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University of Happiness and Well-Being

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Abstract

This article develops a conceptual model of a University of Happiness and Well-Being as a higher education institution structured around eight domains of well-being: body, thought, emotions, transcendence, relationships and community, career and purpose, financial well-being, and digital well-being. The paper is explicitly framed as a conceptual article supported by an integrative narrative review of international literature on well-being, flourishing, habit formation, emotional intelligence, and positive higher education.

Its main contribution is twofold. First, it proposes a pedagogical equation of sustainable happiness, according to which happiness is understood as a function of holistic well-being, while well-being itself is strengthened through habits that generate observable behaviors and eventually consolidate into transferable competencies. Second, it translates that equation into an institutional, curricular, and assessment model for higher education.

Beyond theoretical justification, the article operationalizes the eight dimensions, compares the proposed framework with established models such as PERMA, psychological well-being, self-determination theory, and flourishing, and outlines an empirical validation agenda including instruments, hypotheses, and longitudinal, quasi-experimental, and multigroup research designs. The paper concludes that such a university can become a rigorous response to contemporary crises of knowledge fragmentation, student distress, and the disconnection between education, human development, and sustainable happiness.

Keywords: happiness; well-being; higher education; habits; emotional intelligence; human competencies; financial well-being; digital well-being; positive university; human flourishing.

Introduction

Higher education is going through a historical inflection point. For decades, the university was conceived primarily as a space for disciplinary specialization, scientific production, and professional ad-

vancement. Yet social acceleration, informational overload, the mental health crisis, the erosion of relationships and community ties, and the expansion of technologies that alter rhythms of life and attention now force us to rethink what whole-person education means. The decisive question is no longer only what a graduate knows, but also how that person lives, decides, relates, cares for health, regulates emotions, sustains personal finances, and inhabits the digital environment without losing inner freedom.

In this context, there is a growing need for a university that does not treat happiness as a naive or superficial notion, but as a legitimate object of study, teaching, measurement, and practice. Understood seriously, happiness cannot be reduced to momentary pleasure, forced optimism, or instant satisfaction. The literature distinguishes among subjective well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and eudaimonic approaches centered on meaning, self-realization, and human flourishing. Across these traditions, one idea remains especially relevant: quality of life is more sustainable when relatively stable internal and external conditions support health, relationships, purpose, personal competence, and a sense of control.

Starting from this premise, the present article proposes a specific university model: the University of Happiness and Well-Being. It is conceived as an institution organized around eight pillars of well-being—body, thought, emotions, transcendence, relationships and community, career and purpose, financial well-being, and digital well-being—that operate as interdependent dimensions of a single reality. The metaphor of the eight pillars highlights a structural insight: well-being does not rest on one factor alone. When one pillar is weakened or compromised, overall stability declines. Sustainable happiness is therefore understood here not as the result of a single achievement, but as the outcome of a balanced architecture of life.

The originality of the model lies not only in assembling multiple dimensions of well-being, but in translating them into an operational educational proposal. Each pillar becomes a school; each school teaches knowledge, practices, and habits; and these habits, when repeated with intention, feedback, and contextual support, foster observable behaviors that may consolidate into human competencies. In this way, the university ceases to be merely a site of information and becomes an environment of whole-person learning, behavioral transfer, and personal maturation.

The model also places emotional intelligence at the center as a transversal backbone. It is not taught merely as theory about emotions, but as the practical ability to perceive, name, regulate, channel, and place emotions in the service of healthier decisions and more constructive relationships. In line with social and emotional learning approaches, emotional intelligence is linked here to daily habits and to formative contexts in which the emotional, relational, and ethical dimensions become part of the curriculum rather than being relegated to secondary activities.

The article therefore has a triple purpose. First, to build the scientific and philosophical rationale of the model. Second, to design its institutional, curricular, and evaluative translation. Third, to formulate an empirical agenda capable of putting the model to the test. From that intention arise three research questions characteristic of a conceptual paper: what theoretically justifies a university ori-

ented toward holistic well-being; how can such a university be operationalized through eight schools and habit-based learning; and what methodological conditions would be necessary to validate the model according to high-impact publication standards?

Methodologically, the manuscript is presented as a conceptual article of theoretical integration and institutional design. It does not yet offer original empirical validation, but it organizes prior evidence, identifies convergences among the psychology of well-being, higher education, social and emotional learning, and whole-university approaches, and translates that dialogue into a framework open to later testing. In this sense, the proposal should be read as a rigorous heuristic formalization: sufficiently defined to guide curriculum, assessment, and research, yet explicitly open to empirical revision, cultural adaptation, and psychometric refinement (Li, 2025; Bannigan et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2025).

Theoretical framework: happiness, well-being, and transformative education

Well-being as a multidimensional reality

The classic definition of the World Health Organization marked a milestone by describing health not merely as the absence of disease, but as a state of physical, mental, and social well-being; this insight has subsequently been expanded by the WHO itself toward a notion of well-being that includes meaning, purpose, and the capacity for social contribution (World Health Organization, 1948, 2024a).

Within psychology, subjective well-being was widely examined through Diener's work on life satisfaction, affective balance, and global life evaluation. In parallel, Ryff proposed a model of psychological well-being built on self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, and positive relations. Later, positive psychology articulated integrative models such as PERMA, where happiness can no longer be reduced to fleeting pleasure but includes engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Diener, 1984; Ryff, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2011; Butler & Kern, 2016).

From a social perspective, well-being also depends on the quality of relationships, recognition, belonging, and the experience of meaning. It is not only an internal phenomenon, but a situated, relational, and culturally mediated experience that is very close to the notion of flourishing as full human functioning in concrete contexts (Keyes, 2002; Huppert & So, 2013; VanderWeele, 2017).

The model of the eight pillars of well-being is rooted in this multidimensional tradition, yet expands it toward domains that are now decisive and often underdeveloped in higher education: one's relationship with money, one's relationship with technology, the ecology of habits, and the pedagogical translation of each dimension into observable competencies (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2015; OECD, 2021, 2025; UNESCO IESALC, 2025; Li, 2025).

Happiness as an emergent result of well-being

One of the central theses of this article is that sustainable happiness should not be taught as an isolated emotional state, but as an emergent consequence of sufficiently robust well-being. The statement 'more happiness requires more well-being' captures that idea. Conceptually, happiness is defined here as a global, relatively stable, and subjectively meaningful evaluation of one's own life sustained by a foundation of holistic well-being. When that foundation is weak, happiness tends to be episodic,

dependent on external stimuli, or vulnerable to disruption. When it is strengthened, the person gains greater capacity for recovery, meaning, and inner freedom.

This formulation helps avoid two frequent errors. The first is simplistic hedonism, according to which being happy means feeling good all the time. The second is ascetic moralism, according to which well-being is somehow suspect and what truly matters is performance, duty, or the capacity to endure pain. Between these extremes, the university proposed here adopts a rigorous humanistic stance: happiness does not eliminate suffering, but it does increase the ability to move through suffering with resources, coherence, support, and purpose.

From this perspective, well-being functions as a mediating variable between education and happiness. No university can promise permanent happiness, because no institution fully controls the biography of its students. It can, however, teach habits, criteria, competencies, and relational patterns that increase the probability of a fuller, clearer, and more livable life. That is the legitimate ambition of the University of Happiness and Well-Being.

Habits, behavior, and competency development

The second theoretical foundation of the model is the psychology of habit. Contemporary research has shown that habits are not merely ordinary customs with little scientific relevance, but mechanisms of behavioral automation with enormous impact on health, self-regulation, and performance (Lally et al., 2010; Gardner et al., 2012; Wood & Runger, 2016; Verplanken & Orbell, 2003).

This point is crucial for education. Many formative proposals fail because they produce intellectual understanding without behavioral conversion. Students know what they should do, yet do not incorporate it into everyday routines. A university of well-being cannot limit itself to explaining that better sleep, emotional regulation, or financial planning matter; it must design processes through which such knowledge becomes daily micro-habits. Only then does learning move from the declarative level to the embodied one.

From this logic, the following sequence is proposed: a sustained habit generates an observable behavior; a coherent set of stabilized behaviors shapes a competency. For example, the habit of pausing consciously before responding to conflict may produce behaviors of emotional regulation, listening, and restraint; if those behaviors consolidate, the competency of emotional management emerges. Likewise, the habit of reviewing income and expenses weekly can be translated into behaviors of foresight, self-control, and informed decision making, which then configure the competency of financial well-being.

The proposed university therefore assumes that teaching human competencies requires first teaching habits. And teaching habits requires attention to context, repetition, monitoring, the emotional charge associated with learning, and the meaning that students assign to practice. This vision transforms pedagogy: progress is not measured only through examinations, but through evidence of stable incorporation into everyday life.

Emotional intelligence, learning, and university life

Emotional intelligence is the third pillar of the model. Its incorporation responds to a simple conviction: there is no deep learning and no good life

without the ability to recognize, understand, express, and regulate one's own and others' affective worlds (Gross, 1998; Boyatzis, 2018; UNESCO, 2024).

Understood in behavioral terms, emotional intelligence is not reduced to a trait or a self-image. It is expressed in observable competencies. It appears in the way a person listens, reacts to frustration, asks for help, sustains a difficult conversation, interprets signals of exhaustion, or modulates presence in high-demand environments. This perspective is especially useful for university settings because it allows for the evaluation of real progress through rubrics, observation, reflective journaling, and multisituated feedback.

Emotional intelligence also plays a transversal role in habit-based learning. Without emotional awareness, people do not detect the triggers that sabotage their routines. Without emotional regulation, they abandon the habit at the first sign of discomfort. Without empathy and social support, they lack the relational network needed to sustain change. And without meaning, repetition becomes mechanical and inconsistent. For that reason, in the University of Happiness and Well-Being, emotional intelligence is not a peripheral subject but the pedagogical climate from which everything else is taught.

From this perspective, the proposal can be read as a multilevel framework. At the micro level, it works with habits and self-regulation. At the meso level, it designs teaching practices, tutoring, and assessment. At the macro level, it transforms institutional identity, governance, and social transfer. This multilevel articulation is precisely what brings the proposal close to contemporary whole-university and health-promoting university agendas, while adding a more explicit pedagogical formalization.

That difference matters for an exacting journal. While some models describe the components of optimal human functioning, the University of Happiness and Well-Being attempts to answer a different question: how can a higher education institution teach, assess, and transfer well-being in a curricularly rigorous, ethical, and measurable way? That question requires variables that are often absent from classical models, such as financial well-being, digital well-being, university organizational culture, and behavioral traceability.

The proposed model does not compete head-on with those frameworks; rather, it operates as an integrative architecture of institutional translation. Its principal novelty does not lie in discovering a ninth definition of happiness, but in connecting dimensions of well-being with university schools, microhabits, competencies, and evidence of learning. In other words, it shifts the conversation from the taxonomy of well-being to its pedagogical governance.

To increase the model's theoretical precision, it is useful to position it explicitly in relation to the reference frameworks that currently dominate scientific discussion about well-being and higher education. These include subjective well-being focused on life satisfaction and affective balance; psychological well-being of eudaimonic orientation; self-determination theory with its focus on autonomy, competence, and relatedness; PERMA and broader flourishing metrics; and the recent literature on positive higher education that seeks to integrate learning, mental health, and academic engagement (Diener, 1984; Ryff, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2011; Li, 2025).

Positioning in relation to established frameworks and original contribution

Table 1. Critical comparison between well-being frameworks and the proposed university model

Framework	Main contribution	Limit for higher education	Added value of the proposed model
Subjective well-being	Life satisfaction and affective balance	May remain at the level of global self-perception	Introduces habits, competencies, and learning traceability
Psychological well-being	Autonomy, purpose, growth, and relationships	Describes dimensions, but not their institutionalization	Turns dimensions into schools, curriculum, and assessment
Self-determination	Autonomy, competence, and relatedness	Strong motivational power, but less curricular granularity	Integrates SDT within an eight-domain architecture
PERMA / flourishing	Broad and communicable well-being model	Needs operational translation into classrooms and governance	Adds habits, micro-evidence, and institutional design
Positive higher education	Brings together learning, mental health, and university context	Still heterogeneous and scattered in its instruments	Proposes a coherent and replicable curricular grammar
University of Happiness and Well-Being	Multilevel framework with eight schools, habits, and transfer	Requires empirical validation and psychometric refinement	Offers an integrative design oriented toward real implementation

Formulation of the model: the eight pillars of well-being and the equation of happiness

The proposed formulation begins from an idea of structural simplicity and pedagogical usefulness, but one caution must be stated from the outset: what is presented here is not a closed psychometric equation, but a heuristic formalization of the model. Sustainable happiness can be represented conceptually as a function of holistic well-being, and holistic well-being as a configuration of eight basic dimensions that interact with one another.

*Heuristic formalization: F = f(B), where B is represented conceptually as Sigma (wi * Pi), with i = 1...8 and Sigma wi = 1.*

In this expression, F represents sustainable happiness; B, holistic well-being; Pi, each of the eight pillars; and wi, the relative weight that each dimension may assume in a given person or cohort. The formulation does not presuppose perfect linearity, unlimited compensation among dimensions, or universally stable weights. Its function is to organize reasoning, make the components of the model explicit, and enable testable hypotheses about combinations, thresholds, and differential effects.

The eight pillars are: (1) body; (2) thought; (3) emotions; (4) transcendence; (5) relationships and community; (6) career and purpose; (7) financial well-being; and (8) digital well-being. Their selection responds to three criteria: first, their relevance to quality of life and human functioning; second, their pedagogical translatability into habits and competencies; and third, their pertinence to contemporary conditions of study, work, and connected life. The model aims to be broad enough to respect human complexity and operational enough to become curriculum, assessment, and institutional practice.

The most innovative trait of the proposal, however, is not the mere addition of dimensions, but the dynamic articulation among them. The model argues not only that the pillars matter, but that they can be taught through a formative design sequence that connects everyday practice, observable behavior, competency, and well-being outcomes.

Micro-habits (H) -> Observable behaviors (C) ->

Competencies (K) -> Well-Being (B) -> Happiness (F)

Conceptually, each pillar Pi improves when a person develops micro-habits Hi; those habits increase the frequency and stability of behaviors Ci; and those behaviors, when sustained through feedback, context, and reflection, may consolidate into competencies Ki. The sequence should be read as a design heuristic rather than as exhaustive unidirectional causality: in practice, competencies also feed back into habits, and the institutional context moderates the whole process. Accordingly, Pi may be represented operationally as g(Hi, Ci, Ki), leaving the exact form of that relationship open for later research.

From this logic, the university becomes an organization of deliberate well-being cultivation. Its objective is no longer only to certify knowledge, but to expand personal, relational, and contextual resources that help individuals care for themselves, think clearly, feel with maturity, build quality relationships, work with purpose, manage prudently, and use technology with autonomy. Happiness thus appears as the life synthesis of that process rather than an instant promise or empty slogan.

Table 2. The eight pillars of well-being and their pedagogical translation

Pillar / School	Core formative question	Core habits	Expected competencies
Body and vitality	How can one live with energy, rest, health, and self-care?	Sleep, movement, breathing, mindful eating, physical pauses	Self-care, bodily discipline, energy management
Thought and clarity	How can one think better, decide better, and reduce mental noise?	Deep reading, journaling, focus, cognitive hygiene, cognitive gratitude	Critical thinking, self-reflection, decisional clarity
Emotions and emotional intelligence	How can one feel without overflowing and relate without harming?	Naming emotions, pausing, regulation, listening, repair	Self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, emotional communication
Transcendence and meaning	What do I live, work, and choose for?	Silence, contemplation, weekly purpose review, service, meaning reflection	Life meaning, coherence, hope, ethical orientation
Relationships and community	How can one build nourishing relationships and community?	Quality conversation, gratitude, healthy boundaries, cooperation	Healthy relationships, community life, mutual support, citizenship
Career and purpose	How can one work with excellence without losing one's soul?	Planning, focus, continuous learning, feedback, intentional closure	Meaningful employability, personal leadership, healthy productivity
Financial well-being	How can one use money to live with security and freedom?	Budgeting, saving, expense review, delayed decisions, foresight	Financial self-management, economic prudence, freedom of choice
Intentional technology use	How can one use the digital world without being used by it?	Digital hygiene, screen-free periods, information curation, focus	Technological autonomy, sustained attention, digital well-being

Table 3. Operational definitions, indicators, and suggested families of measurement

Dimension	Operational definition	Core indicators	Suggested measurement families
Body	Physiological self-care and energy management	Sleep, movement, rest, fatigue	Diaries, optional wearables, self-records
Thought	Quality of attention and judgment	Focus, clarity, rumination, criterion	Rubrics, cognitive logs, reflection tasks
Emotions	Affective awareness, regulation, and expression	Emotional labeling, reactivity, repair	Brief scales, emotional diaries, observation
Transcendence	Meaning, coherence, and ethical orientation	Purpose, hope, congruence	Narratives, interviews, meaning scales

Relationships and community	Belonging and relational quality	Listening, support, trust, belonging	Sociometry, rubrics, self- and peer-assessment
Career and purpose	Meaningful and sustainable work	Engagement, learning, fatigue	Portfolios, academic engagement, performance
Financial	Prudent control of resources	Budgeting, saving, financial stress	Financial diaries, self-reports, applied tasks
Digital	Intentional and autonomous engagement with technology	Distraction, screen habits, security	Usage logs, self-reports, personal audits

Operational definitions and construct delimitation

For the proposal to be scientifically evaluable, each of the eight pillars must be formulated as an operational domain rather than as a vague aspiration. Operationalization gives the model clear boundaries, reduces conceptual drift, and makes it possible to connect educational action with evidence. In this framework, body refers to physiological self-care and energy management; thought to the quality of attention, interpretation, and judgment; emotions to awareness, regulation, and affective expression; transcendence to meaning, coherence, and ethical orientation; relationships and community to belonging and relational quality; career and purpose to meaningful and sustainable work; financial well-being to prudent resource management; and digital well-being to intentional and autonomous engagement with technology.

This delimitation helps reduce overlap and make analytical frontiers explicit. The emotional dimension, for example, is not equivalent to the relational one, even though both interact deeply. Emotional intelligence focuses on awareness and regulation of affective states; the relational domain concerns the quality of bonds, belonging, and life in community. Likewise, transcendence is not reducible to career, although vocational purpose may be nourished by broader life meaning. Financial well-being is not identical to career success, because one may possess income without prudence, and prudence without abundance. Digital well-being, finally, does not merely refer to screen time, but to the ecology of attention, privacy, information hygiene, and the capacity to preserve agency within hyperconnectivity.

Theoretical propositions of the model

The conceptual formulation can be expressed through a set of testable propositions. P1: greater adherence to well-designed micro-habits will be associated with improvements in one or more of the eight dimensions of well-being. P2: the relationship between curricular exposure and well-being outcomes will be partially mediated by adherence to habits. P3: emotional intelligence will facilitate the transfer from habit to competency by enhancing self-awareness, regulation, and persistence. P4: greater ecological coherence between institutional culture and the taught curriculum will strengthen the effects of the model.

P5: financial well-being and digital well-being will exert a disproportionate effect on the system, acting as cross-cutting amplifiers or stress multipliers in contemporary student life. P6: students who report higher purpose and belonging will show more stable trajectories of behavioral adherence. P7: transfer effects will be stronger when assessment includes multimethod evidence rather than self-report alone. P8: the relative weights of the eight dimensions will vary across populations, cultures, and life stages, which implies that the equation should be treated as configurable rather than universal.

The University of Happiness and Well-Being: institutional identity

The University of Happiness and Well-Being should not be understood as a self-help center disguised in academic language, but as a higher education institution that places human flourishing at the heart of its mission without abandoning rigor, science, or academic demand. Its raison d'etre is to form people capable of living, working, relating, and contributing more lucidly, healthily, and coherently.

Its institutional mission may be expressed as follows: to educate persons capable of building healthier, more conscious, freer, and more socially valuable lives through the cultivation of eight dimensions of well-being translated into knowledge, habits, competencies, and cultural ecosystems. This mission implies that academic excellence and human well-being are not adversaries, but mutually reinforcing realities.

That identity entails several principles. The first is wholeness: the human being is not fragmented into separate compartments of mind, body, career, and relationships. The second is teachability: well-being can be cultivated and is not only an innate trait or private matter. The third is traceability: changes must be observable, reflectable, and assessable. The fourth is ethical humanism: the model must serve dignity, not hyper-optimization. The fifth is institutional coherence: the university must embody in its structures what it teaches in its discourse.

Under these principles, the university would compete not only for traditional rankings, but for its capacity to generate sustainable development of persons, communities, and organizations. Its prestige would be linked not only to publications and employability, but also to the quality of life, judgment, civic responsibility, and human maturity it helps cultivate.

The eight schools of well-being

School of Body and Vitality

The first school begins from an elementary truth: there can be no stable well-being without a minimally cared-for body. Sleep deprivation, sedentariness, chronic stress, poor eating patterns, and physiological dysregulation erode attention, mood, decision making, and relational quality. The body is not the accessory of human development; it is one of its conditions of possibility.

This school would teach knowledge and habits related to sleep, functional nutrition, movement, breathing, physiological stress, and self-observation of bodily signals. The objective would not be an aesthetic or perfectionist body culture, but the construction of a living alliance with one's own organism. Students would learn to interpret fatigue, hunger, activation, tension, and energy as educational information rather than as inconvenient noise.

The competencies associated with this school include self-care, bodily discipline, energy management, somatic awareness, and recovery. Its academic value is high because a better regulated body improves learning, emotional balance, and the capacity to sustain effort without collapse.

School of Thought and Clarity

The second school addresses one of the major afflictions of the present: cognitive dispersion. It is not enough to develop analytical intelligence; the university must also cultivate a mind that is less

noisy, more ordered, and better able to discern, prioritize, and sustain attention on what truly matters.

This school would teach habits of cognitive hygiene: deep reading, reflective writing, reduction of multitasking, management of informational inputs, critical thinking, self-observation of biases, and focus practices. The aim is that students do not remain trapped in permanent mental reactivity, but learn to construct inner clarity. A clearer mind makes better decisions, reduces unnecessary suffering, and protects attention, one of the most eroded resources of our time.

Expected competencies would include critical thinking, cognitive self-knowledge, prudent reasoning, criterion, and the ability to make sound decisions. This school is especially valuable because it links well-being with lucidity: to live better is not only to feel better, but also to think with greater truth, less confusion, and better discrimination between the urgent and the important.

School of Emotions and Emotional Intelligence

The third school constitutes the transversal heart of the entire university. Its starting point is that emotions are not enemies of reason, but valuable information which, when understood and regulated, improve the quality of life. The problem is not emotion itself, but emotional illiteracy.

This school would train emotional micro-habits: identifying what I feel before acting, naming affective states precisely, practicing a regulatory pause, asking for help in time, listening without invading, repairing after conflict, and turning vulnerability into a space of learning. Teaching would combine theory, role play, observation, emotional writing, peer feedback, and 360-degree assessment of socio-emotional behaviors.

Expected competencies would include self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, emotional communication, constructive conflict management, and affective responsibility. The university would benefit directly from this training: better classroom relationships, less relational violence, greater capacity for cooperation, and an institutional culture that is less defensive and more humane.

School of Transcendence and Meaning

The fourth school addresses a dimension often excluded from university discourse out of fear of conceptual ambiguity: transcendence. Yet a decisive part of well-being depends on the capacity to respond to questions of meaning. What am I studying for? What am I working for? What deserves my time? How do I integrate pain, limitation, and finitude? A university of well-being cannot evade these questions, because they shape the deep direction of existence.

The proposal is not tied to any specific confession, but to a pedagogy of meaning. It would work with habits of silence, contemplation, service, gratitude, ethical reflection, coherence review, and orientation toward purpose. This school would help ensure that students do not live in existential exposure, driven only by others' expectations or by external metrics of success.

The resulting competencies would be life purpose, realistic hope, inner coherence, ethical judgment, and the ability to connect personal projects with social contribution. In this way, the university experience would cease to be merely a credential race and become a laboratory of meaning.

School of Relationships and Community

The fifth school recognizes that human well-being is profoundly relational. Unwanted loneliness, shallow connection, and polarization can undermine the university experience as much as academic overload. Learning to live and work well in community should therefore be considered a high-level competency rather than an accidental by-product of sharing space.

This school would teach habits of relational presence: meaningful conversation, active listening, explicit gratitude, healthy boundaries, cooperation, peer mentoring, and community building. The university must also be a school of intimate citizenship: a place where one learns to disagree without humiliating, accompany without invading, and sustain common projects without instrumentalizing people.

Associated competencies include relational quality, community life, collaboration, trust, and belonging. This dimension also has a protective effect on mental health and academic retention, because social support buffers stress, reduces isolation, and strengthens commitment to the formative process.

School of Career and Purpose

The sixth school integrates the world of work into the well-being model. Work matters, and it shapes us in return. A career can be a source of realization, service, and growth, but also of alienation, exhaustion, and loss of meaning. A university of happiness cannot set well-being against performance; it must teach how to work well without losing one's soul.

This school would focus on habits of healthy productivity: realistic planning, attentional focus, continuous learning, priority management, closure of cycles, strategic rest, review of purpose, and deliberate feedback. The aim would not be to produce exhausted performers, but professionals capable of combining excellence with humanity.

Expected competencies would include meaningful employability, personal leadership, work organization, professional resilience, value orientation, and an ethics of performance. Career success is redefined here not as naked ascent, but as competent contribution compatible with well-being and personal coherence.

School of Financial Well-Being

The seventh school introduces a dimension habitually absent from the general university curriculum: education for economic serenity. Evidence shows that one's relationship with money deeply influences stress, decision making, autonomy, and the quality of one's life project (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2015).

This school would not aim to teach speculation, but financial prudence. It would work with concrete habits: budgeting, expense tracking, systematic saving, distinguishing need from desire, mindful consumption, contingency planning, and delayed decision making to reduce economic impulsivity. It would also teach students to connect money and values: how to spend coherently, how to avoid financial shame, and how to build autonomy without idolizing accumulation.

The resulting competencies would include financial self-management, foresight, moderation, freedom of choice, and understanding the emotional impact of money. This school is especially relevant because financial insecurity erodes concentration,

mental health, and future orientation. Educating for well-being also means educating for a more lucid and livable personal economy.

School of Digital Well-Being and Intentional Technology Use

The eighth school responds to a contemporary urgency: the relationship with technology has become a structural determinant of well-being. Screens, notifications, hyperconnectivity, and the attention economy reshape sleep, concentration, emotional regulation, campus life, and the experience of time (OECD, 2021, 2025).

This school would teach habits of digital hygiene: intentional notification settings, deep-work windows, screen-free periods, information curation, visual rest, mindful social media use, privacy protection, and the design of less intrusive digital environments. The central question would not be how much technology we use, but how we use it and what effects it produces on our body, mind, emotions, and relationships.

Expected competencies would include technological autonomy, sustained attention, informational judgment, basic digital security, and the capacity to preserve human presence in a hyperconnected context. A university that ignores this dimension educates for a world that no longer exists; one that incorporates it helps recover freedom where automatisms of consumption and dispersion now predominate.

Table 4. Indicators for each school and observable evidence

School	Process indicators	Outcome indicators	Evidence
Body	Hours of sleep, movement frequency, pauses	Perceived energy, fatigue, adherence	Habit diary, optional wearable, self-assessment
Thought	Deep reading, focus time, journaling	Decisional clarity, reduced distraction	Cognitive log, thinking rubrics
Emotions	Regulatory pause, emotional labeling, repair	Lower impulsivity, better relational climate	Role play, 360 feedback, emotional diary
Transcendence	Meaning practices, silence, service	Purpose, coherence, and hope	Reflective portfolio, essay on meaning
Relationships	Quality conversations, cooperation, gratitude	Belonging, perceived support, community life	Observation, peer-assessment, support maps
Career and purpose	Planning, focus, weekly review	Healthy productivity, work purpose	Professional project, habit board
Finances	Budgeting, saving, expense review	Financial control, less economic anxiety	Financial notebook, practical cases
Digital well-being	Intentional screen time, disconnection windows	More attention, less digital saturation	Personal digital audit, usage report

Habit-based learning methodology

The habit-based learning methodology constitutes the operational pedagogical core of the University of Happiness and Well-Being. Its premise is that what transforms students is not only what they understand, but what they practice with enough stability to incorporate into identity and behavior (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003; Wood & Runger, 2016).

This methodology combines six components: awareness, design, repetition, emotion, monitoring, and transfer. Awareness means identifying which dimension of well-being is weak and why. Design means translating the goal into concrete micro-habits so clear and small that they become executable in real contexts. Repetition refers to consistent practice in stable situations. Emotion reminds us that habits consolidate better when associated with meaning, accomplishment, belonging, or relief.

Monitoring involves recording progress, setbacks, and triggers. Transfer means carrying what has been learned into other life contexts until it becomes a generalizable competency.

The university would work with cycles of eight to twelve weeks for each block of habits, avoiding both naive voluntarism and perfectionistic rigidity. Each student would select core goals for each school, accompanied by a tutor, a peer group, or a community of practice. The emphasis would be on consistency rather than perfection. Relapses would be interpreted as diagnostic information rather than moral failure.

The basic didactic sequence would be: (1) understanding the dimension; (2) initial self-diagnosis; (3) selection of a micro-habit; (4) design of the context or activation ritual; (5) deliberate practice; (6) brief recording; (7) weekly reflection; (8) feedback; (9) adjustment; and (10) progressive transfer. This logic turns education into a laboratory of everyday life. The classroom ceases to be only a place of exposition and becomes a space of rehearsal, review, and consolidation.

Methodologically, this requires active and experiential pedagogies: portfolios, logs, guided practices, mentoring, structured observation, role play, cooperative learning, service projects, personal habit analytics, accountability communities, and narrative assessment. Scientific knowledge remains essential, but it is embedded in a broader process of behavioral embodiment.

From the standpoint of scientific construction, the article rests on an integrative conceptual synthesis oriented toward design. It does not aim to provide an exhaustive systematic review, but rather to articulate evidence from five fields that rarely dialogue with enough density within one and the same university framework: the psychology of well-being, habit formation, emotional intelligence, student well-being in higher education, and whole-university institutional approaches. The validity of the proposal therefore depends on coherence among these fields, the explicit acknowledgment of their limits, and later empirical testing.

A decisive element is work on context. Habits do not depend only on willpower. They are facilitated by clear cues, reduced friction, visible signals, meaningful rewards, and social support. The university must therefore design ecosystems that make the desired habit easier: schedules compatible with sleep, spaces for silence, institutionalized pauses, accompaniment systems, monitoring resources, and healthy digital norms. In a university of well-being, structure supports what discourse proposes.

The transversal role of emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence runs through every phase of habit-based learning. In diagnosis, it helps identify the emotions associated with the problematic behavior: anxiety, shame, laziness, fear, demotivation, or disordered euphoria. In design, it allows anticipation of which inner states will facilitate or sabotage repetition. In practice, it favors the pause before reactive automatism. In follow-up, it makes possible a compassionate and precise reading of the process of change.

For that reason, each habit pathway would incorporate emotional intelligence tools: brief self-perception scales, diaries of emotional triggers, feedback conversations, specific emotional language, and regulation practices. The aim is to prevent students from interpreting every interruption

of a habit as a sign of diminished personal worth. The process should become an opportunity for self-knowledge rather than a new source of guilt.

This integration is essential for genuinely transformative teaching. A habit can be taught technically, but if the emotional landscape surrounding it is not understood, adherence weakens. The university therefore does not merely train executors of routines; it forms subjects capable of understanding and governing themselves with humanity.

Pedagogical formula of the model

Transformative learning = knowledge + practice + emotion + repetition + reflection + feedback + transfer

This formula synthesizes the proposed pedagogy. Knowledge offers understanding; practice engages the body; emotion supplies energy and meaning; repetition stabilizes; reflection turns experience into learning; feedback corrects biases and opens improvement; and transfer guarantees that what is acquired does not remain trapped within one subject, but becomes integrated into life.

Curricular design and academic structure

In curricular terms, the University of Happiness and Well-Being could be organized around undergraduate degrees, graduate programs, certificates, and micro-credentials. Regardless of format, however, the design should respect three layers. The first is foundational: all students complete a common core in literacy across the eight pillars of well-being. The second is deepening: each student or professional chooses specialized pathways. The third is integration: life projects, community intervention, applied research, or organizational innovation in which the transfer of competencies is demonstrated. The common core could include subjects such as Scientific Foundations of Well-Being, Psychology of Habit, Applied Emotional Intelligence, Financial Well-Being, Digital Well-Being, Culture of Rest, Ethics and Meaning, Community Life and Citizenship, and Life and Career Design. Each subject would combine theory, guided practice, and a laboratory of associated habits.

The deepening layer would make it possible to build minors or specializations such as organizational well-being, emotional education, leadership with well-being, digital well-being, relational health, finance for life, or pedagogies of human flourishing. In this way, the university would become both a center for personal development and a training ground for professionals capable of designing well-being environments in companies, schools, public administrations, and communities.

The integration layer would be crucial for academic quality. Students would not only pass content; they would have to show that they can turn it into a viable proposal. They might design a well-being plan for a school, a healthy habits program for an organization, an intervention to reduce digital overload, or a university well-being observatory. Thus, happiness and well-being would cease to be abstract ideas and become social and professional impact.

Table 5. Proposed curricular architecture

Training layer	Objective	Content	Final evidence
Foundational	Master the language of holistic well-being	Eight schools, habits, emotional intelligence, digital and financial well-being	Personal well-being portfolio
Deepening	Specialize in an applied area	Minors, electives, seminars, and supervised practice	Specialization project

Integration	Transfer learning to real contexts	Applied research, intervention, and impact evaluation	Final project / intervention
Continuity	Sustain learning across the lifespan	Micro-credentials and alumni community	Personal continuity plan

Assessment of learning and measurement of impact

A university that aspires to teach well-being seriously must solve a major methodological challenge: how to assess without trivializing. It is not enough to ask whether the student feels better; it is necessary to measure knowledge, behavior, competency, well-being outcomes, and contextual transfer by integrating validated self-reports, structured observation, and longitudinal data (Diener et al., 1985; Tennant et al., 2007; World Health Organization, 2024b).

At the learning level, assessment should include three levels. First, knowledge: understanding of concepts, models, and scientific evidence. Second, behavioral incorporation: degree of adherence to habits and quality of observed behaviors. Third, transferred competency: the ability to apply what has been learned in personal, group, and professional contexts. These levels can be assessed through reasoned examinations, practice diaries, rubrics, observations, peer-assessment, self-assessment, and intervention projects.

At the institutional level, the university should have a well-being observatory capable of monitoring aggregate indicators: life satisfaction, sense of meaning, sleep quality, emotional well-being, social support, perceived financial security, digital overload, academic retention, student engagement, and relational climate. The goal would not be to surveil students, but to help the institution learn whether the ecosystem it offers genuinely improves the lives of those who inhabit it.

An important feature of the model is that measurement is not oriented only toward detecting deficits, but also toward capturing progress. The observatory would make it possible to establish baselines, track cohorts, compare programs, evaluate interventions, and generate publishable knowledge. In that way, the university would become a living laboratory of holistic well-being, with both formative and research capacity.

For such measurement to be publishable in high-impact outlets, the observatory should work with a staged logic of validity: content validity for each dimension; internal consistency of scales or subscales; convergent and discriminant validity in relation to established instruments; temporal stability where appropriate; and sensitivity to change in longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs. This pathway would make it possible to distinguish more clearly which part of the effect belongs to the institutional ecosystem, which to habit adherence, and which to prior student differences.

It should also be stressed that assessment must be ethical. Personal information, especially in emotional, financial, or digital dimensions, requires informed consent, confidentiality, data protection, and clear limits of use. A university of well-being cannot reproduce invasive logics in the name of care. It must show that dignity is also protected in the very way it measures.

Progress rubrics: from habit to competency

To make assessment operational, the model proposes working with four levels of rubrics: initial,

emerging, consistent, and transferred. At the initial level, the person understands the relevance of the habit but barely enacts it. At the emerging level, the habit is practiced irregularly and depends on external reminders. At the consistent level, the behavior is maintained with relative stability in foreseeable contexts. At the transferred level, the competency appears autonomously across diverse scenarios and has observable impact on one's own or others' well-being.

This system has a notable pedagogical advantage: it shifts the focus from a single grade to a trajectory. Students see that growth is not binary but progressive. It also allows institutions to recognize forms of development that remain invisible in classical assessment models, such as sustained improvement in emotional regulation, financial organization, or digital hygiene.

Table 6. General assessment matrix

Level	Definition	Behavioral frequency	Type of evidence
Initial	Understands relevance but does not sustain stable practice	Low	Self-diagnosis and baseline
Emerging	Practices with intention, though discontinuously	Intermittent	Logbook and tutorial follow-up
Consistent	Sustains practice in ordinary contexts	Medium-high	Rubric, observation, and self-assessment
Transferred	Generalizes the competency to diverse contexts	High and autonomous	Applied project, 360 feedback

Table 7. Methodological triangulation matrix

Level of evidence	Possible tools	What it captures	Risk if used alone
Self-report	WHO-5, SWLS, WEMWBS, PERMA-Profiler	Subjective perception of change	Social desirability bias
Habits	SRHI, diaries, checklists, tracking apps	Behavioral frequency and stability	Reactivity and recording fatigue
Rubrics	Teacher observation and tutoring	Observable competencies	Variability across evaluators
Narratives	Portfolios, interviews, logs	Meaning, coherence, and transfer	Lower statistical comparability
Contextual data	Attendance, retention, participation, engagement	Institutional and academic impact	Confusing correlation with causality

Recommended instruments and triangulation strategy

The proposal, however, should not fall into instrument-centrism. Some dimensions - such as transcendence, ethical coherence, or meaning - require narrative and qualitative methods in addition to Likert-type scales. For that reason, the optimal assessment system is multimethod: scales to capture average change, diaries to capture process, interviews to capture meaning, and performance products to capture transfer.

For general well-being and mental well-being, widely used instruments such as the Satisfaction With Life Scale, WEMWBS, or the WHO-5 may be employed; for flourishing and broader positive dimensions, the PERMA-Profiler; for habit strength, the Self-Report Habit Index; and for academic engagement, instruments derived from the UWES-S or related study engagement frameworks (Diener et al., 1985; Tennant et al., 2007; Butler & Kern, 2016; Verplanken & Orbell, 2003; Schaufeli et al., 2002; World Health Organization, 2024b).

A paper with Q1 aspirations cannot limit itself to stating that the model is measurable; it must show with which instruments it could be operationalized. Accordingly, a triangulation strategy is proposed that combines validated self-reports, teacher rubrics, habit records, structured observation, portfolios, and, where ethically appropriate, non-intrusive digital or biometric data. The aim is not to replace the subjective nature of well-being, but to complement it with convergent evidence.

From the perspective of validation, the methodological agenda should test internal consistency, convergent and discriminant validity, factorial structure, sensitivity to change, and invariance across sex, academic stage, study modality, and cultural context before stable relative weights among dimensions are claimed. Only after that pathway would it make sense to estimate differential configurations of the model with stronger generalizable ambition.

Governance, culture, and university ecosystem

The success of this model does not depend only on curriculum. A university of well-being may fail if it teaches healthy habits in the classroom while simultaneously generating an organizational culture that is toxic, bureaucratic, or incoherent. Governance must therefore be congruent with mission. Well-being is not communicated only through slogans; it is embodied in institutional decisions.

This implies revising schedules, workloads, assessment systems, physical spaces, accompaniment policies, digital uses, leadership styles, and the relationship between excellence and care. A university of well-being does not trivialize demand, but neither does it glorify exhaustion. It seeks a high culture of responsibility compatible with rest, humanity, and meaning.

Governance should include a well-being council with academic, student, and professional representation; an institutional observatory; holistic advising; accompaniment protocols; and alliances with social organizations and companies that make it possible to take the model beyond the campus. Likewise, faculty would require specific training in emotional intelligence, habit pedagogy, and competency-based assessment so as not to reproduce transmissive models incompatible with the proposal.

Institutional culture would itself become an educational content. Students learn as much from atmosphere as from the syllabus. If they encounter listening, coherence, clarity, respect, and healthy structures, they internalize that well-being is possible without renouncing excellence. If they encounter chaos, cynicism, or violence, the explicit curriculum loses credibility.

Research lines and social projection

The University of Happiness and Well-Being should not limit itself to teaching a model; it should also investigate it rigorously. This opens a scientific agenda of considerable value: scale validation, longitudinal studies of habits, mediation analyses between emotional intelligence and well-being, comparisons across cohorts, cross-cultural adaptations, and impact evaluations regarding performance, retention, employability, and mental health (Worsley et al., 2022; Li, 2025; Zhao et al., 2025).

The model's social projection would be equally relevant. Programs could be adapted to schools, companies, public administrations, health organizations, associations, and vulnerable communities.

The university would thus function as a transfer hub: it would produce not only graduates, but also methodologies, observatories, consultancies, certifications, and applicable evidence aimed at improving collective well-being.

At a time of growing concern about mental health, social fatigue, and the effects of digitalization, such an institution could occupy a strategic place. Its contribution would be twofold: preventive, by teaching resources before malaise becomes chronic; and promotional, by developing capacities for flourishing, meaning, and responsible citizenship.

Discussion

The proposal advanced here is located at the intersection of the psychology of well-being, university pedagogy, socio-emotional education, and institutional design. Its principal strength is integration. Unlike partial models that treat well-being as a complementary workshop, this university turns it into a structural axis. Unlike excessively abstract approaches, it translates well-being into habits, behaviors, competencies, and assessment systems. Unlike discourses of happiness detached from reality, it ties them to evidence and to a multidimensional architecture.

Another important strength is the model's ability to respond to the actual needs of the present. It does not restrict itself to body, mind, and emotions, but incorporates profession, finances, and technology as unavoidable dimensions of contemporary well-being. This expansion is particularly pertinent because many current forms of suffering do not arise from a single source, but from the interaction among cognitive overload, economic precarity, emotional dysregulation, hyperconnectivity, and loss of meaning.

The model nevertheless faces challenges. The first is the risk of simplification. Any formula of well-being runs the danger of appearing more exact than it really is. For that reason, the eight pillars must be understood as an orienting framework rather than as a closed algorithm. The second challenge is institutional implementation: changing culture, time structures, incentives, and pedagogies requires leadership, resources, and patience. The third challenge is methodological: some dimensions are relatively easy to measure, while others - such as meaning or relational quality - require more delicate instruments and qualitative readings.

There is also an ethical challenge. A university of well-being cannot become a device of self-optimization at the exclusive service of productivity. Its horizon must be human dignity and holistic flourishing, not the manufacture of subjects who are permanently available, positive, and efficient. In this sense, the dimension of transcendence and the critique of hyper-demand are necessary safeguards against the possible instrumentalization of the discourse of well-being.

Despite these limits, the model possesses considerable theoretical and applied fertility. It enables a redesign of the university experience, the generation of research, the construction of institutional culture, and a constructive answer to the malaise of the age. Its central hypothesis - that sustainable happiness can be taught indirectly through the habitual strengthening of eight dimensions of well-being - offers a promising basis for future empirical validation and curricular development.

Scientific strengths of the model

The first strength of the model is its integrative capacity. Unlike approaches centered on a single

component of well-being, the proposal connects hedonic, eudaimonic, relational, behavioral, and institutional dimensions. The second strength is its pedagogical translatability: it does not merely describe what living well means, but organizes how a university might teach, assess, and sustain it. The third is its compatibility with the contemporary literature on student well-being, engagement, and positive higher education without being absorbed by any one of those traditions.

The proposal also dialogues with two lines of high interest in recent literature. On the one hand, whole-university approaches show that student well-being improves when curriculum, culture, services, and institutional leadership cease to operate in silos and are coordinated as an ecosystem (Bannigan et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2025). On the other hand, the study demands-resources framework reminds us that academic contexts can act simultaneously as a source of load and of protection, which justifies the model's inclusion not only of individual habits, but also ecological coherence, assessment design, and institutional resources (Lesener et al., 2020).

Limitations and interpretive cautions

An additional caution concerns the risk of normativity. Any pedagogy of well-being may slide toward discourses of self-optimization or excessive individual responsibility. The model preserves legitimacy only if it remains tied to an ethics of care, educational justice, and the consideration of structural conditions such as precarity, inequality, prior mental health, and digital ecologies. Finally, some dimensions - especially transcendence and professional well-being - will require cultural and semantic adaptation to avoid narrow or ideological readings.

The principal limitation of the article is its conceptual nature. Although the manuscript is grounded in established and recent literature, it does not yet present original empirical data on psychometric validation, intervention efficacy, or cross-cultural stability of the model. Accordingly, the equation of happiness must be read as a heuristic formalization rather than as a closed mathematical law. Likewise, the assignment of relative weights among dimensions cannot be presumed universal; it must be tested empirically according to contexts, ages, and student trajectories.

Research agenda for empirical validation

At the same time, it will be especially fruitful to explore mediating mechanisms. Among the most plausible are emotional intelligence, belonging, clarity of purpose, and perceived self-efficacy. It will also be important to analyze the differential contribution of financial and digital well-being, given their potential systemic effect in contemporary student life. Such an agenda would not only increase the model's robustness; it would also allow refinement, reduction of overlaps, and the transformation of the framework into an internationally replicable proposal.

To place this framework within the high-impact international conversation, the empirical pathway should advance in four stages. First: the construction or adaptation of a composite eight-dimensional holistic well-being scale, followed by examination of its structure through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and multigroup invariance testing. Second: longitudinal studies on habit adherence and well-being using growth, mediation, and cross-lagged models. Third: trials or quasi-experimental designs comparing cohorts exposed to the model with appropriate control groups. Fourth:

institutional studies examining the effect of university ecological coherence—schedules, advising, culture, assessment, and resources—on student outcomes.

Conclusions

The University of Happiness and Well-Being formulated in this article may be understood as a conceptual framework for reordering the university mission from the perspective of holistic well-being without renouncing academic rigor or empirical demand. Its principal contribution does not lie in idealizing happiness, but in proposing a pedagogical and institutional architecture that can be taught, assessed, and put to the test.

The model of the eight pillars offers an operational taxonomy broad enough to capture the complexity of contemporary life and concrete enough to be translated into curriculum, habits, assessment, and university governance. Its differential value lies in connecting theories of well-being, habit-based learning, emotional intelligence, transferable competencies, and institutional design within a single proposal.

Consequently, the future relevance of the model will depend less on rhetorical power than on progressive validation: the quality of its instruments, the consistency of its effects, its cultural adaptability, and its capacity for implementation in real university ecosystems. If those conditions are met, the proposal could contribute substantially to an international agenda of higher education oriented toward holistic well-being and human flourishing.

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Appendix A. Expanded matrix of micro-habits by school

To demonstrate the pedagogical operability of the model, this appendix provides an expanded matrix of micro-habits. A micro-habit is defined here as a deliberately small, clear, and repeatable behavior designed to reduce entry friction and favor continuity over time. Its key value lies not in its initial magnitude, but in its capacity to become a gateway to more complex routines.

The micro-habit approach is especially suitable for higher education because it allows institutions to accompany heterogeneous contexts. A student with heavy academic load, simultaneous work, or emotional fragility may begin with realistic changes without being excluded by maximalist goals. From this perspective, progress is designed to be sustainable. A small successful habit is worth more than a grand abandoned purpose.

Each school can organize its pathways around basic micro-habits, consolidation micro-habits, and transfer micro-habits. The basic ones aim at initial acquisition; the consolidation ones at stability; and the transfer ones at generalization across different scenarios. This architecture facilitates tutoring, gradual assessment, and personalization of the learning process.

Table A1. Examples of micro-habits by level of complexity

School	Basic micro-habit	Consolidation micro-habit	Transfer micro-habit
Body	Go to sleep 15 minutes earlier than the previous week	Walk 20 minutes a day on 5 days per week	Design a personal energy plan for high-demand weeks
Thought	Read for 10 minutes without a phone nearby	Daily 45-minute deep-focus blocks	Apply decision and review protocols in complex projects
Emotions	Name one emotion each day with precision	Practice a breathing pause before responding under tension	Facilitate emotionally difficult conversations with regulation
Transcendence	Three minutes of silence at the start of the day	Weekly review of purpose and coherence	Link the academic plan with a life and service project
Relationships	Send one genuine expression of gratitude each week	Sustain one quality conversation without screens	Coordinate a cooperative project with explicit relational norms
Career and purpose	Plan three priorities per day	Weekly review of progress and learning	Develop a personal productivity system aligned with well-being
Finances	Record every expense for seven days	Weekly budget and automatic saving	Make economic decisions based on annual goals
Digital well-being	First 30 minutes of the day without social media	Two daily windows for batched notifications	Design a personal digital ecology aligned with well-being goals

This matrix makes visible another important feature of the model: the eight schools are not isolated compartments. A micro-habit in technology may improve sleep; a financial micro-habit may reduce anxiety; an emotional micro-habit may raise the quality of relationships and work. The university must therefore teach not only specific habits, but also the systemic connections among habits.

The model also supports differentiated trajectories. One student may begin the semester by prioritizing digital habits and sleep; another, emotional regulation and purpose; another, financial stability and community life. The common structure does not prevent personalization; on the contrary, it makes personalization more precise.

Appendix B. Roadmap for institutional implementation

Implementing a university of this kind requires a gradual strategy. Attempting to deploy all eight schools with their full complexity from day one may generate organizational resistance or premature exhaustion. A four-phase roadmap is therefore proposed: design, pilot, expansion, and consolidation.

During the design phase, the institution defines its conceptual framework, selects indicators, forms a core team, and adapts the model to its context. Not all universities start from the same point: some will have strengths in mental health, others in pedagogical innovation, others in employability or community culture. The first principle is to diagnose before imposing.

The pilot phase should focus on a reduced number of schools, preferably those with the greatest systemic leverage, such as body, emotions, and technology. This phase makes it possible to examine adherence, acceptance, workload, the feasibility of assessment, and unintended effects. The pilot must last long enough to observe continuity of habits rather than mere initial enthusiasm.

The expansion phase progressively incorporates the remaining schools, trains additional faculty, integrates the model into core subjects, and creates communities of practice among students, tutors, and academic leaders. Finally, the consolidation phase institutionalizes culture through an observatory, research lines, certifications, external alliances, and mechanisms of continuous improvement.

One critical factor of success will be institutional communication. The proposal must be presented rigorously, avoiding two risks: appearing as a motivational project without scientific density or, on the contrary, as a bureaucratic layer added to already saturated structures. The right narrative is that of a university more intelligent about human life, not simply a kinder university.

Table B1. Phases for implementing the model

Phase	Objectives	Key actions	Risks to monitor
Design	Define the framework, indicators, and governance	Diagnosis, core team, curricular map	Excess abstraction, unprioritized ambition
Pilot	Test at small scale	Three initial schools, intensive follow-up, evaluation	Participant fatigue, premature conclusions
Expansion	Scale with coherence	Faculty training, tutoring, curricular integration	Growth without culture, heterogeneity of quality
Consolidation	Institutionalize and transfer	Observatory, research, alliances, certification	Bureaucratization, loss of human focus

Appendix C. Research model for empirical validation

For the proposal to move from the conceptual plane to the scientific-applied one, it requires a cumulative research program. A first step would be to design and validate an Eight-Pillar Well-Being Index composed of subscales for body, thought, emotions, transcendence, relationships and community, career and purpose, finances, and digital well-being. The purpose would not be to simplify the complexity of life, but to provide a useful tool for longitudinal monitoring and institutional intervention.

At a second stage, quasi-experimental studies could compare groups of students exposed to the model with control groups or previous cohorts. Dependent variables would include subjective well-being, psychological well-being, academic engagement, retention, perceived meaning, emotional self-regulation, perceived financial stress, and digital overload. Qualitative measures should also be added to capture narrative, identity, and relational changes that cannot be summarized by scales alone.

A third line of research would analyze mediation

and moderation mechanisms. For example: does emotional intelligence mediate the relationship between habits and well-being? Does social support moderate adherence to micro-habits? Does the relative weight of each pillar vary according to age, professional context, or prior vulnerability? Such questions would allow refinement of the model and prevent its uniform and indiscriminate application.

The university itself could become an international platform for collaborative research, generating comparable data across countries and contexts. This would increase the scientific robustness of the project and permit the model to evolve continuously through evidence-informed practice.

Indicative hypotheses

H1: Participation in educational programs based on the eight-pillar model of well-being will be associated with significant increases in holistic well-being and life satisfaction.

H2: Adherence to micro-habits will mediate the relationship between curricular exposure and improved well-being.

H3: Emotional intelligence will act as a mediating variable and a facilitator of transfer from habits to competencies.

H4: Improvements in financial and digital well-being will partially reduce perceived stress load and increase academic engagement.

H5: Students with higher perceived meaning and belonging will show more stable trajectories of behavioral adherence.

Appendix D. Example of an integrative semester

By way of illustration, an integrative semester could be organized across fifteen weeks. Weeks 1 and 2 would be devoted to baseline assessment, conceptual literacy, and the design of personal goals. Weeks 3 to 6 would focus on body, emotions, and technology because these dimensions have immediate impact on attention, energy, and regulation. Weeks 7 to 10 would deepen thought, bonding, and finances. Weeks 11 to 13 would address purpose and profession. Weeks 14 and 15 would be devoted to integration, presentation of results, and continuity planning.

Each week would combine an academic session, a guided practice, a brief record, a tutorial or peer conversation, and one micro-evidence. The goal would not be saturation, but accompaniment. The semester would culminate in an integrative portfolio in which each student documented changes, obstacles, learning, personal data, and future projection. Such a structure would help demonstrate that happiness and well-being can be taught with the same rigor applied to other university competencies.

Appendix E. Professional and social applications of the model

Although this article has focused on university design, the model of the eight pillars has clear potential for transfer to other social systems. Its value lies not only in academic architecture, but also in offering a shared language for diagnosing, intervening in, and assessing well-being in a holistic way. In that sense, the proposed university can serve as a seedbed for professionals specialized in creating cultures of well-being wherever fragmentation, chronic stress, or disorientation currently predominate.

In the corporate sphere, the model could be translated into programs of organizational well-being, leadership with emotional intelligence, burnout prevention, healthy digital ecologies, and basic finan-

cial literacy for workforces. In education, it would support the construction of schools in which well-being is not extracurricular but a visible pedagogical objective. In health settings, it would facilitate preventive interventions centered on habit adherence, self-care, and meaning. In public administrations, it would contribute criteria for community well-being policies and the design of more humane services.

Its social potential is especially relevant in contexts of vulnerability. Many people do not fail because they lack talent, but because they lack basic tools for sustaining life: sleeping, deciding, regulating themselves, planning, asking for help, managing resources, or disconnecting from noise. A university that researches and teaches these competencies can become an agent of equity because it restores capacity where context has weakened it.

The model's international projection is also promising. The eight pillars constitute a grammar that is intelligible across diverse cultures, provided that they are adapted with contextual sensitivity. This makes it possible to imagine academic networks, chairs, observatories, and international certifications in well-being, happiness, habits, emotional intelligence, and human flourishing. Strategically, the university would not only educate students; it could also train trainers, advisors, researchers, and leaders of cultural transformation.

Consequently, the University of Happiness and Well-Being should not be seen merely as one more institution within the educational ecosystem, but as a possible node of civilizational innovation. Its underlying question is profoundly simple and, at the same time, revolutionary: what would happen if higher education explicitly assumed that teaching people how to live well is an essential part of its mission?

Table E1. Possible outputs and transfer domains

Domain	Dominant need	Application of the model	Emerging professional profile
Business	Stress, burnout, low relational quality	Programs on habits, leadership, and digital well-being	Organizational well-being consultant
School	Emotional overload and a strained school climate	SEL curricula and well-being habits	Educational well-being designer
Health	Insufficient adherence and fragile self-care	Interventions on habits and meaning	Specialist in holistic health promotion
Public sector	Fragmented policies and low humanization	Observatories and community programs	Public well-being manager
Community	Loneliness, exclusion, vulnerability	Life schools, mentoring, and social support	Community flourishing facilitator