

Ten theses of the joy of learning at primary schools

Taina Rantala^a and Kaarina Määttä^{b*}

^a*Koskenkylä School, Primary School, Rovaniemi, Finland;* ^b*Faculty of Educational Psychology, University of Lapland, PO Box 122, FI-96101 Rovaniemi, Finland*

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The aim of this paper is to decipher the essence of the joy of learning and the ways to enhance it at school. In the field of educational psychology, research on feelings is lacking, and the little that does exist has focused more on negative rather than positive feelings. The present paper is based on ethnographic and observational research of a Finnish school class ($N = 19$) and the data were collected by videotaping and photographing first- and second-grade pupils (aged 7–8) studying in the school and lessons from the autumn of 2003 until spring 2005. Based on the children's expressions of feelings and experiences, a detailed description of their experiences of joy of learning or lack of it in primary education was comprised by the video data by way of photos ($N = 754$). This method is known as the ethnography of experience. Ten theses of the joy of learning were created from the transcription of pupils' emotional talk and actions that were reflected by previous research. These resulted in 10 conclusions regarding teachers' work, which contained the idea that a teacher could provide circumstances that are favourable to the joy of learning at primary school.

Keywords: the joy of learning; feelings; experiences; ethnography; primary education

1. Introduction

A school is not a desert of emotions. Everyone thinking back to his or her own school history remembers the events of the school world that have been, in some way or another, slanted by joy, shame or pride. A teacher sees a lot of tired students sprawled over their desks and ends up asking him/herself the question – as did the Finnish novelist Kari Hotakainen – ‘When does the fun start?’ At the same time, one working as a teacher notices how feelings of triumph lead students to the road of success in terms of learning. Failures and negative feelings are also significant for learning. A secure school context allows all kinds of emotions to be expressed.

Nevertheless, emotions in the school world have been studied surprisingly little (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002, p. 91; Schutz & Decuir, 2002, p. 125; Schutz & Lanehart, 2002, p. 67). The negative and declining emotions have been more researched than the positive ones. Anxiety, in particular, as an emotion has been a popular research subject between the years 1974 and 2000 (Lagerspetz, 1996, p. 28; Pekrun et al., 2002, p. 91).

*Corresponding author. Email: kaarina.maatta@ulapland.fi

Could one, however, pose the question of whether emotions are even academically credible? And should a school have to be a place in which fun and amusement are at the centre? Should teachers, in addition to their role as educators, police, psychologists and social workers, also be masters of ceremony with the main task of entertaining the students (Rantala, 2005)? Finnish folk wisdom warns of the cry resulting from long-lasting joy. Could joy offer any significant aid to learning?

This paper concentrates on the everyday school and the joy of learning that too frequently occurs as lack of joy. Traditionally, emotions have been kept separate from learning or considered understated (Ford, 1992, pp. 143–144; Lange & Wilenius, 1997; Schutz & DeCuir, 2002, p. 127.) although actual learning in the absence of any contact with the learner's emotional level is not likely to occur (Meyer & Turner, 2002, pp. 107–108; Puolimatka, 2004). Emotions come forward at the beginning of the learning process, because no one is interested in studying worthless matters (Oakley, 1992; Puolimatka, 2004).

This paper addresses the challenge of researching the joy of learning: the emotions in the classroom are being approached by means of ethnography aimed at getting the emotional experiences of the research subject. An ethnographer has conventionally been seen as a maverick that will, in defiance of the dangers, enter the field, return and then tell the world all about their exciting experiences (Gerstl-Pepin & Gunzenhauser, 2002). The research conducted at a school differs from the traditional anthropologic research since school is not an unknown entity. Everyone of us has experienced school. Familiarity is often considered problematic to the reliability of the research. An ethnographer who has school as research subject has to be able to look at the familiar and safe with open eyes (Gordon et al., 2000; Kluwin, Morris, & Clifford, 2004, p. 63).

2. The contextuality of the joy of learning as emotion

The conceptualisation of emotions is challenging as there is the danger of losing a part of the evocative and real emotions when defining them. The concepts might condense and simplify the emotional state described. Neither does the fact that the emotions frequently change and vary, and are transient and fast, make the research of emotions any easier (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003, p. 186; Schutz & DeCuir, 2002, p. 125). An emotion is an abstraction containing conceptions and valuations that we learn as members of our culture.

Still, a researcher has to try to create concepts, models and categories in order to be able to understand emotions despite their diverseness. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2000), if we remember that we are only talking about a concept or a model and ignore that they represent the whole reality, we can avoid rendering ourselves guilty of miscalculation: 'However, as long as one remembers that we are talking about a model and not the real thing, not much harm will be done' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 11).

Traditionally, emotions are approached from biological, psychological and sociological perspectives. A conceptual heterogeneity has branded the research of emotions (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002, p. 69) along with dualism (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997b, p. 18) and polarisation (Lutz & White, 1986, p. 406). Positive emotions are perceived as heroes and are desired, whereas the negative ones are perceived as gatecrashers (Uusitalo, 2005).

In current research, emotions are studied as a part of the culture and context in which they occur (Zimmerman, 1995, pp. 581–596). However, Finnish cultural anthropologist Minna Lahti (1997) warns against considering the emotions as totally cultural states without any biological or evolutionistic elements. The elements of emotional experience are similar all over the world, but emotional experiences are not. Language, social norms and gender influence both the experience and the expression of emotions.

School as a social environment strongly affects the expression of emotions, and thus offers an excellent surrounding for researching the expression of emotions and, above all, for studying the content and regulating the depth of expression. The school does not have students expressing their emotions too overtly or wildly. The school environment tolerates a broad scale of different temperaments (see Keltikangas-Järvinen, 2004). Education does not aim at transforming all students alike but at welding different temperaments in such a way that every student is able to learn and work at school.

3. What is the joy of learning?

The joy of learning is the upper concept that covers all the emotions and emotional states occurring at school (see Barsade, 2002; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994). The joy of learning can be reflected through several neighbouring concepts and theories of learning. In this paper, we lean to the four-field of the joy of work launched by Varila and Viholainen (2000) (see Table 1). According to it, the joy of learning is either passive or active. The passive joy of learning means contentment with the pleasant state. The active joy of learning is a state that results from the students' own effort. The emotion of the joy of learning may be either evanescent or long-lasting. The fast (physiological) joy of learning achieved by active efforts may, for instance, result from quick comprehension of the subject to be learnt. The passive joy of learning that is quick in the physiologic sense may occur totally unexpectedly and spontaneously.

This research focuses particularly on the joy of learning as an emotion that results from the long-lasting and the learner's own active functioning. Surely, the joy of learning does occur after an active and fast pattern, for example as a perception, but especially the active effort enhances the emotion of joy both during the learning process and after the process due to achieved results. Even the emotion of flow does not usually appear after momentary and fast situations; on the contrary, one's own activity and doing is of great importance to achieve flow. Then, also the motivation and engagement are in the central (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1997b).

Table 1. The experience of the joy of learning (Varila & Viholainen, 2000, p. 67).

The quality of one's own action	The velocity of the emotional experience	
	Cognitive, slowly progressive	Physiological, quick experience
Active	The emotion of achievement that results from persistent work	The emotion of achievement that results from sudden and surprising success
Passive	The satisfying learning situation-related factors of which one has not participated in producing	The learner's immediate reaction issued by an external factor beyond one's own control

The passive forms of experiencing joy are more infrequent (Varila & Viholainen, 2000, pp. 123–129). An example of the passive and slow joy of learning would be a learner's joy of the other learner's success, whereas, the malicious pleasure because of the other one's misfortune would exemplify the passive and momentary joy of learning.

4. The purpose of this research

The purpose of this research is to create a concept of the joy of learning and the factors enhancing it in the classroom environment. The aim is to formalise a rational and concrete expression of the emotions of the joy of learning. Thus, this aspiration to construct division and order into the diversity of classroom life poses a challenging task. In other words, will making a division and an order even be possible when it comes to emotions? How does one go about dividing something that is not even holding still and is coming and going as it pleases? This paper tends to draw a picture of those glimpses and parts of the joy of learning that have visited and lingered in the research classroom and of which it was possible to create an understandable ensemble. The fundamental research question is the following:

- (1) What factors in the learning situation strengthen the joy of learning experienced by the students?

Additionally, when exploring the elements of the joy of learning, some other factors that enhanced the joy of learning emerged. Along with those, some conclusions are reported as research results that answer the second research question:

- (2) How can a teacher provide students with the experience of the joy of learning?

5. Research method, data, analysis

Students from a classroom of a Finnish primary school served as participants for the research. The data collection began in autumn 2003 and lasted for two school years. The students were first-graders (aged seven) at the beginning of the data collection and continued attending school to the second grade (aged eight) until the spring of 2005. Altogether, there were 19 students consisting of five girls and 14 boys. The students' parents as well as members of the school system and other school personnel looked at the data collection and were very supportive and approving. The students were also flattered because of the video shooting. At the beginning of the observation periods, the participants asked a lot of questions concerning the reason behind the filming, but later on were used to the constant presence of cameras in class.

This research comes under ethnographic research and can be compared to a wide umbrella in that it covers a variety of methodological approaches (Alvesson, 2003; Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Fingerroos, 2003; James, 2001; Salo, 1999) that enable the conducting of research on everyday experiences and emotions. Ethnography can also be named according to the context in which it is conducted. Van der Geest (2004, pp. 1995–2000) has carried out hospital ethnography when doing research on the hospital institution in different countries and cultures. The field of school ethnography usually occurs at schools (Kullberg, 2004; Pole & Morrison, 2003; Syrjäläinen, 1990). This research has been defined as the ethnography of experience.

The data consists of filmed lessons, photographs, student interviews, and the researcher's diary. The main data comprises of the transcript texts of filmed lessons and the photographs captured from videotapes. In addition to the latter, photographs were also taken with a digital camera to form the photograph data, as it was not always possible to have a video camcorder along (e.g. at breaks). The photographs captured from videotapes and the ones taken with a digital camera added up to 754 samples that were used as a basis for analysis.

Video filming in ethnographic research is not a new invention. Even before the camera was invented, ethnographers would visually illustrate plants, nature and human beings in their research in order to understand the real world (Collier & Collier, 1992, pp. 5–13).

Video filming produces a lot of opportunities to understand the research target. The filming is always implemented in the original context when the eye is, with filming, possible to direct in a holistic and exact way. The nonverbal language in a picture is a language that is understood both within and between cultures. A classroom represents a culture of its own, where a student has his/her own gestures, expressions and movements, which words can only describe on a very limited basis.

The (video) shooting of social situations provides plenty of information through both verbal and nonverbal communication. Social relationships can be expressed, for instance, by people's distance from each other (see Neill, 1991, p. 93). Movements, expressions and gestures often tell about the unconscious factors related to social relationships. In order to recognise various social situations, an observer has to notice who is talking to whom. Where is someone going? How is someone talking? (Collier & Collier, 1992, pp. 77–82).

The data analysis pursues a thick description aimed at understanding – as profoundly as possible – the phenomenon studied with the diverse methods and ample data of photographs (see Atkinson, 2003; James, 2001). A thick description with accurate notes represents validity in ethnographic research (see Alvesson, 2003).

With a thick description, it is possible to elicit children's talk and emotional expressions (Lutz & White, 1986, p. 410), facial expressions (Custrini & Feldman, 1989, p. 336; Leppänen & Hietanen, 2004, p. 8), gestures, the movements of hands and feet, body postures and movements (Wallbott, 1998, pp. 879–882) in a way that would otherwise be hard or impossible for a researcher to study (Geertz, 1973).

Some basic emotions can be recognised from the face, regardless of culture. These are joy, sorrow, fear, shame, guilt, envy and disregard (King, 1998, pp. 753–762; Russell, Bachorowski, & Fernandez-Dols, 2003, pp. 330–331). Moreover, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1997b, p. 18), people's ability to perceive these emotions is not dependent on culture. Every basic emotion varies in its intensity and includes 'an emotional programme' that activates a versatile entity of emotional expressions.

Nevertheless, King (1998, pp. 753–762) thinks that instead of universal emotional expressions and recognising these expressions, the attention has been focused on how a certain cultures and environments affect the expression and understanding of emotions. The relation between emotions and expression is remarkably complicated. A laugh does not necessarily mean that one is happy; nor does crying necessarily connote sorrow. Russell et al. (2003, p. 337) point out that a child smiles after success as often as he or she does after failure. In essence, smiling is related to a child's social environment rather than his/her own inner state of happiness.

Research of emotional expression has occurred for a long time. In 1872 Darwin published his classic *The expression of the emotions in man and animals* in which he studied emotions through body movements and positions (see also Wallbott, 1998, p. 880).

Ethnography has, for its part, changed child-related research (James, 2001). Ethnography enables the conducting of research on children in their own environment and on the children's own terms. A child should not be considered immature, incomplete or not socialised (Bendelow & Mayall, 2002, pp. 291–292; James, 2001). Instead, a child is seen as capable of expressing his/her own feelings, thoughts and opinions as well as being capable of making decisions and participating in the evaluation and planning of his/her own actions (Prout & James, 1990). The present research is not only implemented among children but also with them.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 4), researchers are considered craftsmen of some kind – instructors, bricoleurs or quilt makers – who act during research on different tasks as scientists, film-makers, artists, writers and, every now and then, as teachers. The bricoleur sets pictures as if they were a scene and cuts and edits a montage for others to judge, and is obliged to work with the material that he or she possesses (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 24). Likewise, researchers cannot manipulate emotions, but have to be satisfied with their observations and experiences. An interpretive bricoleur puts together an ensemble of compatible pieces. This ensemble represents the multiplicity of the research target. The pieces have been collected through a variety of methods but these pieces have to fit into the jigsaw puzzle. The questions put to the data determine whether the pieces will fit into the jigsaw puzzle or not: 'The choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context' (Nelson, Treichler, & Grossberg, 1992, p. 2).

There are several examples of applied transcripts (Georgew, Getachew, & Hendricks, 2005; Jordan & Henderson, 1995; dos Santos & Mortimer, 2003), which are utilised in this research, too. These transcripts work as a good tool for studying significant emotional talks and acts. Additionally, the visual data has been studied from a social semiotics point of view; searching for meanings and explanations for photographs in that environment where actions are placed (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, pp. 134–135). At school, the teacher's authority and action are central when defining those invisible emotional rules under which students express, or fail to express, their emotions.

6. Results and conclusions: what factors strengthen the joy of learning and how can we reinforce them in school practice at primary schools?

The joy of learning appears to be multidimensional in light of the data collected in the research classroom. In this article, we sum up the results in 10 theses of the joy of learning. Along with these theses, we try to convince the readers of the joy of learning through a depiction of the experiences we had with the students. The purpose is to bring out something that tends to be hidden in photographs with the plenitude of nuances and behind words, expressions, gestures, movements, positions and roles. The results introduced in this article are also reflected in the previous research results of other researchers. The theses are based on the ethnography of experiences with the original photographs, the researcher's diary and the interaction episodes published in Taina Rantala's (2005) doctoral thesis. In this article, the verbal interaction episodes are presented in order to validate our results and conclusions.

6.1. *The joy of learning comes from the experiences of success*

The students point out numerous examples of the joy of learning that results from the persistent work leading to success through difficulties:

- Jussi to Teacher: A pleasant school day is the one when we study the multiplication tables, skate, and write as much as possible.
- Teacher [gets excited] to Jussi: Hey, now you mentioned the writing, so how was it at the first grade?
- Jussi to Teacher: It was not so fun because I was not able to write and my handwriting was quite lousy.
- Teacher to Jussi: What happened then?
- Jussi to Teacher: Then, I started practicing, and it was not so pleasing all the time. When it came easy to me, it felt nice, but it is [still] tiring sometimes. I would like to learn more to write in a way that it becomes very funny. I have been glad as I have learnt how to write! (Interview with Jussi, 14 February 2005)

The joy of learning is specified as an experience of success and know-how either during the learning process or after it (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, pp. 38–54; Custodero, 2002, pp. 4–5; Egbert, 2003, pp. 499–506). The joy of learning does not result from listening to a teacher or watching television but quintessence is the student's active role (Freinet, 1987, p. 32). Although the school should turn its back on passivising teaching and be directed towards active functioning, that alone will not be enough to advance the experience of joy: one needs to succeed, too (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a). The joy of learning is also related to the joy of work completed. The experience of success gives strength (Siitonen, 1999), enhances motivation (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003, pp. 196–198; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002, pp. 69–73; Meyer & Turner, 2002, pp. 111–112), improves problem-solving skills and logical reasoning.

- Esko [being glad, tapping himself on his chest with content]: Hey, I figured out how to do math! (3 February 2005)

First conclusion

A teacher should favour such teaching methods that enable the achievement of little intervening goals as a part of a greater learning process: smaller achievements function as catalysts towards greater overall goals. These small steps are important when it comes to the joy of learning.

6.2. *Play provides a possibility to experience the joy of learning in the early school years*

A child who is a student of primary education is a playing child. The classroom situations showed how the students played freely during the breaks (photograph no. 17 in the original data), and how 'one can make a dexterous gun of the handout of the environmental studies' (photograph no. 20 in the original data, the researcher's diary, 2 February 2005). Play can enter the lessons also unexpectedly:

- In the middle of writing, an invisible car came up at Esko's desk by which he drives at Tuomo's desk. The teacher tells the playmate return at his desk: 'ESKO! Drive that car into its own garage!... Go to your place'. The student returns and continues with the writing assignment intensively.' (14 February 2005).

Although a child does not consider play as a tool for learning, play itself represents important and meaningful activity (Huizinga, 1967). Even if play does not produce anything significant or concrete from an adult's point of view, a child structures his/her own environment through play (Bruce, 2004, p. 13). Thinking and action merge during play (Dewey, 1958; Makarenko, 1950), and by means of play, a child takes over in terms of handling their social, cognitive and physical environment (Caillois, 1961; Lehtonen, 2004). Playing is the child's way of seeking pleasure: why is this matter not tapped into more in teaching?

Second conclusion

The teacher's task is to provide a child with opportunity for pedagogical play, which does not imply the teacher taking over again and starting to control the play in the 'right' direction. Play should not be seen as a Trojan horse infiltrated with developing tasks that adults have set. Play should be considered a learning situation (see Hakkarainen, 2000). In Finland the significance of play has been realised in early childhood education, but where does play disappear in primary education? The physical school environment and teaching are rarely designed to support playing. Children should be allowed to create play and a teacher, for one, should provide play with various stimuli, informational contents, means and an environment suitable for playing.

6.3. The joy of learning enjoys an environment of freedom

The freedom in learning refers to that a student can choose how she/he will rise to the challenge of the learning task:

... and Finnish [is nice] because there are some many of those balloons where you can write what you want as long as it is related to the subject reasonably, so you cannot exactly write anything you like ... (Interview with Erkki, 28 January 2005)

Freedom does not refer to students being able to do what they want but to the teacher constricting freedom and allowing children to make choices safely. Every teacher should think over the implementation of principles such as freedom of choice, voluntariness, self-determination and autonomy in their own class.

Jussi to Teacher: How do we actually do it, do we *have to* do all the characters? (16 February 2005)

The concepts of play and freedom are tied to each other as Freinet (1987) points out. Children's free play should not be regarded only as side action that occurs when nothing important is happening and all the 'real' tasks are completed. Free play is relevant to a child and can be considered free, typical and valued child activity without any demands from adults or attempts to subordinate it as an instrument. A free student is inquisitive and creative.

Eeva [with enthusiasm and joy]: Hey, teacher! My presentation [in the next lesson] concerns this topic, exactly this topic that we discuss now! (18 September 2004)

Third conclusion

An authoritative teacher fails to provide opportunities to experience the joy of learning, because joy is linked with freedom. It is teacher's duty to set the limits within which a student can be free. The operational environment should be stimulating enough and it should also include free, unstructured time for a child. Freedom can be achieved in the offering of surprisingly minor choices in primary education. For us adults, it makes no difference whether we write on blue or red paper, but when a student can choose between these options, there will be a lot of joy in the air. Again, joy is made of little marks.

6.4. The joy of learning does not like to hurry

The hurry expresses itself in the conversations between a teacher and a student as the following example from an art lesson illustrates:

Teacher to Class:	Alright, are you going to be ready soon?
Aleksi [worried] to Teacher:	Does this has to be finished <i>today</i> ?
Teacher to Aleksi:	The background, yes, but of course not otherwise yet. We will do the fairy characters separately [makes her voice louder when addressing the whole class] <i>but hurry up now</i> . Five minutes left.
Tuomo:	Five minutes left. [Starts running back and forth in the classroom].
Enna [quickly with hurry] to Leena:	These [the supplies] will not be enough, but hey, you could go get some more ... GO ... GO ... GO! (2 February 2005)

Hurry is present in the school world because learning goals are tightly formulated. Teacher and students use a variety of linguistic expressions that include the idea that one should be faster to make it. Make it to where? Joy does not like to hurry because then a student has no time to enjoy learning.

Teacher to Class:	Alright. Then we put quickly those handouts into the folder.
Students [in unison, disappointed] to Teacher:	<i>We did not have time</i> to colour ...
Teacher to Class:	The colouring assignment was extra. The ones with checks are important. (18 September 2004)

As the joy of learning is often connected with finishing a task or solving a problem, hurry does nothing to enhance the achievement of these goals. The activity itself can act as a significant source of pleasure and joy (Crawford, 2003).

Fourth conclusion

The joy of learning also calls for the dissecting of the contents and goals of the curriculum the schools implement. If the amount of informational goals and contents is overwhelming, it becomes necessary to discuss what we really want to be taught at school and what we want the students to learn. We suggest that methods should also be considered, along with informational contents. Various cooperative work methods, project work and drama pedagogy offer possibilities to support the personal achievement of informational goals in an excellent way.

6.5. *The joy of learning springs up in situations in which a task and an actor converge*

At the classroom there are situations where the assignment seems too easy and do not require enough active efforts:

- Teacher to Class: What kind of things did you learn when you were doing that [pottering] thing?
- Aleksi [frustrated]: I did not learn anything new; all things were already familiar to me.
- Teacher [confused] to Aleksi: Well, did not you enjoy doing it?
- Aleksi: Well, yeah ... [but does not look like enthusiastic at all].
(Interview with Aleksi, 2 February 2005)

The balance between a learner's abilities and the task is crucial to the joy of learning (Custodero, 2002, pp. 4–5; Egbert 2003, p. 500). A learner has to consider the task meaningful to him/herself because true commitment to the task does not occur without considering the task valuable. One also has to feel able to manage the task (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996, p. 96). The feeling of capability provides a learner with courage and represents the meaning of the joy of learning as daring to meet challenges.

The structure of a flower was nice and we *were allowed* to draw and put the names of the parts into their places. (Interview with Leena 16 February 2005)

Avoidance of the task, lack of concentration, and disturbance are things that reveal to the teacher that a student is avoiding a task (Elliot, 1999; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002):

Paavo's pen needs to be sharpened all the time (Photograph no. 23 in the original data, 22 February 2005)

A student's trust in his/her own ability to learn is important when predicting success with study (Ford, 1992, p. 124; Varila & Virolainen, 2000, p. 87). The relationship between abilities and task is the most important factor leading to the state of flow (Egbert, 2003, p. 503), referring to deep focusing on work and the pleasure that follows doing it (Uusiautti, 2008).

Fifth conclusion

A teacher has to back up a student's learning process so that the student gets one-on-one help and support to confront challenges (Larkin, 2001). A teacher also has to pay attention to whether a student is approaching the task from a performance goal orientation or mastery goal orientation (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002, pp. 69–70). It is possible to change the repulsive learning situation into a positive one: the students with performance goal orientation already have, before starting a task, an attitude of being afraid of others' reactions if they fail (Seifert, 2004).

The scaffolding technique, mostly utilised in information and communication technology in Finland (Chen, Kao, & Sheu, 2003, p. 349; Egbert, 2003, p. 502; Larkin, 2001, p. 30), can be adapted and used widely to support a learner's spontaneous learning process. It is possible to enhance a student's self-respect by supporting the student by providing self-directed work and opportunities to succeed.

A teacher can also affect a student's state of awareness by pedagogical solutions related to group division.

6.6. *A student naturally strives for the joy of learning*

A student wants to learn. One adds one's energy in order to attain positive experiences and with these experiences gains positive emotions in a pleasant situation (Varila & Viholainen, 2000).

It was fun at this desk (on the computer) as it is nice to work on the computer because you know immediately if you have made an error. (Interview with Jussi, 22 January 2005)

The endeavour for happiness is by no means a new goal, as Aristotle declared that a human being strives for happiness more than anything else (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 1). Active striving for a sense of well-being is already natural to a school kid. The student's personal characteristics or factors related to the learning context, however, may prevent them from experiencing joy. If the learning environment does not enhance a student's learning at a personal level, a student tries to experience joy by increasing, continuing or predicting other activities.

In addition, immediate feedback positively influences learning, not only indirectly through emotional experience but also by fixing wrong operational models and information (Epstein et al., 2002). The positive feedback from other students is a major factor for the experience of joy.

Paavo [admiring] to Esko: You are so good in making those [dolls] ...

Esko [tries to be modest, I do not know ...

but is pleased] to Paavo:

[Martti goes around in the classroom with his half-done doll]

Eero [admiring] to Martti: Show me, it is cool! (Martti goes on wandering, satisfied, and goes next to the teacher who snaps the doll)

Teacher to Martti: It is very good! Now, you can continue to do it [the doll]. (16 February 2005)

Sixth conclusion

The school should provide every student with possibilities to learn and proceed, as well as to succeed from their own starting points, and avoid comparing them with others. In addition to outer evaluation, one should be able to enjoy one's own success. The students' achievement levels vary: the same achievement level and goal does not fit everyone. A goal that brings joy for one may produce overwhelming pressures to another. Affirmative circumstances should be offered to practice the self-evaluation of learning and the evaluation of one's own achievement level. The feedback from the achievement of little side goals aids a student towards accomplishing the final, demanding target. In addition, the microflow-functions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, pp. 49–53) may make depressing everyday life easier although these factors are thought to disturb the functioning of school (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, pp. 164–178). The microflow-functions referred to here are, for example, rolling the pages of a book, flipping a ruler, humming, whistling and drawing.

6.7. *The joy of learning is often a common joy, too*

Because of the contagion of emotion and shared feelings, emotions represent a social experience in the classroom context (Schutz & DeCuir, 2002, p. 128).

Well, [the teamwork] went really well, as it did today too, when we made the animal thing. We agreed that Nella would write because she is so good at writing and I would draw because I am good at drawing ... No one actually decided that but we just agreed. (Interview with Erkki, 28 January 2005)

Fun ... it was fun to work in groups. I enjoy working with other students. (Interview with Viivi, 11 February 2005).

The company of other students and friends and a teacher's genuine interest are premises for experiencing the joy of learning (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003, p. 198). Peers and other students could turn school into a comfortable place even though school attendance was otherwise regarded compulsive (Bendelow & Mayall, 2002, p. 301; Gordon, 1999, pp. 108–112). Because the joy of learning is connected with matters that are of great importance to a student, those things should be shared with others. The experiences of the joy of learning then become integrated with social relationships as well as emotional and communication skills (Ford, 1992, pp. 130–131). The joy experienced together, and shared, adds up to even more joy.

It was really great to work with that big play as we could act and the students from all grades participated. It was fun to have all the students, the big ones and small ones, boys and girls. I used to look forward to the rehearsals and then to be able to perform to dad and mom, too ... (Interview with Veera, 14 January 2005).

Seventh conclusion

Social relationships are not just resources for learning but are also the object of learning. Working methods and approaches that enhance creating and maintaining human relationships should be practised at school. The interaction between a teacher and a student in a peaceful atmosphere supports the development of a student's emotional skills and sets an example. Students' mutual interaction requires the skill of listening to others and understanding. A student knows more expressions related to positive emotions because the school environment prefers those over negative ones (Custrini & Feldman, 1989, p. 342). Along with positive expressions, it would be necessary to learn how to confront negative emotions in a way that prevents students from coming up with indirect ways of expressing negative emotions.

6.8. *The joy of learning does not include listening to prolonged speeches*

A student should be at the centre of the learning situation. If a teacher alone is active and talks considerably, the student's role is just to listen, get tired and bored with the lack of action and doing.

The following is an example of a learning situation in which the students have listened to the teacher's instructions for a long time and start to be ready to work. The class is going to the hall to identify plants:

- Teacher to Class: I have put plants in the hall; part of them is under the plastic and part of them is those that we have collected [Tino puts up his hand in a vigorous and big way; he has something important to say.]
- Teacher [chagrined] to Tino: You must have something REALLY important to say because I am giving instructions at the moment?
- Tino [excited]: Are we going to orient there? (10 September 2003)

It would be too simple to argue that students who yawn and constantly go to the toilet are not experiencing the joy of learning. However, Egbert also thinks (2003, p. 509) that leaving the classroom is one way to interpret the commitment to school work and especially, a lack of that commitment. If some sudden thing that is irrelevant to the situation disturbs the lesson, students tend to cling to it if they find the lesson boring and joyless. If working feels monotonous or boring, or if students are tired, they will start to look for alternative activities (Woods, 1990). During an interesting task, a student is so concentrated on the task that he/she will not notice what is happening within the surroundings (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, pp. 53–59; 1997a, p. 10; 2000, pp. 9–10; Custedero, 2002, p. 5; Egbert, 2003, p. 504; Hakkarainen, Lonka, & Lipponen, 2004, p. 201).

Paavo [swings a hammer in his hand] to Aleks: Hey, this a cool mah-mer ... hey listen, MAH-MER! (Aleksi did not let his gaze waver. He does not listen to Paavo because he is concentrated on nailing.) (28 January 2005)

If students are concentrating on their own work, they will not pay attention even if a classmate intentionally bothers them. In such an instance, the joy of learning resembles flow perfectly, and the actor's interest is focused on the task at hand in such a manner that the consciousness of time, place and self disappears, as Csikszentmihalyi (1992, pp. 53–59; 1997a, p. 10; 2000, pp. 9–10) notes.

Eighth conclusion

If a teacher structures the learning process solely on the basis of teacher centrality, the students' possibilities to experience joy and freedom become limited. A learning situation should consist of opportunities for students' active functioning, not just passive listening. The joy of learning runs away from long speeches.

6.9. The joy of learning is based on a student's abilities

In the school world, students are rarely allowed to participate in the decision-making of their own learning. Too often, they are asked to answer questions that they themselves have not designed or put forth. The students' opportunities to participate in the decision-making of their own learning and to be allowed to make choices that support their learning, strengths, and success, strengthen the joy of learning (Byman, 2002, pp. 29–31).

It is not fun when you know the task and you still have to do it even though you already know it ... I think that if we practice the same thing all the time, then you wish that you could move on ... (Interview with Tino, 2 February 2005)

The verbal math tasks and exercise book are annoying because they are so difficult. (Interview with Tero, 12 February 2005).

That computer task was nice because you had to work fast. We had so much fun we were doing it with Esko! (Interview with Tino, 22 January 2005)

Students who think of being able to have an effect on the planning of their own learning feel like knowing and learning subjectively, will engage in it, and will also progress better in their studies (Pintrich, 2003).

Ninth conclusion

To create a learning environment where the joy of learning will occur, it is necessary to consider how to get the expertise of both a teacher and a student in joint use, for instance, in composing a curriculum. Teaching does not begin with the premise that the student knows nothing but rather from fathoming out the particulars and skills that the student already possesses. Teaching does not build on obliviousness but upon knowledge. Teaching aims at bringing out students' different particulars and skills that would not otherwise be brought out with usual school work. Additionally, it is important to increase students' status and valuation within the group of students. Relevant forms of action are, for example, talks on a subject that a student finds interesting as well as gallery-walk type of group work that highlight students' expertise. The student's status is of great importance in the experience of learning and success: a high-status student works more actively in the class community. The ultimate experience of the joy of learning for a student may give one the feeling of shining as an expert.

6.10. *The joy of learning is context bound*

Emotions are allowed to show variously in different classrooms and schools (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Russell et al., 2003). The expression of emotions is controlled by the societal and cultural (historical) viewpoints concerning which emotions are considered proper to show and how.

The students are playing the multiplication games with a will but Alekski sits and does nothing really, just looks at the teacher. Teacher [encouraging]: 'Suffle the cords ever now and then and try to speed up the task ... add speed.' Alekski nods lamely [his presence expresses that he is not interested in the task and time passes when he observes the environment and the hassle of the class. (2 February 2005)

A division into pairs for the pair dictation is taking place at the class, and because there are an odd number of students (19) someone has to/is allowed to pair up with the teacher. This time it is Markku's turn, because his handwriting has been a trouble for a long time and the teacher wants to pay a special attention to it. Teacher to Markku: '... and Markku, I am now your pair and that is a good thing because we have pay attention to your handwriting with you.' Markku seems to be of the opposite opinion with the teacher. He slides down at his desk looking miserable. (24 February 2005)

These emotions are not only bound to time but also to place as, for example, some emotions are allowed to be expressed during breaks and others during lessons.

Moreover, the physical environment is significant for experiencing joy because extensive emotions require extensive surroundings.

Tenth conclusion

The joy of learning appears differently in every teacher's classroom. There are many ways to establish a learning environment that enables students to experience the joy of learning. In addition, there are many ways to confront the student in an appropriate manner as well as be a good teacher and build a good professional identity. Teacherhood involves more than teaching particulars and skills; it is a way of being a human being, of having a social role. The most important thing is for every teacher to consider the joy of learning or lack of it in his/her classroom and to think of ways to provide his/her own group with opportunities to experience joy. A teacher sets many emotional rules and could enhance the joy of learning when applying to teaching his/her hands-on know-how, which is personal, tacit, contextual, experiential and content-based teaching by nature (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 1990, p. 60). Students are allowed and are not allowed to do different things in different teachers' classrooms. A teacher's task at a classroom level is to make sure that students act within the predetermined limits. Thus, a teacher might get a role of a killjoy, because the teacher has to ensure that the rules for school work are fair, even-handed, and allow free, human action: 'Teachers' rule must be equable. They must allow a degree of freedom within an ordered framework' (Woods, 1990, p. 23). The marks of the joy of learning manifest themselves as little pieces, we just have to be able to recognise them.

7. Discussion

This paper has approached the concept of the joy of learning with different perspectives. When trying to understand this multidimensional and wide concept, Richard Feynman's (1999), who is one of the most famous physicians of the last century, thought of the joy of learning, which he introduces in his book called *The pleasure of finding things out*, might be of help. Learning does not have to happen fast, effortlessly and easily (like shopping at the super market), but joy can be found through many efforts and mistakes by self-experimenting and doing. The joy of learning consists of little, evanescent moments. It may not blow up galaxies, but is accessible to every little and big learner. A teacher has to act in such a way so as not to drive it away unobserved.

Emotions have also been compared with the tip of an iceberg, which is, in evidence, rarely more than a tenth. It is the same with emotions: only a little part is visible, while the hidden part constitutes the biggest portion of the experienced reality. How can one get in touch with this hidden reality? This research aimed at carefully studying the visible; those experiences of joy that were unpredictable and occasional visitors to the research classroom, and that came and went as they wanted. A teacher can prevent these visitors from coming but they cannot be impelled – tempted anyway. Still, whether we like it or not, the truth gained by ethnography is always imperfect and partial (Malin, 2003, p. 25). You can attain and understand only a fraction of those truths that are within reach (Gordon et al., 2000, p. 29).

Lange and Wilenius (1997) assess the present insight of the emotions to be as rough and unclear as the world map of the sixteenth century. Isn't it time with

emotions as well to prove the earth to be round? It is time to establish emotions in the school world as a research subject. Finland has succeeded well in knowledge-based school achievement tests, but the comparisons made by the World Health Organization (WHO) have shown that there is no one in Europe that like school more than a Finnish student. Could it be that the informational triumphal march has been favoured at the expense of the students' well-being? And is it true that the emotions have been made to take the place of information? It is important to establish emotions as a research subject equal with information, being aware, however, of the danger of over interpreting: so that every phenomenon of the school world would be explained by emotions or lack of them. The emotional backlash should not force information to the periphery in turn. A school's most important task is not teaching but learning, which, in order to succeed, requires both information and emotion and, most of all, the new research results of emotions at school.

Notes on contributors

Taina Rantala, PhD, is headteacher of Koskenkylä School, Rovaniemi, Finland. She graduated in education from Faculty of Education, University of Lapland in 2005. She is interested in emotions in the school. Considering that emotions are evident in the classroom, she has studied them from the perspective of the joy of learning. She has defined the idea in her dissertation 'Searching for the Joy of Learning – Ethnography of Experience in Primary Teaching'.

Kaarina Määttä, PhD, is professor of educational psychology at the Faculty of Education, University of Lapland; docent of teacher education at the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Lapland; and vice-rector at the University of Lapland. Her latest personal research interests have focused on love, attachment and social relationships during human beings' life-span, on guidance of doctoral thesis and the process of that (as she has supervised 42 doctoral theses between 2002–2010) as well as on positive psychology and human strengths. Her next book, which will be published in English in 2011, deals with the pedagogy of supervising doctoral theses from various perspectives.

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