

Love-based Practice in Education

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Teachers' authority relies partly on the mastery of substance but that is not enough if the purpose is to enhance students' overall growth, self-knowledge and well-being. In today's schools, a variety of new phenomena (e.g. multiculturalism, exclusion, etc.) challenges teachers' work and teachers have to be able to cooperate with not only various pupils but also with parents and the community. The purpose of this article is to introduce and discuss a new approach to consider schooling, love-based practices in education. The fundamental aim is to provide activities in education that increase students' sense of meaning and fulfillment, and with experiences of success. We also discuss how teachers' love-based practice may enhance the emergence of productive learning partnerships with pupils, parents, and the surrounding community.

Keywords: School early childhood education, early childhood education teachers, caring, pedagogical love, love-based leadership

Introduction

The uncertainty of the future, competitiveness, demands on individual performance levels, efficiency, strains on proficiency and success, internationalism, outsourcing of caring and nurturing and feelings of exclusion, anxiety, and depression, are phenomena that challenge the well-being of the children of today (Seidl & Friend, 2002). Consequently, teachers need a new type of professional skills, the ability to act as future-makers in diverse school contexts that include pupils with various learning abilities and cultural backgrounds. Multi-professional cooperation between home and school has become more and more important (Wayne, 2012).

We argue that new strategies to address the new issues and challenges of the modern school are greatly needed. So far, a great deal of

Research has focused on home-school cooperation, for example, in preventing bullying at school (Bowllan, 2011; Cross et al., 2011; Limber, 2000).

Prevention and fixing of problems is not, however, the only way of responding to the emerging challenges. Indeed, some of the recent studies have also noted that positive support is the most important factor (Pugh & Chitiyo, 2011). Likewise, for example, the extensive strengthening of the inclusion principle needs versatile cooperation and appreciation of this sort of cooperation (Bennett, Deluca, & Bruns, 1997; McFarland-Piazza & Saunders, 2012). Functional cooperation between teachers and parents also has a positive influence on pupils' learning (Beveridge, 2005), for example on school success, finishing homework, and the general attitude to studying (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991).

Our study seizes this demand by researching and introducing a new concept of love-based practices in education. This viewpoint is based on our new research on love-based leadership, and started at the University of Lapland in 2011. The

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interdisciplinary project with experts from various fields of education, educational psychology, psychology, administrative sciences, and industrial design (for more information about the project see <http://www.ulapland.fi/>

Lovebasedleadership) focused on defining the concept of love-based leadership and determining how the select scientific approaches might be used in elaborating research models for re-thinking and designing caring learning environment, students' and children's psychosocial well-being and school communities, and for developing the models of love-based leadership in schooling context (see also Autry, 1991; Caldwell & Dixon, 2010).

In this paper, we discuss how the above-mentioned goals could be achieved by employing love-based leadership in education in practice: we call this viewpoint "love-based practices in education." When successful, it will have a far-reaching positive outcome and create reciprocity and responsibility over common good and the well-being of the whole society (Wayne, 2012). The purpose is to increase the positively sensitive actions of love-based leadership through training and activities on mindfulness, gratitude, optimism, and resilience in schools. The analysis is based on our initial research results and theoretical definitions (see e.g., Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011, 2012d, 2013; Uusiautti & Määttä, 2011; Uusiautti et al., 2012; Uusiautti, 2013). In this article, we will further elaborate/discuss this concept, in addition to pupil-oriented practices involved in the approach, home-school relationship and especially the use of love-based practices in this important context. We believe that this standpoint is highly called for in the modern world, and such positively-oriented, love-based approach would be worth considering from the point of view of teachers' and parents' cooperation.

What is Love-based Leadership at School?

Interest in school-related leadership studies has been especially focused on the school rector and his or her principles (Neil, 2012), pedagogical touch (Trevor & Palaiologou, 2012), goal setting (Waldron, McLeskey, & Redd, 2011), the way of leading curriculum work (Jenkins & Pfeifer, 2012) and action for improving student engagement and school culture (van der Velden, 2012). In all, school leadership is connected to the quality of schooling (Olayiwola, 2012) and can also ignite

competition between schools (Pollock & Winton, 2012). Parents certainly compare schools and their values when trying to find the best education for their children (Gillanders, McKinney, & Richie, 2012).

However, leadership can be considered more widely. We consider leadership as a fundamental way of action and when defined through certain attributes, it can have many forms. Basically, leadership always focuses on good and efficient results in work units. But where, or better yet, how do these results come from? We refer here to the concept of love-based leadership. To explain our viewpoint better, we refer to the favourable influence of positive experiences and perceived happiness which is widely acknowledged. Moreover, the role, that leadership might have in the emergence of these favorable experiences—enabling the sense of well-being and happiness—is at the core of our thinking. People who are happy are more open, courageous, trusting, and helpful than inhibited, distressed, or depressed people (Seligman et al., 2005; see also Gilpin, 2008). Human happiness and well-being are also important in society: "a happier society overall is beneficial to the greater good" (Gilpin, 2008, p. 3). Happy people are friendlier and less materialistic, show higher levels of self-regulation (see e.g., Fishbach & Labroo, 2007; Otake et al., 2006; Polak & McCullough, 2006), and are more cooperative, pro-social, benevolent, and "others-centered" (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005) than unhappy people.

Our main interest is in the teacher's work and how teachers as caring leaders could enhance pupils' growth and development, and for example, their discovery and use of signature strengths (Seligman, 2002). The need for such applications and interventions is recognized and well-justified: According to Seligman et al. (2009), "well-being should be taught in school on three grounds: as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking" (p. 295). Furthermore, Huebner et al. (2009, pp. 565-566) have defined the features of positive schools: (1) positive schools appreciate the importance of subjective well-being to students' academic success; (2) positive schools work with individual differences in personality, abilities, and interests to maximize the goodness of adapting between school experiences and students' needs; (3) positive schools facilitate supportive teacher

and peer relationships; and (4) positive school setting emphasize instructional tasks that enhance student involvement through offering appropriately challenging, interesting, and voluntary activities. It seems that interventions to increase happiness and well-being have become more and more popular and wanted in educational settings (Huebner et al., 2009; Schiffrin & Nelson, 2010; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). One basic idea is that well-being is not only valuable because it feels good but also because it has beneficial consequences (see Diener & Seligman, 2004).

We regard teachers as leaders who have the opportunity to take care of the well-being of those who are under their influence, students, pupils, or small children (see also Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004; Diener et al., 1999). In fact, this concerns many levels of teachers' action: reflection on their own action, perceiving the role of emotions, and following the love-based practices in everyday teaching, in other words taking them as part of their position as an authority in the classroom. Next, we will discuss these elements in more detail.

Being aware of their role and significance of positive experiences and the ability to recognize these experiences gives teachers the ability to enhance happiness and well-being, and therefore, mindfulness is relative to the idea of minding others' business (see Storh, 2009). According to Blay and Ireson (2009), there is a link between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their classroom practices. Through reflection teachers can become aware of their practices and prejudices and ways of thinking, but we claim that reflection can be carried out in a special manner, namely through love. Love cannot be ignored when reflecting good teaching—regardless of the educational level.

Love in teachers' work can also be considered from the point of view of the interpersonal nature of emotions and ability to look at things from a child's point of view (e.g., Zombylas, 2007). According to Fischer and van Kleef (2010), it is an indisputable fact that emotions are mostly reactions to other people, that emotions take place in settings where other people are present, that emotions are expressed toward other people and regulated because of other people: therefore, the elicitation of love by understanding other people as the cause, target, or third-party observers of these emotions are necessary for leaders.

On the other hand, the teacher as a leader has the power to decide whether or not he or she acts in the aforementioned caring manner. Love-based leadership refers to leaders' ability to use the leadership position in a manner that exemplifies love-based action. Sensitive leaders develop a culture that demonstrates concern for individual needs (Fairholm, & Fairholm, 2000). It has been shown that leaders who are sensitive and responsive to others' needs, and support creativity, initiative, and autonomy, and desire to meet new challenges and develop and acquire new skills, can enhance their self-worth and self-efficacy (e.g. Popper & Amit, 2009).

Indeed, the role of emotions in the leadership process has attracted increasing interest in recent years and leaders' emotional expressions are typically more important to the people, who the leaders interact with, than the objective content of their communication (see Glasø & Einarsen, 2008). Emotions and emotional intelligence can be considered the heart of caring leadership (Goleman, 2006).

Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge that leadership as a concept involves an assumption of an authority position. Authority is often addressed in pedagogical points of view and it has been studied a great deal (Delpit, 1988; Deutsch & Jones, 2011; Pace & Hemmings, 2007). Nevertheless, it has been understood in a contradictory way in education and teaching (Seidl & Friend, 2002). Obviously, the relationship between a teacher and a child is asymmetrical because the teacher possesses something that the child does not. According to Hare (1993), the teacher does not have to think that the student is, at present, his or her equal, but does need to see the student as a potential equal. The purpose of the learning relationship is to make the pupil develop into an independent and responsible autonomous individual. However, children do not achieve this goal alone; they need teachers' (and other adults') help and guidance. Therefore, teachers, as they possess an authoritarian position, can be seen as leaders who have the choice to use their leadership in a love-based manner.

Van Manen emphasized how an adult's ability to affect the pupil is genuine when the authority does not rely on power, but on love and affection (van Manen, 1991), and trust building, treating students as human beings, and the ethics of care and justice (Harjunen, 2009; Hoyle, 2002). Määttä and Uusiautti (2012d) have defined the

connection between pedagogical love and authority in the following manner:

"If pedagogical love and pedagogical authority are based on expertise-based respect, the learning atmosphere is warm and encouraging. Mutual respect supports empathy; students respect the teacher because of his or her expertise and regard the teacher as a sort of safe mainstay that they can rely on. The teacher trusts and believes in the students' abilities, respects their individuality, and helps them to enhance their balanced development and find their own strengths." (p. 29)

What does this mean to love-based practices in education? Love appears in education as guidance toward disciplined work, but also as patience, trust, and forgiveness. The purpose is not to make learning fun, easy, or pleasing but to create a setting for learning where pupils can use and develop their own resources (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011, 2011d). How to use love-based leadership in practice and what does it mean to cooperation with parents in education?

Love-based Practices in the*Classroom

Our starting point in the love-based approach is that teachers as leaders have the *opportunity* to teach and lead children toward tolerance, respect, and consideration (see e.g., Hollingsworth et al., 2003). A loving teacher takes care that children do not lose their trust in their learning and self-worth when facing trouble. Therefore, love appears as goal-oriented action: A teacher plans and implements learning situations that enhance the development of aforementioned abilities and characteristics (e.g., van Manen, 1991; Hatt, 2005). Love-based leadership in education is considered a working method that involves persistent interest and perseverance to support pupils' development for the sake of themselves and the whole society. It directs teachers' actions to love-based practices. In addition, teachers should find a balance between love and authority and combine them both in a student-specific manner: pedagogical tact is at its strongest in this ability (van Manen, 1991; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012d). van Manen pointed out that pedagogical tact is "the language of surprising and an unpredicted pedagogical action" that emerges from the genuine attachment toward the pupil (van Manen, 1991). At the core, it is the children's vulnerability and defenselessness that make the

educator protect them. Therefore, fundamentally, the adult is primarily working for the benefit of the child in this context (Saevi & Eilifsen, 2008).

What might be the positively sensitive of* love-based practices in education, then? A teacher who wishes to adopt the ideology of love-based leadership must be ready for reflection. In practice, it is important that the teacher makes self-assessments: A teacher can observe his or her way of teaching and interacting with students and think whether or not his or her actions express caring, minding, and understanding. It is about the teacher's tact and capability to notice the various learners and personalities and have the situational flexibility (see also Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011b). This kind of reflection is defined as a useful and necessary method for teachers helping to analyse both a teacher's own and others' teaching critically and thus leads to better action in teaching and education (e.g., Mayall, 2000; Swain, 1998).

The teacher's reflection lays the foundation to positively-oriented and well-being-promoting action in the classroom. We consider that the role of a teacher who uses love-based leadership is primarily focused on encouraging and rewarding the multitude of talents and strengths pupils have, by presenting opportunities for displaying these talents and strengths each day. In practice, the means are quite simple: linking strengths to specific festivals and events throughout the school calendar, activities, such as the strengths-based classroom, victory logs, and celebrations of "what went well" (see Linley et al., 2009).

Seligman et al. (2009) describe simple exercises through which they aimed to help students identify their signature strengths and to increase students' use of these strengths in daily life. Moreover, this intervention was to promote resilience, positive emotions and students' sense of meaning or purpose. All these goals were achieved which made the researchers conclude that well-being should and can be taught at school. The point here was that well-being could be taught and with the teacher's leadership, children would not only learn about it, but their own well-being would also increase.

Likewise, children can be taught social skills (e.g., Trentacosta et al., 2008; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). According Webster-Stratton and Reid (2004), strengthening young children's capacity to manage their emotions and behaviour and to make meaningful friendships may serve as an important protective function for school

success. Caring teachers can teach pupils how to tolerate failure, insecurity, weakness, and loneliness through empathy and encouragement: they help pupils recognize the good in themselves and others, regardless of different backgrounds. Instead of concentrating what is done wrong, teachers can help pupils discover what they do well and what more could be done (Ryan et al., 1999). It is also the question of a positive feedback. For example, Wentzel (2002) found out that teachers' negative feedback (and lack of nurturing) was the most consistent negative predictor of academic performance and social behavior among pupils.

Providing children with daily experiences of success is important. If the mastery of information and skills to be learned is to lead toward success and if positive emotion is one of the keystones of learning, it would be reasonable to pay attention to this viewpoint in education (Chafouleas & Bray, 2004). Fredrickson (1998) considers pride as one distinct positive emotion that follows personal achievements and in order to feel pride one has to succeed; in other words have the experience of success. By adjusting goals and objectives and planning learning tasks in a way that each child can have the experience of achieving a goal, this kind of experience of success can be promoted. Teachers, who use love-based leadership, try to find a balance between children's skills, chances, and challenges. We believe this is likely to lead to better performance, contentment, higher motivation, and the sense of self-efficacy that may have a far-reaching positive influence on children's later life.

Love-based Practices in a Home-School Relationship

An important part of today's teachers' work is related to co-operation with parents and other partners of the school. Consequently, love-based leadership has to be considered an all-encompassing state and likewise, love-based practices have to extend beyond the classroom. How could teachers follow the ideology, when dealing also with the most important factors of pupils' lives, parents? Namely, in addition to love-based practices within the classroom, it is important to consider the benefits of a functional home-school relationship.

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), parental involvement in education has

long been a topic of interest among those concerned with optimal developmental and educational outcomes for school children. On the other hand, family status variables do not explain fully parents' decisions to become involved in their children's education nor linkages between parents' involvement and children's school outcomes. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) study showed that parents' sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school positively influences children's learning and school performance. "Parents who hold such positive efficacy beliefs seem more likely than their low-efficacy counterparts to assume that the time and effort they allocate to involvement are well spent because of the positive outcome they are likely to create in their children. They also seem much more likely to assume that if they encounter new demands or difficulties in the course of involvement activities, they will be able—through effort, skills, and other resources they can access—to meet and master those difficulties" (p. 21).

How to make parents feel they are capable of helping their children to succeed at school? For example, Epstein compared teachers who engaged in many parent involvement activities (high-involvement teachers) with teachers who engaged in few such activities (low-involvement teachers) and found that parents who cooperated with high-involvement teachers were more positive about school and more aware of teachers' interest in their involvement than the parents who had to deal with low-involvement teachers (see also Epstein, 2001). According to Epstein and Dauber (1991), when teachers make parent involvement part of their regular teaching practice, parents increase their interaction with children and feel more positive about their changes in helping their children and about teachers, too. The best outcome is, naturally, that students do better at school, improve their attitudes and achievement.

Although Epstein's research talked about students' success, the idea is applicable to a wider perspective. In love-based practices, the academic success is only one element that is merely seen as the positive outcome of paying attention on children's well-being and positive attitude. The fundamental idea is that through these positive experiences of accepting oneself as is and having positive relationships with peers and teachers boost their learning achievements in various school subjects. Teachers' love-based

practices in co-operation with pupils' parents, thus, provide children with positive experiences regarding home-school relationship.

In this respect, love-based practices mean that both school and home pursue the development of self-esteem and health in children (e.g., Desjardins, Zelenti, & Coplan, 2008). Parental love gives more comprehensive support for children that the modern school can offer (Zakeri, Jowkar, & Razmjooee, 2010) but teachers' love-based practices complement the caring and can also act as a way of encouraging parents to get involved in their children's education. Cooperation between school and home is more important than ever because schools struggling with scarce resources may not notice all the children's strengths and talents (e.g., Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012), while such strengths that are not evinced at school can be strengthened at home (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2013).

The concept of family-centeredness is often used in the aforementioned sense (Dunst, 2002). It has practices with relational and participatory components. The first refers to practices typically associated with good clinical skills such as active listening, compassion, empathy, respect, being non-judgmental, etc., and professional beliefs about and attitudes toward families, especially those pertaining to parenting capabilities and competencies. Teachers need flexibility and responsiveness to family concerns, but also they should be able to provide families with opportunities to be actively involved in family-school collaboration and family actions to achieve desired goals and outcomes.

Izzo et al. (1999) remind that although research suggests that building more productive collaboration between parents and schools can enhance children's well-being, many issues need to be clarified to understand better the association between these variables. This is one of the purposes of our research: to test the influence of love-based practices as a part of teacher's work inside the classroom and in collaboration with parents and other partners. Our perspective considers parents and teachers as models of self-control, social skills, engagement in learning, and healthy lifestyles (Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2012c; see also Hubbs-Tait, 2008; Nijhof & Engels, 2007; Verissimo et al., 2011). Through love-based practices, children are provided with the sense of "worthy of love" (Lawrence, 2001). The purpose is that pupils

would find the world interesting and enjoyable, and feel that they have a positive place in it.

Discussion: Love-based Practices and Productive Partnerships in Education

Research themes such as well-being, happiness, quality of life, and positive feelings have been introduced by positive psychology, which has provided research concerning not only positive characteristics and feelings but also institutions that enhance the discovery of positive feelings and strengths (Seligman et al., 2005; Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2004). Naturally, the tenets of positive psychology have started to become well-established, and yet, there are plenty of ways to draw from the approach, especially in educational settings. New approaches, such as love-based leadership and practices in education introduced in this article, aim at transmitting this kind of an attitude in pupils could be the main guideline to follow in various education practices: this is what love fundamentally is and children will learn to use it if we—as educators, parents, and other significant people in children's life—set an example by directing our mindful and loving action in children and other people as well.

Love-based leadership could therefore act as a means to lead and guide students. Greer (2002) felicitously puts it: "When a leader communicates his trust in and respect for followers' ability to perform a given task, their internal motivation takes over and drives the followers to succeed in their assignments, and the process moves forward" (p. 8). If considered from the point of view of considering teachers employing love-based leadership, Greer's words seem similar to the ideas presented about teacher's love-based practices in education. Teachers as caring pedagogical authorities have a salient role not only in the process of learning and performing, but also in the process of promoting well-being and happiness in pupils' lives.

In order to correspond to the future's demands including the societal change and new requirements of tolerance, cooperation skills, and internationalism, new approaches to teachers' and educators' work are needed. Given the idea of love as a learnable ability that consists of emotions, action, and knowledge and skills (Uusiautti & Määttä, 2011); love-based leadership as introduced here seems a worthy approach in education of today and the future. Ideally, it is a model that pupils adopt from

school and home-school cooperation, and can follow it in their peer relationships and in society later on, too. Likewise, teachers can pass on this tradition to other prospective teachers (DePaul, 2000).

Conclusion

Good teaching necessitates live interaction and the ability to work in an interactive relationship with students, teacher colleagues, and—increasingly in the modern world—the wider working environment and economic life surrounding the school system. A teacher's ability to join the school as a part of its unique position in the community strengthens the cultural and social task of the school. The fast changes that are taking place in our society demand that teachers see their responsibilities in society and their roles as active future makers (von Wright, 2009; Seidl & Friend, 2002). According to Coleman (2009):

"Recent years have been marked by a notable increase, among researchers and policy makers alike, of interest in the themes of well-being in schools, the relationships between cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of learning, the importance of a 'good childhood', the balancing of instrumental with less readily definable purposes of education, concerns with resilience and with happiness."(p. 281)

By introducing love-based practices in education from the selected points of view, as pupil-oriented classroom actions and as love-based teacher-parent partnership practices, we wanted to further elaborate and make the wide-ranging and multidimensional possibilities of the use of love-based leadership in education explicit. We also know that love in teaching is not any new invention but this kind of conceptualization, research-based interventions, and systematic testing of promoting well-being practices are things that are called for and desperately needed in today's schools.

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