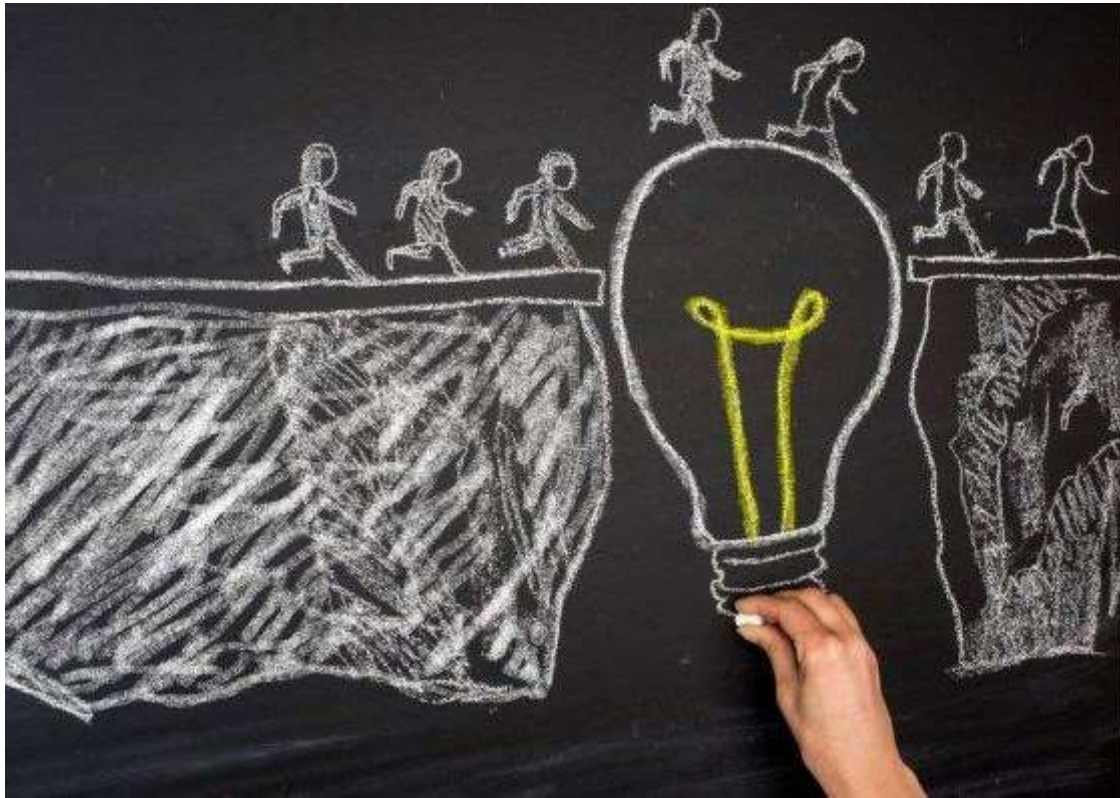# Introducing Joyful Learning in the Classroom

*~ Dr Priyamvada Agarwal*

When discussing problems with teaching-learning, teachers often say that students are 'unable to retain concepts taught'. With the information overload caused by the boom in Internet usage, it has become all the more difficult to make students remember whatever they are taught. Not that this problem did not exist before, but it has aggravated in the current time due to the online mode of teaching and learning, and the easy exposure to the various information available on the net. Teachers and educators try their best to explain, give a lot of homework in the hope that students will write and be able to practise, take multiple tests, etc. Such activities do help students memorize some of the concepts taught in class. But analysis shows that the problem has got more to do than just help students retain information.

A little introspection will show that we can learn and understand anything easily when we experience the concepts that are taught, when we can visualise them, and more importantly, if we enjoy doing those things and have fun all along the way. Even as adults, we can barely sit in one position for long hours. Add to that the ordeal of listening to somebody and concentrating on various topics for long hours,

or even watching videos. All this slows down the processing of information. How much can one remember when so much new information is shared as compared to if the same information was broken down and experienced through activities, projects, etc. One is instantly reminded of the oft quoted Benjamin Franklin, "Tell me and I forget; teach me and I may remember; involve me and I will learn." This is true for all. But why?
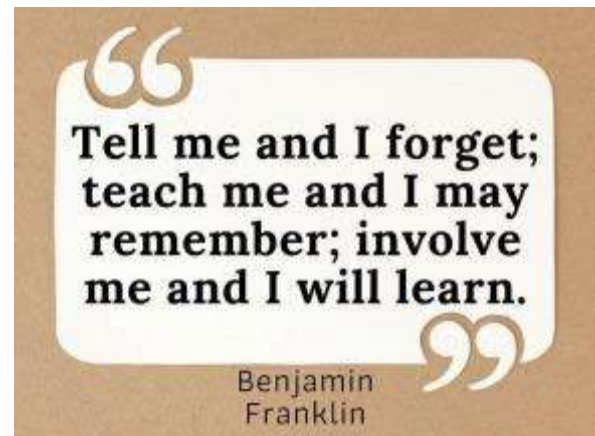
The process of learning becomes enjoyable or joyful when one tries new things, makes mistakes and improves them, when one is challenged and mentally engaged, constructs new knowledge, and last but not the least is positively engaged. The same principle applies to students too. They are full of energy, and they lose interest in online/classroom lectures because they want their energies to be channelized in something which they feel is constructive, and therefore engages them mentally. They are young and curious by nature, always wanting to learn and do things. This is exactly the reason why students become restless during long lectures. When children are mentally engaged, they feel joy. In the words of Dr Anuradha Mehta, "Joy comes when a child feels a sense of achievement as if she/he has created something new, on his/her own."[1]

Why are students hooked on video games, social media, various OTT platforms, etc.? That is because they are constantly looking for opportunities that can keep them mentally occupied in meaningful, authentic, joyous ways. Similarly, if the teaching-learning experience is made to be full of activities and projects where they will be positively challenged and meaningfully occupied, then they will neither be bored nor struggle in retaining information. The key is to engage students in doing meaningfully challenging things. As an educator, one must make students understand that it is okay to make mistakes for it is through mistakes and rectification that they will learn.

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[1] Dr Anuradha Mehta. "Activity-based and joyful learning must be practised in all classrooms." *Hindustan Times*, 02 Feb 2021, 'Activity-based and joyful learning must be practised in all classrooms' - Hindustan Times

Personalisation is important to make classrooms joyful. Students should not be forced to participate in a teacher-led lecture or activity, where everybody performs the same tasks and are put to meet the same academic goal each day. Rather they will enjoy learning when they are made to work on lessons that fit their level and

ability. Moreover, autonomy is crucial to achieve joyful learning. That is, within a framework, students should be allowed to choose what lessons they would prefer to do and when. Activity-based teaching is the easiest way which can ensure that students enjoy their learning experience where they are physically and mentally involved and find it easy to learn and retain information. This has far reaching

effects in making them independent and inquisitive as while doing the activities they will naturally work in a critically thinking domain. This also encourages peer learning which exposes them to collaboration, teamwork, and enhances social skills. The joys of activity-based learning are limitless. Not to forget that it encourages students to express themselves in different and creative ways.

Similarly, project-based learning (PBL)[2] is powerful in engaging students in authentic learning because the whole premise of PBL rests on *learning by doing*. "What we have to learn to do, we learn by doing". This quote, attributed to Aristotle, is precisely what *learning by doing* is all about. When students work on projects, they not only learn by doing but also enjoy that process.

What we have to learn to do, we learn by doing.

Aristotle
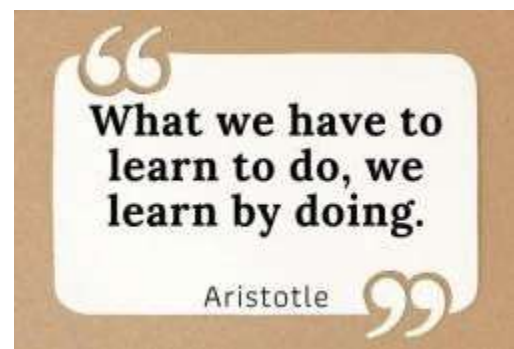
As evident, enhancing opportunities of joyful learning in both online and offline teaching is no rocket science. It simply calls for providing opportunities to students to be constructively and actively engaged in meaningful experiences. Whenever one learns something new the kind of joy one feels cannot be expressed in words. The generation of students in schools in 2021 love to be challenged and they are exposed to advanced gadgets like iPads, technology-based tools like Internet,

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[2] Click here to go through the article and lesson plan on Project-Based Learning from one of the previous issues of this e-newsletter.

social media, etc. most of their lives. They enjoy real life challenges in the classroom too. In case you haven't experienced it, try out a few things suggested in the lesson plan and share your experience with us at OTTindia@oup.com.

Dr Priyamvada Agarwal, founder of TakeAnEdge, is an experienced ELT specialist. Her passion includes teaching, training teachers, and material development. She has worked with organisations like NCERT, Oxford University Press, Cambridge Assessment English, University of Delhi, The Times of India, etc. Currently, she teaches at B. R. Ambedkar University, New Delhi.

Lesson Plan: 7 ideas to introduce joyful learning in the classroom

~ Dr Priyamvada Agarwal

Here are some ideas to make the teaching-learning experience in your classroom joyful. They are not specific to any grade or subject. Teaching and learning with joy is a requisite across subjects and grades. The ideas listed below may be incorporated in any lesson plan as per the scope of the topic and activity.

1. **Use games in class**: With the transition to online teaching and the emphasis on blended teaching-learning in the new normal, it has become natural to use the resources available online to include games in the classroom. There are plenty of websites where interactive material can be developed to help revise a concept, or to give hands-on practice to learners, not to mention the fact that students enjoy multimedia-based games. Using the online tools and resources available, it has become easy to create board games, crossword search, flashcards, grammar games, etc., on websites like Quizlet, Wordwall.

Games give a context for engaging practice which children enjoy.

2. **Introduce digital storytelling:** This innovative strategy can be used both by educators and students. The former can use them as an instruction tool while students can use them as a learning tool. An engaging, multimedia-rich digital story can serve as an anticipatory hook to capture the attention of students and increase their interest to explore new ideas. Create digital stories to enhance current lessons within a larger unit. This will help to facilitate discussion about the topics present in a story and as a way of making abstract or conceptual content more easily understandable. Students enjoy such materials that help in contextualising the concept. At the same time, give assignments that require them to convert their existing lessons into digital stories. This will help to ensure that students

do not struggle with ideas and at the same time be able to process information easily and meaningfully. Incorporate digital tools in teaching-learning to address the demands of a digitally native generation. Teaching through comics, graphic novels, or digital stories is an innovation that is being widely experimented with across subjects. There are moocs (Massive Open Online Courses) also available to learn how to include digital storytelling in classroom teaching.
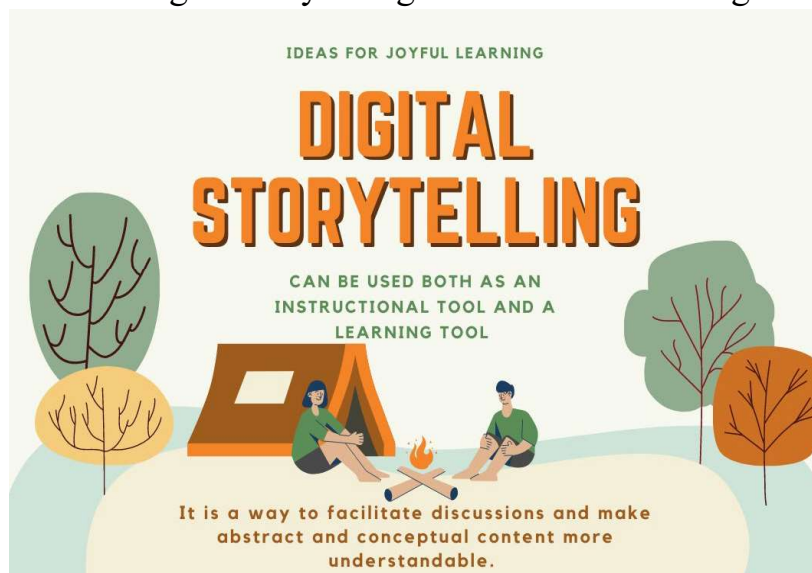
3. **Bring the chatroom into the classroom**: Students or more specifically young adults chat with their friends throughout the day. What if the same concept of chat could be used to bring some joy in the classroom teaching. Pull up sample chats that can be used to practice a lot of language-based activities like:
   a. dialogue writing
   b. converting the main events of a story into a chat
   c. conducting imaginary interviews with historical figures from their history coursebooks

   For these kinds of activities use a [website](link) that allows you to generate such sample/dummy messages.

4. **Conduct virtual field trips:** This is another amazing idea that can be used to bring in joy and fun in the classrooms. Through the wonder of technology now it is possible for students to discover new, far-and-wide places from the comfort of their homes. These trips can be used to give them experiential learning in any subject like science, social studies, etc. Some websites to explore are [explore.org](link), [national geographic](link), etc. Use these virtual trips to engage students in any topic. There are plenty of

heritage walks/tours that are conducted in almost every city/location. Connect with them and organise a virtual tour and dive into the history of a place. This is also another innovative way to ensure that students learn to enquire about their immediate environment, its history, language, politics, etc.

VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS USE THEM TO SEE A MAGIC HAPPEN IN THE CLASSROOMS.

5. **Use Graphic Organizers (GOs):** These are powerful tools that help students visualize what they study and aid in remembering. Use GOs in reading and writing skills lessons, while illustrating a text, during brainstorming sessions, in note taking, etc. Encourage students to convert a text into a GO. It will involve processing of information and help in retaining information. Such activities involve critical thinking and engage students in meaningful learning.

Graphic Organisers
ALL LOVE THEM
Did you try them?

6. **Use Sketchnotes** as an effective way to help students actively construct meaning. They are like visual notes which are created from a mix of handwriting, drawings, hand-drawn typography, shapes, and visual elements. Sketchnotes also promote active processing of information, they aid understanding a text and recall of information.
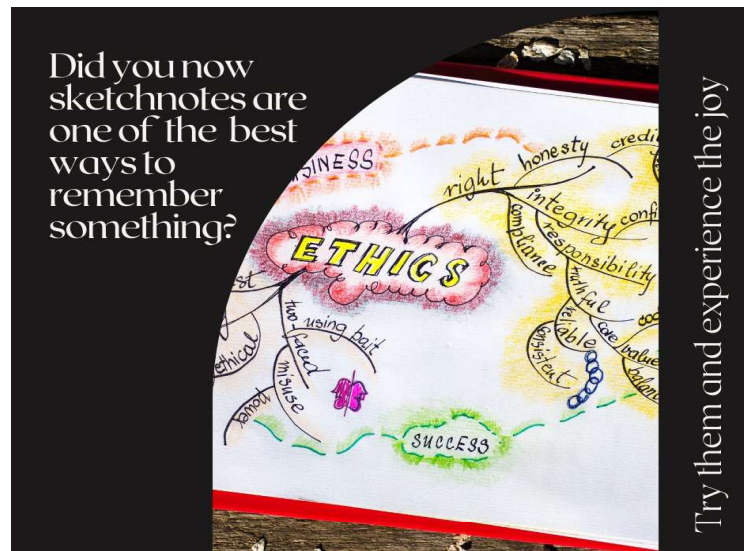
Do share your ideas of how you bring joy in your classroom teaching. Write to us at OTTIndia@oup.com.

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Lore (noun)

Pronunciation: /lɔː/

Meaning: A body of traditions and knowledge on a subject or held by a particular group, typically passed from person to person by word of mouth.

Origin and additional information: Old English "lār" (meaning 'instruction'), which is of Germanic origin related to Dutch "leer", German "lehre", also to learn, that is, to gain or acquire knowledge of or skill in something by study, experience, or being taught.

The word 'lore' also has a meaning which has to do with Zoology. It refers to the surface on each side of a bird's head between the eye and the upper base of the beak, or between the eye and nostril in snakes. Interestingly, it originated in the early nineteenth century from the Latin word "lorum" (meaning, 'strap').

Word section: Lore is often used in association with tradition as in oral lore or folklore. Oral lore is considered a form of communication through which knowledge, art, ideas and cultural material is passed on from the giver to the receiver to be preserved and transmitted orally from one generation to next. It is interesting to note that oral traditions are quite different from oral history as it has to do with information, memories and knowledge that is held in common by a community over generations. Folklore is also a type of oral tradition that includes an expressive body of culture shared by a particular group of people. Interestingly, verbal lore is not just simple communication but refers to words

and phrases that conform to a traditional configuration that is recognized and acknowledged by both the speaker and the audience. It is indeed quite fascinating to know that the concept or idea of 'learning' took its root from 'lore'—the ancient and earliest form of learning and knowledge transfer.

Usage:

1. *We owe it to the younger generation to pass on the vast lore, knowledge and expertise and let them know the heritage of the county.*
(Source: https://www.lexico.com/definition/lore)

2. *Body painting, traditional dance and spoken lore are all virtually impossible to safeguard.*
(Source: https://www.lexico.com/definition/lore)

3. *With some birds, the lores present the most conspicuous field mark.*
(Source: https://www.lexico.com/definition/lore)