

# DISCUSSION ABOUT DIFFERENT APPROCHES OF HAPPINESS AND RELATION WITH EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

Happiness is a very vast area in itself, the study started with the development of human civilization. People have their own views on happiness, mainly studied by positive psychology. At the same time, we can also connect it with Philosophical, economic, political, social, religious, spiritual, cultural and heredity issues. There is currently a new ideology which combines it with education. Through this research paper, the researcher is trying to establish a relation with the education of happiness while studying different points of view of happiness.

Happiness is the common goal of all mankind and it is also the most elusive one. But there is nothing absolute about the concept of happiness. It is an internal experience which is totally subjective and psychological. So, the word happiness is interchangeably used with subjective well-being and psychological well-being. Earlier, in most of the studies, happiness was not directly studied and the concept of happiness has been drawn from subjective well-being and psychological well-being to some extent.

**Keywords:-**happiness, views, positive psychology, education

## Introduction

Since sixth century B.C., happiness has been considered as a primary and necessary component of eudemonia or the worthwhile life (Taylor, 1998). Today, this belief continues with greater emphasis on subjective-wellbeing or happiness. Growth in the field of subjective well-being reflects larger societal trends concerning the value of the individual; the importance of subjective views in evaluating life and the recognition that well-being necessarily includes positive elements that transcend economic prosperity. Economic growth has been a central policy objective of most governments over the last fifty or so years. Part of their overt rationale has been that by increasing national and individual incomes, people have more choice and the ability to pursue that choice. However, as an increasing number of commentators have identified, the relationship between growing economic prosperity and both individual happiness and social well-being that may have existed in 'developed countries' appears to have broken down (see, for example, Frey, and Stutzer 2002)

the effects of shared and non-shared environment on social attitudes were overwhelming and the effect of genetics is negligible. So, it becomes important to study the environmental factors in terms of personality, family environment, parent-child relationship, social support, religion, culture and the most important attitudinal factors to find out the factors contributing to happiness.

the role of nature & nurture seems to be equally important, hence, it would be in order, to determine the role of environmental factors in happiness disposition e.g. the contribution of Religious-Cultural factors in the determination of happiness amongst Bangladeshi & Bhutanese. In Buddhist teaching, when people reach a state of "nirvana" they have reached a peacefulness entailing "complete harmony, balance, and equilibrium"(Sangharakshita, 1991).

educators for as Nel Noddings (2003: 1) has commented, 'Happiness and education are, properly, intimately connected. Happiness should be an aim of education, and a good education should contribute significantly to personal and collective happiness'.

*"Happiness is the supreme object of existence"*

*J. Gilchrist Lawson*

## Philosophical point of view :-

Philosophers often define happiness in terms of living a good life. Happiness has also been defined as a state of well-being, characterized by emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. In *The Republic*, Plato asserts that those who are moral are the only ones who may be truly happy. Thus, one must understand the cardinal virtues, particularly justice. Through the thought

experiment of the Ring of Gyges, Plato comes to the conclusion that one who abuses power enslaves himself to his appetites, while the man who chooses not to remain rationally in control of himself, and therefore is happy.

Philosophers and religious thinkers often define happiness in terms of living a good life, or Flourishing, rather than simply as an emotion. Happiness in this sense was used to translate the Greek eudemonia, and is still used in virtue ethics. There has been a transition over time from emphasis on the happiness of virtue to the virtue of happiness. Since the turn of the millennium, the human flourishing approach, advanced particularly by Amartya Sen has attracted increasing interest in psychological, especially prominent in the work of Martin Seligman, Ed Diener and Ruut Veenhoven, and international development and medical research in the work of Paul Anand.

#### **Psychological point of view :-**

Positive psychology has brought awareness to the study of individual happiness and the obvious and potential benefits to society. Identifying variables responsible for and correlated with the feeling of well-being or happiness has become an important topic in many areas of psychological research. Researchers such as Cummins et al. (2009) go as far as to suggest that when individuals are happier whole societies function better.

The concept of happiness is one that has been defined by researchers and lay people in many ways, ranging from life satisfaction, a sense of well-being, to brief momentary pleasures. However, in the literature, happiness has been broadly described as positive subjective experiences. Using frequency of positive experiences as an indicator of happiness has empirical support. In a large number of studies, measuring happiness in a variety of ways, it was found that happy people are those that report feeling mild to moderate positive moods and emotions the majority of the time. The consistency of positive affect appears to be more important in defining happiness than intensity (see Diener et al. 1985; Diener et al. 1991). Regardless of definitions used by researcher over the years, the evidence appears to be quite consistent; being happy is advantageous to the individual in a multiple of life domains. It is well known in the positive psychology literature that increased happiness is related to multiple benefits including better mental and physical health, (see Lyubomirsky et al. 2005). A number of positive health behaviours have been associated with happiness including better dietary habits and the maintenance of normal body weight (Chang and Nayga 2010; Piqueras et al. 2011), better oral health practices (Dumitrescu et al. 2010), and being more physically active (Piqueras et al. 2011). Psychologist Martin Seligman asserts that happiness is not solely derived from external, momentary pleasures, and provides the acronym PERMA to summarize Positive Psychology's core relational findings: humans seem happiest when they have

1. *Pleasure* (tasty food, warm baths, etc.),
2. *Engagement* (or flow, the absorption of an enjoyed yet challenging activity),
3. *Relationships* (social ties have turned out to be extremely reliable indicator of happiness),
4. *Meaning* (a perceived quest or belonging to something bigger), and
5. *Accomplishments* (having realized tangible goals).

Martin Seligman (2000) gave the positive psychological definition of happiness as consisting of both positive emotions (like comfort) and positive activities (like absorption). He presents three categories of positive emotions.

- a) **Past:** feeling of satisfaction, contentment, pride and serenity.
- b) **Present:** (e.g.) enjoying the taste of food, glee at listening to music, absorption in reading.
- c) **Future:** feeling of optimism, hope, trust, faith and confidence.

These are three categories of present positive emotions:

- a) Bodily pleasure, e.g. enjoying the taste of food.
- b) Higher pleasure, e.g. glee at listening to music.
- c) Gratification, e.g. absorption in reading.

*"A Human being is not one on pursuit of happiness, but rather in search of a reason to be happy".*

*(Frankl, 1984)*

#### **Economic point of view :-**

The industrial organizational literature has happiness correlated with greater productivity, higher salaries and greater success at work (Hoggard 2005; Lyubomirsky et al. 2005). Happiness is correlated with individuals being more energetic, sociable, altruistic, original and having more fulfilling marriages, friendships and a longer life (Martin 2005; Norrish and Vella-Brodrick 2008). The individual benefits can pale in comparison to the potential societal gains of having a population comprised of such happy and therefore, "successful" individuals. Accomplishing the goals set out by one's society is often the operational definition of such success. Most societies value intelligence and academic accomplishment and therefore the relationship to happiness is a well investigated one. The relationship between the concept of happiness or positive affect and the intellectual ability of university

students. The interest in happiness has mostly been in the relationship between intelligence and positive affect. Some have found a positive relationship (Diener and Fujita 1995; Fox and Spector 2000; Kashdan and Yuen 2007) some a negative relationship (Block and Kremen 1996) and others, none at all (Chamorro-Premuzic et al. ...

### Religious point of view:-

In Buddhists ideology, true peace cannot be known, and such existence without peace is considered suffering (Sangharakhsito, 1991). This suffering can be lessened only upon reaching nirvana. Accordingly, nirvana is a state in which self is freed from desire for anything (Schumann, 1974). It should be noted that both pre mortal and post mortal nirvana may be likened to the idea of the ultimate good life". Seeking the good of others is woven throughout the teaching of Buddha. In one passage, the Buddha is quoted as saying, "Wander for the gain of the many, for the happiness of die many, out of compassion for the world" (Sangharakshita, 1991).

Gita deals with the subject of what is happiness, how to remain happy even in the midst of challenging situations. (यत् निश्चितं श्रेयः स्यात् तत् मे ब्रूहि । अहं ते शिष्यः । त्वं प्रपन्नं मां शाधि ।)

Hence Sri Krishna's answer is in those lines. The answer to finding permanent happiness is the Bhagavad Gita. At the core of the teachings of Islam is the idea that to be happy or content we must be grateful to God, not just for what we perceive to be blessings but for all circumstances. Whatever condition we find ourselves in we are grateful and sure that it is good for us as long as we are following the teachings of God. The Bible talks about happiness, but defines it differently than our culture. When the Bible mentions happiness, it is speaking of something that is self-contained. The happiness the Bible advocates isn't dependent on circumstances this is why true happiness is never found in external circumstances. It is a by product of seeking first God's kingdom and his righteousness.

**Genetically:-** we have a predisposition to a certain level of happiness. It could account for around 50 per cent of the variations we find in people's current happiness. The key here, of course, lies in the interaction between our genetic predispositions and other factors such as our upbringing (Shah and Marks 2004: 5).

### Educational point of view:-

The education today aims to produce quality students to become good citizens who are mentally and physically healthy in order that they can live with others happily. Therefore, teachers are important persons who can make the students to have such qualifications. Teachers need to create an atmosphere for happiness learning. The happiness learning is to create a relaxed atmosphere in which the students feel free and easy to involve themselves into the classroom activities. The teachers must accept and understand the differences among students in order that students can develop their learning potentials. To create an atmosphere of happiness learning is very beneficial for students, for both current and future success.

The advantages of happiness learning are as follows:

- 1) It can help students have a good mental and physical health that can lead them living with others happily.
- 2) It will promote self-directed and lifelong learning among students because they enjoy learning and feel independent to how their opinions in the classroom.
- 3) The students who are learning in the atmosphere of happiness will be kind-hearted and helpful persons.
- 4) The students will have high self-esteem and a will power to do good things.
- 5) The students can learn how to live with others; they will accept, understand, and sympathize with others who are different from them.

The happiness learning focuses on learning what the students are interested in; so that they will learn happily. Learning by doing is also one of techniques in happiness learning; they can integrate their ideas and the story to learning process. Moreover, teachers can integrate body movement, music, and arts into the learning process in order to make students happy. When students are happy, their brains will release dopamine, a feel-good chemical; they will also eager and enjoy learning new things. Interestingly, happy students can learn and remember things better than unhappy ones. In terms of memory, it is very essential to the learning process. The more people remember, the better they can learn. The happiness learning is influenced from both external and internal factors. The external factors that influence happiness learning consist of teachers and parents who create a positive environment for learning. The internal factors affecting happiness learning are students themselves who are happy inside. When being happy, they will enjoy learning things both inside and outside the classroom. Education predicts whether or not people get sick in the first place. People with more education tend to have better problem-solving skills and the tools to help themselves. People with more education get better jobs that pay more

money, are less physically demanding, and provide more enjoyment they live in safer neighbourhoods, practice healthier lifestyles, and have less stress.

### **What makes us happy?**

Richard Layard (2005) argued that five factors are central to happiness. Furthermore, he used research such as the US General Social Survey to establish

**Family relationships.** In just about every study, family relationships and our close private life are ‘more important than any other single factor affecting our happiness’

**Financial situation.** As we have already seen our individual financial position is of significance – especially when we are on the margins of poverty – but beyond that it is a poor second to the quality of close and family relationships as a significant source of longish term happiness.

**Work.** There is considerable evidence that we need to feel we are contributing to the wider society. Layard comments, ‘work provides not only income but also an extra meaning to life’. He continues ‘That is why unemployment is such a disaster: it reduces income but it also reduces happiness directly by destroying the self-respect and social relationships created by work’ (2005: 67). However, it is also that the work is fulfilling (and here one of the most significant features is the degree of control people have over what they do. This is a theme that Richard Sennett has explored in *The Corrosion of Character* (2000).

**Community and friends.** It is also clear that the quality of the communities in which we participate has a strong influence upon how we feel. If we do not live and operate in communities and groups where there is a sense of trust and belonging then there is a raft of evidence that shows the impact upon our ability to be happy. In recent years issues around this have been most strongly articulated in debates around social capital (see, in particular Robert Putnam).

**Health.** In studies people frequently cite health as an important contributor to happiness – and for some reason. While we may be able to adapt to many things that happen to us physically, but they take an emotional toll. When it comes to chronic pain and mental illness adaptation is more difficult and there should be a priority placed upon controlling suffering (Layard 2005: 69).

Also key:

**Personal freedom.** Happiness also depends upon the quality of the political, economic, legal and social systems in which we operate. There is some evidence that people living in stable and peaceful societies in which they have a voice and an ability to follow their interests (where it does not harm others), and in which institutions are accountable will be happier. (Lane 2000; Layard 2005: 69-70).

**Personal values.** People’s happiness depends on their ‘inner selves’ and philosophies of life. ‘People are happier if they are able to appreciate what they have, whatever it is; if they do not always compare themselves with others; and if they school their own moods’ (Layard 2005: 72). While we may want to question an emphasis on ‘schooling moods’ and its behaviourist overtones, and to balance it with a concern with biography and the unconscious, the direction of Layard’s argument is surely right. As Parker Palmer has put it, it is difficult to see how people can come to know others, or the world, if they do not know themselves. And, in turn, it is difficult to overcome ‘the pain of disconnection’ if we do not attend to matters of the spirit.

One of the interesting things about lists such as these are the factors that are omitted. Five features that we might expect on such a list, but that appear to have little impact on happiness are, according to Layard:

**Age.** Such research as we have shows that average happiness is remarkably stable over the lifespan.

**Gender.** Surveys show that men and women are roughly equally happy in nearly every 4country researched.

**Looks.** Such research as we have seems to show that how we look makes little difference.

**IQ.** In self-rated studies IQ is said to be only weakly correlated with happiness in terms of subjective feelings of happiness.

**Education.** Education appears to have only a small direct impact on happiness, though it does raise happiness indirectly through its impact on people’s ability to earn, for example. (Layard 2005: 62)

### **Education for happiness**

One of the striking features of political life and discussions around educational reform is the almost complete absence of any sensible conversation around well-being and what might make people happy. Instead much debate is formulated in terms of how education might contribute to economic growth (which, as we have already seen, often has a negative impact on human flourishing) and upon accreditation and achievement within the narrow boundaries of national curricula and the like. Attention is given to what is taught and how. In one of a number of memorable passages in *The Courage to Teach*, Parker J. Palmer dissects a fundamental problem with much of the discussion around educational reform:

The question we most commonly ask is the “what” question – what subjects shall we teach?

When the conversation goes a bit deeper, we ask the “how” question – what methods and techniques are required to teach well? Occasionally, when it goes deeper still, we ask the “why” question – for what purposes and to what ends do we teach? As Nel Noddings (2003: 74) has commented, until recently ‘aims-talk figured prominently in educational theory’, and most educational systems had some sort of statement of aims.

The best homes and schools are happy places. The adults in these happy places recognize that one aim of education (and of life itself) is happiness. They also recognize that happiness serves as both means and end. Happy children, growing in their understanding of what happiness is, will seize their educational opportunities with delight, and they will contribute to the happiness of others. Clearly, if children are to be happy in schools, their teachers should also be happy. Too often we forget this obvious connection. Finally, basically happy people who retain an uneasy social conscience will contribute to a happier world. (Noddings 2003: 261)

Education aimed at happiness cannot be achieved by simply teaching about happiness. We come to flourish in important ways through experiencing flourishing. This means cultivating spaces for learning where people can be happy. It also requires the involvement of educators who are happy in what they are doing and are seeking to live life as well as they can (see Palmer 1998)

Parker J. Palmer has looked, helpfully, to hospitality. ‘Hospitality means receiving each other, our struggles, our newborn ideas, with openness and care’. He continues, ‘the classroom where truth is central will be a place where every stranger and every strange utterance is met with welcome’.

### Conclusion

Nowadays, happiness is a fuzzy concept and can mean many different things to many people. Part of the challenge of a science of happiness is to identify different concepts of happiness, and where applicable, split them into their components. Related concepts are well-being, quality of life and flourishing. At least one author defines happiness as contentment. Some commentators focus on the difference between the hedonistic tradition of seeking pleasant and avoiding unpleasant experiences, and the eudemonic tradition of living life in a full and deeply satisfying way.

Happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being defined by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. Happy mental states may also reflect judgments by a person about their overall well-being. A variety of biological, psychological, economic, religious and philosophical approaches have striven to define happiness and identify its sources. Various research groups, including positive psychology and happiness economics are employing the scientific method to research questions about what “happiness” is, and how it might be attained. In this piece we have seen just how societies that focus on economic growth run the risk of significantly depressing the happiness of many of their members (as well as people in other societies). We have also seen that there is strong evidence to the effect that certain areas of human experience encourage happiness and well-being. These include the quality of relationships in the home and with friends, the ability to contribute to economic and social life, and a strong philosophy of life. We have also seen there is a very strong case for putting happiness at the centre of educational endeavour. If educators are to take happiness, human flourishing, seriously then there need to be some fundamental changes in the way we understand, approach and organize education.

- First, a concern for happiness in education entails looking beyond the classroom and immediate teaching context. If formal educational institutions are to have a care for the whole person then a range of other opportunities and experiences must be offered. This includes an extra-curricular activity and the opportunity to become involved in associational life.
- Second, it involves engaging with informal education, community learning and more dialogical forms of educating.
- Third, it entails jettisoning large areas of national and state curricula (if not the state or national curriculum itself) and seeking out approaches and subjects that do not alienate.
- Fourth, happiness in education requires the possibility of easy access to counselling and pastoral provision so that those who are troubled have a means to come to an understanding of themselves and their situation.

The list goes on ... and its scope and scale is an indicator of the difficulties involved in re-orienting educational systems. Perhaps Jean Baudrillard was right when he spoke of the difficulties of resisting dominant cultures – but people’s happiness seems too important for us not to try.

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