

Chapter 4

Success begins in childhood

Introduction

Is success at work based on childhood and adolescent experiences? What is the influence of parents' expectations on one's career? The influence of childhood and adolescent experiences in relation to adult work success has not been widely studied. As such, we wanted to begin the process of drawing back the curtain on this theme through top workers' biographies.

We were interested in exploring those factors that Employees of the Year recognised from their lives, especially from childhood and adolescence, as having enhanced their success. This is important if our aim is help people with their opportunities to find a suitable occupation in which they can use their talents. Experiences and events taking place in childhood and adolescence can be crucial or can at least point people in the right direction.

The first part of the chapter focuses on the top workers' childhood memories and the factors they recall as having influenced their careers. The second part of the chapter then continues the analysis from the point of view of caring teacherhood. Findings from our leadership studies are also included in this chapter to show how caring leadership in education can be used for promoting students' successful study paths. This contributes yet another viewpoint to factors promoting success during children's and adolescents' school careers.

Success starts from childhood?

Magnusson and Mahoney (2006) have argued that positive development cannot be defined with reference to an individual person and that the person's characteristics, resources and limits, as well as the cultural, physical and historical context in which the person lives, also matter. As such, positive development is a holistic process. This means that developmental processes form an entity that affects all levels of the person-environment system. At the same time, all the elements within developmental processes interact. An individual's positive development depends on how well the inner and outer functions of the organism are synchronised. Inner processes are, for example, mental, biological and behavioural

functions while outer processes cover opportunities, demands and rules provided by one's environment. Therefore, the developmental process also varies between society and culture (Magnusson and Mahoney 2006).

Numerous studies have focused on positive development, and they have often taken a specific stand or approach to the theme. There are singular studies researching various factors and relationships; for example, studies have found a positive relationship between adolescents' perceived autonomy and self-esteem together with a positive relationship with parents. Likewise, parents' socioeconomic status influences not only children's wellbeing but also intellectual attainment, such as education (for example, Bradley and Corwyn 2002). Furthermore, socioeconomic factors are shown to be indirectly related to children's academic achievement through parents' beliefs and behaviours (Davis-Kean 2005). Similar findings have been reported, for example, regarding parents' role in enhancing their children's acquisition of positive values, attitudes and behaviours towards sport hobbies (Côté 1999). However, current approaches to the theme have begun adopting more and more holistic foci concentrating on factors that affect both positive and problem youth development (Catalano *et al.* 2005).

Success is not just sunshine; it requires the ability to be flexible, adjust, make compromises and cope with failures and adversities. It is important to consider how the home teaches and supports a child, including in circumstances in which he or she does not achieve goals, i.e., the ways in which difficulties are handled and how they are understood as an inevitable part of life (Määttä and Uusiautti 2012a, 2012b, 2013), as well as how to develop a sense of oneself as an autonomous individual (Eccles 1999). Therefore, the influence of family and upbringing is far from simple when it comes to children's success in later life (see, for example, Aronson Fontes 2002; Elder *et al.* 1985; Rowe 1990). What might be the most crucial aspect for this study is the manner in which people learn to interpret their experiences.

Indeed, top workers do not develop independently; they are surrounded by their families, friends and relatives. According to Berscheid (2006), human behaviour and development should always be understood as the result of living within the network and context of human relationships. It is crucial to explore how these factors enhance the development of self and the use of human strengths (Caprara and Cervone 2006; Magnusson and Mahoney 2006). Indeed, love and attachment expressed in relationships that surround us are not simply about an affect or a passive inner emotion but an active aspiration to help the beloved grow and be happy (Maijala *et al.* 2012; Määttä and Uusiautti 2013).

Perhaps no one aims for an Employee of the Year award, but the road to success at work, from perspectives on childhood and adolescence, is likely to be something more indefinable and general. Despite this, some people do achieve success at work. Is their success traceable to their childhood, and what could be the role of their childhood and adolescent experiences? The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the childhood experiences of top workers awarded Employee of the Year and to explore what they regard as especially facilitating factors or

obstacles in their childhood and adolescence that could explain their favourable growth and development toward success at work.

First, we discuss the factors that the top workers considered beneficial to their career development and success at work. As expected, many factors were highlighted, which were further categorised into (1) parents' support and upbringing, (2) idols, relatives and friends, and (3) careers counselling at school. Following this, we take look at the hardships and obstacles faced by the top workers in their childhood and adolescence.

Childhood experiences as contributory factors in occupational choices

Success at work can result from many factors. Snyder and Lopez (2002) discuss it as a process emphasising, for example, the influence of family, school, childhood development and good workplaces on the young people. The section will begin by analysing parents' influence on top workers' career choices and their attitude to life, successes and hardships, and many characteristics needed for success. Likewise, the role of idols, relatives and friends as bellwethers is discussed. Third, the significance of careers' counselling at school is studied in the context of the top workers' experiences.

Parental support and upbringing

Values and educational goals that form the basis of upbringing reflect an understanding of the meaning of life, in other words, what people want to achieve or do in order to live a certain kind of life. Home is the most important environment for children because every child is bound to a home and is under the influence of the home environment. Attitudes to life and other people are adopted from home. The influence of the home in upbringing is markedly significant and, therefore, the process of becoming a top worker can be traced to the childhood and adolescence of top workers.

In the interviews, top workers were asked to reminisce about events and factors that have affected their career choices in one way or another and whether their parents had influenced them. The first reaction was that their parents had not tried to influence them. However, according to Snyder and Lopez (2002), families do influence their children's behaviour in later life by exemplifying how to explain adversities, how to set goals for the future, and how they strengthen hope in children. Indeed, according to the interview findings, parents had influenced top workers' attitude toward work rather than their actual career choices.

Top workers maintained that their parents emphasised the importance of having an occupation and earning one's keep during adulthood. Three of the interviewees reported that their parents had some ideas about what they might want their children to become, and two top workers stated that their parents' occupation had influenced their career choices. For example, a farmer had

continued the family farm. However, this career choice was not clear from the beginning. The farmer described the situation as follows:

SU: ‘Was it always clear that you would continue with the family farm?’

Employee of the Year: ‘I don’t know. It wasn’t obvious... Of course, when relatives visited, they would always talk about the young farmer, or they would ask something else. But it wasn’t clear to me... I think that it mattered that I was away for about ten years. It broadened my mind and thoughts, and everything, surprisingly lot when you look around and see what people do elsewhere in the world. My parents never put pressure on me. Rather, they have always asked about my situation. Certainly, these questions were asked more often when my father’s retirement got closer.’

Another top worker was also given the opportunity to continue with his parents’ farm, but this top worker was aware from an early age that this was not a suitable path. One of the interviewees spoke of hope quite concretely: the top worker’s father had wanted his child to become a chemist (in Finland, chemists are entrepreneurs and own pharmacies), but the top worker was not interested in this field. The desire of the parents was primarily driven by the security and profitability of being a chemist.

One top worker stated that studying and having an occupation was strongly encouraged at home. Although parents did not influence this top worker’s career choice, his father’s occupation had affected childhood and adolescence hobbies and the career choices of siblings:

‘My father was a musician... Being an artist, he downright demanded that we do music and almost every one of us children had to play the piano or whatever. You have probably heard these stories about compulsory hobbies. We did it, and some of my siblings, two sisters are cantors and my brother too is a musician.’

Other top workers did consider that their parents had much influence on their careers. The most important thing was to find a field that was pleasing and interesting, and parents did not try to restrict their children. Parents did not put pressure or demands on their children but helped them to think about the future, make their own choices in life, and perceive the possibilities, opportunities and well-being that life could offer. What is relevant for success is the capability to learn how to get excited, set new goals, and the propensity to receive positive feedback and thus enhance one’s own learning.

Furthermore, disappointments are an important aspect of developing self-esteem and mental health (for example, Desjardins *et al.* 2008). In the safety of the home, children can learn about those means that help them to handle disappointments and failures. When necessary, parents can protect their children from feelings of anxiety and guilt. Successful rearing does not aim to rid hardships and obstacles but to help children learn how to confront, tolerate and conquer the inevitable difficulties (McRee and Halpern 2010).

Idols, relatives and friends

Only a few of the interviewees could name an idol who had influenced their career choice. However, three top workers acknowledged someone or some people who had, in one way or another, helped them with their occupational choices. The police officer maintained that patriotism in the family had influenced his career dreams. Patriotism was based on respect for relatives who had gone to war and they were considered the police officer top worker's idols. Although the top worker realised that the police profession was not founded only on the basis of this ideology, it remained partially important.

The priest described how spiritual life was rooted in the family even if the priest's parents had had temporal occupations and there were no actual church employees in the family. Nevertheless, the top worker's grandmother had run Sunday school and the top worker had good memories of it.

These examples show that top workers' stories do not include absolute idols who they would have followed in their lives. Therefore, it is not about admiration with blind worshipping but, rather, that the factors influencing these idols were manifested in attitudes such as patriotism and religiousness. These kinds of positive experiences directed their career choices later in life.

Friends can also have an influence on careers, and their effects are not always foreseen. Hence, one of the top workers stated that the decision to apply to a business school was based on a discussion with a friend. They wanted to continue studying together. This is a good example of how powerful an influence adolescent friendships can have and that, therefore, the impact of the circle of friends should never be underestimated. In a situation in which choosing a place of study is uncertain or difficult, the decision can easily be made with friends.

Careers counselling at school

The previous sections have showed that top workers' career choices were not directed by their families; their upbringing was directed in the sense of enhancing their overall positive attitudes to study and work. Therefore, it was also interesting to explore whether their schools had guided them and whether careers counselling in school had helped them with their occupational choice.

The significance of school in upbringing becomes especially emphasised if the home and family resources are insufficient or if children and adolescents do not receive sufficient information or stimuli at home. Their development can be supported at school, too, by employing their strengths. The purpose of student counselling at school is to support students' personal, social, moral and occupational development, and therefore it is quite wide-ranging and holistic (Sundvall-Huhtinen 2007) in nature. In Finnish schools, students have careers counselling, and practical training periods in real workplaces are also important.

In the interviews, top workers were asked to describe their experiences of careers counselling at school. Their experiences varied from one extreme to the

other. Every top worker remembered their school counsellor, but perceptions of how meaningful the counselling had been varied considerably.

Three top workers had experiences that could be regarded as positive. One remembered that various occupations were introduced to them, although this top worker attended school when Finnish schools did not yet have separate counsellors or practical training periods.

'I think careers counseling was appropriate. I cannot remember which one of the teachers had to do it. It provided information about certain occupations and such, so that we could ponder it a bit. So, it was beneficial at that moment.'

This top worker did not choose his occupation on the basis of careers counselling but did so later when performing army duties. However, the positive experience of careers counselling was based on the information provided about different occupations that many young people did not know beforehand.

Another top worker remembered that at school they had to familiarise themselves with occupations in which they were the most interested. They were asked to write about how to study for and become employed in these fields. This top worker stated that he was already thinking about his current occupation at that time. Thus, careers counselling equipped this top worker with the knowledge of how to enter that profession.

The third positive experience differed somewhat from the previous two. This top worker had sought professional careers counselling after graduating from general upper secondary education. Careers counselling thus supported this top worker's occupational choice.

Two top workers had quite similar negative experiences of careers counselling in school. Their counsellor had advised them about who could apply for vocational school and who could continue to general upper secondary education and then to higher education. While the first top worker's counsellor had not supported the top worker's decision to go to vocational school, the other top worker's counsellor remained doubtful of the top worker's capability to continue on to general upper secondary education. Therefore, careers counselling would have directed them in directions other than what they had chosen and in which they had succeeded. These two top workers were the youngest of the research participants and they also had practical training periods at school. Usually, they would go to familiar, neighbourhood enterprises to familiarise themselves with real work life.

'Yes, we had careers counseling in middle school. And I still remember what our counselor at the time told me, that my choice was a bad one. I tried to say that I did not agree and tried to give reasons. And the counselor strongly encouraged me to continue with general upper secondary education. I did not. I did not think it would be my thing. I really remember it, and we had quite a lot of that counseling during the ninth grade.'

What is most interesting in the previous example, and in the one that follows, is that counsellors do not seem very interested in figuring out what the youth is interested in. At the very least, this was what the top workers remembered. Students were divided into two groups; based on their grades, they would be suitable for either general upper secondary education or vocational upper secondary education after their compulsory education.

Employee of the Year: 'Those careers counseling lessons! Those were about rest and so on. I don't know whether I was just a silly youngster that I didn't understand the idea of counseling or whether it was because of those counselors. I remember that they were all already approaching their retirement age, so they were so far away from...'

SU: '...yeah, the adolescents' life.'

Employee of the Year: 'Yes. And then he looked at my records and wondered whether I was really seriously going to pursue general upper secondary education.'

Two top workers reported that careers counselling had not been significant to them at all. They both remembered it but had not personally benefitted from it. In all, it can be concluded that the top workers had not found careers counselling very important and, therefore, it cannot be seen as one of the key factors directly contributing to their success, although, in fact, it could and should have the opposite effect.

Why did careers counselling not meet students' needs? One reason is probably that top workers who participated in this research went to school in the 1950s-1970s when careers counselling was completely differently organised than it is today. For example, Sundvall-Huhtinen (2007) points out that it was not until the 1970s that the school system started to become more flexible and personal study plans were developed. In addition to changes in the education system, changes in society and especially work life have influenced on the development of careers counselling (Numminen *et al.* 2002).

The need for counselling and guidance has increased. At the same time, attitudes about the future and future occupations have changed considerably; in the 1960s-1980s' Finland, the starting point of studying and work was to make a career decision, pursue studies, find a stable and secure career, and avoid making mistakes. This was also evident in the kind of advice that the top workers received at home from their parents. However, in the 1990s and 2000s, attitudes have changed and emphasis is on having many options, life-long learning, enjoying life, and learning from mistakes (Sundvall-Huhtinen 2007). Changes in the world-view, living in insecure times, and the demand for constant updating and learning at work necessitate efficient guidance that can support occupational development.

Top workers also mentioned other factors that they thought enhanced their careers. One talked about having a gap year between studies and after compulsory

school. This top worker had no idea about a suitable occupation at the time. During that particular year, the top worker worked in a retirement home for eight months and became familiarised with nursing. Although this top worker did not apply for nursing education immediately afterwards, the top worker later realised that positive work experiences from the retirement home would pave the way. Eventually, the top worker studied and graduated as a nurse and has worked as one ever since.

Hardships and obstacles

Top workers were also asked to describe the kinds of hardships they faced in their lives and whether they considered these experiences as having impacted on their careers. Some specific events were mentioned. For example, the police officer did not get into cadet school, which was very disappointing. However, this top worker decided on the police profession and applied to police school, got in, and this is how a fine career as a police officer got started. The setback turned into an advantage, and plan B became a success story.

Various kinds of career-related hardships could be seen as mere sidetracks. This is also because top workers were once clueless youngsters trying to find their own paths. Two top workers experienced such sidetracks; after having acquired an education, they later realised that their pursued fields were misguided and unsuitable. Stories about sidetracks teach that one does not always decide upon the right occupation without some level of stray. As a matter of fact, wrong choices can even be considered advantageous as they may strengthen one's positive feelings toward finding the right path; under such circumstances, one can make solid comparisons between situations.

Every top worker had experienced turning points in which they had to decide where to go next. For example, two top workers had the opportunity to continue with their parents' farm, but only one of them eventually did. Both of them became Employees of the Year awardees. What seems most important is to listen to oneself and choose the direction according to one's own feelings, thoughts and values. One of the top workers expressed this as follows:

‘I do not know about those situations when you have to choose, whether the road will go here or there, or will I take this or that. I have been wise enough to think of what I really want, what is worth investing in with my abilities and talents. And even if something could be really interesting but not quite what is most suitable. I have always discussed these profoundly with myself. When it comes to my occupation, I have certainly been thinking about what are the best use of my strengths. And that had led to such satisfaction and pleasure that cannot be measured by money or respectability in relation to work.’

This type of thinking reveals a multidimensional analysis of the mission, standards and performances expected in work (see also Gardner *et al.* 2001).

Imbibing brisk attitude and optimism from parents and educators?

According to the results, top workers could not recall specific factors from their childhood that could have been crucial in finding the right occupation. However, one important notion can be raised from their childhood, which is the attitude toward education, work and life in general that was adopted from home. Although the top workers' parents did not make career decisions for their children, they had encouraged them to educate themselves, work hard, and have a positive attitude about the future. Indeed, it has been shown that childhood experiences do matter in later development and success in later life (for example, Hawkins *et al.* 2005; Larson, 2000).

How then can success be supported? Twenty years ago, Arnold *et al.* (1993) emphasised that awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses, values and points of interest, and knowledge about different occupations are of primary importance for career enhancement. According to the results of this study, none of the top workers had found their occupation through the careers counselling provided at school, but some of them still appreciated the information about occupations given at counselling.

The latest research in the field of positive psychology has further advanced the importance of recognising one's strengths (Aspinwall and Staudinger 2006). There is not simply one road to success at work, and every top worker is an individual. What was common among them was their ability and courage to listen to themselves and be true to themselves. According to Gilligan (2000), childhood-related factors that promote self-directedness or self-efficacy include parents' belief in the child's own sense of control, responsiveness, consistency, warmth and praise, support, and encouraging the child to engage in his or her environment and surrounding people (see also Sroufe 2005; Young *et al.* 2001). Therefore, social skills learned from home can be crucial for the positive development in this sense (see, for example, Decovic and Janssens 1992).

It seemed that the most important criterion for success is to find a career that is suitable and in which a person can become fulfilled. Educators need imagination, courage, and even the ability to take risks so that they can help growing and maturing people test their own limits and abilities (Uusiautti 2008; Uusiautti and Määttä 2013). Careers counselling can play an important role and should be further researched. Students need information about various occupations and work tasks to be able to evaluate what they find interesting and what they want or can do. Therefore, personal careers counselling also has to help a student recognise his or her abilities and talents, but equally important is to find out which school subjects the student likes the best and what he or she likes to do. Questions related to career choice and occupational socialisation are surprisingly closely connected with free-time activities (Driver 1982; Duffy and Dik 2009; Maljojoki 1989; Middleton and Loughead 1993).

In addition, students have their own preconceptions of various occupations and thus it is crucial that the expectations in various professions are clarified to

students. Abundant practical experiences and examples from real work life cannot be sufficiently emphasised. Furthermore, teachers and counsellors should be aware of their prejudices and stereotypical conceptions of valuable and not-so-valuable occupations. Top workers who participated in this study attended school four to six decades ago, and careers counselling was not as systematic as it is today, since societal interest in adolescent choices emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Petersen 1988).

It is also worth remembering that, regardless of whether a student is a straight-A pupil or simply barely passes, every student needs careers counselling. Therefore, it is important to highlight the positive experiences of success and being capable – every student has and can have them. It would be interesting to know how the future Employees of the Year perceive the role of careers counselling in school today.

In all, it became evident that researching the secrets of success from people's childhood and adolescence was not straightforward. The phenomenon of success does not appear in the same way as failure and, therefore, it is not easy to think about reasons for success (Isen 2001; Uusiautti and Määttä 2011). However, the role of childhood experiences at school and at home should be interesting to educators. For example, Mäkkilä (2007) has found that a sensitive and child-centered upbringing was connected to optimism in later phases of life (see also Sroufe 2005). Top workers also displayed optimistic attitudes, which can be closely related to the overall satisfaction of life, including satisfaction with one's work and career choice.

Perceiving the phenomenon of success from this perspective is relevant to many areas of life, but especially remarkable is that the foundation of success can be laid from childhood. Positive psychology has been interested in exploring and creating optimal conditions for all children and students (Carruthers and Hood 2005). Success is not just something that, for example, gifted people are entitled to but the concept could be used for enhancing everyone's success. If students' mastery of information or skill leads to success, and if positive emotions are one of the cornerstones of successful learning, it would be reasonable to pay attention to this viewpoint in education (Chafouleas and Bray 2004). The purpose, therefore, is to research, define and specify the human strengths and capacities that individual people, families, communities and societies should aim to utilise. Positive human development should be encouraged (Dunn *et al.* 2008). Although the viewpoint presented in this review is very individualistic, it is also worthy to continue the discussion from the collective perspective and to think about whether these concepts can also be used for enhancing collective or communal success.

Educators should be ready to meet the challenge of providing children and students with such positive experiences of finding their own road and being able to fulfil themselves. Lerner *et al.* (2002) use the word 'thriving' to discuss the positive development of youth. They emphasise 'the five Cs of positive youth development: competence, confidence, character, social connection, and caring

(or compassion)' (p. 23), which work toward enhancing positive youth development. Indeed, in addition to the personal benefits of happiness that are achieved through utilising one's strengths (Seligman 2002; 2011), they are also socially beneficial as balanced, satisfied people are also better citizens (Gilpin 2008).

Caring teacherhood as a means to success

As the childhood memories of top workers surfaced, it became evident that the connection between counselling at school and one's capability of finding the right occupation was not that simple. As such, we want to spend a moment to discuss the idea of caring teacherhood as a means to discovering pupils' strengths. We consider teachers as caring leaders who can employ love-based methods that enhance pupils' ability to spot their strengths and thus improve their self-knowledge.

Can pupils and students be led toward goodness and happiness – and wellbeing?

Authority is often addressed from pedagogical points of view and it has been studied a great deal (Delpit 1988; Deutsch and Jones 2011; Pace and Hemmings 2007). Nevertheless, it has been understood in a contradictory manner in relation to education and teaching (Langford 2010; Seidl and Friend 2002). Obviously, the relationship between a teacher and a student is asymmetrical because the teacher possesses something that the pupil does not. According to Hare, the teacher does not have to think that the student is presently his or her equal, but does need to see the student as a potential equal (Hare 1993). The purpose of the learning relationship is to make the pupil develop into an independent and responsible autonomous individual. However, students cannot achieve this goal independently; they need the educator's help and guidance and, therefore, the teacher is in a position of authority.

van Manen emphasised that an adult's ability to affect a pupil is genuine when the authority does not rely on power, but on love and affection (van Manen 1991). Harjunen also defines pedagogical authority through pedagogical interaction (Harjunen 2009). According to the author, pedagogical interaction consists of such characteristics as 'trust building', 'treating students as human beings', and the 'ethics of care and justice'.

We have defined the connection between pedagogical love and authority in the following manner:

If pedagogical love and pedagogical authority are based on expertise-based respect, the learning atmosphere is warm and encouraging. Mutual respect supports empathy; students respect the teacher because of his or her expertise and regard the teacher as a sort of safe mainstay that they can rely on. The teacher trusts and believes in the students' abilities, respects their individuality,

and helps them to enhance their balanced development and find their own strengths.

(Määttä and Uusiautti 2011b)

What does this mean in the context of schooling and teaching? The existence of a good human being can be considered problematic or even impossible because ‘good’ is usually confused with ‘perfect’. Being a good human being does not mean that one should be totally irreproachable, moral and faultless, that is, non-human and probably impossible to achieve anyway. We want to highlight love as the fundamental factor in raising children to be good human beings and that this particular aim is the ultimate purpose of all rearing. Love appears in teaching as guidance toward disciplined work, but also as patience, trust and forgiveness. The purpose is not to make learning fun, easy or pleasing but to create a setting for learning whereby pupils can use and develop their own resources, eventually proceeding at the maximum of their own abilities. A loving teacher takes care that the learner does not lose his or her trust in his or her own learning when faced with difficulties. Therefore, love appears as goal-oriented action: a teacher plans and implements learning situations that enhance learning. Furthermore, a loving teacher takes a pupil’s personal situation into consideration (for example, Hatt 2005; van Manen 1991).

Pedagogical love is considered a working method that involves persistent interest and perseverance in supporting pupils’ development for the sake of themselves and the whole society. In addition, teachers should find a balance between pedagogical love and pedagogical authority and combine them both in a student-specific manner. Pedagogical tact is at its strongest in this ability. Dealing with various students requires flexibility and sensitivity in the teacher’s pedagogical approach. Some students need more intimacy while some others consider expertise especially important. Moreover, the teaching content and learning objectives may necessitate different kinds of procedures from the teacher – in other words, a certain kind of tact (Määttä and Uusiautti 2011b). Taking this viewpoint further, van Manen points out that pedagogical tact is ‘the language of surprising and unpredicted pedagogical action’ that emerges from the genuine attachment to the pupil (van Manen 1991). At the core, it is the children’s vulnerability and defenselessness that make the educator protect them.

Tools for employing strength-based approaches in school

The way we see it, the role of a teacher is primarily focused on encouraging and rewarding the multitude of talents and strengths a child has, by presenting opportunities for displays of these talents and strengths each day. In practice, the means are quite simple: linking strengths to specific festivals and events throughout the school calendar and activities such as the strengths-based classroom, victory logs and celebrations of ‘what went well’ (see Linley *et al.* 2009).

In practice, it is important that the teacher makes self-assessments. A teacher can reflect and observe his or her way of teaching and interacting with students

and ask questions such as ‘Do I listen to students’ opinions in an open manner?’, ‘Do I encourage students to express their emotions or perceptions?’, ‘How do I handle divergent opinions and criticism or feedback from students?’, and ‘Do I treat students equally regardless of their background?’ Becoming aware of one’s own style and level of tact enables one to move from one quadrant to another, toward an ideal state. It is about the teacher’s tact and the capabilities of recognising various learners and personalities and of having situational flexibility (see also Määttä and Uusiautti 2012b).

In addition to teachers’ reflective practice, it is crucial to include positively-oriented and wellbeing-promoting actions toward pupils and students. Seligman *et al.* (2009) describes simple exercises that aim to help students identify their signature strengths and increase their use of these strengths in daily life. Moreover, this intervention was aimed at promoting resilience, positive emotions and students’ sense of meaning or purpose. All goals were achieved, which made Seligman’s research group conclude that wellbeing should and can be taught at school. The positive focus seemed, according to the study by Seligman *et al.*, to consist of relatively small things, such as changing speaking prompts (for example, instead of asking students to describe negative events, teachers asked them to give a speech about when they were of value to others; religious education teachers asked students to explore the relationship between ethics and pleasure and what gives life purpose and meaning; geography teachers asked students to consider how the criteria for wellbeing might differ between various countries; PE teachers focused on analysing the successes of past games before the next game or lesson). The point here was that wellbeing could be taught and, with the teacher’s lead, students would not only learn about it, but their own wellbeing would increase as well.

It is important to discover one’s signature strengths. In Seligman *et al.*’s (2005) study, long-term effects of increased happiness were perceived in exercises that aimed to employ signature strengths in a new way and in which pupils were asked to name and explain three good things about their daily lives.

Furthermore, the idea behind Appreciative Inquiry (AI) could also be employed in education by teachers who would like to utilise the idea of caring teacherhood. Appreciative Inquiry utilises a cycle of four processes that focuses on ‘discover’ (the identification of organisational processes that work well), ‘dream’ (the envisioning of processes that would work well in the future), ‘design’ (planning and prioritising processes that would work well), and ‘destiny’ (the implementation (execution) of the proposed design) (Cooperrider *et al.* 2008). Likewise, Ryan *et al.* (1999) have advanced that AI is a suitable strategy for initiating an affective and analytical micro-level reform within a single school. The fundamental notion is that instead of concentrating on what was done wrong, AI helps with discovering what is done well and what more could be done.

Furthermore, providing students with daily experiences of success is important. If the mastery of information and skills is to lead to success, and if positive emotion is one of the keystones of learning, it would be reasonable to pay

attention to this viewpoint in teaching (Chafouleas and Bray 2004). Fredrickson's (2001) analysis on pride also falls into this category. By adjusting goals and objectives and planning learning tasks in a way that each pupil can have the experience of achieving a goal, this kind of experience of success can be promoted. Teachers try to find a balance between pupils' skills, work-related expectations and opportunities and challenges, which is likely to lead to better performance, contentment, higher motivation and a sense of self-efficacy.

The teacher as a caring leader or pedagogical authority has the capacity to help bring about the best in pupils. The process can then move forward – not only the process of learning and performing, but also the process of discovering and using pupils' signature strengths, and promoting wellbeing and happiness, not only in the current phase of life but also in prospective phases.

According to Hare (1993), pedagogical love, caring in the classroom, humility, commitment and hope are traits that constitute a 'good' teacher, although they are not always easy to adhere to in modern schools. Therefore, pedagogical tact is the key; this is because it, along with pedagogical goodness, illustrates the pedagogical relationship and the fundamental idea that the adult is primarily working for the benefit of the child in this context (Saevi and Eilifsen 2008). The ability to create happiness for life is an important skill for a good educator and teacher. Von Wright has stated that to love the world we have to accept it and, therefore, to love students we have to accept them and to refrain from wanting to change them and to prepare them for changing the world in a particular and predefined way (von Wright 2009).

Enhancing students' study success through caring teacherhood

Caring teacherhood can be the way of bringing out the best in children, but caring, strength-based leading of learning does not need to end in compulsory education. Similar guidance is needed also in higher education levels. Also, it is not just teachers working in the classrooms that is important but the overall study environment that is created by the way the school or education institution is led; whether the teachers are encouraged to focus on pupils' and students' strengths, whether they are provided with sufficient resources for teaching, and whether the students are appreciated at school. The school functions as an entity, and the student-centered, positively oriented approach is a pervasive element of education. Here, we introduce our findings from Finnish and American universities as an example of how school can enhance students' success. The perspective on university studies is not meant to overlook other education levels. Instead, we wanted to analyse our data and provide an example of the impact caring leadership can make in education institutions. Thus, we argue that this viewpoint could apply to, for example, vocational education schools and polytechnics as well as it seemingly does to the university-level education.

Especially at a time when increasing demands on efficient and productive higher education, high numbers of student drop-outs (see, for example, Kuh *et al.*

2008; OECD 2010) and prolonged studies (OECD 2010; San Antonio 2008; Schoon *et al.* 2010) do not seem to point in the same direction, new ways of considering education are needed. How to make students' study paths smooth and have them succeed in their studies?

In this section we will discuss how the goal of success could be achieved by employing caring leadership in higher education. This section leans on the data obtained from Finnish and American university leaders. The ultimate idea of the study was that a particular positive and caring viewpoint could be something that today's higher education would need. For example, Cruce *et al.* (2006) suggest that good practices in education have a unique, positive impact on student development as they can affect, for example, student engagement, which can be seen as one of the main pillars of successful and meaningful study paths. Kezar and Kinzie (2006) have introduced features of a quality undergraduate education that has been associated with student engagement; quality begins with an organisational culture that values high expectations, shows respect for diverse learning styles, and has emphasis on the early years of study; a quality undergraduate curriculum requires coherence in learning, synthesising experiences, on-going practice of learned skills, and integrating education with experience; and quality undergraduate instruction builds in active learning, assessment and prompt feedback, collaboration, adequate time on task, and out-of-class contact with faculty (see also Kuh 2003). Likewise, Theilheimer (1991) has presented a detailed list of five factors that contribute to a positive learning environment: (1) comfort (creating a feeling of safety, accommodating errors, giving students the freedom of expressing themselves without constraints, creating the feeling of belonging to peer group); (2) clarity (providing clear instructions, breaking down material to smaller chunks to maintain the feeling of accomplishment, however small); (3) respect (mutual respect between students and the teacher); (4) relationships (particularly caring relationships between the teacher and individual students, teacher attending each student individually); and (5) responsibility (giving students a degree of control over decisions concerning their learning).

Here, our purpose was to analyse how caring leadership in higher education can be employed to enhance students' success and study achievements, and what its relationship with other factors affecting students' study success is like.

The leaders' perspective is interesting when considering the effect of caring that covers the institution, in this case, the university, through the select approach of the leader. Caldwell and Dixon (2010) have defined love, forgiveness and trust as organisational constructs that are freedom-producing, empowering and vital to enhancing followers' self-efficacy. When leaders consistently exhibit love, forgiveness and trust in relationships, their followers – whether they were students or employees – respond to these behaviours with increased commitment and loyalty. Moreover, happiness can be directly translated into engagement, productivity and satisfaction (Prewitt 2003; see also Rego *et al.* 2011). It has been argued that sensitive leaders develop a culture that demonstrates concern for individual needs (Fairholm and Fairholm 2000; Popper and Amit 2009).

Happiness not only produces a quantitative improvement by increasing efficiency but also a qualitative one by making a better product or outcome by virtue of pride, belief and commitment. Emotions and emotional intelligence have even been considered as the heart of effective leadership (Goleman 2006). Furthermore, an ethic of caring establishes a moral touchstone for decision making (Hoyle 2002) as leaders' elicitation of love regards other people as the cause, target or third-party observer of these emotions (Fischer and van Kleef 2010).

Given this perspective on love and leadership, we were interested in researching how university leaders talk about the connection between caring leadership and students' study success. This viewpoint contributes to the overall knowledge about caring leadership practices, but specifically to the awareness of the multi-dimensional nature of higher education organisations and factors affecting the smoothness of university students' study processes. Finally, the purpose is to determine how the love-based aspect might be used in elaborating research models for re-thinking and designing caring learning environments, students' psychosocial wellbeing, and for developing the models of caring and love-based leadership in education context.

As the interviewees worked in universities, their work was closely connected to not only their followers but also to university students. Therefore, leaders discussed their leadership in relation to the study opportunities and conditions among students at their universities. We analysed how the university leaders actually perceived their role in promoting university students' study success and fluent study processes. All their perceptions were first categorised into themes according to the way leadership was discussed in relation to students (for example, leadership actions for the students, providing resources and quality teaching). Then, the perceptions were re-categorised into three main categories that best represented the leaders' perceptions: using caring leadership for (1) providing resources for quality education, (2) seeing students, faculty or staff, and themselves as equal groups, and thus promoting a sense of solidarity, and (3) treating students as customers.

Caring leaders provide resources for quality education

The first category refers to the relationship between outer factors affecting education and the way that the education is realised in practice and provided to students. The current educational policies regarding funding in universities were reflected by the university leaders. They were aware of the pressure of doing research and having students graduate:

‘The pressure within the public university environment has really focused more and more around money. [Universities] have to be doing more research, they have to be taking more students, they have to be generating more programs.’

(American leader)

‘At this level, in a university, those kinds of push for excellence and productivity make it pretty difficult to be I think a loving leadership model.’
(American leader)

Although they realised that the demands of competition and productivity can make it more difficult to employ caring leadership in universities, the university leaders could see their position and opportunities to utilise their leadership. They seemed to consider themselves responsible for ensuring the high quality education and support for students.

‘I mean, your [the leader’s] job is to make life better for all the faculty and students so they can do what they need to do: their research, their teaching, and the students, so they learn and get their degree, go out there and make us all proud. To do that, you got to be a leader.’

(American leader)

‘A lot of times, that requires that you’re going to make sure that the quality of the education that the students get is going to be the highest possible.’
(American leader)

In practice, caring leadership appeared as a wish to guarantee as high a quality education for students as possible by using the available resources in a purposeful manner, reallocating it to activities that would benefit students’ study processes (for example, by decreasing teachers’ and professors’ administrative work), and enhancing the spirit of everybody doing their share and their best for the students and the university.

‘We have to guarantee such resources that the quality of education is considerably better than it is now, that the operation is meaningful, and that we can take the best possible care of students. That will also benefit work life.’

(Finnish leader)

‘I find it surprising that we have so much administrative work at the university... Teachers have to send emails to various pupils, and they do a little bit of this and that? That’s administrative work. And if we had an employee to do that work, it would be much more logical.’

(Finnish leader)

Caring leaders promote the sense of solidarity among students and faculty

The second viewpoint expressed by the university leaders was related to the atmosphere at the unit. They considered it important for the students’ study success, commitment and overall satisfaction that the people at each unit and at the university would share the sense of togetherness and solidarity.

‘The caring that I have my organization, I got 700 employees, about 18,000 students, the caring I have is for all of them, and so, everybody gets treated that way.’

(American leader)

‘You can have more family-orientation. We are only interested in our own research and we hardly ever collaborate. I think that at the individual level, you know, I think working with your own doctoral students, we can have more personal caring relationship. The stress of competition is not good but working with individual students and dissertations, that’s more satisfying, working with students in the classroom.’

(American leader)

As the latter of the aforementioned data excerpts show, the sense of togetherness was also seen as the answer to the ever-increasing pressures of productivity and individual success. Working together could benefit not only students and the faculty but the whole organisation. Moreover, the university leaders named actual measures that they themselves used in practice in order to improve the spirit of collaboration at their units. The leaders talked about treating everyone equally and promoting open and informal interaction among the faculty and students.

‘Our community; we have students who are equal members of this work unit in their own role, and we have the personnel... This [university] is quite a world of its own compared to the normal units.’

(Finnish leader)

‘Management by walking around; and I think it is insane that teachers for example sit in a separate cabinet away from students or where leaders sit on a different table than employees. I can affect those daily situations in which I can mold in the community and stick together with them.’

(Finnish leader)

‘We’re trying to re-develop the area around the university to build more coffee shops, restaurants, bars, music places ... I think that leadership is all about getting people to feel connected and engaged... A research university should make a very clear connection with the practical world of the community and the faculty and the students.’

(American leader)

According to the findings, the students’ study processes could be enhanced by increasing open interaction and collaboration in units. Caring leadership thus could be seen to be the means of setting an example by spending time with people, discussing problems, and initiating actual proposals for actions, be they small-scale collaborative actions such as the faculty and students having coffee at

the same table, or larger scale measures, such as improving offerings within the overall education environment. Thus, caring university leaders pay attention to their followers' and students' overall wellbeing. They realise that a well-functioning unit with a good and inspiring spirit can offer the best premises for students' study success and, through this, the success of the whole unit and the university as well.

Caring leaders perceive students as customers

The previous category described how the sense of solidarity could support students' study paths. The third category develops this thinking to the personal level by seeing students as the customers. According to the results, the university leaders' way of perceiving students resembles a whole new way of defining customership. It is not just demands expressed by the customers but merely collaboration and desire to find out what is the best for them through reciprocal interaction: students as customers are simultaneously seen as partners too. From this point of view, caring leadership was considered a means of paying attention to students as individuals, taking care of them at the personal level, and respecting them as the most valuable part of the university. The university leaders expressed this idea as follows:

‘In academics, you need to be very careful that the students should come first. And I think that’s a big difference between academics, a leader in academics and a leader in industry. I really try to do what is best for the students first. And then I try to do what is best for the faculty and the college.’

(American leader)

‘Here, where you don’t necessarily have a product, *per se*. You are not making televisions, but the other thing is: What is the product of higher education? You might think the student, I’m saying, no. You can’t claim another human being as your product. No, the curriculum is your product. I just refuse to think, if you use business analogy and you’re a dealer, a car dealer. It’s not the customer that’s your product, it’s your car. So, since when, if we look at that, why not students are our customers.’

(American leader)

The university leaders described that when students are perceived as customers of higher education, they can feel they are being supported and heard. Caring leadership was manifested in personal relationships with students:

‘I have a good, direct, and open relationship with students. I hope, at least, and sense that I am easily approachable and they come to discuss their problems and studies, and quite openly have confided in me.’

(Finnish leader)

In addition to direct interaction with students, some university leaders perceived their position as a possibility to support their followers, department chairs, professors and other faculty, in creating the favourable relationship with students and supporting them in their studies. Caring leaders thus could see their support and guidance they provide to their followers as the way of supporting students' study processes.

'[I want to] support the chairs really connecting with students.'

(American leader)

'From time to time, I've sent them [the faculty] reminders about why we are working here and how important it is to work together despite the fact that your work loads are heavier because of the financial times but remember why you're here: It's the students' smile when they leave your office. You know it's working and reminding them of that ultimate goal.'

(American leader)

The way caring university leaders can show their support to their ultimate customers, students, is to make sure that people working at the unit are aware of the purpose of their work. This was also related to the question of respecting students. One of the leaders described the situation by giving an example:

'If you have an office and you open at 8, it's not just good at all, not good for the students, not good for the whole college, if you're not there at 8 o'clock. If there is no one there, we are not respectful to them.'

(American leader)

The leader continued with the example that he considered that it is also the caring leader's task to make sure that not only are his or her followers aware of their responsibility for students and have accepted them as their customers, but also that they have to find meaning in their jobs. If they still do not find their work meaningful the leader's task, for the sake of the students and the employee himself or herself, is to help the employee find the meaning in the job or reconsider the job description.

'If you say I don't like my work, I'm just shuffling papers, then I can explain, OK, there's the reason why you're shuffling this paper, because the students need this, the students. Maybe there are some forms that students need. But sometimes people are not in the jobs. You have an opportunity to identify that like when you really explain why some things have to be done and still that individual does not find it meaningful, then I would engage in little better professional planning.'

(American leader)

Factors behind students' success

The results of this study complement our previous studies of factors directing university students' study processes (see, for example, Määttä and Uusiautti 2011a). We have previously described the teacher/student's study process as a sum of factors at the student's personal level, the unit level and the overall regulations, values and cultural traditions that control education. Although they do not explain a successful study process alone, their development and significance should be paid more and more attention at universities.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the interconnectedness of students' study processes and factors affecting it. We consider caring leadership the fundamental enabling and empowering element influencing all levels of study processes.

We analysed caring leadership in relation to students' study success. At the personal level, students' study processes vary greatly depending on their backgrounds, starting points, study skills and the experiences they get during their education. Students have certain abilities and habits related to their learning history and experiences and that can strengthen their knowledge and self-efficacy. This conception is either strengthened or dashed at the university (Biggs 1987; Cassidy and Eachus 2000; Gettinger and Seibert 2002; Lindblom-Ylänne and

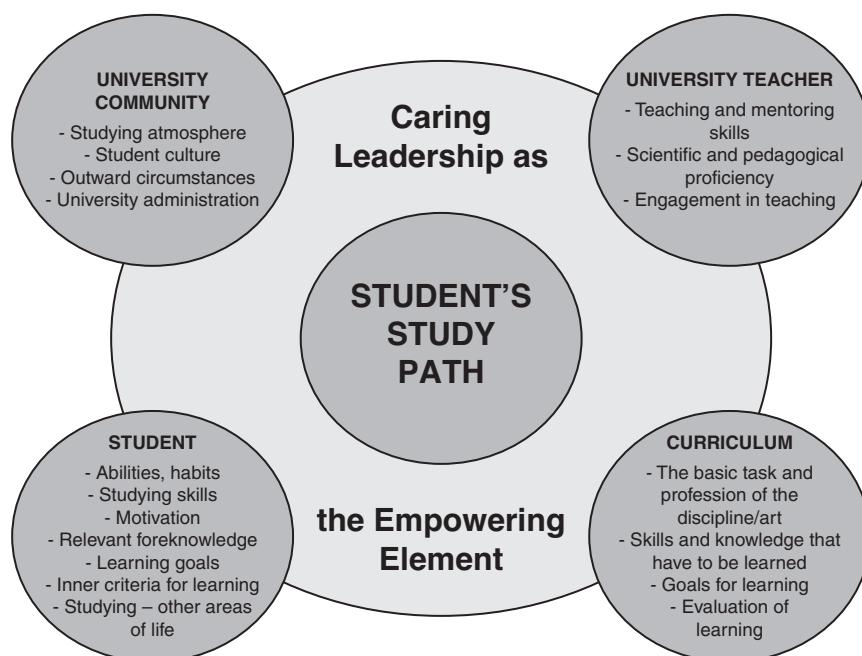


Figure 4.1 Core factors affecting students' success (adapted from Määttä and Uusiautti, 2011: 52).

Pihlajamäki 2003). On the other hand, we want to emphasise students' motivation, which reflects in their way of seizing studies and persistence (Allen 1999; Mäkinen 2000). Certainly, outer rewards matter too. Receiving positive and encouraging feedback about one's own progress is important as it improves one's receptiveness to new learning experiences and tolerance of failures, whereas a perceived feeling of insufficiency and a poor performance level, as well as teachers' inadequate guidance and disinterest, decrease motivation (Pajares 2001).

The viewpoint presented here also included an interesting notion; namely, university leaders talked about considering students as customers. From the students' perspective, this means that they are valued and noticed at the university. They received support and guidance when needed and felt respected as an important part of the university. In addition to sufficient support and guidance, there are other means to enhance students' wellbeing too. Studies should also be in balance with other areas of life; interesting hobbies, good human relationships and family life, versatile and relaxing leisure time act as a good counterbalance to studying (see, for example, Lowe and Gayle 2007). Some university leaders talked about mutual free-time activities that could be provided at or nearby the campus. Participating in these kinds of activities would also increase student engagement. For example, Kuh's (2003) framework for student engagement is based on five benchmarks: level of academic challenge, enriching educational experiences, supportive campus environment, student-faculty interaction and active and collaborative learning. Therefore, it seems that engagement is one basic concept when considering successful studying.

Naturally, everyone also perceives success in studies subjectively and evaluates personal achievements in different ways (Maddux 2002). Expectations for the future affect greatly how people react on changes and challenges (Carver and Scheier 2002) and there are various strategies that lie behind the one that leads to active and meaningful studying. From the perspective of university students' success, it seems that caring leadership can function as a means to support students at their personal level and enable them to find and employ their personal characteristics, talents and strengths in the best possible manner during their studies.

The leaders in this research talked about the sense of solidarity and communal-ity among the faculty and the students. At the unit level, the educators' pedagogical and scientific professionalism, curricula, and the atmosphere and conditions of the unit (see Määttä and Uusiautti 2011a; Uusiautti and Määttä 2013) can be named as the core factors. Consequently, if the students were regarded as customers, the curriculum was named the product. It should fulfill the promises of education and thus be cutting-edge. Basically, the curriculum provides both teachers and students with a clear goal. It answers the questions of what kind of expertise students will have after graduating from the training program and what kinds of courses are included in their studies.

Five stages can be distinguished in curriculum work (see Alaoutinen *et al.* 2009): (1) to define the basic task and profession of the education/discipline/art, to evaluate the need for education; (2) to define required competencies and

general goals of teaching; (3) to define the model of curriculum; (4) to define the goals, contents, workload and methods for study entities and units; (5) to determine the communication in the curriculum; and (6) to evaluate the curriculum and the proficiency produced by it and its constant development. Learning goals in the curriculum tell what students are expected to know after taking a certain study unit and they also direct working and the way learning, teaching and studying are being evaluated.

When pursuing the valued outcomes, students need special support and guidance. What became highlighted here was the importance of equal and open interaction between the faculty and students. This is how the idea of perceiving students as customers was manifested in leaders' thinking; their customership implication appeared as a reciprocal relationship with students. Likewise, a positive atmosphere was emphasised as a crucial element.

More detailed lists of the nature of support and guidance have also been compiled (for example, Haapaniemi *et al.* 2001). Määttä (2012) has divided the resources of a good supervisor into four dimensions that constitute the four fundamental features of supervision: (A) Will: a supervisor's commitment to supervision; (B) Knowledge: substance knowledge and/or the mastery and ability to comprehend the overall structure; (C) Actions: ensuring that the contents meet the scientific quality requirements; and (D) Proficiency: positive and supportive supervision methods and personality. The emphasis that each element is given varies according to a supervision situation. Nor does the emphasis always remain the same. A supervisor can emphasise different features depending on his or her own style and on a student's work habits and needs. Supervision is not likely to succeed if one of the aforementioned resources is completely missing.

Many characteristics of a university community either enhance or hinder students' smooth processes. A study atmosphere can vary from open and vivid dealings between students and teachers and other personnel to distant, minimal and formal relationships between the above-mentioned groups. Indeed, the meaning of informal student-faculty contacts and learning outcomes has been noted already three decades ago (see Pasarella 1980). Finding studying meaningful is shown to have a positive relationship with students' perceptions of academic atmosphere at the unit (see, for example, Kezar and Kinzie 2006; Mayya and Roff 2004; Pimparyon *et al.* 2000).

Ultimately, the completion of an academic degree is a student's responsibility because even the most skillful teacher cannot learn on a student's behalf. Yet, teaching skills and teachers' abilities to be in an appreciating interaction with students and to guide students make a salient impetus in university education. This was also noted by the university leaders. Today's good university teachers bear the responsibility both for their disciplines and are concerned for their students' success.

An ideal education institution naturally covers the outward conditions as well, including studying facilities and their location, the number of teachers in proportion to the number of students, social, economic and health services, library services (the availability of books, opening times, etc.), ICT facilities and their

sufficiency, the length of studying days, the accumulation of lectures versus even division by weekdays and time. It is a known fact (see, for example, Greenwald *et al.* 1996) that a broad range of resources are positively related to student outcome (see also Atjonen 2007). Indeed, this resembles the third perspective brought out by university leaders in this study. As the funding of universities strongly depends on the number of graduates, research programs and publications, in other words measurable outcomes, the pressures of productivity is high. The university leaders in this study considered these outer factors hindering the realisation of caring leadership but considered it as the basic principle for making decisions that would benefit the students the most and allocating money for purposes that would ensure them with as high-quality education as possible.

Toward the adulthood success

In the modern world student groups are more heterogeneous than ever (see, for example, San Antonio 2008; Zhao *et al.* 2008) and thus their study processes should be paid attention to more than ever. Consequently, university educators' work is demanding and important, and requires resources, time and concentration. Caring leadership in higher education can enhance the students' study processes by highlighting some fundamental principles of higher education.

Daniel Goleman (2006: 81) has wisely said: 'Leading a school to create a warmer and more connected school culture need not mean sacrificing academic rigor. Instead, socially intelligent leaders help schools better fulfill their main mission: teaching'. This concerns every level of education. Also, based on the results of our studies, we would like to continue Goleman's thought by adding that by using the leadership position for fulfilling the teaching mission, caring leaders also boost students' success. It can have a far-reaching influence on their consequent success as workers, too, when entering adulthood and work life. Indeed now it is time to turn eyes on the exogenous factors of success in adulthood.

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