

The Place of Emotions in the Higher Education Pedagogical Relationship

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Abstract

This article aims to contribute to the understanding of emotions in the pedagogical relationship in Higher Education, within the context of the changes that have occurred in Portugal over recent decades. The empirical study framed in a phenomenological-interpretative perspective, was developed through 12 interviews with university and polytechnic teachers of 4 higher education institutions. The findings show that most of the teachers participants have been seeking new forms and styles of pedagogical relationship, given not only the systemic changes resulting from the Bologna Process, but also from the challenges of globalization and the consequent mobility of students and teachers. Most teachers are attentive to students' emotions and derive gratification from the pedagogical relationship they establish with them. They see it as a rebalancing element in their own emotional life in face of the intensification and bureaucratization of work resulting from the dominant higher education mercantilist view in past decades.

Keywords: Pedagogical Relationship; Higher Education; Teacher emotions.

Introduction

The university is an arena for the reconfiguration of youth sociability, in which emotions are present, and to which teachers may contribute both positively and negatively. However, there is a persistence lack knowledge of HE teachers' emotions and their presumed consequences, namely in teacher education (Trigwell, 2012; Gilmore & Anderson, 2016). As stated by Damásio (2017), feelings have not been given the credit they deserve as motives, monitors and negotiators of human cultures, since emotions and feelings are essential to energize the intellectual and creative process.

This article seeks to bring to the forefront the emotional dimension underlying the pedagogical relationship at the heart of the teaching profession. The data collected through interviews, about the emotions felt by higher education teachers, in addition to those they claim to perceive in their students, reveal the importance of emotions in the pedagogical relationship and consequently in their professional life. Furthermore, they allow to indirectly estimate their ability to discriminate and deal with emotions. It therefore appears to be legitimate and fitting to develop the data collected on the emotions felt by teachers in the pedagogical relationship, in addition to those they claim to perceive in their students. This perception makes it possible to indirectly estimate the emotion discrimination capacity of these teachers and also to compare the emotions of their students with those reported in international studies.

Regarding the structure, the article begins by presenting the problematic of the pedagogical relationship in higher education in the context of current changes, with a particular focus on the importance of emotions. Next, the objectives, participants and methodology used in the empirical study are presented. The key themes emerging from the data analysis are presented and the results are discussed at the intersection with the results of other studies.

1. Pedagogical relationship in HE

As globalization and the information society gained traction, universities were requested to play new roles, coming out of their "Ivory Tower" to open up to the needs of society. This change on the missions of the university gave rise to internal resistance, especially in the more traditional universities, which defended a distant pedagogical relationship based on the teacher's knowledge and power of communication.

1.1. From relational distance to proximity

The shift in the teaching paradigm, proposed by the Bologna Agreement, presupposes a change in attitudes and calls into question the teacher's powers, by giving the student greater autonomy in the organization of their learning. These are changes that require an adaptive attitude and emotional literacy skills of teachers and students (Chen, 2020). The development of these characteristics will enable them to recognize, understand, manage and express their emotions properly. Hence, teachers need to learn to question and regulate their emotions and those of their students and to develop the emotional intelligence of both. The concept of emotional intelligence is defined here as a set of mental skills that allow us to perceive and come to know the meaning of emotions, to reason and solve problems stemming thereof (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Scientific interest in emotions initially emerged in connection with one's personal and private life, has progressively come to include social, cultural and political dimensions (Bennet, 2014).

The approaches to the theme of emotions in education, in the last decades, are based on a more integrated view of the different dimensions of the human being, specifically, motivation, emotion, and cognition (e.g. White, 2013), and takes in account the multidimensionality of learning processes and the influence of circumstances and contexts (Korthagen, 2017).

From this perspective, teachers' "effectiveness" comes from the influence they have on the environment in which they work, such as the classroom and school. To achieve such effectiveness, coherence of

teachers' qualities, ideas, values and skills is crucial for their daily interactions in educational settings (Korthagen, Kim, & Green, 2013).

In general, this more interactive and multidisciplinary view of professionalism has not been incorporated into the policies and training practices of teachers at different levels of education, especially those in HE. In fact, in Portugal the training of most HE teachers did not include emotional and ethical competences, nor an integrated vision of training and professional development.

Teachers' professionalism involves a component of emotional literacy, a fundamental condition for the emotional training and development of students, for the well-being and effectiveness of the teacher and for the creation of an effective organizational environment. In a society where the supremacy of reason over feelings and instincts is thrown into question, while uncontrolled affectivity may simultaneously be witnessed in the public arena, this concern is justified not only by the need for teachers' emotional self-management in their increasingly demanding and complex work contexts, but also by the responsibility they have in the balanced development of those who teach.

1.2. Teachers' emotions and pedagogical work

Despite the acknowledged relevance of emotions in the lives of people and organizations (Chen, 2020; Chen & Cheng, 2021), research on emotions in HE settings has been sparse. HE, namely the university, has been associated with the competence and mastery of contents and methodologies. However, it is assumed that quality university education beyond content involves enthusiasm and other emotions (e.g. Martin & Lueckenhausen, 2005).

Satisfaction is the most studied emotion in the university context and apparently the most felt by teachers at this level of education (Butt & Rehman, 2010; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011). Research tends to uphold that the type of pedagogical approach taken is associated with the feelings and emotions of teachers. Those who use a more teaching-centered approach tend to have a feeling of greater self-efficacy (Gordon, Petocz & Reid, 2009). Teaching-centered teachers are emotionally more neutral or go as far as to express negative emotions about teaching and the career, while those who are more focused on student learning tend to experience emotions with a more positive charge (Trigwell, 2012; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011). Several authors associate positive emotions with quality teaching and the motivation to teach, a focus on student learning and greater emotional awareness of teaching (Åkerlind, 2003; Martin & Lueckenhausen, 2005; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011; Trigwell, 2012).

The teachers are affected by the challenges of teaching has also been highlighted in the research (Martin & Lueckenhausen, 2005). According to these authors, when teacher identity and integrity are challenged, they tend to respond by means of a wide range of emotions. However, these emotions are not always displayed in the most assertive manner. The study of Zhang and Zhu (2008) revealed that it is important to take emotional dissonance into account, especially in some cultures. This study demonstrated how a dissonance between the emotions the teacher feels, e.g. anger or discontent, and those they express e.g. enthusiasm, may exacerbate dissatisfaction and even create conditions for burnout. Self-reflection has proven to be fundamental for teachers' awareness, in the sense of greater openness and authenticity on their part, and greater awareness of emotions (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). Despite the trend that acknowledges the importance of emotions in the work of HE teachers, the former are rarely the object of reflection. Both novice and experienced teachers have little awareness of their own behavior and the factors that influence it (Korthagen, 2017).

2. Methodology, participants and procedures

This study is part of a broader research project seeking to understand, from a phenomenological-interpretative perspective, the emotions experienced by Portuguese HE teachers in the context of recent changes within this level of education.

Any researchers who use qualitative methodologies understand that one of the main difficulties using this type of methodology is dealing with the high volume of collected data. Selecting of the most relevant data to the research aims and also selecting those that will be published, with the space limitations that this usually implies, constitutes a bet that is not always won in advance. Normally, the researcher is obliged to follow a path, which, in essence, reproduces the now classic data reduction scheme of Huber man and Miles (1991). Hence, the degree of dissatisfaction that may be felt by the qualitative researcher. It is this precise feeling of dissatisfaction and incompleteness which justifies a re-examination of some of the data discussed in this text and its integration in the project cluster and main findings. The reported findings mainly accentuate the emotional side of the changes, largely resulting from the so-called Bologna Process, directly associated with a work overload, constant evaluations and competitiveness, while situations of actual teaching are relegated to a secondary position. The emotional difficulties involved in dealing with the new continuous assessment and career situations point to a need for emotional training, desired in varying degrees by almost all the interviewees. The discourse on the pedagogical relationship, evident in the interviews with HE university and polytechnic teachers, was more sparse and, therefore, less explored in the published texts. It therefore appears to be legitimate and fitting to develop the data collected on the emotions felt by teachers in the pedagogical relationship, in addition to those they claim to perceive in their students.

The place of emotions in the pedagogical relationship is questioned in the present research, taking the interpretations and meanings that the participating teachers attribute to this dimension of their professional life as a starting point of the research. So, the goals this study include:

- To understand how HE teachers perceive the pedagogical relationship and the place occupied by emotions therein.
- To identify the emotion regulation strategies of teachers and how they deal with students' emotions.

The research was based on semi-structured interviews with 12 experienced teachers (6 male and 6 female), 6 from two universities and 6 from two polytechnic institutes in central and southern Portugal. All of them had over 20 years of professional experience, except one who had 11. Most of the teachers had held institutional positions, such as: department coordinator, or duties related to internationalization and inter-institutional relations. Seven teachers were female and five male. They all held a PhD degree in the following respective areas: Arts, Agricultural Sciences, Dentistry, Education, Management and Marketing, Nursing, Philosophy, Languages and Literature and Psychology.

A numerical code was assigned to each teacher to assure anonymity, to which the letters M and F were added, according to gender, and the letters U and P, according to the teaching subsystem (university and polytechnic).

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews as justified in this type of exploratory study, because it enables information to be obtained in an open and in-depth manner (Amado, 2017). Participants were interviewed for approximately 1-2 hours using a semi-structured interview script. Interviews were conducted with a degree of flexibility and attention to create a relational climate of respect, trust and empathy with the interviewees. The ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality and respect for privacy were followed. Full transcription of the interviews was carried out, so as to remain faithful to the interviewees' statements.

The analysis was based on inductive content analysis (Bardin, 2008). Using the identification of propositional discourse units as a starting point, a set of categories and indicators of the participants' discourses was created, following the customary categorization rules of mutual exclusion, homogeneity, productivity, pertinence, objectivity, and validity. Validity was achieved by the same researcher using categorization processes at different times, followed by the adjustment of criteria within the team, with subsequent recourse to an external researcher.

3. Presentation and discussion of data

3.1. Teaching in HE: an emotional experience

Emotions appeared to be a taboo theme for some teachers, which may explain the scarcity of research in this field and some initial strangeness when introducing the topic.

Although, the analysis of the discourse from these 12 teachers shows that some of them easily integrate the personal and even the emotional dimension in direct contact with students, while others express some uncertainties. The words of these teachers are examples of these two ways of dealing with emotions in the pedagogical relationship.

“For me, everything is a little on edge.”, 2PM;

“I frequently become emotional in class (...) I become emotional very easily. I think this is a good thing, because it’s also educational, isn’t it?”, 3PF.

“I don’t know how I manage my own feelings (...) I am restrained in how I do so to a certain extent (...)”, 6PF.

The emotions described by the interviewees were analyzed considering the category system of Parrot (2001) based on the 6 primary emotions (love, joy, surprise, sadness, anger and fear). Distinction between emotion and feeling has not been used here. Instead, the term *emotion* is used here, as this is what the interviewees predominantly mention.

It is clear that these teachers alluded in a generally positive way to their emotional life in the context of the classroom (despite some ambiguity or even contradictions on the part of some of them). This appears to be due to the relationships they establish with their students (“It rarely happened to me not to win the students (...) it is really emotional, for the joy, for the energy, for the activity”, 10UF), and with the areas of knowledge (“these disciplines that I like so much, philosophy, architecture, landscape architecture ...”, 12UM). This positivity is displayed in the experience of emotions such as joy and love / affection, which are dominant, as observed in the statements of Portuguese teachers from other levels of education. Reference to the experience of these emotions emerges almost indistinctly in the teachers of both genders and is also highly similar in the teachers of the two teaching subsystems.

It may, therefore, be inferred that these male and female teachers, like those from other levels of education, experience their profession emotionally, balancing *gratifying emotions*, such as *love* (“I establish and know that I always establish relationships of affection with students and I believe that without affectivity there is no learning, 10UF) *joy* (“when students are motivated and interested ... in classes, in situations of guidance and tutoring too ... it is a great joy, it is a great pleasure “, 6PF) and *surprise* (in the individual support sessions I sometimes have a feeling of surprise”, 5PM), mixed with *less desired emotions*, such as *sadness*, *anger* or *fear*. The most reported of these latter emotions being sadness, translated into disappointment, frustration or discouragement, and does not differ according to gender or teaching subsystem.

According to gender, the discourse differs in relation to surprise, anger and fear categories. Almost all participating female teachers mentioned having experienced emotions of *fear and anger* (5 out of 6), but only 1 of the 6 male teachers referred to these same emotions. A similar tendency was observed with the emotion *surprise*, experienced more by the female teachers (4 in 6) than by the male teachers (1 in 6).

These teachers attribute the emotions they feel as less positive to a set of reasons:

- lack of commitment by some students (“when in fact it is not possible to create complicity, full communication in class”, 8UF);
- persistent failure of some students (“a student who is still finishing the course and who has repeated my chair 3 times ... leaves me with a feeling of bitterness of not being able to do more”, 7UM);

- behavioral difficulties of some students (“students to whom I spend a large part of the class drawing attention to behavioral aspects”, 4PF; ”some postures, some non-verbal manifestations of a certain lack of interest”, 5PM);
- evaluation processes (“he [Master's Degree student]didn't accept any criticism that I made to his work, really surprising, right?”), 9UF.

3.2. Between gratification and disenchantment

Direct contact with students was highly rewarding, for most of the interviewed teachers, which is in line with other studies carried out in the university context (Butt &Rehman, 2010; Postareff&Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011). In contrast some degree of disenchantment was also reported.

There is unanimity about the gratification that the act of teaching gives them (the 12 interviewees clearly verbalize it), although they point several aspects of teaching, as these statements illuminate:

- *act of teaching*: “we are here because there are students, we are here to teach students, so as far as I'm concerned this is the most essential thing, the most rewarding”, 2PF; “it's also good to investigate, but being able to teach ... really for me today is one of the very good parts, one of the good things I take”, 8UF;
- *reflexes of teaching on student development*: “what I like most, I really like the work in the classroom, I really like to see them grow, to see them grow, to grow as people, to grow in knowledge”, 3PF; “to see students grow day by day in the tasks they are doing and see immediately that they can achieve more advanced things is very rewarding”, 7UM;
- *challenges to innovation*: “the most rewarding is perhaps when we are challenged to prepare something new and we have to put our most creative side in planning certain learning situations”, 4PF; “what is a new thing, there is a gleam in the eyes, the students react to a new idea and move, this is particularly gratifying”, 5PM;
- *positive student feedback*: “reading some student comments, it was something that gave me great satisfaction, I think it's the situations that give me the most satisfaction is when I have this positive feedback”, 6MP; “A student said to me ... look, teacher, I wanted to tell you that the subjects that I took this one marked me, I felt here that I learned and that I opened up a little bit my ideas, my horizons in relation to the expectations I had in faculty ... that for example makes me happy (smiles), 8MU; “in a class ... people say that class activities had been a transformative experience”, 10MU.

Differences between polytechnic teachers and university teachers are most noticeable in these last two aspects (innovation and student feedback). Only polytechnic teachers understand innovation as a rewarding aspect, while student feedback seems to be more rewarding for university teachers. Data also seems to show a certain trend towards a greater appreciation of student feedback by women (4 women out of 6, versus 1 out of 6 in men).

Also the feeling that they contribute to the student's education, that is, to their professional future, constitutes a source of gratification for some of the interviewees (3 teachers from the polytechnic and 1 from the university). In their statements, they highlighted various forms of gratification related to the connection with the work contexts of students / future professionals, namely supervised practice, of which the following lines are an example:

“The work in which I can really give more of myself as a person and a teacher is precisely in clinical trials and in the reflection around situations, and within this process of helping to sharpen their thinking and action, in terms of a concrete influence”, 3PF;
“Of course, the success of the students, those who later contact us to carry out traineeship in areas that we have taught” 1PM;

Finally, two university teachers highlight the gratification they derive from the work of mentoring students in carrying out their thesis:

“The guidance of thesis, I believe that for me is what is most rewarding... the interpersonal relationship, the proximity to the students”, 8UF;
“In the orientation of the thesis it is also very gratifying to see someone start to develop a research work and follow”, 9UF.

The data that we have been explaining about feelings of gratification point out that these teachers, as a whole, place a higher value on students' learning and development processes and pedagogical relationship than on quantitative results and obtainment of students' degrees, not following the two categories of teachers from Isomöttönen (2018). According to these author, teachers found themselves divided between the alternative roles of the educator who ensured the development of the student, and that of the system's representative, mainly interested in quantitative progress, evaluated in number of credits and the obtainment of degrees.

Even those who focus on student success, particularly value their learning and skills development and very little the institutional dimension (obtaining degrees, namely).

Arvaja (2018) also advances an analogous finding of the growing tension between what is prescribed by the institution and the vision of oneself. In this study, the teachers who were more focused on student learning expressed more positive emotions than those focused on teaching, who were more neutral, as reported in several studies (Martin & Lueckenhausen, 2005; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011; Trigwell, 2012).

Nevertheless, a certain level of disenchantment in relationship with students was also observed. One teacher complained about students' intellectual levels (“has unfortunately been decreasing”, 2PF), and other about a lack of interest and learning difficulties (“He’s one of those students who could be with me for another ten years and still wouldn’t progress any further, and to a certain extent, that leaves me feeling somewhat sorrowful, as I cannot do more”, 7UH).

Two other teachers complain about the difficulties in the relationship with some students and in the management of their behavior, as well as the lack of fluidity in communication:

“The least rewarding aspect will also have been in the aspect of teaching with the students to whom I spend a large part of the class drawing attention to behavioral aspects”, 4PM;

“In relation to students it is sometimes, when there are those days when the class does not go so well, or when we feel that in fact it is not possible to create complicity, full communication in the classroom, therefore, and sometimes it happens and I get frustrated”, 8UM.

The teacher-student relationship is a system of mutual influences, reflected in emotions and attitudes of both parties. When teachers' expectations to capture the student's interest in learning is frustrated, they experience emotions such as frustration, disappointment, annoyance and irritation. Conversely, confirmation of this expectation is a form of retroactive information on the quality of the teacher's work, and is therefore a source of satisfaction, happiness and pride.

Student assessment, as a process and as a result, is another factor that teachers usually have difficulty managing, due to the dilemmas they face. However, only two female teachers perceive student evaluation like the least rewarding aspect of the pedagogical relationship, although somewhat dramatically, in particular when there is a disagreement between the assessment and the student's expectation. Both teachers talk about the constraints felt with the evaluation process and the difficulties in making value judgments:

“It’s the evaluation, giving marks; being careful with the evaluation (...) I have a lot of suffering with the evaluation... I'm really sorry ... in fact I question myself”, 10UF;

“We have to consider that the most difficult moment is always when the evaluation comes”, 9UF.

The speeches of these teachers highlight the association of assessment with conflict and dilemmas in the relationship with students or the teacher with himself, with impacts on his emotional life.

All these difficulties interfere with teachers' identity and professionalism, as well as their pedagogical and emotional experience. These highlight the need for teacher education, including emotion work (Garcia, Vidal Sellas & Martinez-Terre, 2016). According to these authors, emotion work implies knowing how "to show the appropriate emotion in a work context, according to an implicit or explicit socially accepted rule" (p. 139). As teaching is an essentially relational activity, this emotional work is very important, as the consequent emotional literacy will have a great impact both on the well-being and on the professional performance of teachers.

3.3. Close relationship and new challenging contexts

The references in this study to displays of feelings of sadness and bitterness are not incompatible with the tendency of participants to create a close pedagogical relationship with their students. Within this context of proximity, factors such as empathy, mutual trust and personalization of the relationship were emphasized by the interviewees (e.g., "We, at least here at college, are very close to the students (...) this proximity enables us to get to know the students better, to see that some of them try very hard", 1PM).

Two male and two female university teachers also reflected the practice of proximity in the pedagogical relationship in their statements, as may be observed in the case of 7UM, when revealing his way of communicating with students ("when I sit next to the student and say: *try doing it this way*"). In turn, teacher 10UF described her relationship and way of communicating with her students as follows ("I tried to get close to them, because they generally looked worried, because they were unable to follow, but they wouldn't say so, they wouldn't verbalize it").

Likewise, in the context of academic work supervision, teacher 8UF stressed the importance of mutual trust relationships ("I think it is important, especially for him [the student being supervised] to be able to trust him and for him to also trust the teacher"). In addition to mutual trust, development of the student's self-confidence was a central issue for some teachers. Take for example the statements of 7UM:

"after two years, to see those students, some of whom were lacking self-confidence, believing that they were unable to carry out their tasks autonomously, leave with such resolution, prepared to take on the working world... is a great feeling".

Also trust among the students was valued: "I am involved in that and I want people to get involved in a very personal way, I want them to trust each other, mistrust is something terrible", 11UM.

In the context of cultural encounters in the classroom with students from many parts of the world (Ben-Peretz, & Flores, 2018), the establishment of close relationships was an important challenge for HE teachers and students. Teacher 7UM felt thankful for the results brought to him by this reality:

"some students who came from abroad, from totally different environments to ours, (...) to then see them leave with a stronger ability (...)".

In a more detailed and rich manner, the words of teacher 8UF reflected her strong experience with cultural diversity and draws our attention to the need for teachers to be aware of their students' cultural differences. She refers to students from Eastern cultures, namely from China, as follows:

"In some cultures, I have noticed that they are not accustomed to having a close relationship with the teacher. They look upon it as a lack of respect. When they actually do get close, they are very affable and dedicated and establish a degree of complicity, but they take some time to build this relationship".

These behaviors stand in stark contrast with those of the students from Latin or Latin- American cultures, where closer proximity and extroversion prevail:

"Sometimes there's a contrast with other cultures, the Italians, Brazilians or Spanish, for example. In the case of the Spanish, we had a student who would say: *But I'm used to addressing the teachers by an informal way...*" (8UF).

Dealing with diversity requires of the teacher not only the capacity for observation and cultural knowledge, but also the ability to manage human relationships with respect for other people's frames of reference, as may be noted in the following statements of the same teacher: "Her peers would just stare when she addressed me in a colloquial way, as if I was a peer, but I knew that as far as she was concerned, this was not a lack of respect". She also added: "(...) sometimes it is a little difficult to manage (...)".

This need for the HE teacher to be open to other cultural and multidisciplinary references,—in order to exercise a new form of authority, is also referred to by teacher 12UM, who is responsible for curricular units in an interdisciplinary context:

"In the case of my work, it is always a challenge because in fact I am neither an architect nor a landscaper, so you are always positioning yourself from the standpoint of the disciplinary field, which is not entirely yours, and therefore your intelligence, your sensitivity, your imagination and your ability to be a good teacher are constantly being put to the test. This also obliges you to be very cautious, not only by not talking nonsense, but above all by letting the students show their authority, their acquired knowledge and to act with a degree of common sense."

For the teacher 12UM, it is a new way of looking at his status and that of the student, where he delegates power, by integrating and sharing knowledge of a diverse nature. In addition to scientific competence, this relational climate requires the teacher to have certain personal qualities, such as, humility and flexibility, as well as relational skills and emotional literacy. These are personal and professional dimensions which, when interacting with the circumstances and contexts in which teachers work, contribute to the definition of their professional identities (Khorthagen, 2017).

Many of the interviewees were not affected by the transformations in the pedagogical relationship caused by the use of new technologies, probably as this was not an innovation for them. Those who expressed themselves revealed different or ambiguous positions, as technologies represent a new burden for teachers, but are also a means of approaching and facilitating students' autonomy.

3.4. How the teachers deal with challenging emotional situations

Nine of the twelve respondents referred to the use of strategies for dealing with emotional situations that challenged the way they act in and after a situation. The analysis of the data related to this aspect of teachers' perceptions of their action may contribute to a better understanding of this issue and serve as a source of information with the potential to train teachers at this level of education, in this field. Pineau's (1985) terminology was adopted regarding the modalities of adult education with the required adaptations, namely "self-regulation", "hetero-regulation" and "eco-regulation" strategies. In the strategies for dealing with the emotional dimensions of teaching, the research reported those that were more intrapersonal, others in the domain of interaction with students in context, and others that drew on the use of other elements of the broader ecosystem, in this case the academic organization.

Only one of the nine interviewees, teacher 6PF, showed evidence of having tried to deal with the situation by sharing her concerns with colleagues, which may reflect both the professional isolation of teachers at this level and an ongoing traditional individualistic culture.

If the set of nine respondents are taken into consideration, there appears to be a balanced resource of hetero-regulation strategies, involving the relationship with students, and teacher self-regulation strategies.

It was evident that the analysis of the distribution of these strategies across both genders, revealed specific interests: the male teachers were less informative than the female and male teachers appeared to resort exclusively to hetero-regulation strategies, namely immediate actions in the context of a direct relationship with students. The female teachers appeared to base their action on self and hetero-regulation strategies and develop a highly varied range of actions, both for pedagogical and intrapersonal interaction,

although the greater focus on self-regulation strategies may be noted which may substantiate actions and attitudes such as:

- *authenticity in the expression of emotions*: “I get involved totally and emotionally with the students and they clearly understand when I am angry or when I am happy”, 10UF;
- *emotional self-control*: “I have to pay attention, I have to pay attention and have some regulation in the way I respond to my students”, 3PF;
- *reflection after action*: “I was convinced that I had some ability to seduce students, to motivate them, but with the class that I had last year none of the strategies I used managed to seduce them, which made me feel uneasy”, 6PF;
- *learning from mistakes*: “things are bad, I take them on board and then I try to learn from them and not make the same mistakes again”, 2PF.

As for hetero-regulation strategies, the male teachers appeared to favor the following processes, when interacting with students:

- *modeling*: “sometimes I have to get involved and transmit this type of training, we try to transmit with our own example, don’t we?”, 1PM;
- *confrontation*: “when I see a bag on the table, I try to break down the situation, sometimes in an invasive manner, I ask straight out: *why is your bag on the table?*”, 5PH;
- *use of power*: “he had a choice, either to keep still and be silent with no emotional expression [the student] ... without an unpleasant facial expression in my class, or I wouldn’t let him stay ... I would remove him from the class”, 11UM;
- *ignoring*: “last year there were a few situations when someone would shout at me and I ignored the shouting”, 11UM.

When using hetero-regulation strategies, the female teachers appeared to focus more on promoting communication and observation in order to understand the emotions and behaviors of the students:

“I approach them, I try to take them to one side to talk to them, even when they don’t want this ...try to understand, to be able to readjust if necessary, to see if it’s because of my attitude, or find out what caused such dissatisfaction (...), 8UF;

“Sometimes I pick up on a student [female] who is sad or appears to be down or more dissatisfied, and I try to understand why, that’s it!”, 6PF.

Relating to the gender, the emotional regulation strategies used by both males and female teachers are noteworthy. In the discourse of the female teachers, an important self-regulation component and the use of more diverse strategies were observed.

Final considerations

This research has shown that it is in the relational field that teachers find space for affirmation, autonomy and the positive confirmation of their professional identity. In view of the changes introduced to HE, driven by the Bologna Agreement and by mercantilist visions of teaching which have given rise to negative feelings, the pedagogical field appears to most of these teachers as a factor of resilience and compensation for the intensification of their workload and external impositions. It is also in the pedagogical field that teachers seek a balance between the change in the teaching paradigm, which is linked to Bologna, and their own convictions resulting from their personal experience and idiosyncrasy. Perhaps for this reason, the participants in this study underlined the feeling of gratification they experienced in their relationship with students in a teaching situation, although some also referred to a feeling of guilt or even helplessness in the face of the failure of some students and the lack of discipline of others.

Most of these teachers seem to have internalized a new way of being a teacher and a new way of being a student. However, qualitative differences between male and female teachers were detected in this research that lead to consider the need for their confirmation through studies with larger samples and using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

These teachers acknowledge that scientific competence is not enough and that today's teachers must have emotional competence. This competence should manifest itself both in relation to themselves and in relation to the feelings and emotions they perceive in their students. By the same token, training is required for both parties.

The new way of being a teacher represents continuous enrichment, when it is exercised in a multicultural and interdisciplinary context capable of increasing the understanding of others, respect and tolerance. A new way of being a teacher is based on their ability to limit their power, recognition of the student's free initiative and their ability to construct knowledge. A new way of being a student may also stem from giving value to self-learning, to peer cooperation, freedom, which is not unlimited, and the possibility of expressing emotions.

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