

## Mathematics, Humour and Teaching Combine?

Luís Menezes

Polytechnic Institute of Viseu (Portugal)

### ABSTRACT

Mathematics is a very important school subject, but in many countries around the world, such as Portugal and Spain, it has high levels of failure, which are accompanied by low levels of student appreciation. Therefore, mathematics teachers seek to find the best methods for teaching with appropriate learning outcomes. Humour is a social element enjoyed by most people and is increasingly consumed, for example, in cartoons, television shows, and the internet. Some of this humour focuses on Mathematics and mathematics classes. Many studies, conducted in different school subjects, namely in mathematics, show the benefits of using humour to teach and learn. Therefore, we ask the following questions: Do Portuguese and Spanish mathematics teachers appreciate humour? Do they recognize their educational value for teaching mathematics? Do they use humour to teach mathematics? If so, how do they use it? To answer this question, we designed a quantitative study with a sample of 1088 Iberian mathematics teachers (Portuguese and Spanish), that teach from the early years of education through to higher education. The questionnaire is organized into three dimensions of analysis: 1) Humour and sense of humour; 2) Educational value of humour in teaching and learning mathematics; and 3) The use of humour in mathematics teaching. The main results show that most teachers, at all levels of teaching, recognize the concept of humour, consider that they have a sense of humour (89%), recognize their educational value (98%) and have already used it in their classes (56 %), with the goal of creating a good learning environment (with an emotive function) and making students think (with a cognitive function). The study also reveals that there are no statistically significant differences between Spanish and Portuguese teachers.

**Keywords:** classroom; education; school; teachers; verbal humor