

Three Components of Happiness: Synthesising a Sense of Competence, a Vital Sense of Life, and a Sense of Accomplishment

MASUO KOYASU

Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University

In this paper I will first provide an outline of our Global COE (Centre of Excellence) Programme which partly supports the Kyoto University-London IoE (Institute of Education, University of London) link on the Japanese side. Then I will describe one of my research studies which was conducted as part of the programme.

OUTLINE OF THE GLOBAL COE PROGRAMME

Based upon the products of the programme 'Centre of Excellence for Psychological Studies', the COE program of 2002-2006, the Centre has been established through dynamic collaboration between researchers in psychology and educational studies for the purpose of developing talented researchers who can demonstrate their achievements on a global scale. More specifically, in order to conduct research on revitalizing education for dynamic hearts and minds and address the issue of how to advance practice in relevant fields, the Centre involves the participation of researchers in psychology and educational studies from: the Graduate School of Education (Departments of Education and Clinical Studies of Education), Institute for the Promotion of Excellence in Higher Education (Section I), the Graduate School of Letters (Department of Psychology), Graduate School of Human and Integrated Studies (Department of Human Coexistence), and the *Kokoro* Research Centre. In a coordinated manner, the Centre facilitates excellence in research, centering on the following four research units: (A) Basic Processes Unit, which conducts research on the vital state of the mind, and conversely, the non-vital state of the mind; (B) Systems Unit, which conducts research into the design of the system necessary for revitalizing education for dynamic hearts and minds, and the scheme through which it is explained and applied to society; (C) Support Unit, which conducts research on the psychological support and educational commitments that are effective for revitalizing education for dynamic hearts and minds, and that puts them into practice; and (D) Development and Evaluation Unit, which conducts evaluation on the theory and practice proposed by each unit, and which has the task of implementing a project on 'Cross-Cultural Research on the Sense of Happiness'.

The Centre aims to develop researchers in psychology and educational studies who can think deeply, with high-level expertise and a broad perspective and who can publish in international high quality academic journals and present papers at international conferences. To accomplish this task, an educational system is being developed to enable graduate education programmes in psychology and educational studies to be provided by the Centre as a whole. At the same time the Centre

reinforces its position as an international centre for research and education through official academic exchange agreements with high-level research institutions abroad, including Michigan University (USA), Lancaster University (UK), China National Institute for Educational Research, Beijing Normal University (China), Free University of Berlin (Germany), and the Institute of Education, University of London (UK). The aim is to create in Kyoto University a meeting place for scholars in psychology and educational studies from all over the world.

The Centre also promotes a support system for the career development of researchers, attracting especially those who can think deeply and broadly, who can contribute to the analysis and understanding of problems concerning revitalizing education for dynamic hearts and minds, and who can put solutions into practice, so that their career paths can be extended not only to universities and other research institutions but also to governmental organisations and business corporations.

The Centre encourages young researchers including doctoral students to get tenure through the following measures: financial support for graduate students through a competitive research fund; the employment of 30 research assistants; the employment of 8 postdoctoral researchers recruited through public advertisement; the employment of instructors through public advertisement abroad; and financial support for young instructors in their thirties who have not got tenure yet or who have just got it.

Through these activities the Centre aims to create a new research and education field in which psychology and educational studies are integrated. Through this integration, it is hoped that (a) significant developments in the humanities discipline will be achieved within Kyoto University and in academia as a whole; (b) scholarly information and understanding will be promoted, which in turn will promote social reform and innovation; and (c) wider engagement in effective and fruitful educational practice will be facilitated.

OBJECTIVES, IMPORTANCE AND PROSPECTIVE IMPACTS OF THE COE ESTABLISHMENT

1) The disciplines which the Centre covers

The main academic disciplines covered by the Centre are first and foremost psychology and educational studies. These would naturally incorporate diverse perspectives, such as: philosophy and history in education, cognitive studies, neuropsychology, comparative psychology, developmental psychology, clinical psychology, lifelong learning, media studies, cultural studies, and institutional theory. From the standpoint of goals and values to be attained, it takes three 'approaches to knowledge': *empirical* studies that aim to analyze problems, *clinical* studies that deepen the understanding of problems, and *practical* studies that execute the solutions to problems (see fig. 1).

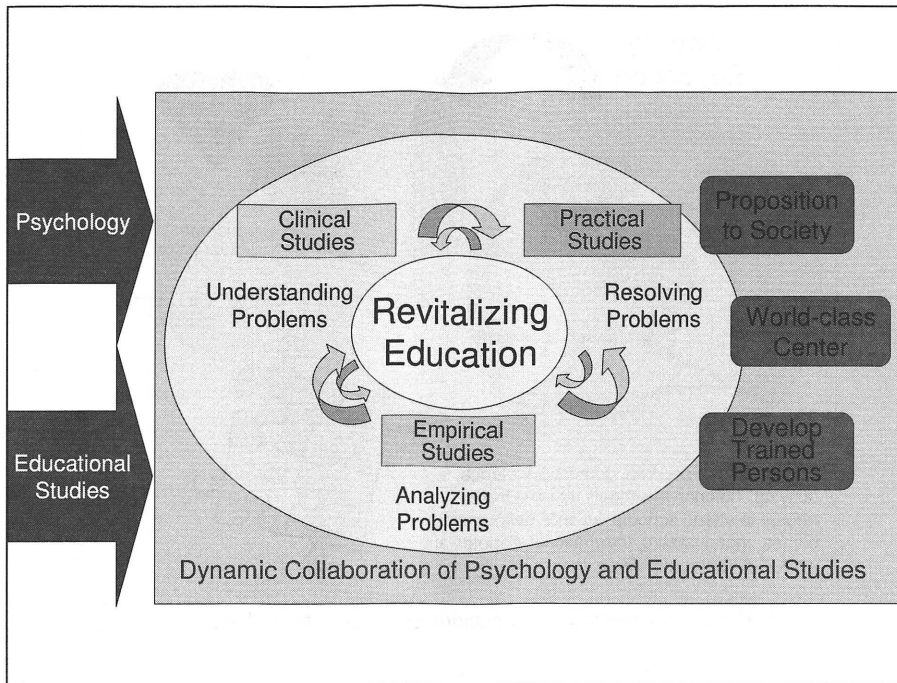


Fig. 1: Main Academic Disciplines Covered by the Centre

The project has established a world class centre for educational research which, through advanced studies carried out through the three approaches noted above, undertakes a comprehensive examination of and put forward wide-ranging proposals for ‘revitalizing education for dynamic hearts and minds.’ The project also facilitates the development of talented researchers who can play active and important roles in the various sectors of society including academia.

2) Concepts and objectives of the Centre

In the 20th century, despite the rapid progress that was achieved in science, technology and industry, conflicts relating to poverty, crime, international disputes and wars, and environmental disruption became firmly entrenched as the major problems facing humanity. Unresolved tasks, which are derived from the limitations of modern societies, have been carried over to the societies of the 21st century at various levels, involving individuals, societies and the international community as a whole. In school settings, those who are involved in education, including parents and teachers, have been suffering from such adverse phenomena as bullying, violence and children’s refusal to attend schools. They raise a serious question concerning the state of the human mind. Ideally speaking, the human mind should be revitalized through educational institutions and organisations produced by human beings; in reality, however, these same institutions or organisations often inadvertently torment human beings themselves and enfeeble the mind (see fig. 2).

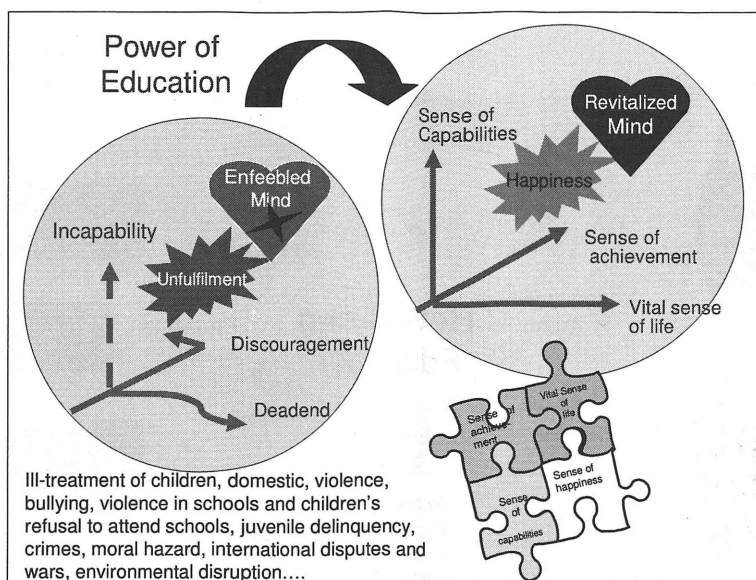


Fig. 2: A schematic representation of components of happiness

Problems of mind should be investigated in various fields, especially in the field of education. In the contemporary society of advanced information, education cannot be limited to the narrow field of schooling. Rather it should be reconsidered from the perspective of life-long learning and development in a broader context of human life and in the extended horizon of time and space.

It is the function of education that human beings obtain a sense of capability through the acquisition of knowledge and skill, and a vital sense of life through connection with nature and society. Furthermore, by making the full use of these senses in attaining a certain goal, they can obtain a sense of achievement. Simultaneously they can enjoy a sense of happiness. Conversely, if a part of, or the whole of, these interconnections does not function well, various problems arise. The power of education is also applicable to solving these problems. In contemporary society, in which problems concerning the mind and education are prominent, there is an urgent need, in light of these conditions, to envision an international centre for the study of *revitalizing education for dynamic hearts and minds* in order to develop researchers capable of addressing these problems.

3) The COE's most outstanding and unique attributes

Kyoto University has been characterized, since its foundation in 1897, by an academic atmosphere of freedom, one that values self-study and self-learning rather than the mere inculcation of knowledge. It might be said that the series of Nobel Prize laureates from this University has been born out of this academic atmosphere of freedom. The basis of the best research in the world is that it is conducted autonomously by researchers and shaped by their own academic interests. For future academic development in Japan researchers need to be engaged in continuous self-renewal so that they will not subside into self-complaisance or solipsistic independence, but enhance through their research *a sense of capability, a vital sense*

of life and a sense of achievement, while enriching the sense of fulfilment among the members of a university community.

The Centre distinguishes itself from others in that its research topic is itself highly practical. The research topic of the Centre is the *recurrent, reflexive, or recursive* nature of education, which involves one's cultivation of oneself while cultivating others, and through which one acquires the power of cultivating others while being cultivated by others. This is not only a unique and crucial aspect of the research, but also fits well with the academic atmosphere of freedom by which Kyoto University has been characterized.

With the background of psychology and educational studies in humanities, the Centre is engaged in research in these fields both by promoting its international activities and by incorporating the notion of 'vitality' in the eastern tradition, a notion that values the connection between nature and society. In response to the crisis of 'conflicts in civilisation' the Centre makes the distinctive proposal of revitalizing education for dynamic hearts and minds. It can thereby make a substantial contribution not only to COE in Japan but also to the development of the Japanese academy as a whole.

A STUDY IN HAPPINESS IN RELATION TO OPTIMISM AND POSITIVE ORIENTATIONS

It is generally believed that people's positive attitudes to their life are good for their health and happiness, especially in cases when they are facing stressful events. Taylor and Brown (1988, 1994) argued that *positive illusions* are adaptive, since there is evidence that they are more common in mentally healthy individuals than in depressed individuals. Their work initially derived from research with cancer patients but was integrated in the 1988 paper with literature on social cognition in general, suggesting that positive biases are important for human mental health. However, the term *positive illusion* is too strong to designate everyday cognition of ordinary people. Therefore, we will use the term *positive orientation* in this paper.

The optimism/pessimism dimension is also related to people's health and happiness. *Optimism* generally means that people have a belief that everything goes well or a bad situation will turn better without any objective rationale and *pessimism* is vice versa. Scheier and Carver (1985) developed the Life Orientation Test (LOT) to measure dispositional optimism and then revised it into LOT-R (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994) which was translated into Japanese.

Recently, Nes, and Segerstrom's (2006) meta-analytic review showed that the relation between dispositional optimism and better adjustment to diverse stressful events may be attributable to optimism's effects on coping strategies. Dispositional optimism was found to be positively associated with *approach* coping strategies aiming to eliminate, reduce, or manage stressful events and negatively associated with *avoidance* coping strategies seeking to ignore, avoid, or withdraw from stressful events. However, it is not clear whether optimism and pessimism are symmetrical or mutually independent. We conducted a study in which relationships among optimism/pessimism, positive orientations, and feelings of happiness were explored by using a questionnaire method.

Three hundred and thirty-seven students from three universities in Japan participated in the study. Their age range was 18-29 years and mean age was 19.4 (SD

1.3). Number of males and females were 230 and 107, respectively. They were asked to complete a questionnaire which contained three scales, namely, a Japanese version of the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R; Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994), a Japanese version of the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), and an original Positive Orientation Scale. LOT-R included three items of optimism and three items of pessimism (Table 1). SWLS includes five items of life satisfaction (Table 2). The Positive Orientation Scale includes 14 items which measured positive attitude to each imaginary stressful event. In all three scales, participants were asked to rate each item on a five-point rating scale.

The data were analyzed by a factor analysis (the maximum likelihood method and promax rotation). Two factors, *optimism* and *pessimism*, were extracted from the LOT-R scale (Table 1).

Table 1 shows that optimism and pessimism were separate, but that a moderate negative correlation (-0.57) was found between them. Therefore, optimism and pessimism are not totally independent.

Table 1
Two factors extracted from the LOT-R scale

Item	F1	F2	CF	Mean	SD
F1; Pessimism $\alpha=0.586$					
I hardly ever expect things to go my way.	0.711	-0.07	0.774	2.97	1.11
I rarely count on good things happening to me.	0.604	-0.06	0.643	3.58	1.03
If something can go wrong for me, it will.	0.543	0.302	0.320	3.19	0.96
F2; Optimism $\alpha=0.451$					
In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	0.110	0.534	0.301	3.34	1.01
I'm always optimistic about my future.	0.078	0.474	0.320	3.18	1.13
Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.	-0.390	0.301	0.772	3.01	1.04
Correlation between factors	-0.570		-0.700		

Table 2
One factor extracted from the SWLS scale

Item	F1	CF	Mean	SD
I am satisfied with my life.	0.740	0.547	3.19	1.13
In most ways my life is close to my ideal.	0.685	0.470	2.64	1.01
The conditions of my life are excellent.	0.605	0.366	3.36	1.00
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.	0.501	0.251	2.33	1.06
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	0.493	0.243	2.12	1.11
Contribution (%)		37.528		

The results of the SWLS (Satisfaction With Life Scale), as is shown in Table 2, suggested the significance of only one factor (*happiness*).

Three factors were extracted from the Positive Orientation Scale (14 items); *upward orientation*, *maintaining calmness*, and *downward comparison* (see Table 3).

Table 3
Results of factor analysis of the Positive Orientation Scale (Promax rotation),
including means and SDs of items

	Item	F1	F2	F3	Communi- nality	Mean	SD
F1; Upward orientation $\alpha=0.810$							
p9	I have someone who would help me to cope with this event.	.706	-.281	.003	.328	3.62	0.92
p5	I think that there are not only bad but also good aspects in this event.	.648	.012	.072	.484	3.48	1.03
p4	I can cope with this event.	.630	.305	-.242	.562	3.27	0.90
p13	I think that the situation is becoming better with time.	.551	-.172	.066	.246	3.58	0.92
p12	I can manage this event with my own effort.	.537	.138	-.012	.393	3.62	0.95
p8	Good things will happen in the future.	.524	.043	.251	.516	3.88	0.92
p10	Notwithstanding this event, I do not think of myself negatively.	.426	.096	.168	.361	3.54	0.97
p14	I think that I can make sure that this kind of events will never happen again.	.364	.222	-.076	.245	3.08	0.92
F2; Maintaining calmness $\alpha=0.564$							
p1	I can recover calmness soon.	-.211	.687	.088	.378	2.94	1.05
p6	I would be so depressed that I could do nothing.	.096	-.598	.047	.275	3.04	1.04
p3	Even worse situations would derive from this event.	-.109	-.385	-.007	.217	3.03	0.94
F3; Downward comparison $\alpha=0.644$							
p7	As it was possible that the situation could have turned worse, I am in a better condition as compared to that possibility.	.036	-.071	.849	.700	3.46	0.95
p2	Compared to people who have experienced a similar event, I am in a better condition.	-.016	.359	.421	.431	3.44	0.89
Interfactor correlation F1							
	F2	.631					
	F3	.527	.461				

Upward orientation (8 items) means a tendency to think that everything will go well or that a bad situation has both good and bad aspects, and so on. Maintaining calmness (3 items) means that people tend to think that it is easy to keep calm. Downward comparison (2 items) means a belief that the current situation is better compared to even worse possible situations or to the state of people who are in worse situations.

Fig. 3 shows the results of structural equation modelling. Optimism had a positive effect on upward orientation and, in turn, then upward orientation had a weak positive effect on happiness, though there was a direct strong positive correlation (0.86)

between optimism and happiness. The roles of pessimism were not as clearer as we had expected, especially the finding of a positive correlation (0.40) between pessimism and happiness. We need to explore their relationships further.

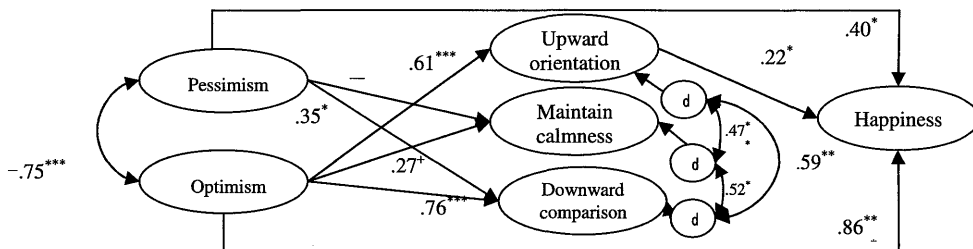


Fig. 3: Results of structural equation modelling
 $(\chi^2=516.828, p<.000; GFI=.890, AGFI=.862, CFI=.864,$
 $RMSEA=.059, AIC=638.828); **p<.001, *p<.05, +p<.10$

NOTE

- * The study described here was done in collaboration with Kyoko Hashimoto (Kyoto University), to whom the author is most grateful.

REFERENCES

- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985) The Satisfaction With Life Scale, *Journal of Personality Assessment* 49, pp. 71-75.
- Nes, L. S., & Segerstrom, S. C. (2006) Dispositional Optimism and Coping: A Meta-Analytic Review, *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 10, pp. 235-251.
- Scheier, M. F. & Carver, C. S. (1985) Optimism, Coping, and Health: Assessment and Implications of Generalized Outcome Expectancies, *Health Psychology* 4, pp. 219-247.
- Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (1994) Distinguishing Optimism from Neuroticism (and Trait Anxiety, Self-mastery, and Self-esteem): A Reevaluation of the Life Orientation Test, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67, pp. 1063-1078.
- Taylor, S. E., & Brown, J. D. (1988) Illusion and Well-Being: A Social Psychological Perspective on Mental Health, *Psychological Bulletin* 103, pp. 193-210.
- Taylor, S. E., & Brown, J. D. (1994) Positive Illusions and Well-Being Revisited: Separating Fact from Fiction, *Psychological Bulletin* 116, pp. 21-27.