

WHEN A CHILD'S EMOTIONAL COPING FAILS

Eeva-Liisa Peltokorpi

Maaniittu School, Nurmijärvi, Finland

E-mail: peltokorpieevaliisa@gmail.com

Kaarina Määttä, Satu Uusiautti

University of Lapland, Finland

E-mail: Kaarina.Maatta@ulapland.fi, satu@uusiautti.fi

Abstract

The aim of this research is to increase understanding about children's emotional coping and to support teachers' work on enhancing children's readiness to handle challenging social situations at school. Emotional coping skills are important to human beings' success and wellbeing and the basis for these skills is built already in early childhood. In this research, various interactive learning activities were planned and carried out in the classroom and the measures of emotional coping were created. Nine pupils aged between seven and eight who had problems with their emotional coping were selected as the research participants. Their forms of emotional coping, development and teaching were observed and the pupils' self-evaluations were collected during the study year 2006-2007 in interactional classroom situations that involved mathematical problem-solving tasks. As a result, six various forms of emotional coping were found, which exemplified either constructivist, operational, or emotional coping. Results showed that pupils' individual emotional coping can be illustrated through various mathematical reasoning and problem-solving tasks in stages. Familiarizing oneself with the various forms of emotional coping contributes to the teacher's abilities to enhance students' emotional coping to survive and direct their emotions when the goal is to develop toward emotional directedness.

Key words: child research, emotional coping, emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, primary school.

Introduction

Life has turned into more challenging than ever and problems into more and more complex (Giddens, 1991; Morrison, 2005; Young, 2003). Thus, the school has to respond to this challenge by devoting more to achieving socio-emotional goals and pupils' overall wellbeing along with informational teaching. It means, for example, conscious learning of social skills (Berler, Gross, & Drabman, 1982; Fabes et al., 1999; Lee, 2009) which can be seen as the prerequisite for good citizenship (see Mayer et al., 2000; Verma & Pathak, 2011.)

International research has shown that the primary school students lack the ability to regard their classmates (Androjna et al., 2000; Caparos et al., 2002; Krantz et al., 2003; Andrusyk & Andrusyk, 2003). The mastery of social skills has got a significant role in the modern school and working life (e.g. Fontana, 1990; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000). Furthermore, it seems that nowadays children have difficulties to get along with their peer mates (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; LeBlanck, Sautter, & Dore, 2006).

In addition, a child's mind can become exhausted by the flood of information provided at school (Rowe et al., 2010; Zullig et al., 2010). Today's curricula prefer information-oriented studying over the subjects that could provide the children with experiences of recognizing and paying attention to their own self and needs. Acquiring social skills is invaluable for the children's forthcoming life (Cheng & Furnham, 2002; Woodward & Fergusson, 2000). For

instance, research has pointed out that those people who are socially skillful manage well at their work (Coll et al., 2001). Thus, in this article, we want to highlight the importance of social skills that are learned at school. This viewpoint contributes a counterbalance to the present emphasis at school which is focused merely on the distribution of information at the expense of emotional life (see also Uusikylä, 2005).

Emotional coping can be considered as social functioning and its objects are other people, in other words, the social reality (Habermas, 1984; 1998). In this article, we introduce results from a study where pupils' emotional coping was observed and developed by various teaching methods. Results showed that getting acquainted with various forms of emotional coping improves the teacher's abilities to enhance students' emotional coping.

What is Emotional Coping?

According to Matthews et al. (2000), emotional coping is the ability to handle various demands. They define the concept briefly but the definition can be interpreted in several ways. Emotional coping can be understood as a skill or ability that can be taught. Brenner and Salovey (1997) consider the concept of emotional regulation as a sub-concept for emotional coping. According to the authors, both emotional coping and emotional regulation are processes with which for example difficult situations are handled. Previously learned strategies are used in both processes in order to manage the situation. Boekaerts (1996) shares this opinion but she emphasizes the strong influence of the emotions and assessment to the selection of a particular coping method. Boekaerts has developed a model of the coping process that can be seen connected to the concept of emotional coping. According to the model, people use emotions to direct their wellbeing. In a problematic situation, emotions are strongly present as the situation is expected to turn into a better one. It happens, for instance, when people try to control negative emotional reactions by disentangling them elsewhere or pursue handling the situation by self-control. (see also Goetz, 2005.)

Individuals store emotional regulation processes they have used in their repertoire, as Boekaerts (1996) asserts. This repertoire is an important part of the emotional coping process and thanks to it an individual can activate the possible forms of emotional regulation in suitable situations after the emotional coping process has started. Eisenberg and his research groups have studied emotional regulation (see Spinrad et al., 2006; Hanish et al., 2004; Eisenberg et al., 2004; Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004; Spinrad et al., 2004) and noted that the definitions of emotional regulation are clearly connected to Boekaerts's (1996) model of the coping process. According to Eisenberg's research group (2000), emotional coping is a process that consists of conducting, sustaining, confirming, and consolidating inner emotional states. Furthermore, it is an emotional-based psychological process that helps achieving the goal for the process of emotional regulation. One area in this model is the learned systems that comprise an individual's repertoire of emotional regulation. Because of it, emotional regulation and coping are considered firmly interconnected.

The Classification of Emotional Coping

The classification of emotional coping created by Eisenberg's research group (1993) formed a basis for the observation and description of the phenomenon studied in this article. The classification of Eisenberg's research group consists of three main categories for emotional coping with 13 altogether sub-categories:

- A. Constructive coping:
 - 1) Instrumental coping,
 - 2) Emotional intervention,

- 3) Instrumental aggression,
- 4) Avoidance, and
- 5) Distraction.

B. Emotional venting:

- 6) Venting,
- 7) Emotional aggression,
- 8) Cognitive restructuring, and
- 9) Emotional support.

C. Passive coping:

- 10) Cognitive avoidance,
- 11) Instrumental intervention,
- 12) Instrumental support, and
- 13) Denial.

Constructive coping includes instrumental coping, emotional intervention, instrumental aggression, and avoidance. Instrumental coping is constructive action that aims at changing the problem situation. Emotional intervention shows continued emotion to get assistance. Instrumental aggression resolves problems through physical or verbal aggression. Avoidance means the same as to leave or avoid problematic situations. The last one of constructive coping group is distraction, which relates to a situation where one is so busy that he or she is unable to think about the problem.

The second main group, emotional venting, includes venting, emotional aggression, cognitive restructuring and emotional support. Venting appears as complaining of the suppressive situation or content oneself with other ones. Emotional aggression means the use of verbal or physical aggression to release feeling whereas cognitive restructuring resembles thinking about the problem in a positive way. Emotional support is a coping strategy where people talk about a problem hoping of getting support.

The third main group, passive coping, consists of cognitive avoidance, instrumental intervention, instrumental support, and denial. Cognitive avoidance avoids thinking about a problem situation. Instrumental intervention as a coping strategy in problem situation refers to asking for help; and instrumental support means talking with someone to find a solution. The last group, denial, is a coping strategy which is based on ignorance of the problem in the prevailing situation.

The Development of Emotional Coping

Zeidner's research group (2003) has constructed an integrated model for the development of emotional intelligence where emotional coping is considered intertwined with temperament and previously learned skills. According to the model, a child's emotional intelligence develops through feedback, modeling, and reinforcement, for example in interaction between a mother and a child. Later on when a child gets older, interaction involves more and more people, such as the child's friends, teachers, and other adults. It can be assumed that a child's emotional coping develops, among other things, in interaction with social factors such as parents, friends, and teachers (Zeidner et al., 2003). This view is supported by the study that was focused on the manifestation of emotional coping and its development and which is introduced in this article. In this study, pupils' emotional coping was developed with interactional teaching methods (Peltokorpi, 2007; see also Peltokorpi & Määttä, 2010; Peltokorpi & Määttä, 2011; Peltokorpi, Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2011.)

According to the Zeidner et al. (2003), emotional coping not only includes social skills but also it is interconnected with social skills. Similarly, other studies (Sahlberg & Leppilampi, 1994; Sharan & Sahlberg, 2002; Androjna et al., 2000; Krantz et al., 2003; Siegel, 2005; Krol et al., 2004) have proved that pupils' social skills in all age groups (Jordan & Le Metais, 1997) can be developed with interactional teaching methods.

On the other hand, the development of emotional coping is an individual's inner process that can be dissected by Boekaerts's (1996) model of the coping process. According to the model, an individual builds on emotions and assesses the selection of methods and strategies in problematic or stressful situations. People use emotions, various behavior-related reasons, and the field of cognitive coping strategies for directing or restoring their wellbeing and turning the current problematic situation into a better one. This process involves assessment, intentions, and strategies. Boekaerts (1996) writes about two functions of coping defined by other researchers (see Lazarus, 1985; Goetz, 2005): problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. The first one focuses on the problem itself and the latter on emotional regulation trying to regulate the negative emotional reactions for example with alienation or self-control.

Based on the model of coping process, Boekaerts (1995) has introduced a model of controlled learning process in which a central factor is also represented by assessment functioning as a mechanism for the process of attracting attention and channeling energy. Both models, the model of coping processes and the model of the controlled learning process, are about finding a controlled balance. According to Boekaerts's model of the controlled learning process, learning activities such as various problem-solving tasks trigger a special kind of activity because learning activities affect pupils' personal effort and sensitivity (Boekaerts, 1995). If a learning activity is considered positive, the prevailing assessment in that situation will lead to strong learning intentions and to such a level of positive experience that activates the functional ways of coping and learning; whereas a prevailing unfavorable assessment results in poor learning intention and a negative experiential level. The latter "path" is not likely to lead to learning (Boekaerts, 1995).

Research Focus

The focus of this research is to increase understanding about children's emotional coping and to support teachers' work on enhancing children's readiness to handle challenging social situations at school through carrying out interactional learning situations that were supposed to develop pupils' emotional coping at school.

The research questions are the following:

1. How did primary pupils manifest their emotional coping interactional situations during mathematics lessons?
2. How did pupils' emotional coping develop during interactional learning situations that involved mathematical problem-solving tasks?

Methodology of Research

General Background and Sample of Research

This research is based on the first author's doctoral research (Peltokorpi, 2007; see also Peltokorpi & Määttä, 2010; Peltokorpi & Määttä, 2011; Peltokorpi, Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2011) where primary school children's emotional coping was studied by acting simultaneously as a teacher and researcher in the classroom. The results in total have been published in the first author's dissertation (see Peltokorpi, 2007, written in the Finnish language). The main research subjects were the children (N=21) whose emotional coping was observed in the interactional

classroom situations related to the mathematical problem-solving tasks and games in pairs or in groups of three. 18 learning situations were observed during the research period (2005-2007). The teaching methods used in these learning situations were streaming and reflective tasks. The pupils (N=9) were selected from one of the classes that the first author taught (in 2007) and in which she had confidential relationships with students and their parents. The pupils and their parents gave their assent to the research.

The research represented qualitative research in which a researcher is seen as a part of the phenomenon studied (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). A researcher can also be seen as socially structured inside research. This view presents a new way to understand action and can be seen as the ability to consider the action as a factor that influences the social situation (Somekh, 2006.) Denzin and Lincoln (2005) consider a research process as an interpretative community where the researcher is an inhabitant inside the community. Due to this reason, the researchers familiarize themselves or adopt a special way to interpret other people. Tomal (2003) points out that qualitative research introduces a naturalistic and new research approach. It refers to, among others, that research pursues understanding how people experience and create the meanings for objects and phenomena. A conceptualizing process of this kind, according to Stringer (2004), is the heart of the naturalistic qualitative research. Furthermore, one central feature of qualitative research is that it produces meanings to the researcher enabling him or her to understand how people interpret things.

Instrument and Procedures

Learning situations, where the pupils were figuring out the mathematical problem solving and reasoning tasks either in pairs or in the groups of three, were *observed* in this research. The situations where the same kinds of small groups were playing games that were based on the mathematical calculations were observed as well. Part of both the tasks and the games were originally adopted from the teacher's books, text books, and supplementary material for the first grade's mathematics. Some of the assignments were revised in order to be more suitable for the pupils and some were created by the teacher. The mathematical problem-solving and reasoning tasks included among other things the tasks in which the pupils were supposed to fill the right number into a triangle or grid, or they had to form certain figures out of tangram peaces or stitches.

In the playing situations observed, the pupil threw a dice in turns and did certain mathematical calculations during the game. The games followed the rules of a traditional game: for example, a pupil had to wait for his or her turn over one throw. In addition, the pupils who participated in this research played a game in which the pupil's were to place the dice's spot in the heart figures in a way that the number in the heart and the one in dice equaled ten. A pupil was allowed to color the heart and, at the end, the winner was the one with the highest number of colored hearts.

The observation method was direct observation because it had the advantage of the researcher being able to acquire the first-hand information. It enabled the researcher to collect the data in real-life situations (Tomal, 2003). The learning situations were observed so that the researcher who was simultaneously the pupils' teacher wrote down the pupils' talk as such. According to Tomal (2003), direct observation is practical because it can be transferred into anecdotal form.

In addition to observation, the data was also collected with *self-evaluation forms*. A self-evaluation form was created based on the previously mentioned classification by Eisenberg's research group. The tasks that were related to the questions in the evaluation form were designed so that the first-grade pupils would find it easy to answer. According to Tomal (2003), the main function of the questions is to ask directly in order to acquire information for the later analysis

with which the plans of action can be developed. The questions allowed pupils to choose between two answers the most suitable one (I agree or I disagree). Closed-ended questions allow the respondent to choose between a variety of answers and these kinds of questions are designed to measure respondent's opinions, knowledge, or conceptions (Tomal, 2003).

Two kinds of self-evaluation forms were used in this research. After a mathematical problem-solving situation, the pupils had to answer the following nine statements:

1. I did the tasks together with my friend,
2. I solved the task by myself,
3. I tried to solve the tasks by myself when they seemed difficult,
4. We tried to solve the tasks together when they seemed difficult,
5. I concentrated well on doing the tasks,
6. I found the tasks pleasant,
7. I completed the tasks by myself,
8. We completed the tasks together,
9. I quitted doing the tasks.

Of these statements, numbers 2, 3, 7, and 5 (a negative answer to the statement no 5) were planned to measure constructive coping; the statements number 1, 4, 8, and 6 emotional venting; and the statement number 9 (a negative answer) passive coping.

The pupils answered the second self-evaluation form after a game situation. The statements concerning games were the following: 1. I did the tasks together with my friend, 2. I solved the task by myself, 3. I concentrated well on doing the tasks, 4. I found the tasks pleasant, 5. After losing a game, I get angry or start to sulk. Of these statements, numbers 2 and 3 (negative answer in the statement no 3) measured constructive coping, numbers 1 and 4 emotional venting, and number 5 emotional aggression.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was executed by constructing a chart of the observation notes adapting Tomal's (2003) anecdotal observation method. In practice, the pupils' talk and behavior were documented in the form of a table. The table consisted of four columns: date, pupil's name, citation from the observation diary, and the researcher's comments on the observations. This is how the researcher operationalized the concepts of emotional coping. The researcher's comments were significant because the classification of the emotional coping was made based on these in order to know in which direction and how emotional coping had to be developed. The column would have included comments such as: *-wants to do together*; *-discusses the task with a partner*; *- asks for advice*. These observations, the researcher's pre-comprehension, and the classification of emotional coping created by Eisenberg's research group (1993) formed the basis for developing pupils' emotional coping. Self-evaluation forms provided a comparison point to the pupils' development: the results of self-evaluations were compared with the observations.

Results of Research

The Manifestation of Emotional Coping

Emotional coping occurred in the group of pupils researched that all three main forms of emotional coping manifested themselves in the mathematic lessons observed. Next, we will describe how the various sub categories were emphasized and how the emotional coping appeared from this perspective.

Instrumental coping

The constructive coping in the mathematic lessons was especially instrumental coping by nature. It appeared in a manner that a pupil might tell aloud all the time to the other pupil what he/she was doing but did not take into consideration the other pupils of the group or let them on their own initiative participate in the problem solving. This pupil's action was defined as ostensible cooperation in the research because the pupil made like he/she was doing the task together with his/her pair even if he/she was guiding the partner's actions all the time. In a game situation a pupil could take a liberty to dominate the game by giving even quite strict orders to the other pupils of the group. A pupil that used instrumental coping could also be a maverick who solved the problems alone like there were not any other pupils around. A maverick communicated just a little with the other pupils and persistently solved all the tasks. In a game situation, this manner appeared so that although the partner had already finished, the maverick rolled the dice for so long that his/her own piece finished as well.

Avoidance

A pupil with this kind of emotional coping did not participate in solving the problems or in the game situation at all or just a little if the other pupils asked him/her to. The pupil would rather pay attention to the things on the desk or the pictures on the classroom walls. Everything else except the problem solving tasks or games interested the pupil. Typical of the pupil in a learning situation was that he/she would sit by and follow other pupils' activities.

Venting

Venting occurred when one was interested in the task. In practice, venting was manifested as contentment with oneself and other pupils: in a game situation, a pupil could comment on the game by saying "yes" or after winning telling with excitement: "*Teacher, I wan*". Contentment with other pupils was expressed by nodding or smiling when another pupil threw a desired spot. The acceptance of other pupils was also manifested by touching or nudging playfully in the middle of problem-solving situation or game situation. Accepting oneself and the others appeared also as laughing or smiling a bit or shedding a laughing glance to the other pupil with commenting "*this is a nice game, isn't it?*"

Emotional aggression

Emotional aggression was expressed by sulking and speechlessness. It occurred especially in the game situation as a pupil could go off a sulk on the floor or under the desk and would not consent to continue to play the game. Naturally, it happened when a pupil lost the game. Some bodily expressions were also connected to sulking such as frowning or shrugging shoulders. In addition, some verbal communication could pertain to sulking; for example the comments such as "*oh no*" or "*h'm*". Some would also hit one's head with hands or put hands on one's ears. In a problem-solving situation, emotional aggression could appear as speechlessness or quiet snorts. The latter one occurred when a partner or some other pupil from the group was solving the task in a wrong way.

Emotional support

Emotional support means sharing feelings with others and managing the troublesome situation together. It is profound interaction that involves participation, caring, and trust. Participation and caring mean noticing other participants and engaging as well. It means being

interested in the other: not just the person, but also in what he or she wants to say. The intensity of the interest relates on how important the other is perceived. In a class room, the pupils were obliged to be with each other because they had to solve the tasks together. A pupil would be discussing the task with other pupils, possibly ask for help to solve the problem, and finish the task together with other pupils. Thus, pupils' actions and behavior were directed both to the assignment and other pupils in the group.

Cognitive avoidance

During this study, cognitive avoidance was manifested by leaving a task unfinished or by quitting. A pupil would chuck it all up at once when facing the first difficulty. In a group or pair work, a pupil could easily leave problem solving to the other pupils. Every now and then, a pupil might take part in solving the task. When finding it too difficult, a pupil could just tell the others that he/she cannot do the task. In a learning situation, this kind of pupil did not, however, ask other pupils for help in order to solve the problem.

How Did Emotional Coping Develop?

Pupils' instrumental coping that was based on emotional coping developed in stages during the execution of the study. At the initial phase of the research process, pupils' emotional coping was mainly instrumental coping. In a problem-solving situation, a pupil could state after a group or pair work that "teacher, I have finished the task". The pair of pupils could solve the task together by drawing the line in the middle of the paper so that both of them would focus on their side of the paper. Some pair had even drawn two lines, one per partner, so that they would be sure to stay on their own side. The researcher noticed that pupils' emotional coping was, thus, strongly instrumental and decided to pay attention to the selection of teaching methods. A tangram task where pupils were supposed to create figures by using tangram pieces was indeed the very first method that directed pupils' emotional coping toward cooperation. At the end of the research process, instrumental coping started to give place to more developed emotional coping.

Pupils' emotional coping developed with the use of mathematical learning tasks during the research period. Pupils found the mathematical reasoning tasks inspiring and these tasks also enhanced the development of their instrumental coping toward emotional directedness. In game situations, instrumental coping dominated when winning the game was the goal. When the purpose was not to win, their enthusiasm in the game situation increased and emotional coping was directed in doing together.

However, the development of pupils' emotional coping progressed individually. Three pupils' emotional coping remained instrumental coping until the final phases of the research process. At times, one pupil's emotional coping appeared simultaneously as both emotional directedness and instrumental coping. Only one pupil's emotional coping did not develop into emotional directedness but some traits of this kind of coping were however detectable. Five pupils' emotional coping turned into emotional directedness little by little during the final phase of the research process.

Discussion

When the teacher decides to conduct research in a class room, he or she may think of some professional and pupil-centered questions that should be developed (Tomal, 2003), for example, concerning the development of pupils' human relationship and cooperation skills. This kind of research is practical and systematic in nature and it grounds on the events of

daily life. (Heikkinen et al., 2006; McNiff & Whitehead, 2005.) In these cases, planning the research process starts from practical premises and its result is direct and efficient in that setting where the research is conducted (Stringer, 2004). This was the fundamental idea of the study introduced in this article as well.

In this research, it was especially important to be morally and ethically aware of pupils' individually and age-bound sensitivity. The first author who conducted the research in practice was able to enter an individual pupil's world in order to understand how to create educational activities that really are significant in pupils' everyday life. (see also Stringer, 2004.) One important ethical basis for the research is that it must not harm the participants. Obviously, the researcher has to get agreement from the participants to participate in the research and they have to be carefully informed of the issues related to the research. (Fontana & Frey, 2005.) In this research, the participants were first-grade students so naturally, the permission was asked from their parents. The teacher-researcher engaged in the group activities closely during the research. The question of how closely and intimately the researcher should participate or engage in the group may become problematic along with the research process. How will commitment affect the participants or the researcher? How does it appear in research results? Should the researcher keep distance to the participants consciously? These questions had to be deliberated and solved when starting the research (Merydith, 2001). Engagement is, however, connected to participants' trust in the researcher (see Fontana & Frey, 2005; Altrichter et al., 2005). When analyzing the ethicality of research, it could be reasonable to talk about the threats to reliability that consist of the truth value, adaptability, stability, and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If these four ethical basic values are mutually in balance, the foundation for the research is well constructed.

In this research, the teacher who acted as a researcher had noticed that pupils were not able to take advantage of their class mates in order to enhance their own learning. Likewise, international research has shown that primary school students do not have sufficient social skills (Androjna et al., 2000; Caparos et al., 2002; Krantz et al., 2003; Andrusyk & Andrusyk, 2003). Thus, plenty of attention has been paid on developing social skills (Christopher, Hansen, & MacMillan, 1991; Miller, Fenty, Scott, & Park, 2011; Siemens, 2010; Zhang, 2011). In this research, an intervention that was focused on teaching methods was carried out in order to solve the evident problem. Recognizing the forms of emotional coping in the classroom directed the teacher-researcher to develop emotional coping toward emotional directedness which meant that pupils started to share their feelings with other pupils in an interactional learning situation (see also Burbules, 1990; Thompson, 2009). Then, pupils' emotional coping appeared as cooperation and goal-oriented team work as well as reciprocal and caring communication between pupils (e.g. Fabes & Eisenberg, 1992). Together, pupils were able to perceive more and were connected by verbal empathy and commitment (Burbules, 1990; Ross & Roberts-Pacchione, 2011).

The working methods that were utilized in this research enhanced pupils' emotional coping which was manifested by pupils' behavior as social flexibility, ability to act in a constructive cooperation, and being responsible for others (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004). Moreover, these methods supported learning that took place in pupils' mutual interaction and activated pupils to work in a goal-oriented manner (Brock et al., 2007). These skills are connected to pupils' wellbeing because for example according to Rantala and Määttä (2011), pupils' wellbeing is supported the best by basic daily work that provide pupils with experiences of success and if the practices in the everyday life at school support communality and wellbeing.

Conclusions

One way of developing children's emotional coping was introduced here. It is worth

remembering that developing emotional coping in a more interactional direction is not only significant for an individual pupil's future wellbeing and success but also in a wider context. Emotional directedness is a today's challenge because more and more competences—such as confronting dissimilarity, working together, and developing networking skills—are needed in the future. Globalization including the change in teaching professions and multi-lingual and multi-cultural environments demand the ability to confront dissimilarity and to cooperate with various people. The fundamental skill is the ability to use these means in an interactional manner.

In the prevailing culture of interaction, we have to set goals both for educators and pupils. In practice, this means that we are creating a culture that is founded on new structures. These structures and their goals have to be parallel at every level for the traditional culture at school differs too much from the interactional demands and needs of the today's working life.

References

- Altrichter, H., Posch, P., & Somekh, B. (2005). *Teacher investigate their work. An Introduction to the methods of action research*. London: Taylor & Francis e-library.
- Androjna, E., Barr, M. E., & Judkins, J. (2000). *Improving the social skills of elementary school children*. Chicago, IL: Saint Xavier University and SkyLight.
- Andrusyk, D., & Andrusyk, S. (2003). *Improving student social skills through the use of cooperative learning strategies*. Chicago, IL: Saint Xavier University and SkyLight.
- Boekaerts, M. (1996). Coping with stress in childhood and adolescence. In M. Zeidner & N. Endler, (Eds.), *Handbook of coping. Theory, research, application* (pp. 452-484). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Berler, E. S., Gross, A. M., & Drabman, R. S. (1982). Social skills training with children: proceed with caution. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 15(1), 41-53.
- Boekaerts, M. (1996). Coping with stress in childhood and adolescence. In M. Zeidner & N. Endler (Eds.), *Handbook of coping. Theory, research, application* (pp. 452-484). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Brenner, E. M., & Salovey, P. (1997). Emotion regulation during childhood: Developmental, interpersonal, and individual considerations. In P. Salovey & D. J. Sluyter (Eds.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence. Educational implications* (pp. 168-192). New York, NY: BasicBooks.
- Brock, L. et al. (2007). Children's perceptions of the classroom environment and social and academic performance: a longitudinal analysis of the contribution of the responsive classroom approach. *Journal of School Psychology*, 46(2), 129-149.
- Burbules, N. (1990). *Dialogue in teaching: Theory and practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Caparos, J., Cetera, C., Ogden, L., & Rossett, C. (2002). *Improving students' social skills and achievement through cooperative learning. Action research project*. Chicago, IL: Saint Xavier University and Skylight.
- Cheng, H., & Furngam, A. (2002). Personality, peer relations, and self-confidence as predictors of happiness and loneliness. *Journal of Adolescence*, 25(3), 327-339.

Christopher, J. S., Hansen, D. J., & MacMillan, V. M. (1991). Effectiveness of a peer-helper intervention to increase children's social interactions. generalization, maintenance, and social validity. *Behavior Modification*, 15(1), 22-50.

Coll, R. K., Zegwaard, K., & Lay, M. (2001). The influence of cooperative education on student perceptions of their ability in practical science. *Journal of Cooperative Education*, 36(3), 58.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Elksnin, L. K. (1998). Teaching social skills to students with learning and behavioral problems. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 33(3), 131-140. doi: 10.1177/105345129803300301.

Eisenberg, N., Guthrie, I. K., Fabes, R., Shepard, S., Losoya, S., Murphy, B. C., Jones, S., Poulin, R., & Reiser, M. (2000). Prediction of elementary school children's externalizing problem behaviors from attentional and behavioral regulation and negative emotionality. *Child Development*, 71(5), 1121-1476.

Eisenberg, N., & Spinrad, T. L. (2004). Emotion-related regulation: Sharpening the definition. *Child Development*, 75(2), 317-33.

Eisenberg, N., Liew, J., & Pidada, S. U. (2004). The longitudinal relations of regulation and emotionality to quality of Indonesian children's socioemotional functioning. *Development and Psychology*, 40(5), 790-804.

Fabes, R. A., & Eisenberg, N. (1992). Young children's coping with interpersonal anger. *Child Development*, 63(1), 116-128. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.1992.tb03600x.

Fabes, R.A. et al. (1999). Regulation, emotionality, and preschoolers' socially competent peer interactions. *Child Development*, 70(2), 432-442. doi: 10.1111/1467-8624.00031.

Fontana, D. (1990). *Social skills at work*. New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2005). The interview. From neutral stance to political involvement. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 695-728). London: Sage.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: self and identity in the late modern age*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Giffor-Smith, M. E., & Brownell, C. A. (2003). Childhood peer relationships: social acceptance, friendships, and peer networks. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 41(4), 235-284.

Goetz, T., Frenzel, A., Pekrun, R., & Hall, N. (2005). Emotional intelligence in the context of learning and achievement. In R. Schulze & R. D. Roberts (Eds.), *Emotional intelligence. An international handbook* (pp. 233-253). Cambridge, MA: Hogrefe & Huber.

Habermas, J. (1984). *Theory of communicative action I*. New York, NY: Beacon Press.

Habermas, J. (1998). *On the pragmatics of communication*. Cambridge, MA: Polity press.

Hanish, L. D., Eisenberg, N., Fabes, R. A., Spinrad, T. L., Ryan, P., & Schmidt, S. (2004). The expression and regulation of negative emotions: risk factors for young children's peer victimization. *Development and Psychopathology*, 16(2), 335-353.

- Heikkinen, H. L. T., Konttinen, T., & Häkkinen, P. (2006). Toiminnan tutkimisen suuntaukset [The trends of action research]. In H.L.T Heikkinen, E. Rovio, & L. Syrjälä (Eds.), *Toiminnasta tietoon. Toimintatutkimuksen menetelmät ja lähestymistavat [From action to information. The methods and approaches of action research]* (pp. 39-75). Vantaa: Dark.
- Jordan, D., & Le Metais, J. (1997). Social skilling through cooperative learning. *Educational research*, 39(1), 3-21.
- Krantz, S., McDermott, H., Schaefer, L., & Snyder, M. A. (2003). *Improving students' social skills through the use of cooperative learning strategies*. Chicago, IL: Saint Xavier University & SkyLight.
- Krol, K., Janssen, J., Veenman, S., & van der Linden, J. (2004). Effects of a cooperative learning program on the elaborations of students working in dyads. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 10(3), 205-237.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1985). The costs and benefits of denial. In A. Monat & R. S. Lazarus (Eds.), *Stress and coping. An anthology* (pp. 154-173). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- LeBlanc, L. A., Sautter, R. A., & Dore, D. J. (2006). Peer relationship problems. In M. Hersen (Ed.), *Child clinical handbook of behavioral assessment Vol. II Child Assessment* (pp. 377-399). San Diego, CA: Elsevier.
- Lee, G.V. (2009). From group to team: skilled facilitation moves a group from collection of individuals to an effective team. *Journal of Staff Development*, 30(5), 44-49.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mayer, J. D. & Casey, D. C. (2000). Educational policy on emotional intelligence. Does it make sense? *Educational Psychology & Review*, 12(2), 163-183.
- Matthews, G., Schwan, V. L., Campbell, S. E., Saklofske, D. H., & Mohammed, A. R. (2000). Personality, self-regulation and adaptation. A cognitive-social framework. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation* (pp. 171-205). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- McClelland, M. M., Morrison, F. J., & Holmes, D. L. (2000). Children at risk for early academic problems: the role of learning-related social skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15(3), 307-329. doi:10.1016/S0885-2006(00)00069-7
- McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2005). *Action research for teachers. a practical guide*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Merydith, S. P. (2001). Temporal stability and convergent validity of the behavioral assessment system for children. *Journal of School Psychology*, 39(3), 253-265. doi: 10.1016/S0022-4405(01)00064-4.
- Miller, M. A., Fenty, N., Scott, T. M., & Park, K. L. (2011). An examination of social skills instruction in the context of small-group reading. *Remedial and Special Education*, 32(5), 371-381.
- Morrison, K. (2005). Structuration theory, habitus and complexity theory: elective affinities or old wine in new bottles? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 26(3), 311-326.
- Peltokorpi, E. L. (2007). *Yhtä kaikki yksinäisen – Tutkimus alkuopetuksen oppilaiden emotionaalisesta hallinnasta [No child is an island – A study of emotional coping among primary pupils]*. (Acta Universitatis Lapponiensis No. 124.) Rovaniemi: University of Lapland.

Peltokorpi, E. L., & Määttä, K. (2010). The pupils' emotional coping in the mathematics lessons in the primary school. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 5(4), 282-295.

Peltokorpi, E. L., & Määttä, K. (2011). How does the pupils' emotional coping develop within learning situations during primary school years? *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 7(2), 295-322.

Peltokorpi, E. L., Määttä, K., & Uusiautti, S. (2011). Children as teacher-researcher's research partners – Action research in the classroom. *British Journal of Educational Research*, 1(1), 18-35.

Rantala, T., & Määttä, K. (2011, accepted). Ten thesis of the joy of learning at primary schools. *Early Child Development and Care*. iFirst: doi: 10.1090/03004430.2010.545124.

Ross, R., & Roberts-Pacchione, B. (2011). *Making Friends, PreK-3: A social skills program for inclusive settings*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rowe, E. W., Kim, S., Baker, J., Kamphaus, R. W., & Horne, A. H. (2010). Student personal perception of classroom climate: exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 70(5), 858-879.

Sahlberg, P., & Leppilampi, A. (1994). *Yksinään vai yhteisvoimin [Alone or together]*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.

Sharan, S., & Sahlberg, P. (2002). *Yhteistoiminnallisen oppimisen käsikirja [The handbook of cooperative learning]*. Helsinki: WSOY.

Siegel, C. (2005). An ethnographic inquiry of cooperative learning implementation. *Journal of School Psychology*, 43(3), 219-239.

Siemens, L. (2010). The potential of grant applications as team building exercises: A case study. *Journal of Research Administration*, 41(1), 75-91.

Somekh, B. (2006). *Action research: a methodology for change and development*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Spinrad, T. L., Eisenberg, N., Cumberland, A., Fabes, R. A., Valiente, C., Shepard, S. A., Reiser, M., Losoya, S. H., & Guthrie, I. K. (2006). Relation of emotion-related regulation to children's social competence: a longitudinal study. *Emotion*, 6(3), 498-510.

Spinrad, T. L., Eisenberg, N., Harris, E., Hanish, L., Fabes, R. A., Kupanoff, K., Ringwald, S., & Holmes, J. (2004). The relation of children's everyday nonsocial peer playbehavior to their emotionality, regulation, and social functioning. *Development and Psychology*, 40(1), 67-80.

Stringer, E. (2004). *Action research in education*. New Jersey, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Thompson, J. (2009). Building collective communication competence in interdisciplinary research teams. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 37(3), 278-297.

Tomal, D. R. (2003). *Action research for educators*. Lanham: Scarecrow Education.

Uusikylä, K. (2005). Luova koulu, rokote kouluviihtymättömyyteen [Creative school, the vaccine to the pupils who are not happy at school!]. In S. Karppinen, I. Ruokonen, & K. Uusikylä (Eds.), *Taidon ja taiteen luova voima. Kirjoituksia 9-12 –vuotiaiden lasten taito- ja taidekasvatuksesta [The creative force of the skills and arts. Writings of skills and arts education to children aged 9-12]* (pp. 23-31). Tampere: Tammerpaino.

Verma, N., & Pathak, A. A. (2011). Using appreciative intelligence for ice-breaking: a new design. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 23(4), 276-285.

Webster-Stratton, C., & Reid, M. J. (2004). Strengthening social and emotional competence in young children – the foundation for early school readiness and success: incredible years classroom social skills and problem-solving curriculum. *Infants & Young Children*, 17(2), 96-113.

Whitehead, J., & McNiff, J. (2006). *Action research living theory*. London: Sage.

Woodward, L. J., & Fergusson, D. M. (2000). Childhood peer relationship problems and later risks of educational under-achievement and unemployment. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 41(2), 191-201.

Young, J. (2003). Merton with energy, Katz with structure: The sociology of vindictiveness and the criminology of transgression. *Theoretical Criminology*, 7(3), 389-414. doi: 1362-4806(200308)7:3.

Zeidner, M., Matthews, G., Roberts, R. D., & MacCann, C. (2003). Development of emotional intelligence: towards a multi-level investment model. *Human Development*, 46, 69-96.

Zhang, K. C. (2011). Let's have fun! Teaching social skills through stories, telecommunications, and activities. *International Journal of Special Education*, 26(2), 70-78.

Zullig, K. J., Koopman, T. M., Patton, J. M., & Ubbes, V. A. (2010). School climate: Historical review, instrument development, and school assessment. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 28(2), 139-152.

Advised by Laima Railienė, University of Siauliai, Lithuania

Received: September 13, 2011

Accepted: September 26, 2011

Eeva-Liisa Peltokorpi	PhD, Primary School Teacher in Maaniittu School, Muuttolinnunreitti 26a, 02660 Espoo, Finland. Phone: +358 40 539 4440. E-mail: peltokorpieevaliisa@gmail.com
Kaarina Määttä	PhD, Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Lapland, P.O. Box 122, FI-96101 Rovaniemi, Finland. E-mail: Kaarina.Maatta@ulapland.fi
Satu Uusiautti	Ed.D., Post doc Researcher, Faculty of Education, University of Lapland, Lepolantie 29, 01830 Lepsämä, Finland (May-Sep), 2403 SE 8th Avenue, Cape Coral 33990, FL, USA (Oct-Apr). E-mail: satu@uusiautti.fi