

Review

“GOD LOVES A JOYFUL TEACHER” – AND SO DO PUPILS

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What has joy have to do with teaching and learning? This article reviews the concept of joy of learning. The purpose is to discuss the emergence of joy in learning situations and teachers' opportunities to create a learning atmosphere in which joy is present. As the conclusion, pupils' self-directed learning and teachers' self-esteem are considered the key factors of learning and well-being in pupils in numerous ways.

Key words: joy, joy of learning, learning, teaching, self-directed learning.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of joy to learning is a well-established notion. In Finland, Haavio (1954) has analyzed the relationship between joyfulness and learning from a historical perspective because already Augustine's¹ emphasized the significance of joyful teaching —“God loves a joyful teacher” and “let us all teach with joy”—in his historical analysis of the relationship between joyfulness and learning. Although, for example, the recent results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have shown the excellence of the Finnish school system and teacher training (Lavonen and Laaksonen, 2009), the fact that pupils do not enjoy being at school has aroused concern in Finland already for two decades (Ahonen, 2005). As Finnish educationalists, we are concerned about this phenomenon and probably share the concern with our international colleagues as well; pupils' maladjustment is not just Finland's problem (e.g., Hargreaves et al. 2009; Kashdan and Yuen, 2007). On the other hand, emotions,

contentment, and experiences of joy at school are topical research themes in Finland (Juurikkala, 2008; Korpinen, 2007a; 2007b) and abroad (Black, 2008; Melanson, 2007).

This article reviews viewpoints to joy in schooling. It leans on a study on emotions at school, the joy of learning as the main concept (Rantala, 2005). Furthermore, we wanted to contribute the teacher-researcher's voice in the educational discourse to support those ordinary teachers who does not get their voices heard easily (e.g., Malin, 2003). How to find joy from the classroom based on the idea that one of the features of good teacher hood is optimism (see also Huebner et al., 2009; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012)? In order to be able to teach with joy—as presented, for example, by Haavio (1954)—the teacher has to have courage, boldness, self-esteem, and self-knowledge (Uusiautti and Määttä, 2013).

The purpose of this article is to illustrate the manifestation of joy of learning through select viewpoints: Self-directed learning can be seen as the core of active joy to possibly emerge (Rantala, 2005). However, self-directed learning environment in classroom requires

¹ Augustine, also known as Saint Augustine or Saint Austin, lived in 13 November 354 – 28 August 430 and was an early Christian theologian and philosopher.

something from the teacher too. The teacher's self-esteem is always related with educational optimism which lays the foundation for the respect the teacher expresses toward pupils. Educational optimism and good self-esteem are a teacher's tools for achieving learning goals. The teacher can influence this process with his or her action and, first and foremost, with positive and encouraging interaction. The core factor of a teacher's work is strong self-esteem. Teachers who genuinely use their personality at work enable authentic interaction and can provide personalized support for pupils. As the classroom forms a social learning environment, a teacher who has a positive self-image can create encouraging atmosphere in the classroom (Korpinen, 1996; Määttä and Uusiautti, 2012). Joy and self-esteem go hand in hand; this will be discussed in detail in the Conclusion.

Joy brings order in life

Already Aristotle emphasized that all human action pursue the experience of joy (Aristotle, 1981). Indeed, joy represents the prototype of the family of positive emotions that has been studied and analyzed increasingly (e.g., Isen, 2001; 2003). The philosopher of joy, Spinoza, regards joy and sorrow as the basis of all feelings (Spinoza, 1677/1994). Spinoza considers joy as the transition toward greater perfection. Joy appears as self-appreciation, hope, trust, recognition, and peace of mind (see also Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). The most important form of joy is, however, active joy that is significantly related to voluntary action and active thinking (Pietarinen, 2001).

Despite all fancy dreams of youth, fame, and richness, the core of these dreams is that we want them to make us happy and joyful. It is notable that materialistic well-being and national equilibrium do not automatically increase joy unlike one would first think (see Polak and McCullough, 2006; Twenge, 2006). In the midst of among tragedies and chaos, people more often define themselves happy rather than sad because joy can also be used as defense² (Varila and Viholainen, 2000).

Joy can be defined as a positive basic emotion. Positive emotions are the basis of order and well-being (Isokorpi and Viitanen, 2001; Varila and Viholainen,

2000). Happiness, joy, and contentment create harmony and order, and provide strength to encounter other people (Isokorpi and Viitanen, 2001).

Joyful Personality

Joy can also be analyzed as an element of human personality, and one way of approaching the wide field of emotions has been to connect emotions with temperament and moods (Rosenberg, 1998). Keltikangas-Järvinen (2004a) defines temperament into innate difference that is connected with the personal way of reacting. A human being's personality develops within the interaction between environment and innate temperament. Temperament partly explains emotional experiences, which means that personal features are significant, for example, when experiencing joy. Negative and positive emotions emerge in different situations, and various temperaments explain why people differ from each other when experiencing these emotional states. Temperament defines how people control emotions and how they adjust to different situations (Puttonen, 2004).

Therefore, people differ also by their ability to experience joy. Some people have the ability, but that alone does not define what brings joy, and how and when one rejoices (Varila and Viholainen, 2000). For example, a healthy, extrovert, self-respecting and religious human being reports more likely experiences of joy and happiness than others (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). People's cognitive features, resources, and personality also influence on the experience of joy of work (Varila and Viholainen, 2000). While some people experience momentary joy, others perceive joy through their life choices. For some, joy means bubbling and unruly emotions whereas others appreciate calm and steady feelings of joy. Likewise, some people experience joy more easily than others. Although people differ in their experiences and expressions of joy, there are also situations that cause joy to everyone (Varila and Viholainen, 2000).

The Importance of Joy in Learning Situations

Joy is worth courting in learning situations and at school because joy has plenty of consequences improving the quality of learning both at the individual and communal level (Seligman et al., 2009). Often it is difficult, downright impossible, to distinguish individual benefits from communal benefits; when joy affects positively someone's learning and working, the situation has positive consequences to the whole community. Joy spreads. Joy provides strength to a learner to face and surpass difficult situations. Vitality and optimism can be

² Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) did an experiment that was related to cognitive dissonance. The test persons were paid for participating in a boring experiment. The other group was paid well whereas the other had only a minimal reward. Those who had lesser money experienced the test less boring because the little reward caused the cognitive dissonance, a state of imbalance. These participants tried to reach balance by trying to convince themselves that the test was more interesting than it actually was (Varila and Viholainen, 2000).

produced by oneself with active reflection, which makes the experience of joy desirable to reach over and over again. Learners are likely to commit themselves to communities and learning situations that provide them with experiences of joy. Thus, joy connects learners with their learning processes and learning situations. The feeling of joy is a comprehensive and integrating emotion during which mutual, communal goals can be reached faster. Joy is a positive emotion that develops the individual person and the community as it enhances social interaction (Rantala, 2005).

However, it is way too black-and-white to argue that positive emotions always enhance learning and that negative emotions always hinder learning. Negative emotions can also function as catalysts in learning situations helping the learner to focus his or her attention to the content of learning. Emotional experiences influence also remembering that can cut both ways. Because emotional experiences are important to a learner, he or she surely remembers them. In these cases, learning can be hindered if the experience includes previous unpleasant learning experiences³ (Isokorpi and Viitanen, 2001).

Likewise, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) emphasizes the dualistic feature of emotions: they can be positive and charming or negative and compelling. Emotions help us make decisions that are good for us. Certain emotions can function as negative and positive factors in learning processes. For example, competitiveness is a complex problem in relation to learning: in some situations activates and maintains action but for some people it can hinder or stop action. Positive emotions are mainly beneficial for learning and act as catalysts (Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter, 2003; Hakkarainen et al., 2004; Isokorpi and Viitanen, 2001; Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2002; Meyer and Turner, 2002). The importance of joy in a learning situation is the most clearly seen when the situation lacks it.

Autonomous Action Produces Joy

One feature of action that produces joy is the opportunity to act autonomously, in a *self-directed* manner (Knowles, 1975; see also Candy, 2004). School work is perceived meaningful and encouraging when a learner has dreams and goals toward which he or she pursues; finding tasks

meaningful is crucial for the experience of joy. According to self-determination theory (SDT), people are by nature active and self-motivated, curious and interested, vital and eager to succeed (Deci and Ryan, 2008) and therefore, self-determination is linked with the feeling of joy: performing well in meaningful tasks is personally satisfying and rewarding (see also Uusiautti, 2013). Small goals and achievements function as catalysts when proceeding toward bigger goals. Instead of singular learning projects, learning projects should be viewed as a series of consequent functions. Dividing a task into a series of subsequent functions serves the perceived meaningfulness of a learning project. This leads closer to higher-level goals because it increases the learner's self-direction (cf. Ryan and Deci, 2000). Moreover, the harvest is not reaped at once but the meaning becomes realized in the long run (Varila and Viholainen, 2000).

The proverbs such as "no pain, no gain" or "all is well that ends well" seem to be connected with the experience of joy of learning. The joy of learning is experienced at school more likely after a long-term effort (Rantala, 2005). Active joy that emerges from one's own action can be cognitive in nature and thus joy has emerged as a result of one's persistent effort (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Varila and Viholainen, 2000). Joy that results from one's active action strengthens the sense of self-direction. Self-direction is one of the meta-cognitive processes through which the learner can direct and regulate his or her action. What matters is the series of learning projects following the emergence of a skill. The series of learning projects does not always include similar learnable skills but what is crucial is the sense of self-direction produced by the series (Varila and Viholainen, 2000).

Self-direction is a criterion of good learning. Self-directed pupils participate in the planning, achieving, and evaluating of their own learning goals (Sahlberg and Leppilampi, 1994; Pintrich, 2003). The development of pupils' self-direction can be supported with scaffolding (Bliss, Askew, and Mcrae, 1996). The term "scaffolding" relates to guidance of learning and emphasizes the guide's role as the supporter of thinking and learning processes. The guide involves in the learning process when a pupil's skills are not good enough to have a task performed well (Järvelä and Salovaara, 1998). Scaffolding has been studied especially in the contexts of creating modern learning environments (Chen et al., 2003; Roschelle and Pea, 1999). Scaffolding encourages the learner toward self-directed learning (Chen et al., 2003). Scaffolding allows pupils to perform a task first assisted after which they can perform it independently. According to Egberg (2003), learners' abilities develop when they are given more and more challenging as their skills develop. Scaffolding support learners until they have sufficient skills for performing the task independently (Larkin, 2001). Then, learners have the

³ In learning processes, classic conditioning is important when it comes to the experience of joy. If the learning environment, for example during a math lesson, a pupil becomes disappointed too many times, the pupil will draw a negative picture of mathematics (Varila and Viholainen, 2000).

possibility of acting at the limits of their talents, because once they have learned the strategies, they can reach the potential goals that they could not aspire without the necessary skills provided by guidance. However, the goal must be reachable (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Actually, the concept of self-directed learning is usually connected with adult education (Merriam, 2001; Varila and Viholainen, 2000). Still, self-direction is a feature that develops and that can be learned. Therefore, the concept of self-direction and self-directed learning must be considered already in elementary education. Other pupils are more self-directed than others, which means that teachers have to notice various needs for guidance in various pupils (Järvelä and Salovaara, 1998). Varila and Viholainen (2000) warn about viewing the concept of self-direction just through two opposite dimensions that define a learner either unskillful, helpless, and teachable or responsible, committed, and active with no need for a teacher's guidance. Self-directed learning is not learning without the teacher's support. The opposite of self-directed learning is a learning process directed from outside where someone else decides the goals of learning and teaching and the ways the goals can be achieved (Varila and Viholainen, 2000).

In addition, Sahlberg and Leppilampi (1994) combine good and efficient learning with the concept of self-direction. Likewise, Varila and Viholainen (2000) emphasize the meaning of self-direction as the basis of active joy of work, which can be seen similar to the idea of joy of learning. Varila and Viholainen highlight the importance of independent action when discussing features of good work. Work is perceived encouraging and positive when an employee has a chance to participate in planning and evaluation of his or her work (Laubach, 2005; see also Latham and Pinder, 2005)—and this seems to concern learning, too. Although self-directed learning and self-direction are positive phenomena, self-direction must be analyzed critically. According to Varila and Viholainen (2000), the goals of a self-directed employee can resemble the employer's goals. The old proverb says that "He who pays the piper calls the tune". On the other hand, opportunity to participate in planning and realizing the goals increases the employee's positive attitude and commitment, and the same phenomenon occurs in the classroom context among students as well (Rantala, 2005).

Although the concept of self-direction has numerous equivalents, such as autonomous learning (e.g., Chan, 2001), contract learning (e.g., Kasworm, 1983), independent learning (e.g., Moore, 1973), inquiring method (e.g., Healey, 2005), and self-education (e.g., Cleary and Hogan, 2001), a successful learning process leads to a common outcome: self-directed learning process produces a positive emotional experience. Self-directed learning projects involve carefully-planned

evaluation of goals, which means that after the learning process, it will be possible to evaluate how well the goal has been achieved (Varila and Viholainen, 2000). Csikszentmihalyi (1997, 2000) emphasizes clear goals as one of the prerequisites of flow. Goals help communal development too. Isokorpi and Viitanen (2001) view goals as positive, finished actions through which the community develops and becomes more versatile.

Every human-being has the need to rejoice

Because of the numerous, ambiguous concepts and researchers' contradictory viewpoints, the history of emotion research is challenging to analyze (Rantala, 2005; Schutz and Lanehart, 2002). Despite the diverging viewpoints, emotion researchers have agreed upon the spontaneous nature and avoidance of voluntary control (Varila, 2004). People's aspiration toward positive emotional experiences is common to the viewpoints: a negatively perceived experience directs away from a learning situation whereas a positive emotion invites to the situation. Consequently, people increase their energy in order to have more positive emotions in situations they find pleasant (Varila and Viholainen, 2000). Indeed, a human being pursues happiness more than anything and an active aspiration of the sense of well-being is natural to people.

Likewise, children have an innate ability to rejoice. The feeling of joy creates a pedagogically challenging situation because it occurs alongside other activities and is not the goal of learning and teaching as such. Joy of learning is based on persevering working, and it is experienced during or after accomplishing a task. In order to experience and perceive joy, one needs skills that develop by practicing. Joy cannot be given to someone else, but everyone can produce joy. Nor is it possible to plan or schedule joy, but it occurs here and now (Varila and Lehtosaari, 2001).

In addition, joy cannot be produced according to a predetermined plan. It is as impossible as it is to encourage other people to be genuinely joyful. Teachers can predict whether something can bring joy in the classroom, but this also can be prevented by an unforeseen, sudden event (Basom and Frase, 2004). Joy can stay in the classroom for a moment: freedom, surprise, and unpredictability belong to the feeling of joy (Freinet, 1987; Varila and Viholainen, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Feeling joy requires courage

Experiencing joy and creating benign circumstances for

joy require courage from teachers. In this sense, courage means self-esteem, and the ability and willingness to face challenges, feedback, and even criticism (see e.g., Seligman et al., 2005). Self-esteem in work has been named a core feature in satisfaction and performance in any job. When it comes to teachers, Liisa Keltikangas-Järvinen (2004b) has analyzed factors related to good self-esteem and Eira Korpinen (2007a) connected a teacher's self-esteem with creativity. Martti Haavio (1956) did not refer to self-esteem but humbleness that helps teachers to learn from others and develop in their work. The influence of a teacher's self-esteem can be summed into three conclusions:

1. Teachers with poor self-esteem use traditional, teacher-led methods. Teachers with good self-esteem let pupils shine and step aside preferring work methods that support pupils' activity and self-direction. Pupil-centered methods are surprising and despite careful planning, the teacher cannot always be certain what will happen. Teachers with good self-esteem consider unforeseen situations challenges, not threats.

2. Teachers with good self-esteem try to interact with pupils, parents, and colleagues, and favor methods that necessitate abundant interaction. The more challenging task, the more interaction and discussion between the teacher and pupils are needed (Ames, 1992). Teachers often consider interaction with parents the most challenging part of their work. They need good self-esteem to receive feedback, and sometimes critical comments too.

3. If teachers are optimistic about their work, they will appreciate their pupils, too. Teachers believe their pupils can reach their learning goals (e.g., Määttä and Uusiautti, 2012). Teachers who believe in themselves are convinced that they can help their pupils. Difficulties are conquerable, merely just speed bumps, but never obstacles.

If teachers can accept themselves as they are, they become able to accept pupils as they are, with all their strengths and weaknesses (Korpinen, 2007a). Martti Haavio (1954) encouraged teachers to recognize their own flaws with humble minds and be sympathetic to pupils' flaws. Teachers who are equipped with good self-esteem give pupils the opportunity to be active in their own learning processes. Likewise, the pioneering researchers of employee self-esteem, Locke, McClear, and Knight (1996) have noted that "A person with a high self-esteem will view a challenging job as a deserved opportunity which he can master and benefit from, whereas a person with low self-esteem is more likely to view it as an undeserved opportunity or a chance to fail" (p 21).

Self-direction is one of the criterion of good learning and foundation of the joy of learning. Self-directed pupils

can regulate and understand their action. They finish their tasks. Not all pupils are equally self-directed, but they can learn and develop that feature with the teacher's guidance. Teachers can create such atmosphere in their classrooms that allow development of self-direction: laughter and joy liberate teachers to guide pupils in their learning processes.

To conclude, the joy of learning appears differently in every teacher's classroom: there are as many ways to establish such a favorable learning atmosphere as there are teachers. Namely, teacherhood involves more than teaching a school subject and every teacher is a personality. However, teachers have the opportunity to pay attention to students' abilities, cooperative learning settings and doing together without hurry, learning through playing, and providing each student with experiences of success.

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