

**Jonna Kangas, Vice-Chair of the University of Helsinki Lecturers' Association HYL,  
speech at the opening ceremony of the academic year on 5 September 2022**

Madam Rector, your excellencies and honoured guests, dear members and friends of the University community,

It is a pleasure to be with you today in this hall, which has seen hundreds, even thousands of master's and doctoral graduates adorned with laurel wreaths walk through the doors into their future lives, a spark in their eyes. This hall has also witnessed hundreds, even thousands of equally enthusiastic teachers who have joined the University community, assuming the duty of teaching and guiding students.

University education is about striving to teach what does not yet exist in our society, but what we dream of it becoming. The teaching provided in this institution affects not only your personal future, but also the future of our society for nearly a century. This is why, this year too, we are pursuing pedagogical skills that convey knowledge and research as well as the values of education and lifelong learning. A well-known scholar in education, John Dewey, has stated that "the goal of education is to enable individuals to continue their education". A noble goal I personally believe in.

Teachers and students, key players at the University, participants and people of influence. We are not too different. All of us in this hall and in the University community are united by motivation. A passion for understanding the surrounding society and a dream of changing it, making it better. I believe we are all united also by a passion for research and its conduct, for teaching and learning. As members of the University community, we have grown accustomed to tolerating incompleteness and our own uncertainty. In other words, we have the motivation to improve the future even though we cannot know what our future will be.

But motivation to learn and motivation to develop yourself into a better teacher require participation. Participation is not something that you either have or don't have. Participation is a skill that must be practised.

Tell me and I will forget,  
show me and I will remember.  
Make me participate and I will learn.

Participation requires the experience of joining and belonging to a community. We are all expecting and hoping, creating meanings and looking forward. We wish to be part of the group, and we are perhaps slightly afraid that our skills, personality or way of studying or teaching do not fit the way our University community works.

We enjoy the moments when we encounter other, similar people or get to know those less familiar to us. For me the best moments in my work are the ones where I see students enjoying themselves: Laughing in the cafeteria, or someone suddenly having an insight in the middle of a seminar: YES, I CAN DO IT. WE CAN DO IT.  
From among human emotions, joy may be the one with the greatest power to bring people, teachers and students together to form communities. Joy brings about the meaningful experiences that shape us and opportunities to make a difference in the future.

The University of Helsinki is Finland's leading university in both research and teaching. We can be proud of having the best students and teachers in the country. It is natural to have a meaningful life, human wellbeing and a healthy environment as a theme of the University's strategic plan.

This is why I personally think we should not forget the University's great role as an educational institution. To educate means we have a great responsibility in teaching and lifting up not only students, but also ourselves. Education is not something we need only for learning. "Education is not preparation for life. Education is life itself."

But this goal of wellbeing and meaning is not limited to tomorrow. I hope that in the new academic year no student will encounter discrimination or loneliness, that no researcher will face inappropriate hatred on social media alone, and that no teacher will feel unheard, or that concerns about coping and the workload have gone unheeded.

Much like participation, the realisation of wellbeing is everyone's responsibility, including the University leadership. Wellbeing is not an individual trait, but something that is brought to life through action. Here in the University community, we have a moral responsibility for each other and for our surrounding society. Wellbeing is a key building block for motivation.

I wish all members of the University community an extra boost of motivation for teaching, research and studying this academic year. Let's remember to take care of one another and enjoy the opportunity to once again return to this hall and these premises to meet in person.