are the signs of different functions of schools. Serious revitalizing should be given to school administration. While current problems in schools may prevent from finding social requests and viewpoints, our society needs to have schools for betterment of social life of children. Happiness is characterized by positive affective states such as optimism, positive thinking, and the perception of personal well-being. While there are

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several sources that produce happiness, one important source is relatively stable personal traits and dispositions such as self-esteem (Diener et al., 1999b; McCrae & Costa, 1991).

Therefore, any consideration to mental health of students and any attempt to bring about happy environment in schools will make students to attend school with more interests. This may not only cause more success in academic affairs but may respect all considered values and further sincere relations in the school and society (Nasoohi, 2009).

A happy school environment is very effective for learning experience and for blossoming students' talents. It may increase their energy. Freshness and happiness of students will be possible but in attractive and happy schools (Ale Yasin, 2001). In order to provide such a school we need to recognize effective factors and consider suitable guidelines for educational programming. In lack of suitable pattern most students have no more interests and motivation for learning. With lack of happiness, schools will be boring for them. Consideration of students' requirements might be somehow difficult but not impossible. Therefore, this paper intends to find effective factors on happiness of students in schools and find a meaningful model for it.

2. Theories & Models

Ben-Shahar, defines happiness as 'the highest on the hierarchy of goals—the ultimate currency—the end toward which all other ends lead'. According to Ben-Shahar's Happiness Model that Also known as "The Hamburger Model", there are four archetypes that people can exhibit in the way they live. These are:
1. Nihilism - Nihilists have lost the joy in life. They derive no present pleasure in their work or life, and expect no future benefits or rewards. They've "given up."
2. Hedonism - Hedonists live for the moment. They pursue pleasure and an easy life, and give little or no thought to future consequences and plans.
3. Rat Racing - The Rat Race archetype often sacrifices current pleasures and benefits in anticipation of some future reward.
4. Happiness - True happiness is achieved when there is a perfect balance between present pleasure and future benefits (Ben-Shahar, 2007).

Achor explains the latest research he and his colleagues in the field of positive psychology have conducted. The results are fascinating:
1)   Our brains work better when they are "happy."
2)   There are concrete things we can do to make our brains "happier."
3)   We can also overcome our inclination to procrastinate and put off these exercises.
4)   When our brains are at "happy" that positivity will ripple out to others and can raise the productivity. (Achor, 2010).

The PERMA Model is a well-being theory developed by positive psychologist Marin Seligman. It identifies five essential elements to well-being. These are:
1.   Positive Emotions (P).
2.   Engagement (E).
3.   Positive Relationships (R).
4.   Meaning (M).
5.   Achievement/Accomplishment (A).

By focusing on all five of these elements, we can flourish in life, and find the happiness we want. As such, PERMA gives us the starting point for living a great life! (Seligman, 2011b).
Bita, (2011) in her article have learned important lessons along the way about herself and life in general:
1. Set personal goals
2. Follow your own path
3. Stay focused
4. Do what you love
5. It's never too late to follow your dreams

Aristotle: (Schumaker, 2007a), in his book titled In Search of Happiness, explains that If people would search among the writings of Aristotle, realize that the happiness and success in achieving a level of growth are important and mentality is the nature of life, and personal values are integrated with friendship, position, knowledge, reality, priority, control of wishes and research.

Carr, (2004) believes that happiness is understandable, based upon relevant concepts of positive feelings like happiness and enjoy. It is obvious that all people could not explain their happiness in a single and special way. It is possible to explain happiness with different experiences like a warm internal feeling, successful feeling, coordination feeling and internal calmness, a joyful experience and reduction or lack of any problems.

Argyle, (2001) considers happiness as an individual factor with three separate fields: 1- Satisfaction of life, 2- Positive affection, 3- Negative affection.

Affections or positive excitements include different cases like enjoy, calmness, self reliance, interest, excitement, happiness and suitable mode. Feelings or negative affections include angry, stress and depression. From Argyle's (2001) point of view it is possible to divide all parts of happiness in other cases. As a result, great deal of current problems in psychology is related directly or indirectly with concept of happiness. Argyle theory focuses on real meaning of positive excitement as a happiness resource. Then consideration of current items may cause positive excitements and better understanding of mentioned theory.

Eyesenck describes happiness in a Stable Exterior Sign. He believes that positive affection in happiness is related with easy social relations in the format of a natural and satisfying relation. (Narrated by Sadeghi, 2006).

Rath, (2002) specifies the happiness as a condition for better experiences and benefiting from mentioned items. He has presented different experiences such as aesthetic experience as a sample.

Teffler believes that happiness has various forms. Exciting happiness is a belief according which a person may find some important things as requested and also joyful affections out of these beliefs. (Narrated from Franken, 1994).

Skinner believes that behavior is under the control of external awards. He was able to show that if a live creature receives any gifts, it may find more fixed behavior. He has explained in his book that people could be happy by the use of happiness principles (Narrated from Franken, 1994). Different types of happiness may create with wideness of personal values. The only way for understanding happiness is to measure it in relation with mentioned and ideal values. Therefore, it is possible to point out to this good description of Ayn Rand about happiness that: "Happiness is a level of understanding resulted from human values. Such a description may change this question "What makes you happy?" into "What are your values?". When others are asked about their happiness, they may omit automatically that part of values inspired to them through their cultures (Schumaker, 2007a).

3. The real meaning of happiness and cheerfulness

According to Veenhoven, (1993b), humanistic psychologists believe that happiness may cause personal activities and increase its knowledge and encourage its innovation with easy methods for creating social relations. It may also encourage any political partnership and better maintenance of health and life span. In spite of finding happiness, it may cause betterment of bodily health. Happy people have more safety feeling and make decisions more easily with higher level of partnership mode. They are more satisfied through living with others (Myers, 2002). Certainly positive transaction in the school and omission of negative transactions and excitement are necessary for better learning of students. Carr, (2004) believes that negative excitements such as Anxiety and Anger may have limited effects on recognition and thinking processes.

On the other hand, positive excitements may cause better recognition functions. As a result omission of negative excitements and depression are the most important goals in any educational organization. Therefore there will be an increase in operational quality of students.

Happiness and cheerfulness are different specification of human beings according to three elements such as Positive affection, Satisfaction with life and lack of negative feelings. Obtaining happiness and cheerfulness is based upon positive affections such as Enjoyment, Relief, Self confidence, Joy, Exhilaration, Excitement, life satisfaction and lack of negative feelings like angry, stress and depression (Argyle, 2001). Happiness has a critical and important role in motivation of students. This is because it is effective in reducing of depression and stress of students from one side and their interests in school and studying along with self confidence, safety and life satisfaction on the other (Naghib Zadeh, 1998).

Also we have Humanistic relations as one of the effective factors and the origin of happiness for facilitating any other items (Miller. et. Al. 1997). Meanwhile most of students consider physical environment and social space of the school free from any dynamism (Ale Yasin 2001). Happiness and cheerfulness are different affairs in betterment of learning and so much necessary for the students. It is directly in relation with quality growth of their life in school

(Sadeghi, 2006). Fredrickson (1998) stated that: Happiness and cheerfulness are a part of satisfaction which may cause more plays and amusements with better possibilities for development of bodily, social and mental skills. Diener (1984a, p 542) believes that most scientists consider happiness and cheerfulness as the greatest bounties. Veenhoven (1984a, P. 334) believes that: "Freshness means a level of judgment by which it is possible to find out general quality of life. " Happiness and especially positive affections are related with exterior situation and negative affections are related with depression and disordered mentality. This effect is based upon the answer of extrovert people to the gifts and those with disorder mentality may reply to punishment.

On the other hand such an effect is based upon any tendency to different situations. Positive affections have lower fixedness and are under the effect of negative affections than position factors (Nasoohi, 2009). Personality has a more effective role in happiness in comparison with the race, social classification, money, social relations, job, amusement, religion and other environmental variables. (Diener, et. al, 1999b). Schumaker, (2009b) writes in his book under title of " What is happiness?:" All efforts for happiness show that happiness could bear a lot of forms with various viewpoints such as: Satisfaction level of life, Health & positive thought, active & constructive welfare, suitable life quality, its meaning, optimistic, interest success, self-confidence, enjoyment, finding reality and so on. Acceptable happiness is going towards practical goals (Franken, 1994). Also they consider all personal activities of a person as the scope of happiness.

4. The effects of happiness

Changes in behavior, thoughts, ethic, goals and jobs are the greatest effects of happiness on life. Although the effects of happiness are more from thinking-mentally aspects than behavior-bodily on, but in case of modifying the thinking and mentality, it is possible to change body and behavior as well. The other effects of happiness are regularity and hope. Happiness may cause more efficiency in you. Happiness may cause little mistakes and better thinking and functions. Also it may cause freshness in management and leadership and betterment of regulations and rules in a calm environment. A happy manager and/or leader may be more successful than a serious and unhappy one (Qodsi, 2009).

Cheerful educational system may provide innovation and new thinking and ideology of the world. Training and change may find a new life with expansion and interests and may stop with hate and contraction. The origin of happiness is internal freshness. Through a wide range of studies, Okun, et. al. (1984) showed that combination of happiness and health is %32.

This may increase if we use mental health criterion. Health is a reason of happiness. Therefore happiness has a mutual relation with health and immunity system of body. Furthermore happiness is effective on health processes of mental processes including viewing the life and different views about itself (Akbari, 2002). According to a study on %10 of happiest people in a college, Seligman (2002a) noticed that the special characteristic of them is benefiting from a powerful and social life.

Happy people are more interested in other people and removing social problems with lack of interest in their own personal problems. Freshness has a clear effect on increasing the efficiency and reducing of absence in work environment. When people are happy they are really active from social point of view and are greatly interested in visiting new people and help others and follow up joyful activities. There are several researches which may show that happiness is a defence against stress and happy people could find better compatibility with environmental accidents (Verkly & Stolk, 1989).

In addition happiness and freshness are in contrast with depression and in fact any presence of happiness makes it impossible to have any depression. Happiness will increase group relations and activities and finally may lead to self confidence and mental & bodily health. Happy people are more in love of each other and would be loved with others. It means those who may set aside more times for them and sit closer to them and say they want to see them again and again (Howes and Hocson, 1979).

5. Elements of Happiness

5.1. *Happiness:* It means joyful feelings, release and self confidence. There are different forms of happiness. A type of happiness is accompanied with high level of excitement (Argyle, 2001).

People in this condition will be happy by joyful voices and excitement social accidents. In its other form which is calmer happiness, people may enjoy from calmness and personal activities. The other type of happiness is very serious and when performing dangerous sports. People who may perform these sports are so much interested in excitement (Zuckerman, 1979).

5.2. *Satisfaction:* Satisfaction is another part of happiness. Some of the effective factors in satisfaction are mental evaluation of a problem, judgment about it and manner of performing an activity in present or in the past. Satisfaction level is depending upon the manner of thinking about problems and goal making of people. On the other hand, any disability in finding a goal could be changed into a source of dissatisfaction. Franken (1994) considers satisfaction as a feeling resulted from reasonable progress of goals. As a result any motivation to reach to a goal may cause further satisfaction. For example if the goal of person is to obtain an academic record, any completion of classes and academic procedures may cause his/ her satisfaction (Dunavold, 1997). Feelings are also effective in turn for creation of life satisfaction. When personal experience is not satisfied, warning system of feelings are like red flag and remind him to make correct his functions and perform a mental arbitration as well (Carlson, 1997).

5.3. *Lack of negative affections:* It is third part of freshness. Negative affections or negative excitements are the contrast points of happiness. Different types of it include stress and depression. Needless to state that enrichment of happiness factors are so much effective in reducing these conditions.

6. Effective factors on happiness & freshness

As one of the most important mental needs of human being, happiness has major effects on human personality and its total life. The most important points in this field are finding happiness and its enrichment and effective factors on this critical need. Personality, self confidence, religious beliefs, social capital, leisure activities are different factors with considerable effects on it (Mirshah Jaafari, 2002).

6.1. *Social activities:* One of the ways for finding happiness is to be a social person. Human being is naturally a social creature. Therefore more and successful and social activities of persons may cause more happiness in their life. Like positive effects of social activities on happiness, it is also one of the real factors of further success in social activities (Robinson, 2003).

6.2. *Sport exercises:* Sport exercise are the easiest and most powerful way for creation o positive behavior somehow an anti-depression factor (Argyle, 2001). There are social aspects for the sport because it is in group form and will enrich social relations.

6.3. *Social position & approval:* One of the factors of unhappiness of people in our decade is lack of self-confidence especially with adolescence. Perhaps one of the reasons is that most societies are success-base and consider to more success. Therefore, they start to compare children from the first years of life with each other and recommend their priorities. In addition all members of society compare their real self with ideal one for finding their ideals. There is a difference between those who may consider themselves as powerful and useful creatures and those who think they have been rejected by society and are so much weak (Mahmoudi, 1998). Social confirmation may enable people to reduce their anxiety from fail at different situations and keep their happiness.

6.4. *Benefiting from skills:* Skills in job performance may increase the positive mode of persons and has a direct relation with self-confidence as one of the happiness factors. Most of people are happier when occupying and applying their skills with better situation of bodily/mentally health. Any applying of learned items is really effective in their freshness and will remove their bad feelings (Robinson, 2003).

6.5. *Amusement:* Satisfaction of amusement has a great relation with total satisfaction. According to the experimental studies of Argyle, (2001), people are encouraging to participate in bodily experiences. These studies show bodily exercises may reduce any stress and depression and increase their self confidence and bodily health.

6.6. *Training:* Training is another variable which has been considered recently with a good relation with satisfaction. Training and experience are valuable factors for self-confidence and internal satisfaction which may cause the learners to work with their maximum abilities (Gremlin, 2003). Ross and Vanwiligen, (1997) found out in a sample American society that academic records have positive effects on people satisfaction, mental / bodily health

of them. Satisfaction is under the effects of different factors like type of thinking of people about internal problems and control.

*6.7. **Type of people thinking about different problems**:* Optimistic persons are happy and with suitable experiences and findings than others. They may remember more positive accidents with wide range of relations with others. People could be happier when they have different view against real changes of their life. Positive view against others' functions and speech may increase their friendly relations and develop public cooperation and activities. All obtained results in happy are effective in personal satisfaction (Matlin and Gawron, 1979).

According to the Argyle theory (2001), followings are the most important happiness conditions:

1- Eating & drinking
2- Social activities
3- Sport
4- Lack of alcohol drink and other medicines
5- Success & social confirmation
6- Benefiting from skills
7- Music, art and religion
8- Condition & environment
9- Relaxation

7. Happy Schools

With a careful glance to all presented descriptions and aspects about happiness and freshness, it seems that providing a suitable space for it in schools as one of the most important educational society.

Paying attention to various elements may change the school space into a happy condition. If fact it is an important step towards a health school. Wolk (2008) points out to this item in his paper and states that happily learning is possible in schools if we provide its situation. Also according to the findings of Sadeghi (2006), there are seventeen factors in creation of freshness in schools as follows:

1- Reducing courses
2- Training life skills
3- Performing happily activities
4- Suitable transfer of information
5- Making a beauty environment
6- Nurturing talents and curiosity of students
7- Providing welfare facilities and school equipment
8- Employing teachers with competency
9- Prevention from any Discrimination and Persuasion
10- Proper educational planning for better understanding of principles
11- Providing laboratory & workshop facilities
12- Participation of students in performance of works
13- Making a health environment
14- Promoting creativity and innovation in students
15- Performing group work.
16- Compliance of exam with course content
17- Reducing any anxieties of students

Also from the point of view of Wolk, (2008) by focusing on the following important principles it is possible to have more happiness with students going to school and find more happiness working inside the school:

1- Finding any happiness in learning
2- Give different options to the students.
3- Let students to create any things
4- Presenting of students' job
5- Set a time for playing with parts
6- Make an attractive school space
7- Go out

8- Read good books
9- Present more sporting & artistic classes
10- Make a change in evaluation
11- Make group amusements

Wolk, (2008) states in his essay about happiness that: Both narrations about going to school are important for me. The first one has been mentioned in the book written by Dewey, (1938) under the title of "Experience & Studying": What is the benefit of reading history and geography and/or reading and writing when a person may leave his/her soul and feeling through learning?" (P.49). If school experiences may destroy any learning soul of children and remove their excitement and curiosity against the world and their intend for paying attention to people, in spite of their participation in standard tests, is it possible to say that we were successful as teachers?

The second narration belongs to John Goodlad, (1984) in a book under the title of "A place named as school" After good understanding of any considerable similarities in our schools, Goodlad wrote:" Tiredness is an epidemic disease. Whey our schools are not a place for happiness? (p. 242). Now if you request the students to prepare a list of characteristic of the school, I cannot believe none of them mention the happy situation of their school in the list. Their thoughts and hearts of adolescence are open against learning excitement and beautiful complexities of the life. But schools are trying to change it into an experience free from happiness."

Followings are different factors effective in schools' happiness:

7.1. *Revealing any success made by students:* We can show any progress and efficiency of students by encouraging and respecting them. It is possible through introducing of active students, inviting their parents and granting them ward and gifts.

7.2. *Benefiting from active teaching methods:* Benefiting from active teaching methods is really effective in increasing their learning, understanding of self-conscious and finally freshness of students. Preparing the learner for better recognition of active learning methods and dominance on education skills, learning methods are the most important changes in educational systems. This is impossible just with changing their thought, thinking and attitude of educational persons in charge, professors and executive managers who have made a great obstacle against innovation and progress of educational activities by insisting on traditional beliefs and methods. (Talebzadeh, et. al, 2010).

7.3. *Performing of group thinking and works:* It is possible to benefit from facilities, group thinking and group cooperation in problem solving and performing of school responsibilities in this method. Kindness, competition, efforts and cooperation are the consequences of this method in upgrading of students. Bayan has written in a book under the title of "Management Rules": Group thinking is an important problem by which every group members thinks he/she has a special position inside the group. Then it is the effect of him and/or her to reach to the ideals. As a result he/she tries to find all the ideals since he considers himself as a decision maker. Therefore dangerous may combine with personal interests and their efforts are the factors of progress of the organization (Behrangi, et. al., 2010).

7.4. *Interaction:* One of the serious subjects in 21st century is changing the educational programming process. The important point in this process is classroom, content, functions quality and any relations between student & teacher. Furthermore any benefiting of students from class activities means better participation in school and obtaining life skills in personal & social dimensions (Talebzadeh et. al, 2010). Also it is obvious in most considerations that voluntarily activities may even result into reducing the stress out of loneliness. Wining is one of the tools of good luck. Sometimes it is said that happiest people are those who make others happy (Schumaker, 2007a).

7.5. *The role of teacher's happiness and interaction with student*: Happiness has a great role in social acceptance and personality of teachers. The role of teachers includes a complex of rules and programs which are not only effective but also under the effect of other items. Therefore it is two times more important because may create good relations and cooperation with students and also make happy the teacher.

7.6. *The effect of teacher in teaching process*: Efficient teachers are conscious about thinking method of students. Thinking methods of all students belong to his/her own world. As a result any knowledge of teacher about students' attitudes is so much important for teaching (Glover and Bruning, 2001). Powerful teachers are aware of recognition differences of students and take account of it when programming for teaching (Wittrock, 1985).

7.7. *Course content*: One of the most important problems in upgrading the learning and providing an internal motivation for learning is any connection between courses and life of learners. Jacobs (1989) says: "There are no more successful methods than current method in programming of courses which may cause escaping of students

from school." One of the real reasons of immediate exit of students from schools is lack of any relation between course content and external environment of their school (Mehr Mohamadi, 2002).

Course content should be:

1- About completely related problems of leaner
2- Involve with fundamental and critical aspects of learner about manner of living
3- Encourage the activities and innovation of students (Smith, 1995).

*7.8. **Training facilities**:* Rather than focusing on the importance of physical effects of classroom, Beecher, et. al. (1993) consider the behaviors and abilities of students for further reflections and abilities of them. They believe that critical important of physical situation of class and school is due to the spending of a great part of their life in school. Therefore both the school and classroom should bear different specifications such as relaxation, attraction and motivation.

In some cases any betterment of physical space of school may directly cause better movement and feeling reactions. Sometimes it may cause enrichment of the mode of people with indirect effects on them. Colour is one of the factors which are attractive for human being even from the ancient times (Ale Yasin, 2001). According to a research, any usage of happy colours for schools in each academic course has been considered as an effective and correct function (Abbasi, 2004).

*7.9. **School organizational climate**:* If the major goal of education is creation of human being and specially active and powerful creatures for performing of new jobs and some creative and innovative creatures, the special duty of education organizations is to employing of innovative managers and submission of new plans and methods accompanied with a suitable situation for arising these specifications in teachers. Then it is possible to change the educational space into an active, innovative, warm and effective place with a lot of coordination and enjoyments (Safi, 1995). According to the findings of Hoy et. al (1996), we can say that there is a relation between organizational health with functions of students. Healthier situation in a school means higher academic progress of students in mathematics and reading. Furthermore there is a positive combination between organizational health of the school with its humanistic space, cooperation of teachers in decision making, powerful school culture and effective criterions of the school (Alagheh Band, 1999).

8. Conceptual Model for Happiness in Schools

Based on the literature reviewed and evidences from previous researches, following model could be presented for creation of happiness in schools. This model includes four factors namely: individual, instructional, physical, and social /emotional elements based on these sections:

*8.1. **Philosophy & goals of model:*** Normal growth of child instead of focusing on training and also pay attention to all needs of students, changing of school into a happy and satisfying place for students and personnel, betterment of students' function through happy schools, rethinking about education process, creation of calmness in environment and betterment of relations and principles.

*8.2. **Theoretical Foundations:*** Ben-Shahar, Achor, Seligman, Bita, Aristotle, Argyle, Carr, Eyesenck, Rath, Teffler, Skinner and Ayn Rand's points of view.

*8.3. **Conceptual framework:***

Physical factors: (allocation of hours for training of imagination and innovation of students, providing a green space in school, providing health foods at school, benefiting from various and suitable educational aids for more attraction of classroom (electronic board, computer, internet), benefiting of personnel and teacher from suitable clothing with happy colours).

Individual factors: (reflection in course classes, familiarity with children rights as a teacher, skills, specialty and dominance of teachers in teaching, friendly relation among personnel, high level of family support and society).

Social /emotional factors: (Respectful & friendly contact with students, more focusing on sport activities in school programs, positive attitude of teacher against students, positive attitudes of students about subjects, positive attitudes of students about educational environment).

Instructional factors: (Playing a happy and calmness music at relaxation hours, benefiting from active teaching methods like scientific trip and role playing, responding situation of students, pay attention to the art in school programs, establishing of sport teams including of teachers and students).

8.4. ***Executive procedures of model:*** Creation a special committee in education for providing of happy school, Creation of work groups under the supervision of special committee, Operational programs according to the conceptual framework of the model, Preliminary performance of written programs, Modification according to the feedback, Finalizing the program and final performance, Continuous evaluation according to the new findings.

9. Conclusion & Contribution

The important subject heading of this paper was the importance of happiness and happy making factors in schools. We considered real meaning of happiness, its effects, its different elements, effective factors in happiness and happy schools. Finally we presented a conceptual model for happiness of students at schools including four factors namely: physical, social–emotional, individual and instructional. The mentioned factors are based upon four parts of philosophy and goals, theoretical Foundations, conceptual framework and executive procedures. As we know a considerable part of students' time spends in schools and students need to be happy while in schools. Happiness will make positive attitudes among students and may lead to a higher academic achievement and eventually more active citizens. School authorities, therefore, need to revise their learning programs as well as physical possibilities implemented in schools. Therefore it is necessary to pay more attention to these factors. Furthermore, since happiness is one of the permanent goals of human beings and they search the case in different ways and methods, school is one of the most important organizations for their behavior and with a considerable share in happiness creation of people inside the school and then all people of society.

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