

Learning leadership from teaching: emotional competences

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Abstract

During the last two decades, in our societies we have sought quality education. One way to achieve this goal is to promote educational leadership. The field of educational leadership is complex: administrative, instructional, school supervision, teacher supervision. Our focus is on instructional leadership and teacher leadership. There's an extensive literature on this topic and we have selected recent publications that present a discussion of theoretical and practical implications. Our theoretical study is from an educative perspective. We highlight a theme: the emotional competences of academic leaders and teachers and their influence on effective teaching. Researchers insist that teachers' emotions cannot be regarded only in their psychological aspects. They show the interconnections between teacher's beliefs, identity, goals and emotions and teaching. The relevance of this topic drives our research on how it's introduced in programmes of teacher education. Teacher education should incorporate this vision. In particular, we analyse the most representative and current programmes in Spain. We compare these programmes with the current tendency of teacher education in an international context.

Keywords

Teacher leadership; instructional leadership; emotional competences; teacher emotions; teacher training; teacher education.



1. Introduction

Some sets of competing contextual pressures on schools for reclaiming quality education are: constant change, new movements, new programmes and new directions; the emergence of school bureaucracies and teaching reforms; social and cultural context blocking education – the damaging impact of some mass media and new technologies, more dysfunctional families than ever before; new conceptualisations of academic organization with an emphasis on social capital, learning organizations, collective teacher efficacy and communities of professional learners. Today the skills and knowledge which children require are becoming more complex and the range of other issues which schools are expected to help address is growing.

Leadership is itself one of the main drivers of the quality of teaching, the other is the teacher. More than school input or context, learning depends on a determined and accountable school leader. Some reviews show how the world's top school systems are building their teaching leadership. There are statistically significant empirical and qualitatively high associations between heads' educational values, qualities, and their strategic actions and improvement in school conditions leading to improvements in student outcomes.

This paper is the result of a preliminary study of teacher education. The interconnection between quality education, the best teaching, academic leadership and instructional leadership inspired us to seek the necessary conditions in teacher training. A cross-theme emerged: emotions in education. The effect of emotions on teacher development, educational changes and teaching improvement are subjects of increasing importance in understanding the work and quality of school leaders and teachers. Teachers' emotions are investigated as a means of enhancing the self-awareness of the individual, understanding one's own responses to change and how to improve, and for those in leadership roles. For this reason, the findings are interesting when teachers become leaders in their schools.

For this purpose, it is interesting to analyse what leadership training is given, how effective it is, and the role of emotional competency in teacher training. We consider that emotions should not be reduced to technical competence. Presenting emotion management as just another set of skills to be mastered, in which people can be trained, limits how we approach, understand and try to shape the emotional work that people do. Emotional labour in teaching can be pleasurable and rewarding, when people are able to pursue their own purposes through it, and when they work in conditions that allow them to do their jobs well. Being tactful, caring or passionate as a teacher is treated as largely a matter of personal disposition, moral commitment or private virtue, rather than of how particular ways of organizing teaching shape teachers' emotional experiences. So we studied how emotional competence is integrated in teacher education programmes.

We selected recent publications on this topic that present a discussion of theoretical and practical implications. The present theoretical study is from an educative perspective.

2. Teacher leadership, Instructional leadership and Teaching

Our study is on leadership in schools. There is a consensus about the importance of school leadership. We found a growing body of evidence demonstrating the impact of effective school leadership. This evidence is consistent across a large number of countries and contexts. Apart from classroom teaching, the quality of head teachers is the most important influence on achieving improvements in school standards. Across the systems in the review, there is an emerging common opinion on the importance of school leadership and how to improve it (Barber et al. 2010). This study review proved that the most important impact on student achievement is attributable to the effectiveness of both principal and teachers.

On the other hand, the impact of social interaction on learning is evident. In view of this, the most important condition of a school's success is the quality of relationships: academic leaders-teachers, teachers-pupils, teachers-parents, teachers-teachers.

Successful school principalship is an interactive, reciprocal and evolving process involving many players, which is influenced by and in turn influences the context in which it occurs (Mulford 2010). As Liberman and Fiedrich (2010) explain:

“Teacher-leaders negotiate a variety of challenges as they work to enact a collaborative approach to leadership. These include dilemmas that arise when attempting to work collaboratively inside traditional bureaucratic structures, pedagogical challenges that emerge from teaching in any situation including other teachers, and tensions that stem from conflicts between policy mandates and values and approaches” (p. 654).

Teacher leadership should pay attention to the interpersonal relationships in school and to promote them. It should be noted that the teacher-leader relationship sets up one of the bases to recover learning, getting better classroom teaching and academic leadership. Leadership focused on teaching, learning, and people is critical to the current and future success of schools.

The research highlights both a set of practices which effective leaders share, and a common set of beliefs, core values, attitudes, and personal attributes which they possess (New Leaders for New Schools 2009; Day et al. 2010). Which of these practices of leadership are related to teachers? We think the practices most related to teaching are: building a shared vision and sense of purpose; establishing effective teams within the school staff, and distributing leadership among the school staff; understanding and developing people; focusing on student achievement; putting children ahead of personal or political interests; being resilient and persistent in goals, but adaptable to context and people, open-minded; willing to develop a deep understanding of people and context; willing to take risks and challenge accepted beliefs and behaviours; self-awareness and the ability to learn from others.

But it is really striking that high-performing principals focus more on instructional leadership and developing teachers. They see their biggest challenges as improving teaching and the curriculum, and they believe that their ability to coach others and

support their development is the most important skill of a good school leader. They are more likely to report that they greatly enjoy teaching. They spend more time working with the people in their school: walk the halls more, spend more time coaching teachers, interact more often with parents and external administrators, and spend more time with students.

Much prior research about teacher leadership has focused on teachers taking on leadership roles inside their own schools. Teachers' deep understanding of the daily workings of classrooms has long been recognised in the literature as a hallmark of their leadership (Mulford 2010). Classroom practice forms the foundation of these teacher-leaders' knowledge base and serves as a continued source of leadership learning. The teacher-leaders share the philosophies and research base that motivate their teaching, as well as specific practices and materials, as they work to improve education. Specifically, they collaborate with their peers so that other teachers can adapt practices to best meet the needs of their students and to create their own practices.

Good leaders and good teachers share core values: persistent, resilient, nurturing, open, respectful, trustworthy, honest and caring. These values are experienced in their relationships. Leaders influence the sense of safety and openness to collaboration in the culture of their schools and the learning conditions of their students and teachers (Beatty 2011). Such cultures are also reportedly more emotionally comfortable.

“The nature, roles and effects of emotions in teacher development, educational change and school improvement have become subjects of increasing importance in understanding the work, quality and effectiveness of teachers and school leaders” (Day and Lee 2011, p. 1).

School leadership preparation programmes include a social-emotional territory to develop leaders who will emphasise collaborative reflection and will take into account an emotional understanding of themselves and of teachers. They reveal the role of emotional understanding in healthy relationships and those characterised by disconnection and

antagonism. The studies have contributed to a growing number of efforts to explore the meaning of emotions in education and to contribute to our developing understanding of emotion's place in leadership (Grobler and Conley 2014). The emotions powerfully contribute to the well-being and effectiveness of and influence on learning at all levels. The principals express a sense of duty to remain positive and cheerful to make up for the emotional baggage of teachers.

The main path to understanding the emotional dimension of the relationship between leaders and teachers is the emotionality of both the leaders themselves and the teachers. The capacity for connecting with others depends heavily on the quality of the connection one has with oneself because all human relationships involve emotions. We can see the connection between the ethics of caring, moral leadership and relationships. Respect/disrespect, care/lack of care and professional support/lack of professional support involve positive and negative emotions. The leader reconciles positive and negative emotions to release energy for change and address difficult problems. The relationship between respect, care, support and the teacher's professional self, includes the ability to hope, to remain optimistic. Hope helps us to find ways and resources to address difficult problems. The academic leader should attach importance to teachers' emotions to improve teachers' professionalism. We will discover that the main emotions and emotional competences that help leaders in their task are the same as those that help the teacher. Hope and trust are claimed to make the necessary changes that we need to achieve a quality education. In this paper, we continue by studying teachers' emotions.

3. Teacher emotions

Teaching and learning are always emotional practices (Hargreaves 2002). This affirmation is confirmed in the research about emotions, teaching and teachers. Emotions provide a context for learning, students' emotions interfere with their learning and emotions are viewed as a form of learning – emotional competences. Teachers

experiences intense emotions in their teaching; they feel about: their pupils, their skills, their colleagues, and the structures of schooling (Kelchtermans et al. 2009). Job dissatisfaction, health, emotional exhaustion, stress and depression, are key components of burnout related to teachers, and are of concern to researchers. Negative classroom emotions have considerable implications for student learning, the school climate and the quality of the education (Corcoran and Tormey 2013).

Teaching and learning aren't solely emotional practices. Emotion, cognition, self, context, ethical judgement and action intertwine in the complex reality of teaching and of learning. This idea illuminates the way we consider teacher training. We seek two matters in the reviewed studies: which teachers' emotions are emphasised and what educative perspective is presented to keep teachers' emotions in mind in teacher education.

Two publications serve as reference in understanding the state of research on teachers' emotions today: *Advances in teacher emotion research: The impact on teachers' lives* (Schutz and Zembylas 2009) and *New Understandings of Teacher's Work: Emotions and Educational Change* (Day and Lee 2011). For the past three decades, the central issues have been: emotions in teaching, teachers' emotions and educational change and teachers' emotions in their lives, teachers' emotions and relationships in school, with pupils, colleagues, parents and principals. Driving teachers' feelings is a cross-theme. Denzin (2009) insists on a performance approach. Teachers and students, as moral agents, enact emotions in their relationships: positive emotions – love, desire, empowerment, hope, happiness, sympathy, gratitude, admiration and contentment; negative emotions – rage, shame, despair, fear, anxiety, anger, disgust, sadness, envy, embarrassment and indignation. Simultaneously, the subjects of research on teacher education are: professionalism, instructional leadership, confronting changes – cultural, social, legal variations, difficulties in work and the social demands – educational reforms. The interconnection between these fields of study is obvious. The emotions are inextricably linked to teachers' work development and identity. For this reason, emotional education

of teachers joins with the educative encouragement of identity, professionalism and good teaching.

Teachers' emotions are influenced by their biographies, social and working contexts, peers, phase of professional development, phase of life, sociopolitical cultures and teaching preferences. Emotional education is part of moral education. The emotions in teaching are linked to matters of interest and values, to making decisions with moral consequences. Teachers' choices between pedagogical options are technical and moral, and they involve the need to do justice to children's educational needs. "Threats to 'being a proper teacher' are so closely connected to one's personal and professional identity; they arouse intense emotional reactions" (Kelchtermans 2011, p. 76).

We found proposals to enhance a passion for teaching (Noddings 2011; Day 2012). This passion shows other needed emotions: pleasure, joy and hope. Researchers inquire into teacher development's broader aspects containing effective phenomena: well being, effectiveness, efficacy, identity, resilience, happiness, motivation, commitment, vulnerability (Day 2011; Bullough 2011, MacBeath 2012). These realities are interconnected; the positive emotions express the correctness of this link and strengthen teacher agency. Being passionate about teaching relies on a commitment to understand and educate every learner; a conviction and hope of teachers and pupils, for themselves, to achieve the best in learning and teaching; a sense of purpose and well being connected with a sense of professional identity. These efforts can be made every day with organizational support.

Teachers should combine their professional competences with their personal commitment and values, but hopefulness and resilience, courage and perseverance overcome stress, fear, exhaustion, irritation, and frustration when teachers work in professional learning communities. These communities develop school cultures with common beliefs, interaction, participation and meaningful relationships. Teacher effectiveness is the product of the preparation and continuing support of the head (cognition) and the heart

(emotion). Teachers' self-esteem, confidence and hope grow when they think their actions are consistent with their values and beliefs and they promote students' learning. Also when working with others, giving support to and asking for support from others (Day and Quing 2009).

Concluding this section, we bring into contention several implications of the research about teachers' emotions for the training and professional development of teachers. In general, in the reviewed literature, the researchers suggest the need and benefit of being aware of the emotions; proper emotions and others' experiences in diverse situations and in different relationships. The studies reflect a variety of ways in which emotional management is worked in the classroom, in relationships with students, teachers, and heads. Changes, reforms, and demands affect teachers (Neophytou, 2013). Professional development could include making teachers understand their emotional life lessons and, in this way, they will be prepared and able to overcome the common obstacles of teaching. Teacher education is designed from a vision of the interconnections between teachers' identity, emotions, values, beliefs, social expectations and responsibility for social justice (Pillen et al. 2013; Karlsson, 2013; Van Uden et al. 2013).

4. Teacher emotions training

In Spain the design of programmes aimed at the development of emotions in teachers is new. Despite broad academic knowledge generated around emotions in recent years, the initiatives to promote emotional awareness among teachers and help them to develop their emotional competences are still scarce, both in pre-service teacher education and teacher practice.

It is, however, possible to highlight two major programmes in Spain especially given the number of teachers who have been involved.

On the one hand, the GROU group at the University of Barcelona has developed a teacher-training programme based on the theoretical model of Bisquerra and Pérez-Escoda (2007) which aims to develop the following components of emotional competence: 1) emotional awareness; 2) emotional regulation; 3) personal autonomy; 4) social competence; and 5) competence for life and wellness. This training is carried out for 30 hours at teachers' schools and is conducted for one hour a week for 9 months.

On the other hand, the programme designed by the Laboratory of Emotions of the University of Malaga, pursues teacher development within four dimensions according to the theoretical model of Mayer and Salovey (1997): 1) perception, appraisal and expression of emotions; 2) emotion as a facilitator of thought; 3) emotional awareness; and 4) regulation of emotions. This training requires 45 hours over 6 months (4 hours every 15 days). After the eighth session there are no classes for one month and teachers' assistants put the theory into practice in their classrooms. They have five tutorials online. After that, they return to class and describe the application that they have conducted.

Initiatives in emotional teacher training are scarce and it is difficult to collect empirical evidence about their effectiveness. The experiences assessed are still few. Nevertheless, some of the evidence collected highlights improvements in emotional competence, especially in two areas: emotional regulation and social competence. Teacher stress levels are also reduced and the institutional climate improves (Pérez-Escoda et al. 2012; Pérez-Escoda et al. 2013). Muñoz (2005) evaluated a psychopedagogical intervention programme in emotional teacher training in five schools in Guipúzcoa. She found that it increased the feeling of well-being of teachers, particularly over their security and in the classroom; their capacity to cope with conflicts, and they also discovered new skills. It contributed to their professional development; they became more aware of their influence on the emotional development of students.

From another perspective, the programmes targeted at the emotional development of students are more numerous. For example, the INTEMO project



(<http://emotional.intelligence.uma.es>), the FOSOE program (Training in socioemotional skills), the “Responsible Education” program of the Marcelino Motín Foundation (http://www.fundacionbotin.org/educacion_areas.htm) or the Extremadura Network schools emotional intelligence, are some of the initiatives that are taking place in different schools in the Spanish geography. They all have something in common: they emphasise the teacher in the classroom as a reference model for the emotional development of students. Emotionally competent students require teachers who are emotionally prepared. The legislative framework has opted for the integral development of the student from a competency-based approach, and this is inevitably associated with the need for such skills to be taught by a teacher team that dominates them.

The teachers are a model of communication, respect, prosocial behaviour; they have the opportunity to explain, express and opine openly about issues; they can manage and guide situations of conflict; to promote or not certain desirable behaviours in their pupils and all that is associated with an optimal socioemotional classroom climate. This requires an emotional competence and resources that teachers recognise they are not ready for.

The literature review and the analysis of programmes show how the emphasis is on the need to help teachers and facilitate them in the development of emotional skills to cope with their work stress. This stress is due to the challenges of the teaching-learning process and also to the curricular and organisational changes required by the educational context. So, if teachers learn to maintain positive emotional states and reduce the impact of negatives, it results in greater teacher welfare and consequently the best psychological fit with their students. In the line of positive psychology (Fredrickson, 2004), it is considered that teachers who experience positive emotions (joy, interest, contentment and love) over time provide more flexible and creative thinking and they boost their psychological resilience.

Although it may be useful to work on certain emotional teacher competencies according to specific needs – for example, teacher behavioural deficits, only from positive values

can skills be routed towards personal, interpersonal and social improvement, enforcing the benefit of quality education. Emotional training also requires moral training because teachers have to consider what values develop in relationships with others and their social life.

Otherwise, emotional teacher education responds only to a remedial approach based on the professional teacher deficit, with certain therapeutic connotations. It seems important to give greater visibility to the role of emotional competence as a key to the exercise of teacher leadership. Beyond the role of emotions in the “survival” of the teacher, their well-being or the adjustment of their students, emotions are key to broadening their capabilities and the exercise of their profession. Even the revised proposals claimed to adopt a broader perspective that supports the participation of a set of abilities and skills to address the social, affective and emotional problems in the life of schools and classrooms (Valdivieso et al. 2013).

The teacher needs to be personally aware of values and commitments, and emotional training can facilitate the development of fundamental qualities of teachers (justice, kindness, sincerity and perseverance) but it can also help them better understand the context in which they work and the demands of the teaching profession. Emotional education programmes for teachers in Spain will have to incorporate a holistic approach as we have seen in the previous section.

On the international stage, it is possible to collect more teacher training of emotional experiences, some of them particularly relevant as Jennings and Greenberg (2009), Nelis, Quoidbach, Mikolajczak and Hansenne (2009) and Brackett and Caruso (2007). In one of them we see how it raises the personal development of the participating teachers and educational professionals and their commitment, trust, responsibility and motivation. Specifically, Jennings and Greenberg (2009), based on a comprehensive review of research on teacher emotional education, claims that teacher training should indispensably include four themes: 1) emotional intelligence (information on some

emotions that affect learning and on the identification, expression and regulation of emotions in response to common classroom situations), 2) mindfulness (as a technique that encourages the full and reflective awareness of what happens in the moment and reduces stress), 3) commitment to education, 4) developmental psychology of social and emotional development (to better understand the development and sociopersonal needs at different ages and the effect this has on the dynamics of the class).

These authors, from the model “The prosocial classroom” describe how a comprehensive education that takes into account this set of factors contributes to a learning environment that promotes quality positive outcomes – academic, social and emotional – among students and also feeds the enjoyment, effectiveness and commitment of teachers to their profession. If teachers recognise the emotions of their students they will respond more effectively to their individual needs; so they will show a better effective classroom management; greater ability to use their emotional expressions and support verbally; promote enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning, guide and manage students’ behaviour and understand the dynamics of conflict and guide them properly. We find this approach interesting because the emotional competence of the teacher not only has to do with their well-being or adjustment. To this extent teachers who improve their emotional competence can also improve the methodology used, the dynamics of classes, and their enthusiasm for teaching or their relationship with students and colleagues.

However, all this can be influenced by contextual factors like the leadership of the principal, the climate, school values and norms, state or local politics and even the level of stress or well-being in the personal life of the teacher or the support of another teacher in the classroom (co-teacher). If the school promotes a culture of positive engagement, a community with a shared vision of education, it generates a teacher’s sense of belonging and makes it possible for ways of coexisting with positive ways of feeling, thinking and acting.

5. Conclusions

In relation to the requirements of good teachers and teaching at its best, researches have made clear the interrelation between cognition, effect and competency and the crucial part played by emotions in teachers' capacities to exercise their professionalism. From a holistic framework, leaders can begin to better develop their own leadership practices (Cradwford 2011).

The context of changes, reforms and demands in which principals and teachers work challenge their moral and ethical purposes, their vision and their sense of positive identity, efficacy and agency. Learning leadership and learning teaching should entail a holistic training joining cognition, emotions and skills, beliefs, values, sense of identity, agency and efficacy (Meyer 2011).

Teachers' capacities to sustain their commitment – to be resilient – are moderated by their identities, their professional life phases and the contexts within which they work. Teacher emotions – emotional exhaustion, burnout, stress, job satisfaction, well being, joy and hope – point to how teachers experience their work and influence it. The sense of commitment facilitates emotion management; emotion management makes it easier to sustain commitment, a positive identity, and an effective competency (Zembylas and Schutz 2009).

The need for an emotionally positive academic climate and the need for leaders' and teachers' wellbeing are resolved, in part, through interventions: coaching, mentoring, consultation with experienced peers and “supervisors” in contexts where leaders provide time and open cultures which build trust. Such interventions will need to be made by those who themselves are emotionally attuned to the personal, professional and organisational contexts in which they work. The researchers examined have important implications for teacher education, both pre- and in-service. The case studies of the

biographies of teachers, interviews and reflective journals are qualitative methods of study which are really useful in understanding this subject.

Programmes of emotional teacher training in Spain are scarce. Also few experiences have been evaluated. The little empirical evidence that has been collected shows that after participation in a programme on emotion teachers improve their well-being, stress level, emotional regulation and classroom management. There are more initiatives on the emotional education of students which require teachers to be emotionally prepared.

From the analysis of programmes and the literature review we have done in this paper, we note that it is necessary to incorporate a holistic approach that goes beyond a vision of emotional teacher training based on developing specific skills for their welfare and survival in the classroom. Emotional teacher training should help teachers to exercise the values, qualities and commitments of the profession with enthusiasm and passion.

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