

ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTION CLASSROOM TEACHER STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF ART AND SKILL SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL AND IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This research focuses on elementary classroom teacher students' (N=10) experiences of art and skill subjects at school and in teacher education. The data was collected by narrative accounts of students' experiences of music, visual arts, physical education, and crafts. Both positive and negative experiences were found from these subjects. Every respondent had negative experiences in some of the subjects. At worst, the experiences were so traumatizing that respondents suffered from the consequences even after twenty years. This shows the importance of the teacher's behaviour in evaluation and feedback at school. Young pupils are at a sensitive developmental stage when in elementary school and at the high school level, as students' self-conception is still building. The art and skill subjects may cause students to feel more vulnerable than other subjects, because everyone can see or hear immediately when something goes wrong. Teacher education should be developed in a direction where future teachers are emotionally sensitive and discrete to avoid traumatizing their pupils.

Keywords: *Art and skill subjects, experiences, memories, attitudes*

Background

Finland has succeeded quite well in international comparisons of school achievements (Programme for International Students Assessment PISA). Still, there is a lot of malaise in Finnish schools including not enjoying being at school, marginalization and even suicides. Mostly, people are too dissatisfied with life and experiences of failure and misfortune. A valuable life has stalled as disciples feel aimless and grieve. It is important that a child can, already at an early stage, gain positive experiences of themselves through acceptance and success. It would be important to teach students to acknowledge their own strengths, dignity, and their specialities. This can take place at home and school through sensible and wise growth and education together with the constructive activities with peers.

Our society is going through a critical period. The change in age structure, digitalization and strengthening of multiculturalism are phenomena of this age. Similarly, society is also differentiating, and inequality is increasing. The well-being, sharing, participation and health of the population polarize the population (Ministry of Education, 2014). Searching for experiences is typical for our time. Commercialism and selfishness describe the spirit of current times when everyone wants to own everything more and more (Pulkkinen & Kanervio, 2014).

In the field of education, competition between schools may further strengthen marginalization and polarization of students and communities. Also, the gap between the educated and uneducated population is growing, leading to a division of society into two parts (Kyllönen, 2014). There are more and more families pushing exceptionalism on their children and burdening them with different hobbies and goals of material well-being. At the same time, there are more and more families who do not take good enough care of their children, who may drift toward a marginal way of life. When an individual fulfils oneself through art and skill hobbies, it protects them better from withdrawal (Allardt, 1976). Art and skill subjects with their experiences like development of skills, collaboration, succeeding, enjoyment, regularity, relationships with adults, discussions and supervision can be seen as protective factors. Self-esteem is strengthened and the feeling of one's ability to influence different issues grows along with successes (Rönkä, 2014).

According to PISA's school enjoyment research, the situation in Finland is not vaunted, although Finland's school system is shown in a positive light from the point of view of learning results. Finland has participated in PISA research since the year 2000 and has been at the top or near the top of learning assessment tests. In 2009, the level of results began decreasing and by 2013 the results clearly had dropped. PISA-research evaluates learning, and it is used in developing educational systems (Kupari et al., 2013). Finns share a worry about the results, which show the need to develop the country's education system. Still, Finland is in the top quarter of the OECD countries and the best of the Scandinavian countries. The opportunities in social and economic structures of society, the growth of the importance of media and globalization have changed the world of young people. This should be taken better into account to include young people's everyday real life as a part of a school's pedagogy. The elementary school system which was created in the 1960s and 1970s needs national-level renovation (Kupari et al., 2013). The school well-being model by Konu and Rimpelä (2002) explores the school and education as a whole, where every part is in connection to each other, and nothing is separate. Especially interesting are self-fulfilment (*being*) and social relationships (*loving*). In fulfilling oneself, the use of creativity and self-esteem strengthening can be seen in the teaching of art and skill subjects. In the area of social relationships, the atmosphere of the school, group dynamics, teacher-pupil relationship, peer relationships and the collaboration between the school and homes are in the centre of promoting well-being.

Well-being from Art and Skill Subjects

The significance of arts and creativity has been gathering more appreciation among Finnish administrative personnel. Already more than ten years ago the government of Matti Vanhanen promoted a creativity strategy to promote the development of

creativity nationally. The working group of the strategy highlighted the significance of creativity in comprehensive well-being. In addition to that, it also imparts versatility to Finnish society's different sectors, everyday life, social life, education, upbringing, working life, communities and so on (Luovuuskertomus, 2004). The working groups of the Creativity-story strategy reported their plans to promote creativity. One sector in the report promoted creativity in education and upbringing, building reserves of strength-centred activities. Education and upbringing should promote the development of power reserves and life-managing skills so that a child and young individual could live a valuable life with others also into adulthood. The working group was concerned about the way some children are raised at home, not enjoying studying at school, the spirit of competition, the culture of increasing haste and the increase of performance pressures at school. Creativity is stifled in these circumstances and causes accumulating problems in the long run (Kolme puheenvuoroa luovuuden edistämisestä, 2005).

Artistic activity has always been a part of human nature. The task of art, the place and the significance have remained, but they have gained new manifestations in new places. Recently, artistic activity has been brought in as a part of problem solving and its positive impact in different connections has been noticed. Social problems cannot always be solved using only artistic actions, but it offers a counter point to rationalist thinking and creates a more versatile idea of many people where diverse usage of the senses is joined together (Bardy, 2007). Society's efforts towards efficiency and strong economic thinking overshadow the value of creativity (Känkänen, 2006). We can also speak about art-based developmental direction which can be seen both in Finland and internationally (Bardy & Känkänen, 2005). Culture and art are seen more strongly as a part of the promotion of humankind's well-being. In the conception of development there has been a pragmatic change, which means that rational reasoning and economic values have proven insufficient in creating the individual and communal creativity and spirit building (Bardy, 2002). Arts education should be strengthened at school to bring in artistic thinking and acting as a bigger part of life skills and all-round education (Bardy, 2007). Arts education teaches how to understand and handle multilevel phenomena, also present in social life, through the arts. The arts are not separated from life; art should be present as a part of everyday life and a natural part of life (Sederholm, 2007). We can even say that thinking through creative activity is a way of existing and living (Karppinen, 2008).

For some children, functional or artistic work can be the only way for them to approach and connect to themselves and their emotional memories. Creative activity offers a metaphoric cover or a symbolic distance to handle issues. In the same connection, we can talk about the birth of free space which includes ambivalence toward interaction, which means aimlessness and handling it through artistic activities. This kind of experience enables exploring one's own emotional movements and understanding one's own story (Heino et al., 2013).

The art and skill subjects bring counterbalance and offer different ways of working compared to core subjects. The pupils may be creative and express themselves more than, for example, in math or language classes. Art and skills subjects also offer a good environment for promoting educational targets and issues which aim at pupils' spiritual growth. The captivating digital world of today is a pleasing environment for children and young people and an instrument for spending time and learning. The

digital world competes for children's interest with activities in the same way as in the art and skill in the art and skill subjects. Chatting face-to-face and doing things together have been transmitted to the virtual world (Pulkkinen & Kanervio, 2014). Art and skill subjects have a lot of potential; they strengthen identity and offer social experiences which create trust and well-being (Liikanen, 2009).

The Well-being Promoting Influences of Art and Skill Subjects

PISA research focuses on mathematical skills, natural sciences, and literacy. It does not measure pupils' well-being, creativity, or artistic development. Because PISA only measures some sectors of school subjects, their significance is secured because Finland wants to remain first in international comparisons. The issues affecting art and skill subjects are difficult to measure. Nevertheless, although the administration promoted creativity and creative activity to a level of high value more than ten years ago, not much was done to promote artistic activity or creativity during that time. In the report of the Ministry of Education's working group, aims to add to the number of arts and skills at school by adding one lesson to the earlier curricula are merely a titular addition. Artistic activity strengthens cultural abilities and creative thinking, which are useful also for creative economic development and promoting Finnish competitiveness. The status of arts education has weakened even though more and more well-being promoting impacts of art and creativity have been explored and understood. The Finnish International Society for Education through Arts (InSEA) underlines protection of Finnish cultural know-how in the law on elementary teaching, prevention of marginalization, development of internationally validated arts education and protecting it, assuring qualified arts teaching, and increasing the number of lessons in art and skill subjects at school (Suomen InSEA ry, 2012).

Juvonen (2008) validates the significance of art and skill subjects for pedagogic well-being. The art and skill subjects can offer solutions to students not enjoying being at school, having low motivation, and experiencing dissatisfaction at school. The school should balance theoretical and practical learning. The art and skill subjects offer experiential learning with emotions, enabling development of theoretic learning processes and greater opportunities to gain feelings of success without strict performance pressure. This keeps motivation high and may make otherwise dull subjects also feel increasingly significant. The art and skill subjects also provide communality and common activities, which lead to a better classroom atmosphere and acceptance of oneself and others. To an individual pupil, creative activity offers a possibility of self-expression and finding one's own abilities, using, and developing them. The art and skill subjects also enable differentiating and learning from pupil's own starting points. The everyday life of school changes and becomes more meaningful with creative activities and may even offer therapeutic experiences in school life (Juvonen 2008).

Possibilities for self-expression and use of imagination are important to pupils. They see the usefulness of art and skill subjects in their free time and for their future. The subjects bring variety to schoolwork and may help some pupils who have difficulties with the core subjects. Similarly, the pupil can gather energy for new challenges. During art and skill subject lessons, a pupil may find new qualities both in themselves and in peers' skills and behaviour. In the lessons new qualities are learned about

friends and the lesson is a place for collaboration. Art and skills activities help in understanding oneself and others and accepting more and greater differences (Tornikoski & Ylämäki, 2009).

Motivation-pedagogy can be used to support pupils' human development and participation in common activities. Similarly, pupils dare to try and survive challenging situations. The pedagogy is based on arousing the conscience, participation, and social creativity. The aim is to make the pupil become enthusiastic in making things with their own hands, practicing skills, being curious and courageous in front of new issues and pushing one's own borders. This helps in developing a skill to meet problems in a creative way, which helps in many sectors of life (Karppinen, 2008) (see Figure 1).

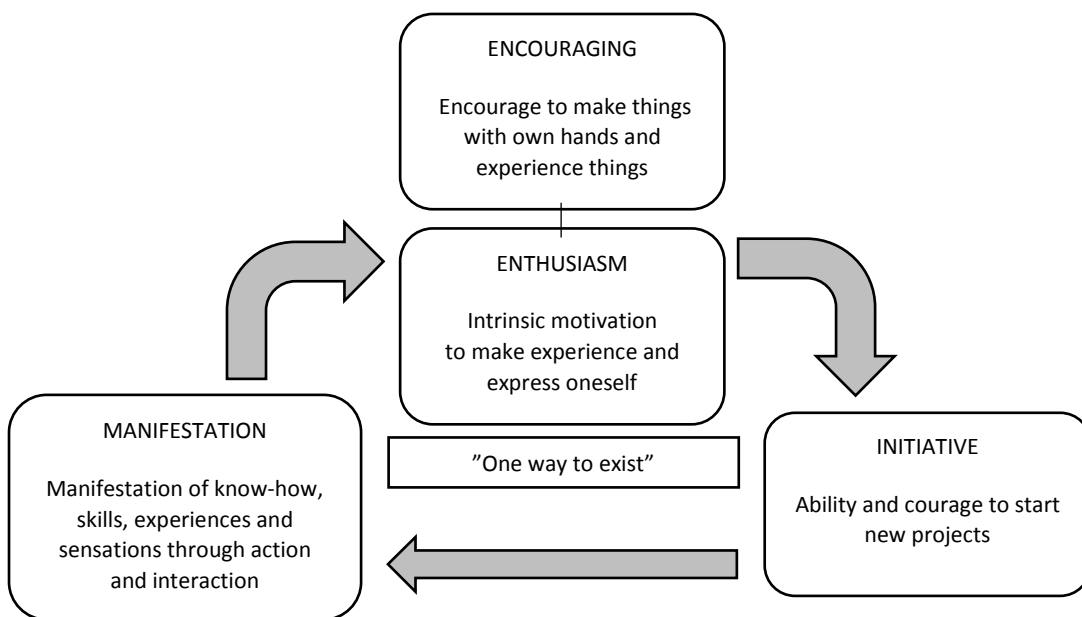


Figure 1. The circle of encouragement in art and skill subjects (Karppinen, 2008, 103)

A. Music

In music, pupils gain versatile experiences of musical activities and partnership in cultural issues. Pupils learn to interpret different significances of music, improve musical skills, and develop a positive relationship with music and music as a hobby. Music promotes comprehensive growth, ability to collaborate with others and skills of expressing oneself. The subject is harmonized through pupils' own targets of interest, themes, other subjects, celebrations, and projects (POPS, 2014).

Music offers pupils a possibility of self-expression, communal experiences, and creativity. School music education may lead to taking music as a hobby and give one a way to enjoy life and become happy (Ruokonen & Grönholm, 2005). Lilja-Viherlampi (2007) sees music education's therapeutic potential. Therapeutic pedagogy starts from the teacher's therapeutic educational attitude, showing pedagogical loving in different situations during music lessons. The teacher sees and recognizes what kind of developmental and educational opportunities music offers. Then it is possible to

support a child's future harmonizing qualities if the child's well-being has caused worries (Lilja-Viherlampi, 2007).

B. Visual art

The aim of visual art education is to guide pupils in exploring and expressing reality through art. In addition to that, the pupils are guided to see and understand the visual culture surrounding them. Learning is experiential, multi-sensual and functional. Pupils are guided to use different instruments, materials, technologies, and ways of expression in their actions. When the pupil produces and interprets pictures, his/her identity grows as well as cultural skills and communality experiences strengthen. Pupils can use their imagination, creativity, and curiosity for experiments in visual arts lessons. A visual art improves critical thinking, encourages social influencing, and offers abilities to act locally (POPS, 2014).

C. Craft

Craft is a multi-material school subject, where pupils learn to manage a whole handicraft process using craft expression, design, and technology. Pupils learn versatile skills and knowledge which they can take advantage of in everyday life. Spatial perceptive skills, sense of touch, motor skills, creativity and skills of designing are developed in crafts. The subject strengthens self-esteem and produces enjoyment. In crafts, pupils can fulfil themselves also communally. In addition to these, it also brings up pupils to become ethical, aware, participating, skilful, self-appreciative and entrepreneurial citizens who have know-how in crafts and willingness to develop craft culture (POPS, 2014).

The primary target is not learning different techniques or skills, but to learn something about oneself, others, culture and possibilities through self-expression and interaction (Karppinen, 2005). Seitamaa-Hakkarainen (2009) discovered that the motives and significances of crafts are connected to the joy of making, creativity and building of new significances, instead of simply making products. Crafts, like all other arts and skills, can have the influence of strengthening school enjoyment. Joint working, arousing and using enthusiasm can make crafts an important source of expression and joy (Karppinen, 2005). Crafts can also produce feelings of empowerment, support human growth and most of all enrich our lives (Karppinen, 2008). Crafts have therapeutic dimensions which will be used in utilizing psychic well-being, preventative mental health work and as a way of designing interventions for the future. Craft is still important as a hobby and in educational work (Pöllänen, 2008). In craft science Pöllänen and Kröger (2005) have discovered that crafts develop life managing skills and can work as a preventer of marginalization.

D. Physical education

Physical education at school aims to promote pupils' comprehensive well-being and build a positive attitude toward one's own body. Positive experiences, physical activity and team working are in the centre of physical education lessons. Physical education supports healthy ways of life and promotes social approval and communality. Pupils get information and experience different forms of exercise. School physical education helps students develop their skills in interaction, enhances responsibility, emotional development and recognizing their own emotions. The aim is to develop pupils' self-

conception through exercise. Physical education offers opportunities to feel joy, participation, and versatile physical activity. (POPS, 2014).

Correctly executed physical education offers pupils positive experiences which lift self-esteem and support psychic well-being. Also, in the subject, students learn to handle negative feelings. The acquired socio-emotional skills can be transported to other sectors of life. Self-conception develops in physical education through trusting in oneself, social relations, and one's own abilities. A positive attitude toward one's own body belongs to self-conception, too. By trying, self-reflection and learning new issues, a pupil increases the experiences of success, learning new things and progressing (Jaakkola, Sääkslahti & Liukkonen, 2009).

The Object, Questions and Acquiring the Data of the Research

This research examines elementary classroom teacher students' (N=10) experiences of art and skill subjects at school and in teacher education and the significance of these experiences in their life and attitudes. The students wrote 3–4-page-long narrative stories about their experiences. They also considered the influence of these experiences on their later attitudes towards these school subjects. The research applies to the field of phenomenological touch, as a study of experiences aims to add to teachers' understanding of the importance of art and skill subjects. The research questions are:

- *What kind of experiences have you had in art and skill subjects during your own school years and in teacher education studies?*
- *How have these experiences influenced your later attitudes toward these subjects?*

The students who participated in this research were 3rd- to 6th-year students from the University of Eastern Finland. The data was collected in spring 2019. The students were asked to try to remember experiences from both their school years and from their teacher education.

Results

We present the results in the same order as these school subjects were presented in the theoretic background of this article. Typical of the memories about art and skill subjects at school is that they are polarized: the respondents have experienced these subjects as either strongly positive or similarly negative, depending on how they assessed themselves as being good or bad in the subject area. The expectancy-value motivation theory explains this so that when the student expects to survive well in the subject and appreciates it, their motivation rises and the results become better, too (compare Suomi, 2019; Mäkinen, 2020). Because art and skills subjects are very personal and emotions, skills and abilities are shown so that they are easy to be compared to the others, it is easy to find a natural explanation for the polarization phenomenon. Especially music and physical education traditionally are subjects where strong emotions and experiences are aroused. In both of these subjects, the skills of others can easily be evaluated, and if the teacher's work is not correct, equal, discreet, and fair, the emotions are often at the surface.

This age-group's (22–25 years old) school years seemingly did not include much digitalization, or it does not show in the memories of art and skill subjects. Actually, the computer applications for these school subjects are brought into use no earlier than today, although they have been available for years. The respondents' memories talk about quite traditional schoolwork with traditional gender models, for example in the subject craft. For many respondents, art and skill subject lessons were the highlight of the whole school day, which inspired and motivated schoolwork on a general level, too (Compare Juvonen, 2008).

A. Music

The results show that there are not many exact memories from elementary-level classes. Memories are more general like, "all art and skill subjects were nice in elementary school". What the participants remember best was singing together when the teacher played a piano accompaniment.

I do not remember anything about the music lessons in the first and second grade. I think that there probably were not specially music lessons at all, maybe we sang in other lessons every now and then. Music in the upper grades was one-sided, playing the recorder, simple drum accompaniments, small presentations, and singing together. I liked to sing together as the teacher accompanied with piano. (1W)

Music lessons were in the music classroom. Music was mostly singing, playing the recorder and the kantele. Later, we played with rhythm instruments and sang karaoke. I remember best the summer opening celebration for which we practiced songs. (2W)

I liked music in elementary school. I am not especially musical, but I liked to sing with the class when the teacher played piano. (5W)

There were many more memories from the music classes in the higher grades, especially about playing different musical instruments. This means that pupils were offered versatile musical experiences and activities (compare POPS, 2014). Singing with the teacher's piano accompaniment was a safe and enjoyable way of participating, which means that music education had also a therapeutic perspective (compare Lilja-Viherlampi, 2007).

Music also raises feelings of uncertainty and unsureness and one's own abilities and skills are often doubted. The experiences from music lessons are often imprinted with a fear that the others in the class would laugh if one failed at playing some musical instrument or singing. There has been a lot of singing in music lessons, which is natural as singing is the basic way of action in music education.

I have never had music as a hobby and now when I should be able to teach it, I am quite uncertain. I can somehow play piano, but for example guitar or drums are out of my skills range. I believe that I can carry out music lessons well for elementary classes, and thanks to university music teaching I am luckily interested in music. During my earlier school days, I never experienced any trauma from music learning, although I remember trying to avoid playing some instruments. For example, I never played the drums

during music lessons simply because I was afraid that the others would laugh at me. (3W)

Playing different instruments has been a nice common activity for some, while for others it has been an obligatory dull grind. One respondent explained that their enthusiasm and interest in music have risen during teacher education. As a whole, it can be seen that teacher education's music studies have left the students with some uncertainty about their own skills, especially in playing multiple musical instruments. In teacher studies, there is a limited number of lessons during which these instruments can be taught.

Studies were fun also in music, as there were good instruments and other mediums for playing (music school). We sang a lot, but we never had singing tests. I remember playing in bands. Through dance I have gained lots of know-how also concerning music (sense of rhythm, elements of music, genres, etc.). These skills have also helped later in other studies. (4W)

I remember playing the metallophone in a school celebration and it left good memories. From high school I remember that we learned the basics of many musical instruments. (5W)

In addition to memories about singing and playing instruments, many respondents wrote about their thoughts of their own musicality and musical abilities. Singing tests were still used during the respondents' school time and there are strong contradictory memories about them. For some respondents, singing tests did not cause any kind of trauma, but for others they caused lifelong damage to their musical self-conception. Many respondents wrote that their musical self-conception either collapsed at once due to singing tests or it faded out little by little due to the teacher's comments. The teacher education's singing tests also caused severe damage and trauma for some respondents. This is an issue that has been identified in earlier research, too (See Juvonen & Anttila, 2007).

High school music was OK, but I have never been musically talented. The lessons were sometimes dull and frustrating. The singing test did not traumatize me, but I think that it was unnecessary as an obligatory activity at school. Luckily, there were only 1–2 obligatory music courses. (1W)

Music at high school was nice and interesting. I liked singing and got interested in guitar playing. In our own classes' music lessons, I was not participating, but I ventured into singing and playing during the voluntary music lessons. (2W)

Music was a subject I imagined I was to be good at, but little by little, maybe in the 4th to 6th grades I noticed that I maybe was not so good. I got the grade 8.5 in the singing test and I compared the result to my friends and noticed that they had got better grades. I remember once practising with one friend to play a drum accompaniment and the teacher commented that the rhythm should not accelerate. Neither of us learned to play without accelerating the rhythm and a more musical pupil got to play the drums and we were given other instruments. Singing tests, I remember from elementary upper classes and in high school: oppressive experiences. But the

most oppressive experience was the singing test in teacher education. There was no accompaniment to lean on to support singing. Trembling from nervousness, the singing went totally poorly, and the rest of the day was spent crying at home. As a result, I could not sing for months, not even at home. Now I sing sometimes, a little when I am alone, but never when someone else could possibly hear me. The singing test totally collapsed my musical self-conception to zero, and surely, I will not sing in a classroom or teach music. Failure in this singing test was the worst humiliation of my life. (6W)

I remember that I felt I was good in music, but in singing I was lousy. Singing tests occurred in elementary school and in 6th grade we had a recorder playing test. The singing test was simply torture but recorder playing I liked because I was good at it. I had a little more difficult song to play for the test than the other pupils, which motivated me even more. I still can play the song "Under the northern star" by heart with the recorder. In upper classes we had a singing test which was torture again, but otherwise we played together which was nice. (7M)

In high school, music courses were merely an obligatory evil which culminated in a singing test. In the test an optional song was sung to the teacher using a microphone. The experience was terrible, but I imagined that this would be the last time I would have to take a singing test. But what happened was that during the university teacher education I had to do a singing in test in the music teacher's office without accompaniment. Certainly, feeling down about myself was not as difficult as it was in high school. (8M)

Visual art and music classes left me experiences of incompetence and failure: the issues were not practiced, and we should have had the skills and succeed right away. I notice that this influences my feelings about myself even today as a musician or visual artist. (10W)

Music education during primary and secondary school as a whole seems to have had a significant influence on musical self-conception. The singing tests seemed to have been inhumane and terrifying for the pupils as well as to the teacher education students. Singing tests have traditionally been a way of abusing power and putting down pupils and students. The tradition may have lived on because music teachers have wanted to take revenge for their own negative experiences during their studies at Sibelius Academy or other music teacher education institutions. No reasonable, rational explanation can be found to justify including singing tests in modern-day education programmes. On the contrary, unnecessary singing tests cause traumatization and fear towards music, which creates changes in attitudes in the negative direction.

I went to an artistic expression high school which was open to all kinds of people. I chose several music courses and enjoyed the creative atmosphere. (2W)

Art orientation and interest in art and skill subjects united pupils. In high school, the teachers were very encouraging and motivating. After high

school I wanted to carry on my studies in the art focused UEF campus in Savonlinna. Wonderful memories from art and skill subjects during the school days! (4W)

In teacher education, it was nice to have piano lessons. I learned an enormous amount and felt successful. I plan to develop my playing skills further in my free time. I would like to learn more instruments. (10W)

The pupils form their concepts about themselves as actors in different school subjects and they seem to carry that concept in their minds until the adulthood.

B. Visual art

There were few memories from elementary school visual art lessons. Generally speaking, visual art was liked a little more than music, but also visual art had caused traumatic experiences for some of the respondents. Mostly the criticism focused on different types of evaluating and marking systems. Comparing artwork to that of others also caused negative experiences and anguish for respondents.

Visual art was versatile and nice, the evaluation system from one + to three +++ was not nice, it was unfair. (1W)

I do not remember anything from visual art lessons, they were thoroughly planned, and they did not leave room for creativity. In upper classes, art and skill subjects were rather painful because comparing took place all the time and bullying got worse and worse. (2W)

Visual art lessons usually are quite free, and teachers allow quiet discussion with friends in the classroom. Still, one respondent wrote that her class was so loud that all the lessons seemed meaningless. Also, too sharp critique of the artwork felt bad and one of the respondents wrote that there was no room left for a pupil's own creativity in visual art lessons. Comparison to other pupils' works seems to have created all respondents quite a lot of stress. Positive experiences which can turn self-esteem upside down have also occurred, for example, due to success in a school drawing contest. This kind of public positive feedback has a very strong influence on an individual's self-conception.

When I was small, I liked drawing and painting a lot, visual art lessons were nice, but in upper classes our class was so restless that I did not like any subjects at school. (3W)

I did not gain good memories from elementary school visual art lessons: the works were so strictly critiqued and there was no room for creativity. All works were supposed to look just the same, and the comparison between the works was merciless both via voice and inside my own head. At the end of elementary school all the works were collected together for the teacher for evaluation. Then the teacher looked at each work for a couple of seconds and gave a grade for each work. The final mark was the average of the numbers given. This was depressing, I felt like crying, and I was ashamed as it was the only feedback given, there was no room to develop. I thought that I was a lousy drawer, and I did not draw in my free time. The change came along with the school's drawing contest, where I was second best with my dragon drawing. I got beautiful wooden colour pens as a prize. (10M)

Many of the visual art teachers have been very nice and much liked persons, which the respondents remember even more often than the things which took place in the lessons.

In high school the teachers encouraged creativity and did not interfere with pupil's abilities. (2W)

My secondary school teacher succeeded in encouraging me to work with the pictures, the teacher was a liked person and memorable. The high school teacher was quite original, but very much liked. (8M)

In memories of visual art, it seems obvious that the teacher had a strong impact on pupils as an encourager or on the other hand as someone who stifled enthusiasm. All kinds of comparisons and evaluation seem to have been quite counterproductive according to many respondents' experiences, but still, there were also positive experiences. A high mark in the school report was a good supporter and positive experience, and a lifter of self-esteem.

In secondary school the teacher compared the works again and my enthusiasm ceased. (10W)

All works were evaluated numerically, the situation was quite stressing, but I always got marks 9–10 and that is why the experience was empowering. (7M)

The first memory was a paper coloured with crayon. I was very self-critical, nothing seemed to be a success. I was quite sensitive to evaluative feedback. (9W)

The experiences gained from visual art lessons are still affecting respondents' attitudes towards the subject, as well as their self-conceptions.

The experiences from elementary school have been wide-ranging, it is good to become conscious of them and start learning new issues. (5W)

Some respondents experienced this task as the one that made them aware of the impact of experiences in elementary school and school at any level, as well as attitudes towards different school subjects and self-esteem.

C. Craft

Craft education has aroused many positive memories, but the traditional division of boys doing technological education and girls dealing with soft materials seem to be clear. Quite many girl respondents seem to be uncertain of their skills to deal with hard materials and some even expressed their fear of loud woodworking machines. Several respondents said that their warm relationship with crafts originated from a hobby which started at home when tinkering and mom or grandmother familiarized them to knitting.

Handicraft was very nice; working with soft materials I remember myself making elf-pillows. (1W)

I liked handicraft (textile works) but when dealing with hard materials (wood) I felt uncertain. Different drilling machines and other machines scared me. During woodworking, I liked sawing and painting, the kind of work where loud machines were not needed. (6W)

I have been tinkering, making handiworks, crocketed and carved wood since childhood. Craft and visual art have been my favourite school subjects since elementary school, and they still are today. I wish to take craft as my major subject. Behind my liking of crafts is my enthusiasm, the encouragement from home has been much more important than what the teachers have been doing. Because of my handicraft hobby, I have always felt like I am good at it. (9W)

In the best possible situation, craft has offered a lot of experiences of success; empowerment and use of one's own creativity (compare Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2009). Many respondents had handicraft as a hobby also in their free time. They also had many warm memories of their craft teachers.

In secondary school craft was still my favourite subject, I took all the voluntary courses. The teacher was really nice, she encouraged taking craft as a hobby during free time, too. In the 8th grade, I made a sweater and in 9th grade I made a rug. The worst thing in high school was that there were not craft as a school subject. I liked visual art because we made things which had a connection to craft like printing on a bag and building miniature models. (7W)

In craft I was always at the top of my class and I favoured it as the best school subject. The atmosphere in the lessons was wonderful, the teacher cared about the pupils personally, creativity and our own designing were favoured, and the works succeeded well. Experiences of success, wonderful teachers, communal working and as a result also the best marks on the school report card. The same continued in secondary school and also in free time. (10W)

Some respondents have also had negative experiences of craft lessons at school. The projects required too much time to complete. The traditional division into boys' hard materials and girls' soft materials seems to have been clear to this group of respondents. Gender-oriented craft seems to be alive and well at least when these respondents were at school 5–10 years ago. One respondent suffered a lot from being left-handed. The teacher did not have skills to teach her in textile works. The teacher's yelling, of course, does not help in liking any school subject.

Craft was sometimes boring, and the projects required too much time to complete. Too much concentration was needed for one project. (1W)

The girls were doing textile projects and the boys did woodworking projects. (2W)

Craft I never liked. I am left-handed and I clearly remember that in the elementary school teachers could not teach me in handicraft because of me being left-handed. I remember difficult situations from craft lessons, and I

was even afraid to go to craft lessons when I knew that I cannot do the assignments, and nobody could help me. I did not like woodworking either. (5W)

Most of the craft lessons went wrong because of the misbehaving girls in my class who tried to make the very volatile craft teacher explode. These girls succeeded in their aim too well and too often. (2W)

Craft left me with the most negative memories. In elementary school I was enthusiastic in handicraft, but the secondary school teacher started yelling at me when I could not use the sewing machine. I started skipping craft classes already in elementary school. (6W)

I had bad experiences using soft materials in craft lessons, and I started to be afraid of hard material lessons, too. I am afraid and I get stressed from craft teaching. (3W)

I still do not like craft, and I cannot imagine myself teaching craft up from third grade. (5W)

Many respondents had taken a negative attitude towards craft, and it still exists even today though several years or even decades have passed since they gained the experiences causing a negative attitude.

D. Physical education

Physical education is, according to several studies, the most favoured school subject, but many respondents have also negative experiences from physical education lessons. Those who felt they were sporty or physically talented usually liked physical education as a school subject, too. Many respondents have enjoyed physical education lessons, and this subject has been the best among all other school subjects, and they have nothing but good things to say about their teachers. This means that the physical education has been carried out in the correct way (compare Jaakkola, Sääkslahti & Liukkonen, 2009).

I have good memories from physical education, I was always good in it and succeeded and enjoyed the lessons. The teachers were wonderful, and I got many experiences of succeeding and working communally. The old traditional dances were marvellous, and I enjoyed every moment. (2W)

In craft and physical education, I have been able to shine and flourish and had experiences of success which show that I am at my best dealing with craft and physical education. I chose physical education as voluntary courses, even though the group games were not my favourites. (1W)

Learning the old traditional dances at physical education lessons has been the best experience for some respondents and the worst for some others. This clearly shows the polarization of the subject. Running the Cooper's test and all the other testing and measuring of performances have raised negative feelings, but some, almost professional athlete-level respondents have enjoyed these the most. The competitions between schools have offered extra positive experiences for some of the respondents.

I have always been very sporty, and I only have positive experiences from physical education lessons. The best experiences came from the 1500 m running test, because I was almost a professional athlete. Nowadays I understand why not all pupils liked these tests. (3W)

I am sporty and I have been competing and am target oriented, and in the competitions between the schools I was always the best, I liked the running tests, and I won Finnish championships. (5W)

Positive feedback from teachers has supported sportsman-like behaviour until the present day for one respondent. Also, good marks on the school grade report have been encouraging and reassuring. Some respondents have felt that they were good at every sport taught during their physical education lessons at school.

The teacher said that I was the best physical education pupil of all time. This recognition has affected my life strongly; everything connected to sports makes me believe that this is where I am at my best. 6W

Physical education lessons were the highlights of the day, I was good in sport, swimming, gymnastics, and skiing were my favourites. (7W)

I started playing volleyball when I was 5 years old; sports have always been close to my heart. My physical education grade was 10. We won the volleyball competitions against other schools. I acted like a teacher when there was volleyball in physical education lessons. (8M)

I liked skating and skiing the most, which I also did in my free time. Group games and apparatus gymnastics were my aversions. (9W)

The respondents had quite a lot of negative memories from physical education lessons. In winter sports, skating with lousy skates in very low temperatures below zero and long skiing tours with difficult uphill slopes created negative experiences.

I have the worst memories from winter sports (the skates were lousy, and it was colder than -20 degrees Celsius) and in skiing we ran long tours, and the uphill slopes were so terribly difficult. Secondary school physical education: I liked the variability, floorball and track and field sports were nice but bad memories I got from team division. (1W)

Division into teams for team games was often done in the way that the two best players chose participants for their teams and worse players were chosen last. This caused trauma for many respondents.

Ball games offered bad experiences as the most popular pupils chose the teams. (3W)

Physical education became my aversion because I felt I was worse than the others. I was always the last one chosen to teams. Even now sports feel unpleasant, although a nice teacher succeeded in lifting my motivation a little. (4W)

Also, a clear division into good and lousy, continuing evaluation and measuring performances in sport, as well as a bad and competitive atmosphere, caused bad experiences for some of the respondents. In these cases, the teacher had not succeeded in supporting the pupils' physical education self-conception toward a positive direction; quite the opposite (compare Jaakkola, Sääkslahti & Liukkonen, 2009).

Later we got a different teacher, and the terrible division into poor and good athletes started, I belonged to the poor group, as I was bullied. The teacher did not care at all; he rather threw more water onto the mill. The physical education lessons were utter pain, full of assessment and discrimination. I was one of the poorest because of my weak self-confidence. The physical education lessons were divided between boys and girls. The most terrible classes were the old traditional dance lessons, I became an outsider again. In my self-assessment I was totally lousy in everything. (2W)

The high school physical education teacher killed my interest in sports by favouring such pupils who had sports as a hobby and who were on some sports team training their skills. Only they could get marks 9–10 and for the others the highest mark was 8. I always got 6 or 7 from the high school condition testing which caused a feeling of failure and did not strengthen my motivation. In high school physical education lessons, the competition was continuous, and the prickly teacher followed all the time who was the best. I was almost every time the last and slowest which caused me to not be physically active or doing any sport in my free time. Skiing, skating, and biking have stayed as occasional hobbies, but I do not want to compete or compare my performances. (9M)

In High school we played football and the teacher was sitting by the field drinking coffee which was terrible because I did not like team sports at all. Teachers, their attitude, feedback, and tasks have an important significance according to my own experience. (10W)

Unfair evaluation and teacher's despicable behaviour and favouring some at the expense of others as well as the justification of giving poor marks in the school report are sources of negative experiences for many respondents. Competitiveness and comparison to other pupils have also caused a considerable dissatisfaction among some respondents.

Discussion

The art and skill subjects have a strong influence on pupils. The strength of the influence is caused by the subjects producing such actions and products which are easy to evaluate by anyone. Judging by the respondents' narratives, it often seems that teachers have acted incorrectly and discretely in every situation. The negative experiences affect building attitudes which are quite permanent in nature and these attitudes may remain for the rest of the whole individual's life. For example, singing tests in music classes have caused such severe trauma for many people that they had never got over it. When one's musical self-conception is damaged, it is very difficult to mend it. The experiences of having been put down follow the individual until

adulthood, labelling the person as unmusical, a lousy sportsman, poor handicraft maker or bad drawer. These negative experiences often influence the individual's whole personality, his positiveness and negativity and whether the person is optimistic or pessimistic. The attitudes also mirror the courage of starting a new kind of tasks and meeting new people.

Curriculum may set many important and enviable tasks in art and skill subjects, but it seems that only in some cases these aims have been reached. In some cases, teachers' actions have traumatized many pupils and have created a negative attitude towards the subject. All kinds of competitiveness, comparison or direct criticism have aroused negative feelings towards the subjects. This can be seen clearly in physical education and visual arts, but also in music in the form of singing tests and also in craft in various ways. The negative experiences obtained during school time have had a strong attitude-moulding impact which can be seen still affecting the minds of the respondents. On the other hand, those whose experiences have been positive still have positive attitudes toward those school subjects and they show their willingness to learn more about these subjects.

This research reveals the strong influence of teachers and their activities as attitude moulders and as producers of experiences which leave their mark on the whole school experience. This issue must be considered more seriously in future teacher education programmes so that to avoid traumatizing and negative experiences in school art and skill subject education. There has been some research on what a good music teacher is like in pupils' opinion. Pupils do not expect to have a highly skilled musician as their teacher. They want a person who is nice, appreciates the pupils and is pedagogically competent (Mäkinen, 2020). How to train such a teacher? Mäkinen (2020) identifies three ways to solve this problem: 1) supervised teaching practice, 2) integrated artistic and physical education, and 3) taking into account wishes of students.

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