



Teachers' Experiences of Enjoyment of Work as a Subtle Atmosphere: An Empirical Lifeworld Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to show how teachers' experiences of one dimension of enjoyment of work, namely joy as a subtle atmosphere, can be described and understood from a lifeworld perspective. The lifeworld phenomenological approach contributes to the whole research design and provides the concepts that form the theoretical basis for the analysis. The specific lifeworld concepts used are 'intertwinement', 'natural attitude', 'pre-predicativity', 'intentionality' and 'intersubjectivity'. Using these concepts, the results illuminate and describe the meanings of enjoyment of work, based on what the teachers expressed in interviews. The empirical study consisted of interviews with five teachers working with pupils aged seven to nine years. The results illuminate some vital and fundamental characteristics of teachers' experiences of enjoyment of work and its significance. These characteristics include its basic function and its inherent possibility for opening up the whole classroom situation to the teachers. In this sense, enjoyment of work is similar to standing in a doorway and involves an expectant foreshadowing. The study also found that teachers' experiences of joy are intertwined with their experiences of flow and control. The results found that enjoyment of work was significant in the sense of the confirmation of good work, like a receipt. Finally, the results revealed new concepts and metaphors for a richer understanding of this phenomenon. The research implications of the study illustrate how the lifeworld approach enables a deeper understanding of emotional dimensions in teachers work. The approach provides useful concepts that broaden the understanding of the content, function and meaning of teachers' experiences of enjoyment of work. The paper also points to the need for more research in this area. The results illuminate new and different aspects of teachers' work that may be a valuable resource in this profession.

Introduction

Enjoyment of work is something that most teachers see as central to their profession. Despite this, enjoyment of work has been overlooked in research on teachers' work (Hargreaves, 1998) and its content, function and meaning are vague and unknown. This leads to the risk of its importance being ignored or it being perceived as something that is vague and that cannot be analysed. Existing studies on emotions in teachers' work suffer from three basic difficulties. These difficulties are discussed in the subsequent

paragraphs.

Firstly, positive emotional dimensions, such as enjoyment of work, have been given relatively little attention in scientific studies in general (Snyder & Lopez, 2005) and in scientific studies of teachers' work in particular (Hargreaves, 1998; Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001). The consequence of this is that positive emotional experiences have been left vague in research. Hargreaves (1998) argued that this near absence of studies concerning emotion in literature and research on teachers' work provides an

inaccurate picture: "It is as if teachers think and act, but never really feel" (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 559). To the extent that emotions have been studied, the focus has been mainly on negative emotions and their impact on the work. This bias is partly due to the psychological research field where more is known about mental illness than about mental health. This means that there is much left to explore concerning positive feelings that could enhance our understanding of human interaction, especially as these emotions are fundamental to creating incentives and meaning in our lives (Ekman, 2007).

Secondly, the studies concerning enjoyment of work have either occurred in the context of psychological research (Snyder & Lopez, 2005) or in the context of working life (National Institute of Working Life, 2006; Swedish Work Environment Authority, 2002). The National Institute of Working Life (2006) study focused on the emotional impact on work, while the Swedish Work Environment Authority (2002) study focused on the influence of external factors on teachers' work. The experience of enjoyment of work has not been explored. This article aims to contribute new knowledge concerning enjoyment of work by focusing on teachers' experiences of enjoyment of work.

The third problem with studies concerning teachers' emotions, is that they have tended to focus on the emotional dimensions of teachers' work only when there is a perceived conflict between reason and emotion (Sutton & Harper, 2009). From this perspective, feelings are viewed as problematic and should be overcome and controlled by reason. These research traditions maintain a dualism between reason and emotion. In contrast, this article makes use of a lifeworld phenomenological perspective and views reason and emotion as intertwined in all human activity, and thus important in the work of teachers.

This article forms part of the results of an empirical study where theoretical concepts, drawn from lifeworld phenomenology, were used to understand and describe teachers' experiences of enjoying work. In this text, only one aspect of teachers' enjoyment of work, namely enjoyment of work as a subtle atmosphere, is discussed. The quotes used are a sample of the available material (gained through interviews) and form part of an ongoing doctoral thesis.

Based on the above-mentioned problem areas in research on positive emotions in teachers' work, the following research question was formulated: What is the significance of enjoyment of work as a subtle atmosphere for teachers of younger children in grades 1-3 in school?

Theoretical framework for the study

The lifeworld phenomenological approach used in this study aimed to understand the phenomenon of enjoyment of work and was based on lifeworld theory. In the context of this article the word 'phenomenon' should be understood in its phenomenological sense as appearance for someone. One of the basic principles of the lifeworld phenomenological approach is the understanding of the lifeworld as an intertwining between life and the world (Bengtsson, 1999). In attempting to understand this entanglement, I have found the metaphor of the lifeworld as a tapestry useful. All experiences in the lifeworld are intertwined, and we can only understand enjoyment of work through its interweaving between life and the world. There is nothing 'in-itself-itself' (Heidegger, 1992; Husserl, 1989); instead everything is intertwined just as threads in a tapestry are intertwined. If we want to study a phenomenon in the lifeworld, it must be studied both in relation to the one experiencing the phenomenon and in relation to its context. We cannot pull out a thread from the fabric image without destroying the whole picture. Therefore, in this study teachers' enjoyment of work has been explored from the perspective of the persons who experienced the joy as well as in relation to specific situations in their everyday work, such as meetings with students, classes and excursions.

Joy is a multifaceted experience, and there are different kinds of joy. Although we speak of enjoyment of work as if it were a simple feeling of joy, it includes a variety of experiences. Our existence as human beings is characterized by, among other things, a continual experience of mood (Heidegger, 1992). Everything we do is connected to one or more emotions and these have a powerful influence on how we experience our existence. Sartre (1990) pointed out that there is a dualism between physical and mental emotional state within research concerning emotions, and he refuted this dualism. This division between mind and body is not compatible with a lifeworld phenomenological approach (Bengtsson, 1993; Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

A phenomenological study of enjoyment of work is a study of the lived experiences of joy in relation to work. The study poses the question: What does it mean to be happy in relation to one's work as a teacher among younger students? The purpose is to seek an understanding of this experience of teachers' enjoyment of work. Therefore, the teachers' descriptions of enjoyment of work form the empirical base of this study. Each experience belongs to the lifeworld of the person who has experienced the joy. We cannot speak of any general enjoyment of work, but we can recognize the expression of the lived

experiences of enjoying work.

Every being has a way-of-being. The question is whether this way-of-being has the same character in every being – as ancient ontology believed and subsequent periods have basically had to maintain even down to the present – or whether individual ways-of-being are mutually distinct. Which are the basic ways of being? Is there a multiplicity? How is the variety of ways-of-being possible and how is it at all intelligible, given the meaning of being? How can we speak at all of a unitary concept of being despite the variety of ways-of-being? (Heidegger, 1982, p. 18)

Central lifeworld phenomenological notions in the study

An empirical study of teachers' enjoyment of work does not need to develop a general ontology; instead, a regional ontology aimed at the specific field being studied would be more appropriate. From a lifeworld phenomenological perspective it is necessary that this delimited ontology be made explicit (Bengtsson, 1988, 1993, 1999). This study made use of theories in order to understand the feeling of enjoyment of work in relation to teachers' work.

Our emotions captivate our consciousness, but our consciousness is not captivated in itself. Instead, what appears to us as captivating is the object in the world that the feeling is directed towards, in other words the object that produces the feeling for us (Sartre, 1990). In this way, the feeling is intentional because it is primarily directed toward something other than itself. To be released from a feeling in the world of emotions, the emotional situation must be replaced by another consciousness, such as perception. When this occurs a liberating shifting can take place.

The world may emerge in very different ways for us, and can be seen as cruel, sad, joyful or loving. The relation between the world and the person is always intertwined in our feelings. Emotions are similar to the nuances of colour in that they shift in intensity, even if the quality of feeling ascribed to the world or object remains the same. We are literally not in the world, although our whole existence is directed towards the world. Through our corporality, our existence is connected to the world. Merleau-Ponty expressed this as follows, "To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world, as we have seen; our body is not primarily in space: it is of it" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 171). Through our natural attitude we are directed towards our environment, and this approach to the world is referred to as intentionality.

Emotions are pre-predicative, in other words they are

unreflective and spontaneous, and thus precede predications (Husserl, 1989). Emotions are immediate while the intellect awakes afterwards. We never encounter simple psychological facts; instead, we experience through the psychical and through our whole existence. In this way, teachers are pre-predictive and spontaneously in the world of the school; they throw themselves into their work as a being-to the world.

In our natural attitude, we are in a situation that is experienced as obvious. As subjects, we are moored in a particular world that our whole existence addresses. Taking things for granted is distinguished as the natural attitude above all. A feeling can be a point of departure for acting in a situation that we take for granted and a mood can colour the whole situation. Our existence and things around us cannot be meaningful in terms of disconnected parts that are added to each other, but only in relation to a situation (Husserl, 1976; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Thus, teachers' enjoyment of work emerges in relation to the background or context (a school in this case) in which enjoyment is experienced.

The lifeworld is a practical and social world in which we act together with others (Schütz, 1999). In our human existence, we are intertwined with others, in the present, past and future (Heidegger, 1992; Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Schütz, 1999). The lifeworld is also an interactive whole, where there are continuously ongoing relationships of various kinds between the others and the individual, between outer and inner and between different times, such as past, present and future. In teachers' work, the school is a part of their lifeworld, and functions as a regional world (Bengtsson, 2006, 1999). Within this lifeworld children and adults live together in a cultural and common world that both they and society can influence.

The research question in this study is directed to a specific part of a reality; to a specific regional world. Thus, it is not just any enjoyment of work that is being studied but the specific enjoyment of work experienced by teachers working with pupils aged seven to nine years. In this environment, teachers' ways of acting and being are significant to their everyday work.

Just as the relationship between humans and the world is an indivisible unity, people are also intertwined with other people in their world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). People are thereby directed towards others, and are receptive for communication, fellowship and understanding with others. Inter-subjectivity is part of human existence. Inter-subjective understanding is fragile and we can easily misunderstand each other, which may result in the

interaction failing. A precondition for understanding each other is simply meeting and interacting with others (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Our interaction with others is a dynamic relationship, where understanding is never definitive, but is constantly shifting depending on the interaction. Interaction is a fluid system in which acts can switch and change direction. The reason we are not constantly misunderstanding each other is that the other's body is a whole where its different parts are integrated with each other and the whole with its environment in such a way that it constitutes a harmonized existence. Thus, it is possible to gain a hint of what another person means but it is not possible to be certain of understanding that person.

Intersubjectivity is a moving system much like style and trends (Bengtsson, 1999). The joy is always in relation to something or someone, and it is constantly unfolding. This is also true of teachers' enjoyment of work.

Bollnow (1989) studied the educational atmosphere as an important ingredient in the work of teachers. He described significant emotional dimensions of teachers' work, and these dimensions share some similarities with teachers' enjoyment of work as a subtle atmosphere. However, although enjoyment of work is one aspect of the educational atmosphere, the concepts of enjoyment of work and educational atmosphere are based on different underlying notions. The concept of educational atmosphere is based on its importance to students' maturity and learning, while the enjoyment of work concept is crucial to teachers' personal experiences of their work.

Sartre (1990) distinguished between a sensation of joy and a feeling of joy. He dwelt on joy as a feeling but did not provide any more detailed descriptions of joy as a sensation beyond the statement that the sensation of joy is "an adapted state of equilibrium" (Sartre, 1990, p. 46), while the feeling of joy is characterized by impatience. The character traits he ascribed to sensation can partly be compared to Heidegger's (1992) description of how human beings always experience the world in a mood. A mood can be sensed and can be subtle and vague, which is consistent with Sartre's (1990) description of a custom state of equilibrium. However, a mood can also be powerful. Heidegger (1992) described mood as an experience that has a vague reference in the situation and that permeates a whole situation. What sets a joyful sensation apart from a joyful mood is that the mood can vary in strength, while a sensation remains subdued.

In the interviews there are several examples of a powerful mood of joy at festive occasions such as graduation or the finale of a thematic work. These

examples have been left out of this article because the aim in this article is to understand the function and importance of a vague and subtle atmosphere of joy in teachers' work. However, the existence of both powerful and subtle moods needs to be acknowledged.

Sartre (1990) described the sensation of joy or pleasure; Heidegger (1992) wrote of mood, and Bollnow (1989) used the term atmosphere. In this article I have used the term atmosphere, which includes various elements from these theories.

Methodological grounds

Phenomenological research begins and ends in lived experience. Within lifeworld theory, experience is always rooted in the world (Bengtsson, 2013). This study is based on the premise that conversations about things that are unclear or that have not previously been expressed in words lead to new discoveries for those involved in the dialogues. Conversations are elemental to our human interaction, and language is a tool to learn about others' experiences as well as to present our understanding to others (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nyström, 2008; Van Manen, 1997).

Emotions can be difficult to observe, but through our ability to tell others about our experiences we are able to express feelings. Talk makes it possible for people to give meaning to their experiences in the world; it also allows them to give meaning to their personal actions (Polkinghorne, 1988). We naturally tell each other about both everyday and special experiences; it is a simple way for us to share our experiences (Kvale, 1997).

Merleau-Ponty (2002) stressed that language is the primary tool available to human beings for making sense in relation to each other. Through interviews, a variety of experiences of enjoying work were collected in order to provide a picture of a varied and intertwined human world. The interview questions were designed to focus on the emotional experiences that we usually do not talk about or that easily remain unnoticed because they are often seen as obvious, as is the case of enjoyment of work. Based on the study's lifeworld approach the intention was to capture the participating teachers' experiences of enjoyment of work in order to gain a broader and more nuanced understanding of these experiences.

As an alternative to interviews, this study could have made use of the participant observation method. However, questions arise regarding how much of teachers' enjoyment of work is visible and observable. Of course, the participant observation method does offer an opportunity to study the subject of inquiry in its natural environment (Dahlberg et al.,

2008; Van Manen, 1997). In some cases, observation provides a fuller picture because everything from speech to body language and actions can be captured; this is the strength of observations. Yet, the researcher has less control over observations than interviews. Through an interview, a phenomenon can be focused on in a more precise way. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage when the openness of the phenomenon is limited. The interview method was chosen for this study because this method was considered to be most effective in capturing the phenomena being studied. In addition, it offered an opportunity to turn the teachers' attention to a subject that is often experienced, but rarely described with words. This process is described in the following quotation:

Throughout an interview, as researchers we make a concerted effort to direct the informant's intentional consciousness. This means facilitating the individual's attention towards the phenomenon of interest and directing the interaction towards deeply anchored meanings, rather than superficial attitudes or commonly held beliefs. (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 187)

Metaphors can be helpful in analyzing interviews but they have several pitfalls. Some implications of enjoyment of work described in the results led to metaphors, which proved useful in the analysis. By utilizing lifeworld theory to specify how a metaphor can be understood, metaphors were used to aptly describe teachers' enjoyment of work. In studying the different aspects of a phenomenon, language is important in describing the personal experience and its meaning for the one experiencing (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Experiences are complex in nature. This means that we need to use dynamic language to describe the experience. Metaphorical expressions can be used for scientific understanding as they serve to link abstract theoretical illumination to tangible explanations (Pramling, 2006).

The use of new metaphors can aid in expressing something new that has been discovered in the world, something that was previously hidden. In order to use metaphors, it is necessary to discover something new for which the metaphor is to be used. Metaphors also assist others in discovering something new. The discoveries I want to use the metaphors for in this article are the result of my lifeworld phenomenological study, which includes lifeworld theories. That is how metaphors are used in this study. However, the use of metaphors can also be incorporated into language so that they are taken for granted and thus lose their power. A metaphor can cement a pattern of thinking about a phenomenon, with the result that it hides other perspectives on the world. This means that

the use of a metaphor can prevent us from seeing sides other than those that are in line with the chosen metaphor (Pramling, 2006).

Method

The data used in this article forms part of the data used in the author's doctoral dissertation. Interviews with 19 teachers about their experiences of enjoyment of work were conducted between February and December 2009 as part of the doctoral dissertation. The teachers in the study were working in four different Swedish compulsory schools with schoolchildren in grades 1-3.

This article includes quotes from five of these teachers selected to show an aspect of teachers' experience of enjoyment of work. The five participating teachers in this article are Felicia, who has worked as a teacher for 14 years; Cecilia, who worked for 15 years; Jenny, 30 years; Ofelia, 32 years; and Nora, 35 years. When the interviews took place, they were all working with pupils aged seven to nine years. At the school where Felicia and Cecilia worked there were about 290 students, and the school where Jenny, Ofelia and Nora worked had approximately 590 students.

As noted above, interview was chosen as the method of data collection in order to gain access to the teachers' personal experiences of enjoying work. During the interviews, I sought the richest possible descriptions of the enjoyment of work based in the teachers' regional world, i.e. their everyday work. Each interview was recorded on tape, and the recordings were supplemented with notes. The interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours. The recordings were transcribed and all the teachers were offered an opportunity to read and comment on the transcriptions. One of the teachers read the printout, but no comments were given.

The interviews were analyzed in order to discern the meaning of enjoyment of work. Phenomenological research requires a reflexive distancing at different levels in relation to the empirical material and in relation to the researcher's own pre-understandings of the topic of interest (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Openness and curiosity about the teachers' enjoyment of work was the guiding principle in the analysis. Although it is impossible for a researcher to fully escape his or her own pre-understanding, I attempted to bridle my pre-understandings through self-reflection and a curious aloofness to the topic of interest (Dahlberg et al., 2008). According to Gadamer (2004), all human sciences always entail some degree of self-awareness, and scientific work must therefore be based on a systematic and orderly use of experience (Bengtsson, 1993b; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Although this may

seem obvious not all empirical research accounts for the researcher's pre-understanding and experiences as a part of the research process.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that the concepts we use to describe feelings are often vague or awkward in relation to our experiences. In contrast, a metaphor is better able to capture and express emotional experiences. As I analyzed the interviews with the selected lifeworld phenomenological concepts, different functions and characteristics of enjoyment of work emerged and I described them with the help of metaphors. These results are presented below.

Results

The first topic presented in the results relates to a situation described by Felicia. In this situation, enjoyment of work emerges as taken for granted. This shows how joy is a natural, basic stance in her work. This is followed by a description of Jenny that shows the importance of enjoyment of work for the interaction in the classroom. The quote by Ofelia is another example of enjoyment of works' inter-subjective character, and shows how a mood of joy in work is a pre-conscious framework for understanding the classroom situation. Finally, I provide two examples of how the lack of enjoyment of work as a mood is experienced by Cecilia and Nora.

Enjoyment of work as an intertwined atmosphere

In the teachers' descriptions enjoyment of work shows itself in a variety of ways. Felicia talks about many different situations in her work when she experiences joy. The joy she highlights is primarily a subtle joy. When she talks, the idea of joy as an atmosphere in the classroom emerges. This atmospheric delight has some specific characteristics.

The enjoyment of work described by Felicia is an atmosphere that serves as background to what is happening in the classroom and to being with the students. The sensation of pleasure is not particularly intense, which means that it does not stand out, but is perceived as pervasive and obvious. She describes enjoyment of work as small everyday events in the classroom that are really nice and that flow together. The terms Felicia relates to enjoyment of work describe this atmosphere in a simple and robust way. On the one hand, joy is so interwoven with everyday events that it feels hidden in a taken for granted way. On the other hand, she points out that it is possible to note that what is occurring is a little out of the ordinary, and that this is something that can be recognized. Joy often remains unnoticed in its everydayness.

Yes there are the amounts [of situations where the enjoyment of work is perceived]. But I think that it's the same with us adults as it's with the children, that we remember what's going a bit beyond the ordinary. All these little moments that work great in the classroom, yes, all those everyday events, they are intertwined, they are so many and they are so similar, so what one remembers most is what stands out then. (Felicia)

Felicia finds it difficult to link the enjoyment of work to a single event. This is characteristic of the experience of enjoyment of work as a mood. Joy is a part of her everyday work and permeates her work. It influences lessons and breaks, the responses between her and the children, as well as her posture and responses. It is also visible in the results of the students' classroom work as well as in her own classroom work. She ascribes the joy an obvious role in everyday life; it is just there. In her description, joy emerges as fundamental and mundane in its intertwinement.

The joy in her work comes in the moment. Thus, although the subtle enjoyment of work is not primarily related to specific situations, she ties her joy to certain situations. She does not experience enjoyment of work at just any time and in any way, instead it emerges in relation to specific situations in which she feels that the work is going well. However, she is unable to explain exactly how it works. Her way of talking about what it is to be happy in relation to her work reveals how joy is an intertwinement between life and world. It is both her own feeling that the work is going well in the classroom and her ability to see and confirm that the quality of the students' performance is good.

It's in the moment somehow. That you walk around with a smile on your face. And you leave the classroom when the pupils get a break, feeling well. [...] A positive attitude, positive parents as well as being all the time in a positive atmosphere in some way, well, it keeps you going. It's not that someone says to you all the time: "Oh God, this is great! Oh, how good you are!" It's not like that. But it's that you feel for yourself that ... you just feel that it's going well and I see it in the results and so, too. (Felicia)

Felicia's joy makes reference to the whole classroom situation. Although it is not pronounced, she both sees and feels this joy. The reference to joy refers to the work as a whole. She describes joy as something that takes place in her own body, in her actions as well as in the activity in the classroom. Enjoyment of work is

described as simple, ordinary and as an inter-twinement between her feeling and what is happening in the classroom.

Another characteristic of the enjoyment of work described by Felicia involves experiencing joy as a basic attitude to her work. A feature of her enjoyment of work is that she walks around with a smile on her face. She speaks of joy in her work as a positive attitude, and she adds that it is an ongoing experience. The feeling is connected with the situation and has a clear duration and extends throughout the room. When she talks, she connects enjoying work with the atmosphere in the classroom.

The everyday character of joy also manifests itself in relation to the social dimension of teachers' work. The atmosphere has an impact on the interaction with others. Above all, the sensation of pleasure affects relationships with students and parents, and vice versa. Felicia also shows how her experience of enjoyment of work is associated with the experience of confirmation of her ability. It is not primarily what is expressed in words, instead, it is the mood in the room that conveys and confirms that she is doing a good job. All personal experiences are anchored in the world and Felicia's mood of enjoyment of work is no exception. Her enjoyment of work is both a personal experience and an experience she describes as rooted in the world in that she sees results. In this way, a joyful mood is also distinguished by its practical interest. Teachers' work is a specific job and to experience joy as a teacher has a specific meaning for that teacher's work, as is apparent in the quotation above. Felicia describes the joy from its reference to her work. This reference is vague in that it does not point to anything specific, but is associated with her work as a whole. Felicia also speaks of the practical function of joy in work; it gives her strength and energy, and makes her feel good.

The sensation of joy also gives the situation a specific meaning as joyful. Felicia says that she shares this mood of joy with her students. It is not something that needs to be overtly stated; instead the classroom atmosphere communicates that "Things are going well". Felicia's life as a teacher is coloured by the feeling, and it gives her a mooring in the classroom among her students. The description indicates that the emotional dimensions of the work are of supreme importance in the understanding of the classroom situation. The emotions are to be understood as supreme in the sense that they occur before reflection. It is not primarily through rational reflection that Felicia notes that work is going well; instead, these experiences are emotional and are based on the classroom atmosphere. A joyful atmosphere is immediate in the situation.

The significance of enjoyment of work for the interaction

Jenny describes enjoyment of work as a feeling of flow in her work. Joy is interpersonal in character, and Jenny is linking enjoyment of work to harmony and coherence in relation to the students. The experience of flow in the work creates a good atmosphere in the room that allows teachers and students to experience a happy mood. It spreads comfort that clearly contributes to Jenny's enjoyment of work.

The pupils' eagerness and desire to work is the main reason for Jenny's joy. The presence of frenetic activity in the classroom does not disrupt the calm atmosphere. Jenny describes it as everyone working at his or her own level; although there is a little small talk and mumbling it is fundamentally a tranquil atmosphere. It is this combination of high activity and harmony, "it flows and it works", which is an important source of joy for Jenny. The positive atmosphere in the classroom is related to enjoying work in two ways. First, the activity and the harmony in the classroom are signs of joy as a receipt for good work, just as one would receive a receipt for delivering supplies to the school. However, they are not only signs of joy; they are also ingredients in the joy that prevails.

Yes, thus, when I feel really great enjoyment of work in the classroom, then it is so that all the students are active, you can have ... say that we have Swedish and I have had a briefing about something. And there are many exercises to this stuff and everyone works at their own level and with what that particular student needs. It's a little small talk here, a little hum, but it's still a calm atmosphere. "And Jenny, you come a little and watch!" And you know so ... and I can just look out. Oh, so very lovely! Everyone is working on one's own and it flows and it works. Then, I think it's so sweet! Yes, but it's like a thing. And then it is not this "haha what fun", but it is actually harmony. There is coherence in the room ... (Jenny)

Jenny identifies the enjoyment of work that she feels in the situation as a specific kind of joy. It does not belong to a feeling of joy she associates with laughter and with fun; it belongs to a feeling of joy whose meaning is harmony and fellowship. She calls the joy coherence. Coherence can be understood in the sense of orchestral instruments all being tuned in the same key. She also uses the word harmony, another metaphor from the world of music. Her use of the term harmony suggests that her enjoyment of work is associated with her relationship with her students and

the interactions that occur between them. The atmosphere of enjoyment of work means they are in tune with each other.

Ofelia describes the importance of a calm and happy atmosphere in the classroom. Teachers of younger students spend extended periods with their schoolchildren, which makes it possible for them to get to know their students. Ofelia says it is important to know the students and establish a good relationship with them in order to ensure that an atmosphere of joy is able to reign in the classroom. There is a clear connection to time here, even if time itself is no guarantee that enjoyment of work will be achieved. Rather, a variety of things should come together for the feeling of a joyful atmosphere and flow to be reached. Teachers' work is interpersonal and the classroom influences, and is influenced greatly by, the emotional aspects. The atmosphere experienced influences how teachers and students perceive their schoolwork.

Creating belonging and well-being is important for enjoyment of work, but Ofelia also speaks about the importance of order and control. As she became better acquainted with her students she felt more freedom to joke with them without the situation getting out of hand. A happy atmosphere not only creates the freedom to joke, but it also encourages spontaneity in the work, and provides the ability "to throw out some stuff".

That we like being together, that I think it's fun to get to know them, and as in really getting to know them, so that you know more, like almost read each other's thoughts. Therefore be able to kid, throw out some stuff but still know that the situation is calm, without 'popping'. One can also have a little spontaneity then. It's a bit of the enjoyment of work, when you get this relationship between each other. [...] ... When you feel the atmosphere, i.e. it's good; it's a calm and happy atmosphere. (Ofelia)

Both Jenny and Ofelia describe how the mutual balance between freedom and control in their work becomes visible and is a prerequisite for enjoyment of work as a subtle atmosphere. The calm and happy atmosphere is based on a sound relationship. Conversely, Ofelia further describes how a joyful mood also becomes a facilitator.

The absence of an atmosphere of enjoyment of work

Cecilia provides another example of the fundamental importance of enjoyment of work as a subtle atmosphere in teachers' work. That work flows is an amazing feeling and it is closely linked to the activity

that takes place in the classroom. For Cecilia, a happy atmosphere is linked to everyone knowing what to do and work flowing smoothly.

It's a bit different, sometimes you feel the fluency or as having an awesome feeling, Yes! Everyone knows what to do and I'm there and I feel that I'm enough and enjoying the kids' work and everything. (Cecilia)

Cecilia's feeling of being enough also links joys to a sense of confirmation. She describes her sense of enjoyment and suggests that joy emerges in its intersubjective character. It is an experience that she shares with the students; it spreads out over everything.

These moments of joy overflow at work and can easily turn into a completely different experience and stress and disorder can emerge as dominant feelings. It is only in those situations where the interaction works and where there is harmony that the joy of fluency in the work occurs. As Cecilia continues in the interview, we come to understand that the experience of joy is fragile and can be easily lost when an increased tempo, ambiguity or small change occurs in the structure. Cecilia also says that this can occur because she is simply feeling a little unhealthy on a specific day, or is not on top of her game for some reason. She describes this sense of lack of enjoyment as feeling chased, or a sensation of feeling as if she is one step behind. Then both students and teacher experience a feeling of stress.

Cecilia explains that she sometimes feels that she needs to step up the pace and that this feeling spreads to the students. According to Cecilia, the atmosphere in the classroom can be radically different due to the shift of small nuances that results in the whole situation becoming unmanageable. It can be difficult to determine exactly what has led the fluency in the classroom to fail. Lessons' flow cause joy in work; but when fluency is exchanged for stress and increased tempo, the joy is diminished and is replaced by negative emotions such as failure and discomfort.

But sometimes, you feel that it gets out of hand and that there is such a lesson that you yourself either were a bit vague in your instructions, or you feel a bit lower some day and then I somehow feel that I am one step behind throughout the lesson. It is increasing its pace, the kids are stressed and want very much help, and so you go into the trap of just rushing faster and faster. And while you help someone, there is someone else with a book in front of your face and then you go into that trap and help it, though you really are very clear with that everyone sits and raises his or

her hands. And then someone realizes that: Yeah, she did it! And so it is five more in front of you. So yes, you can go into spin sometimes. And then you think afterwards: What was it that happened? (Cecilia)

Cecilia describes enjoyment of work as something that affects her whole person. Her actions are influenced and changed based on how the situation appears to her and the mood that prevails. She experiences the classroom rhythm quite differently when this atmosphere is absent. The joy associated with a feeling of peace and harmony in the classroom makes the situation appear open and full of possibilities. This feeling is diminished by the experience of stress. In these instances, an atmosphere of joy and harmony is replaced by a sense of insufficiency and stress. The whole situation appears radically different for Cecilia when an atmospheric shift takes place.

Since enjoyment of work is so closely connected with the everyday life as a teacher, it is sometimes only noticed once it is lost. It is the lack of enjoyment of work that reminds teachers that it is something that is often part of everyday life as a teacher among young children. Nora describes enjoying work as something she takes for granted that has a powerful impact and becomes visible only in its absence.

You take it for granted, but when the “shade goes down” [a Swedish expression for being unhappy], then it’s ... then you don’t know if you would barely get to work. (Nora)

Both Cecilia and Nora experience joy as a natural emotion in their work as teachers. Nora points out that the joy of work is first noticed when it is no longer present. The above quote also shows the powerful role that enjoyment of work plays in a teacher’s everyday life. Nora refers to enjoyment of work as something you simply cannot be without as a teacher. Joy allows teachers to work and, according to Felicia, it provides them with strength and energy. Teachers’ experience of enjoyment of work is therefore fundamental to their functioning as teachers. In this way, it is similar to a floor on which they are able to stand.

Theoretical deepening of the results

In the results, the idea of enjoyment of work as a mood within teachers’ work emerges. This section is a theoretical deepening of the results. A lifeworld phenomenological elucidation of the result strives for a deeper understanding of what appears within the results (Bengtsson, 1999; Dahlberg, Drew, & Nyström, 2001). The lifeworld phenomenological concepts selected are used to understand the function

and significance of a subtle atmosphere of enjoyment of work for the work of classroom teachers.

An intertwined atmosphere of enjoyment of work – Enjoyment of work as a floor

Enjoyment of work emerges as a foundation in the work of a teacher. The joy is a feeling that gives teachers an anchor and a foothold in their everyday work. The subtle enjoyment of work’s bodily anchoring has a linking function that allows teachers to feel at home in their work. The joy is familiar and obvious, which can be likened to the floor’s stability and fundamental significance.

In Felicia’s description, enjoyment of work emerges as something that is taken for granted in everyday life and as something which is intertwined with small everyday events. The joy she is talking about does not have a specific reference in the world as an explicit feeling of joy (Sartre, 1990), but is spread out throughout the classroom. Enjoyment of work’s composite character emerges in the situations she describes. It is intertwined with Felicia’s work as a whole, and it has the character of a mood (Heidegger, 1992). Her description of enjoyment of work is of something that colours the whole classroom situation. This description is similar to Sartre’s (1990) way of describing the sensation of joy as well as being similar to Heidegger’s (1992) description of existence as ‘being tuned’. Describing enjoyment of work as a feeling of joy is explicit and this makes it easier to recognize and reproduce. Feelings have their roots in the world and we are able to ascertain their origins. A mood, however, lacks this particular stronghold in existence and its source is more uncertain because it is spread out everywhere (Buytendijk, 1951; Heidegger, 1992). Both of these emotional states (joy as a feeling and joy as a mood) share the experience of intense presence and a sense of the ‘here and now’ as well as a strong association with the body.

In everyday life joy is invisible in the sense of being unnoticed and taken for granted. The subtle atmosphere of enjoyment of work is hidden in everyday life and experienced as a part of the natural attitude in the lifeworld. The natural attitude is characterized by the interdependence between life and the world, and the lifeworld is the foundation for everything we experience (Husserl, 1976). Felicia shows how her enjoyment of work is a way to be in her everyday work. It is not a conscious or explicit stance, instead the feeling is pre-predictive. This characteristic of the joy in work may influence the way in which the work emerges. It forms a background for the whole classroom situation and the activities that take place within that situation. Experiencing enjoyment of work appears as a natural attitude in teachers’ work, a way of being-to the

world. Joy is a basic attitude that is pre-predicative and this makes it powerfully effective and apparent, but rarely noticed.

The lifeworld is complex and cannot be captured in simple explanations without being reduced (Bengtsson, 1993). Felicia's enjoyment of work shows how joy occurs in the intertwining between the inner and the outer; between the mental and the material. Thus, understanding joy in this manner rejects any understanding of either-or thinking. Instead, enjoying work is characterized by both-and thinking; this means that joy could be described as having kind of an in-between character. Enjoyment of work is not only a subjective inner feeling but also involves a reference to the outer situation. For Felicia, this reference is to the work as a whole and not to a feeling of joy in a particular person, thing or phenomenon (Buytendijk, 1951; Sartre, 1990).

Enjoyment of work is not directed towards itself, but towards what happens in the regional world that Felicia forms part of, in this case the classroom. It is associated with her actions and activities that occur in the classroom and in her own body. This is also how it appears as a specific kind of joy associated with Felicia's work. Felicia's lived body is the link between the inner and the outer, between life and the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). What distinguishes Felicia's enjoyment of work is its importance as a natural attitude in her work.

The joy colours Felicia's entire life and world as a teacher. The feeling captures both her body and mind, but she does not recognize being trapped in a feeling. Instead, she experiences enjoyment of work in the manner that Sartre (1990) describes as the magic of feelings. In other words, the whole situation becomes pleasantly tuned without her even touching the situation. What appears to Felicia as captivating is the classroom situation to which the feeling is addressed. The atmospheric joy is subtle in its character, which depends on its being pre-predicative and on it being directed toward the whole context in which it is experienced. Thus, the overall situation emerges as pleasantly tuned by Felicia's sensation of joy. She experiences the situation in her natural attitude as joyful.

Felicia's experience of joy has a practical interest in the work that she is involved in, because the reference of joy in the concrete situation makes her feel secure and anchored in her work. Felicia's enjoyment of work involves rejoicing over that which is related to her ongoing work. According to Heidegger (1992), our existence as human beings is characterized by concern and we are therefore practically geared to take on the tasks at hand. Felicia's behaviour is associated with a feeling of joy that means satisfaction and contentment.

For the teachers, the experience of enjoyment of work as a mood is a foundation of their work. For the teachers, this taken for granted experience of enjoyment of work acts as a floor. Thus, it simply exists but is as unnoticed and taken for granted as a floor. It constitutes a basic condition that is necessary in order to feel good and be able to work as a teacher. Just as the floor gives stability and security in life, the teachers link a feeling of joy in everyday work to something that guarantees functional and good work in the classroom. They expect this fundamental joy in work to be present as a base for the work they perform. They do not primarily need excited shouts and praise; rather, joy is experienced throughout the whole work situation and affects them in their entire person. The joy gives the situation a specific meaning, and the embodiment of the joy anchors the teachers in their work.

The significance of enjoyment of work for the interaction – Enjoyment of work as a receipt

Another metaphor that can be used to understand the meaning of enjoyment of work as a subtle atmosphere in teachers' work is the image of enjoyment of work as a receipt for a job well done. In this metaphor enjoyment of work is compared to the receipt one receives for goods having been delivered. The teachers describe how they experience the atmosphere in the classroom as acknowledgment of their work. This positive atmosphere is a receipt, which confirms the good work and lets them know that everything is going well. .

In Jenny's description, the enjoyment of work's intersubjective character becomes visible in relation to the activity that takes place in the classroom. A mood of joy contributes to an understanding of the situation as joyful. This joyful atmosphere in the classroom is something that Jenny shares with the students. She experiences a consensus in relation to this joyful atmosphere. The lifeworld is a social world in which we are intertwined with other people (Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Schütz, 1999). Jenny's being-to-the-world is directed towards the students in the classroom, and she describes her enjoyment of work as something that originates in the meeting with the students. The classroom's positive and joyful atmosphere emerges in relation to the students.

Both Felicia and Jenny describe a feeling of enjoyment of work as a confirmation that they are doing a good job. Their experience of enjoyment of work as confirmation reveals their dependence on their relationship to the students. The work is interpersonal, and therefore the enjoyment of work is also interpersonal. In order to experience enjoyment of work, it is not enough that Felicia is happy; her happiness is dependent on the students. Enjoyment of

work is an intersubjective experience in the classroom.

Jenny also talks about the consensus that she feels and her sense that the students' high labour intensity indicates that the work is going well. The teachers' reference to confirmation as part of their enjoyment of work involves linking enjoying work to a feeling of satisfaction with their labour. In their descriptions, they describe this feeling as being very important. Cecilia says that she enjoys the pupils' work, while other teachers say that joy gives them strength, desire and motivation in their work. Joy also brings a sense of coping with work and a sense of security in relation to the tasks that surround them. This understanding of enjoyment of work shows the interpersonal character of teachers' work and the teachers' interdependence with their students in their work. It is not enough that they experience joy; their job is dependent on the students' response and desire to work. This dependency is characteristic of teachers' work. The work's relational character is a source of joy for the teachers, but this source can be reversed and joy can be diminished if, for example, the students do not respond positively.

The significance of enjoyment of work for the interaction – Enjoyment of work as a door opening

A feeling of joy is primarily a positional consciousness and not a reflective consciousness. Buytendijk (1951) described joy as an open attitude, an expectation of the unexpected. Felicia shows such a positional approach to work when she says that she walks around with a smile on her face and she has a positive attitude toward work. Bollnow (1989) also described a joyful mood as making us open ourselves to the world. This assumption rests on Heidegger's (1992) assertion that we always exist in a mood. Our lives are characterized by always being in a mood, which makes it possible for us to understand the fundamental differences between different moods such as cheerful, dejected, happy or sad. These moods show their clear contrasts with the activities and actions that are expressed. According to Bollnow (1989), if we are depressed and gloomy, life becomes dull and joyless, and we retreat into ourselves. Conversely, a happy mood opens us to the world. It arouses curiosity about our surroundings and provides an opportunity to experience joy in our actions. Joy opens us for spontaneous activity and playfulness (Bollnow, 1989). Ofelia speaks of the ability to act spontaneously as an aspect of enjoyment of work.

A joyous atmosphere emerges as taken for granted, and in their natural attitude teachers are opened or closed to different ways of acting. A joyful mood is thus a natural attitude that the teachers act on spontaneously. They can, of course, reflect on this

subtle atmosphere and thus act on both reason and emotion. However, the feeling is pre-predicative and thus precedes the reflection. This does not mean that an emotional behaviour is the same as an irrational act. On the contrary, emotional responsiveness provides an opportunity to act sensitively in relation to the situation (Anderson, 1994; Nussbaum, 1995). This is exemplified by work appearing efficient and enjoyable for Cecilia when she feels joy and the work flows well.

Emotion and reason interacting in teachers' work allows action to be accompanied by a greater responsiveness and sensitivity in relation to the whole classroom situation (Nussbaum, 1995). An atmosphere of enjoyment of work makes Ofelia feel free to joke with students and also allows for spontaneous activities. In this way, a sense of enjoyment of work is fundamental to teachers' actions in their work and what emerges as possible within this context (Buytendijk, 1951).

This basic attitude of joy in work is like a door opening to different possibilities for action. Joy as a mood helps the situation be open to new and unexpected actions. The work appears more open and richer in ways to act. Experiencing this fundamental joy creates room for variety and spontaneity in the work. For Ofelia this means that she can spontaneously blurt out some ideas. This openness, which is part of joy, contributes to an expectant attitude toward work. The joyous atmosphere has an inherent feature of producing an open situation for the teachers. It is like standing in a door opening where you have a hopeful attitude towards that which is yet unknown.

The picture of enjoyment of work as a door opening becomes even clearer when it is contrasted with teachers' experience of joy when it is shrinking or being hindered. When the mood shifts, the situation closes and opportunities to act shrink. As in the example with Cecilia where time becomes an opponent chasing her, her actions become fragmented and she feels insufficient in her work. As the door closes, her whole person experiences the work differently. She feels that she loses control and loses her foothold in the situation.

Emotions exist in a mutual relationship between life and the world. Various moods put our lives into motion, and how this movement develops or declines is due to this reciprocal relationship, which is the very basis of our existence. According to Husserl (1976), our consciousness is always conscious of something towards which it is intentionally directed and that thus has a meaning for us. A consequence of this assumption is that our feelings are not viewed as meaningless consciousness or merely mental; rather it

means that a situation requires a response. Our emotional attitude is our response that we act on intentionally (Buytendijk, 1951).

Absence of enjoyment of work

Heidegger (1992) describes our existence as human beings as an existence in a mood. Mood is fundamental to our existence, and we are never “masters of the mood by becoming free from mood, but always by bringing in some new, or opposite mood” (Heidegger, 1992, p. 179). We can apply this description of mood to Cecilia’s experience of her mood shifting in her enjoyment of work. Her experience of enjoying work appears fragile in its dependence on her students and the teaching situation. According to Sartre (1990), an emotion is a way of experiencing the world. He argued that our emotions affect the world in a magical way. Through our emotions, the whole world is changing before our eyes without us even touching the world. However, the world can also affect our emotions, because it is from situations, people and things in the world that a mood or feeling develops.

A mood of enjoyment of work is something that unfolds in an ongoing process. This means that a given atmosphere may cease at any time, making it fragile. Both Cecilia and Nora describe joy as a natural attitude in relation to their work. Cecilia’s description of enjoyment of work is a way to be in her job that affects her whole person. Her actions are influenced and change on the basis of how the situation appears to her and the mood that prevails. The joyful atmosphere associated with the experience of harmony and peace dissolves and is replaced by an agitated atmosphere, where the time and the rhythm in the classroom are completely changed.

Although the nuances that overthrow the peace and flow that exists are small, the feeling associated with these nuances is palpable and completely changed. Heidegger (1992) pointed out that we are always in a mood and a mood is therefore always replaced by another mood. In the classroom situation the atmospheric joy, which was characterized by a sense of calm and openness to various possibilities for action, is replaced by the experience of stress. The whole situation emerges in a radically different way through the atmosphere that Cecilia experiences. This is a concrete example of emotion’s magical character (Sartre, 1990) and shows how feelings affect a situation as well as how a situation affects feelings.

Enjoyment of work as a floor to stand on in everyday life becomes clear when Nora points out that the joy in work is first noticed when it is no longer there. When the floor is snatched away, life becomes uncertain and stability in life is lost. Enjoyment of

work’s powerful role in the everyday life of a teacher becomes evident when Nora says that enjoyment of work is something she simply cannot be without. The expression ‘enjoyment of work’ focuses on a specific kind of joy. It is a joy that is associated with work, and the two have a mutual influence on each other. There is a circular causality between work and pleasure so that joy may have its source in the work, and a cheerful attitude can rub off on the whole work situation.

The teachers’ expect to experience joy in their work. They see enjoyment of work as something obvious and take this fundamental emotion for granted in their natural approach to their work. That is why it is often noticed first when it is absent. That is why the implicit atmosphere of joy in work is a basic attitude and teachers refer to it as a starting point for coping with everyday life as a teacher. If the joy shrinks or is suppressed they lose stability and control in their work. The teachers feel lost in their work when the subtle atmosphere of joy is lost. The atmosphere of stress and anxiety that replaces enjoyment of work is flaccid in character and makes the whole situation seem like a quagmire.

Our emotional life functions to bind us to the situation in which we find ourselves. Emotions involve us in a situation, but also the reverse is true, that is, they involve the situation in us (Mazis, 1993; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). The teachers’ experiences of joy as a receipt or confirmation of a job well done is also lost in situations where enjoyment of work is absent. Instead, the teachers feel insufficient and pressured by the students’ needs and the growing scarcity of time at their disposal. Their attitude toward their work changes and their ability to manoeuvre is perceived as shrunk and closed. This could be likened to the door slamming shut.

Discussion

Let us return to the question I asked initially in this article. What is the significance of enjoyment of work as a subtle atmosphere for teachers among younger children in school? The results show that enjoyment of work as an atmosphere appears to be fundamental in the work of teachers. This mood is common in teachers’ daily lives, but is often unnoticed and taken for granted. Despite this, a joyful mood is powerfully effective in their work and of utmost importance. In this way it serves as a floor, grounding their work.

By applying a lifeworld phenomenological perspective to teachers’ descriptions of everyday situations where they experience enjoyment of work, their personal experiences are illuminated. We can see the complexity of enjoyment of work and how it is intertwined with teachers’ work as a whole. In their

descriptions, teachers speak of joy as both an inner and an outer experience. They experience the joy of working as an intertwining of their own person and the whole classroom situation. Simply describing the enjoyment of work as an inner state of mind or as being determined by external factors that influence it would mean that our understanding of enjoyment of work as intertwined with life and world is lost. The work environment and personal mood are interdependent in the teachers' experiences of enjoyment of work. To understand enjoyment of work's content, function and meaning, it is necessary to take into account this interdependence.

The results show the need to study the emotional dimensions of teachers' work as well as to understand the rationality and feeling as interdependent. I do not intend to argue for a one-sided emphasis on the emotional dimensions of work, but instead to argue for recognition of an atmosphere of enjoyment of work as the foundation for the choices made and the action taken by teachers. The results of the study show the importance of emotions such as enjoyment of work. A mood like enjoyment of work is pre-predictive (Heidegger, 1992) and is therefore an incentive for teachers to respond to in their work. It is much like standing in a door opening with many options for action.

From a lifeworld approach, emotions are understood as intentional. However, according to Heidegger (1992), a mood is not intentional but instead is a way of being in the world that encompasses and colours all objects and gives them particular meanings. An atmosphere of enjoyment of work is therefore a ground for the teacher to act upon in his or her natural attitude. This study shows that an atmosphere of enjoyment of work allows the teacher to experience the situation with a certain meaning; i.e. as joyful, that allows for certain ways of being and acting in his or her work. By ignoring emotional aspects of teachers' work something fundamental and powerfully activating in their work is overlooked. This is in evidence in this study, and was also pointed out by Hargreaves (1998). We will not be able to comprehend emotions or be able to see their full potential for improving teaching and learning, if we do not study them using scientific theories and perspectives.

The idea that reason and emotion are each other's opposites is problematic in interpersonal work, where emotional labour forms the base of the work. Teachers' emotional involvement in their work is not something that can or should be discouraged (Aspelin, 2010; Laursen Fibæk, 2004; Van Manen, 1994). The results show how emotions form the basis of teachers' work and a study like this thus contributes to a deeper understanding of the function

and meaning of emotions, like enjoyment of work, in teachers' work. Through this research I aim to highlight the importance of emotional dimensions (such as enjoyment of work) in teachers' work. I also wish to show that these emotional aspects are a necessary aspect of teachers' work, and are not opposed to their use of theories, thinking and rationality. On the contrary, these are interdependent. A one-sided knowing is, according to Mazis (1993, p.1) "an empty knowing". He stated that:

The understanding that allows for a connectivity to others and world in recognizing their difference, a motivation that is fluid and transforming, an embodiment that is enlivening, expressive, and sensitive to nuance, and a wonder that allows becoming a way to manifest itself, occur only at depths of meaning of engagement and apprehension that involve the emotions. (Mazis, 1993, p. 4)

To spend the working day with young children is to take part in children's spontaneous way of being. An open posture at work makes teachers better prepared to meet the schoolchildren and expect the unexpected. In situations where enjoying work is replaced by stress, a teacher's ability to capture and handle spontaneity in the classroom shrinks. The unexpected becomes a threat that must be eliminated in order to maintain control. If the teacher, however, experiences a joyful atmosphere where the situation is under control, the open attitude that joy involves can contribute to the unexpected being handled as an opportunity rather than as a threat. It is not only a sense of enjoyment of work that makes this possible, but the experience of joy seems to serve as both a floor to anchor the teacher and a doorway through which new possibilities can emerge.

For teachers' to handle the intensity of their work enjoyment of work is needed as a floor on which to stand. The joy becomes something taken for granted and is expected in the everyday meeting with the schoolchildren. If enjoyment of work is absent the teachers say they lack the energy and strength to deal with their daily work. There is thus an element of basic safety associated with the picture of joy as a floor. Positive emotional dimensions of teachers' work are a relatively unexplored area of research (Hargreaves, 1998; Munby et al., 2001) and this is problematic given the results of this study, which indicate that enjoyment of work is of fundamental importance to teachers' work.

An empirical lifeworld phenomenological analysis leads to new concepts and images that are useful in describing and understanding enjoyment of work; in this case it led to recognition of subtle joy being like a floor, a receipt and a door opening. This way of

describing and understanding teachers' experiences of enjoyment of work differs from the descriptions of conditions of work in previous studies (National Institute of Working Life, 2006; Swedish Work Environment Authority, 2002). The lifeworld phenomenological approach contributes to an understanding of the experience of joy in teachers' work, which is omitted in most other studies.

The results demonstrate the importance of asking for

teachers' personal experiences to gain knowledge about essential dimensions of their profession. Likewise, attention to analysis and understanding of the emotional dimensions of teachers' work can develop new expressions and concepts to reveal more of the complexity of teachers' working lives. Here, a lifeworld phenomenological perspective is a valuable resource.

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