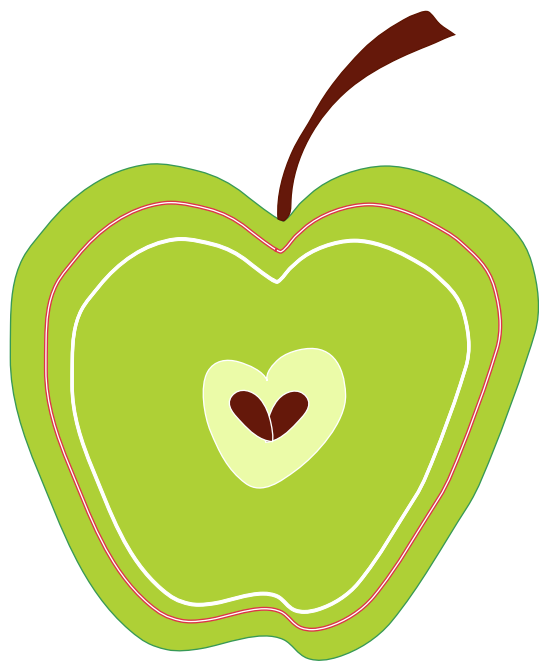


Developing Emotionally Competent Teachers

Emotional Intelligence and Pre-Service Teacher Education



ROISIN P. CORCORAN AND ROLAND TORMEY

Peter Lang

Classrooms are emotional places, filled at different times with enjoyment, excitement, anger, hurt and boredom. The teacher's skill in working with emotional information and in regulating their own and their pupils' emotion impacts upon what and how pupils learn. But what emotional competence do teachers need? Can they learn this in pre-service teacher education? And should this kind of ability even be categorised as emotional skill, competence or intelligence? Given recent policy initiatives in this area, these questions have become increasingly pressing.

This book focuses on how pre-service student teachers develop the competence to work in and with the emotionally rich life of the classroom. Building on the concept of emotional intelligence, it examines the skills used by student teachers in perceiving and regulating emotions, generating particular emotional states to facilitate particular types of thinking, and understanding the processes of emotional change in their classroom. Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data, it explores what pre-service teachers can be seen to have learned through an emotional competence training programme and how this impacted upon their teaching.

Roisin P. Corcoran is a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Department of Psychology at Yale University. Her doctoral research focused on emotional competence and pre-service teacher education, particularly the role of emotion regulation and emotional intelligence in teaching, learning and learning to teach. She has served as a reviewer for both psychology and education peer-reviewed journals and is Communications Chair of the American Educational Research Association Social and Emotional Learning Special Interest Group. She has taught in pre-service teacher education for some years and is the recipient of numerous grants and awards for her emotion-related research. This book links directly with her doctoral research for which she was awarded an IRCHSS scholarship.

Roland Tormey is a *Conseiller pédagogique* at the Centre de recherche et d'appui pour la formation et ses technologies (CRAFT), École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne. He is co-chair of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Expert Group on Competences in Education for Sustainable Development. He has worked in teacher education, education research and curriculum development for fifteen years and was formerly Head of the Department of Education and Professional Studies at the University of Limerick. This book links directly with his ongoing programme of research on emotion, metacognition and global citizenship education.



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info@peterlang.com, www.peterlang.com, www.peterlang.net

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Emotions are at the heart of teaching [...]. Good teaching is charged with positive emotion. It is not just a matter of knowing one's subject, being efficient, having the correct competences, or learning all the right techniques. Good teachers are not just well-oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy.

— HARGREAVES 1998: 835

Human experience is an emotional affair. This is as true for educational experience as it is for any other aspect of our lives. Learning is not simply about comprehending the abstract content of ideas; it is about discovering ourselves in relation to new ideas. It involves surprise, revelation, delight, and sometimes outrage [...]. It is distressing, therefore, that we find ourselves in a moment when the public discourse about education is so exclusively focused on measurable cognitive outcomes of teaching.

— ROSIEK 2003: 399

Classrooms are filled with emotion. Much of the emotion is positive, with young people enjoying their learning and each other's company and with teachers coming alive with excitement. Unfortunately, too much of it is negative, with pupils' or teachers' voices being raised in anger or silenced through apprehension or boredom. As Rosiek notes in the quotation above, emotions are central to learning. Positive emotions help pupils to anchor memories and learning; they provide the motivational drive that encourages learners to stretch themselves and to continue to engage in the face of difficulties. Negative emotional experiences can lead to pupils disengaging from their class or from school. As Hargreaves notes in the quotation above, if teachers are to help young people learn, their ability to generate and to be open to experiencing passion, pleasure, creativity and joy is likely to be key to their role.

It is worth noting that the potentially positive role of emotions in learning has not always been recognized so clearly. As Solomon notes, western philosophy has traditionally regarded emotion as being dangerous, 'more primitive, less intelligent, more bestial, less dependable and more dangerous than reason' (Solomon 2000: 3). While reason was prized in the western world, emotion was denigrated and often regarded as sinful. Emotions were seen as a threat, the opposite of rationality; indeed emotions could cause us to 'lose our reason'. This negative view of the role of emotions has, in the last few decades, been challenged. Emotional revolutions in neurology, psychology and sociology, for example, have led to a re-examination of traditional assumptions about emotion. Recent work on the biology of the brain and on brain injuries has identified, for example, that people do not make optimal decisions when the parts of the brain responsible for emotion and rational thinking are separated (Turner and Stets 2005: 22). As shown by Damasio (1996), appropriate emotions can actually facilitate and speed up decision making. Work on pro-social behaviour has also highlighted the role of emotional connection and empathy in the decision to act in ways that are positive for other people (Hoffman 2001). In these areas, and in others, there is a growing awareness that, rather than seeing emotion as dangerous and valueless, there is a need to recognize the positive contribution of the emotional realm to our lives.

Part of this reorientation towards emotion has been the idea that emotions can be linked to intelligence. The term 'emotional intelligence' was popularized in the mid-1990s by Daniel Goleman (1995a) in his bestselling book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter More than IQ*. The value of emotions was now centre stage: Goleman defined emotional intelligence as encompassing zeal, self-control and persistence, and argued that it could enable children to unlock their intellectual potential, while at the same time counteracting a sense of moral deficiency and enhancing altruism in wider society (1995a: xii). Goleman followed the success of *Emotional Intelligence* with a second book, this time on emotional intelligence in the workplace. Here more claims were made including the one that, compared to IQ and expertise, emotional competence mattered twice as much in contributing to excellence in work (1998: 31). Unfortunately, independent reviews of Goleman's popular writings have since shown that many of his claims are

unsubstantiated or excessive (Epstein 1998; Hedlund and Sternberg 2000; Roberts, Zeidner, and Matthews 2001).

But the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) was not developed by Daniel Goleman. It was instead the brainchild of two New England psychologists, Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer (1990). While Goleman's claims were lighting up the public consciousness before burning themselves out, a number of other researchers continued to develop different approaches to the concept and to develop ways of assessing emotional intelligence. For Salovey and Mayer, EI involved a skills framework with four components (Mayer and Salovey 1997; Salovey, Bedwell, Detweiler, and Mayer 2000):

- The ability to perceive emotions in self and others
- The ability to generate and use emotional states to facilitate different types of thinking
- The ability to analyse emotional information and understand emotional changes, blends and transitions
- The ability to regulate emotion in self and others.

The potential for each of these four skill areas to contribute to positive classroom experiences are probably immediately obvious. The ability to *perceive emotions in ourselves and others* is akin to what Whitcomb, Borko and Liston have referred to as 'attentiveness to ourselves and our students' (2008: 3). Time and again, researchers have highlighted the importance of teachers being aware of the emotional states of their pupils, and Hargreaves has argued that, 'because it is an emotional practice which involves relationships with others and which seeks to shape those relationships in particular ways, teaching [...] necessarily involves and depends upon extensive degrees of emotional understanding' (1998: 838).

Likewise, the *use of emotions to facilitate different kinds of thinking* has been identified as a key skill of successful teachers. Roseik (2003), for example, has argued that the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers involves recognizing and planning for the emotional journey of students when learning. He introduces the concept of 'emotional scaffolding' to refer to 'teachers' pedagogical use of analogies, metaphors, and narratives

to influence students' *emotional* response to specific aspects of the subject matter in a way that promotes student learning' (2003: 400, emphasis added).

Successful teachers are also constantly required to *analyse and make sense of emotional information* and to understand how the emotional dynamic of their class is changing, not least because, as Intrator has argued, 'the emotional context of [...] [the] classroom is more dynamic than static' (2006: 235). Teachers are constantly judging whether their pupils need to be energized, calmed down or have their enjoyment levels raised, and are constantly deciding on the best ways of achieving these goals. This would not be possible without the ability to understand the relationships and transitions between various emotions and to understand how to change emotional states.

Ultimately, the teacher is constantly engaged in a process of *managing, not just how they and their pupils act, but how they feel*. In doing so, teachers are required to remain open to the experience of an emotion – to what their own emotions can tell them about what is going on. They will also need to generate or change their own emotions and those of their pupils as required. For example, teachers may find themselves needing to generate in themselves feelings of excitement when it is required in class, or to take the heat out of a pupil's growing anger.

The idea that EI is likely to be of value to teachers is also borne out by what research exists on the impact of having high levels of EI. The emotional skills of teachers have been found to influence student conduct, engagement, attachment to school, and academic performance (Baker 1999; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger 2011; Schaps, Battistich, and Solomon 1996; Wentzel 2002). Emotionally skilled teachers are also likely to demonstrate empathic behaviour, encourage healthy communication, and create more open and effective learning environments where students feel safe and valued (Brackett, Katulak, Kremenitzer, Alster, and Caruso 2008). Teachers who are more skilled at regulating their emotions – a component of emotional intelligence – report less burnout and higher job satisfaction (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, and Salovey 2010). Brackett and Katulak (2007: 4) argue that 'emotional skills

training for teachers can create a more stable, supportive and productive learning environment’.

Given all this, it may seem odd that there has not been a greater focus on the potential of emotional intelligence as a component of teacher competence that should be developed through teacher education programmes. In fact there has been relatively little research on EI in relation to the teaching profession and some researchers (such as Hargreaves 1998, 2000) have been critical of the concept. There are probably at least four reasons for this: First, the EI model involves the quantitative assessment of emotional competence or skill, and many researchers in education would accept Denzin’s (1984) argument that emotionality is best researched through phenomenological methods, and that ‘human emotional interaction must be situated in the natural world’. Second, many have a deep unease about the way in which the ‘intelligence’ concept has been taken to refer to fixed or innate abilities and has, in turn, been used in an ideological way by right-wing thinkers to justify the existence of social and economic inequalities (Fischer et al. 1996). Third, it is widely recognized that a person’s ability to demonstrate a particular skill on a pen-and-paper test (or on a computer screen) should not lead us to assume that they can or will draw upon that skill in the lived reality of a busy school or classroom. Related to this is the idea that the concept of EI is also seen (perhaps unfairly) as treating emotions in a way that is acultural and asocial (it should be noted that many researchers offering this critique of the EI concept refer only to the work of Goleman) (Burman 2009; Hargreaves 2000). Fourth, notions of emotional intelligence tend to be seen as diametrically opposed to a labour process perspective in which the exploitation of labour is central to the analysis. Drawing on a number of these ideas, Hargreaves has argued that, ‘emotions should not be reduced to technical competences’ (2000: 814).

While it is fair to say that emotions should not be reduced to technical competences, it is probably unhelpful to further broaden that view to suggest that competences should have no place in a discussion of teacher emotions. While there have now been quite a number of descriptive studies which have looked at the emotional experiences of teaching (see for example Bullough, Knowles, and Crow 1991; Jackson 1968; Lortie 1975; Nias 1989; Waller 1932; Woods and Jeffrey 1996), there are few studies that help us to

conceptualize the emotional skills that teachers actually need. There have also been few studies that assess the extent to which teachers have those skills. While it is important not to see emotions as decoupled from their social and political context, teacher educators remain concerned with the competence of student teachers (as well as with their understanding of the social contexts of learning). We need, therefore, conceptual tools that can draw upon the valuable EI skills framework that Salovey and Mayer have provided, and can at the same time locate these skills in the lived reality of schools and classrooms. Therefore, EI can be understood as measuring a person's abilities to recognize emotions in themselves and in others, to generate and use emotions to facilitate thought, to analyse emotional information and emotional changes, and to regulate emotion in themselves and others. However, teacher *emotional competence* as defined by Corcoran (2011) describes the extent to which teachers have the disposition and ability to use these skills in the lived practice of their school and classroom life.

If it is accepted that teacher emotional competence is an important element in teacher competence more generally (and there now appears to be abundant evidence that would lead us to accept this), it must then be asked whether or not such a competence can be developed in the context of teacher education programmes. Here again, evidence-based research is in painfully short supply. While the importance of emotions in education has led to a number of calls for a greater focus on emotion in teacher education (Corcoran and Tormey 2012b; Intrator 2006; Rosiek 2003; Tormey 2005a; Whitcomb et al. 2008), there has been little research on how this might be achieved. This question is made all the more telling by the realization that much of what is taught in many (but not all) teacher education programmes has relatively little impact upon teachers' classroom practices (Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden 2005). Some recent work on student teachers' tacit skills has focused on the role of their school-based experiences, arguing that such skills are not easily taught and tend to be learned in school contexts (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko, and Hoffman 2011: 87). Others have proposed addressing the issue through retreat or counselling/coaching models that would require considerable change to, and investment in, teacher education programmes (Hoekstra and Korthagen 2011). However, Elliott et al. (2011: 98) have recently concluded

that at present, ‘the question remains as to whether [...] greater gains could be made if teacher training programmes were to focus explicitly on developing practical interpersonal skills in teachers [...]. Future research looking at experimental interventions may be necessary to address this question adequately’.

There is a need, then, to address a number of questions which cut to the heart of the teacher education endeavour:

- (a) What levels of teacher emotional competence or of EI do student teachers have?
- (b) Can they develop emotional competence if it is addressed in a pre-service teacher education programme?
- (c) Does developing such competence in pre-service teacher education actually impact upon their practice as teachers?

These are the questions that this book addresses.

Content and Organization

The research described here looks at the role of emotional competence in teacher education, drawing on data from a large study on emotional intelligence and emotional competence (Corcoran 2011).

In Chapter 2 the role of emotions in teaching and in becoming a teacher is explored, highlighting the extent to which emotional issues are, or should be, a central issue for teachers and for those in pre-service teacher education. Relatively little research in teacher education currently addresses emotions as an issue, and what research does exist tends to focus on describing the emotions teachers experience rather than looking at the skills or competences that student teachers need to work with those experiences.

Making sense of emotional competence in teaching requires a deeper understanding of emotion itself. Therefore, in Chapter 3 the concept of

‘emotion’ is explored, identifying the physical/behavioural, cognitive, and social/cultural dimensions of emotion. Making sense of emotion in this way can help to prevent the decoupling of emotional intelligence and emotional competence from their social and political context. It can also help to make sense of the range of resources (physical, cognitive and social) that can be drawn upon by people when they work with emotions.

In Chapter 4 a range of approaches to making sense of emotional competence are identified and explored. These include the Bloom’s/Krathwohl’s taxonomy on the educational objectives for the affective domain, Multiple Intelligences Theory, Sternberg’s Triarchic Intelligence Theory and Emotional Intelligence (EI). Questions regarding the concept of intelligence and its measurement are also addressed in this chapter. The concept of teacher emotional competence and its relationship with EI is described. Chapter 4 is also concerned with mapping out the research methodology. The research question and design are described, along with the sample of participants involved in the research. In designing this research, the value of qualitative studies that could locate emotionality in social contexts is recognized. However, acknowledging the dominance of qualitative approaches, numerous researchers (Corcoran 2011; Corcoran and Tormey 2011, 2012a; Sutton and Wheatley 2003; Zembylas and Schutz 2009) working on emotion have argued that mixed-methods research – including quantitative measures – that offers multi-perspectival answers is now needed in order to gain a more complete picture of teachers’ emotions. Therefore this book provides an insight into the role of emotional competence in pre-service teacher education by combining quantitative with qualitative data within the study.

The quantitative element of the study is based on the use of the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). An experimental research design was adopted, with sixty students from a four-year undergraduate teacher education programme being given an emotional intelligence test (the MSCEIT V2.0) before being assigned to either an experimental group (who undertook an emotional competence workshop series) or a control group (who received their normal classes). At the end of the period, the students were retested and interviewed. In the later phase of the work, students were interviewed again after undertaking a teaching

practice placement to identify if their awareness of the skills of emotional intelligence had impacted upon their teaching. At this time the MSCEIT was also administered to another group of undergraduate students (control group 2) and a group of students from a one-year postgraduate teacher education programme (control group 3). This provided MSCEIT (emotional intelligence) scores for 356 student teachers in total. Using the MSCEIT, this research involves what is, to the best of our knowledge, the largest ever study on emotional intelligence in pre-service teacher education students.

Chapter 5 addresses the findings from the MSCEIT and consists of two sections. Section 1 presents the main findings from 356 pre-service teacher education students' scores on the MSCEIT. Section 2 explores whether or not student teachers' emotional intelligence can be increased through a short emotional competence workshop series integrated into their pre-service teacher education programme. It shows that while the students who participated in the workshop series did not show a significant increase in their EI levels, the mean score for managing emotions – the skill area that is perhaps most relevant to their career choice as teachers – did show a marked, if marginally non-significant, increase.

Chapters 6 and 7 present the main qualitative findings of the study. Chapter 6 returns to the question of whether the workshop series led to an increase in students' level of emotional competence. It highlights the extent to which the students who participated in the workshops experienced an increase in their understanding and skill levels when compared to those who did not participate in the workshops. It highlights the ways in which the quantitative measures may not be sensitive enough to actually track the development of emotional competence in student teachers, thus highlighting the value of using both quantitative and qualitative tools to assess the extent of EI skills development.

Chapter 7 explores the overall impact of the workshops on the student teachers' classroom practices. It highlights the extent to which the understandings and skills developed in the workshop series did not 'wash out' when student teachers entered the classroom, but instead shows that they were able to bring a more sophisticated set of emotional understandings and competences to their practice when compared to those who did not take the workshop series.