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# How Emotions Impact in the Higher Education Pedagogical Relationship<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article aims to contribute to the understanding how emotions impact in the higher education pedagogical relationship and how teachers of this level view emotional 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 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. These teachers are attentive to students' emotions and derive gratification from the pedagogical relationship they establish with them and 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. Nonetheless, they also experience negative emotions and some emotional difficulty in dealing with permanent stressful situations. Results highlight the emotional side of the changes imposed on teachers mainly due to work overload, competitiveness and the system's neglect of teaching and learning processes. Moreover, participants derive positive emotions from the relation they establish with students and simultaneously share the need to overcome more negative experiences that may affect their work and suggest the importance of emotional education.

**Key words:** Emotional Education; Higher Education; Pedagogical Relationship; Teacher emotions

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## Introduction

Today's Higher Education (HE) has evolved since the Bologna Process came into action two decades ago with the aim of promoting quality education across Europe. However, some difficulties in its implementation have impacted the way HE teachers feel about their profession and the pedagogical relationship they establish with students. The main aim of this article is to explore this emotional impact.

Based on a qualitative study carried out with HE teachers, this article highlights the way in which these teachers experience the pedagogical relationship at an emotional level and their perspectives on the emotional education of teachers and students at this level of education. The main literature on the topic is explored and the method and results emphasize that emotions impact in all the higher education process and why emotional education should be implemented at this level both for teachers and students.

## Changes in Higher Education

There has been an overall change in HE towards the achievement of outstanding patterns of quality and excellence that assure competitiveness on a global scale. These changes have given rise to multiple tensions and emotional states that result, on one hand, from globalization and the rapid advance of the knowledge and information society and, on the other hand, from the consequences of the hegemony of neoliberal policies that fit the dominant economic perspective of education, with very specific effects on teaching in general and universities in particular. This shift merges the aims of universities with governmental and industrial goals, within a knowledge-based economy that consequently increases the probability of influencing curriculum decisions [1,2].

The Bologna Process (BP), started by European universities in 1999 and implemented across Europe during the past decades, aimed at developing mobility, quality assurance and recognition and has reached a total of more than 38 million student numbers [3]. In its essence, Bologna proposed a globally competitive European HE space and ensured the foundations of economic development and innovation. According to the most recent report it has had unprecedented achievements in developing convergent degree structures in the European HE area within its 49 member countries [3].

The general guidelines of the BP are a compromise with quality and have challenged the supremacy of universities in English-speaking countries. This agreement falls within the context of the changes that have been developing in many Western universities characterized by overall globalization and internationalization, accompanied by a quasi-marketing competition between institutions and a partial marketization of teaching, research and services [4]. The new scenario developed in the last decade imposes quality assessment as a foundation for the credibility of diplomas and training and makes universities and teachers increasingly competitive. The shift in the teaching paradigm presupposes a change in attitudes and calls into question the teacher's powers, thus requiring an adaptive attitude and emotional literacy skills of

teachers and students [5].

However, the implementation of BP has encountered difficulties and critical perspectives. Its pedagogical implications, derived from policies at the organizational level, include decoupling teaching from research, shallow definitions of employability and lifelong learning, a lack of depth and critical perspectives [2]. At the centre HE purposes and one of the main objectives that BP is quality, a concept whose definition is far from being consensual [6]. Moreover, standardization through academic curricula is a critical issue in the sense of the cultural and economic influences that dominate and promote convergences and a superficial conformity, although other dimensions of HE is equally important, such as cultural diversification [2]. At the same time, critical voices have highlighted that the risk of the need for adaptation can bring about economic dependency and camouflage essential equality issues is also explored [2].

There has been an increase of economic and competitive concern about the evolution of HE beyond the borders of the European Union [7]. The implementation of the BP has had different specificities and timings according to the countries [8]. In the particular case of Portugal, the system has strongly influenced universities and has instated a high pressure on the demand of research that has led to a disillusion and other emotional reactions of teachers. BP triggered ambivalent emotions in a sample of Portuguese HE teachers with a dominance on negative emotions [9]. In this research, the changes were seen as a threat to teachers' professional identity and autonomy. They feel limited in their academic freedom. The pressure to publish, as well as the enormous dispersion of tasks and the permanent accountability generate concern and dissatisfaction, sadness and even frustration, because teachers complain that they cannot focus on teaching and student learning, as they wish. However, in face of these demands, some teachers strive to change their spontaneous emotions into more desirable emotions (they invest in knowledge and training, converting discontent into feelings of professional fulfillment).

## The role of emotions in Higher Education

Education is a matter of personality and emotion, rather than of learning, cognition, objectives, and outcomes [10]. It does not dissolve itself into learning, but rather opens existential possibilities [11]. Quality university education beyond content involves emotions [12]. In fact, university is a space for reconfiguring sociability in which emotions are present and in which teachers can contribute in a positive or negative way. Emotions are inherently linked to and influence cognitive skills that play a key role in learning and development [13]. Moreover, HE is teaching is an emotional endeavor [14], in spite of the persistence of poor knowledge of emotions among HE teachers and their presumed consequences. Damásio [15] notes that emotions and feelings have not yet received the space they deserve as motivators of the great human cultural and intellectual enterprise.

With the global boom in HE and the wave of educational reforms, emotions are even more important [14]. Emotions play a crucial role in adapting people to change. Emotional

states are relevant indicators of institutional climate and enable resistance and transformation [16]. A more interactive view of professionalism has not been incorporated into the policies and training practices of teachers at different levels of education, especially those in HE. 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 Portugal the training of most university and polytechnic teachers does not include emotional and ethical competences, nor an integrated vision of training and professional development. However, recent literature has recognized that a deeper knowledge on emotions can help teachers better understand their teaching performance from a micro perspective [14]. In a society where the supremacy of reason over feelings is thrown into question [17], 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. The deep emotional-cognitive integration that exists in the human brain leads to the recognition of the role of emotions in education [18].

Focusing on the emotional and interpersonal dimension of pedagogy is inevitable because the central task of education is, ultimately, the creation of personal thought and feeling in the pupil aiming at his/her full development [10]. The pedagogical relation in this sense is an emotionally charged relationship between teacher and student. The concept is extremely complex and needs to be explored in more depth to understand why 21st century education is complex and challenging [19]. It may be analyzed as a relation between teacher and a single student, as an association of a group of individuals purposefully that accomplish specific objectives, or as subject-based relations arising from the teacher and students engaging in a focus on the substantive matter of the class. It may also lead to instrumental relations fostered by the teacher through the use of strategies and techniques for developing a good working atmosphere in a classroom that try and get students to perceive the teacher as warm, responsive, caring and supportive, as well as holding high expectations of their students [19].

Frequently omitted, the pedagogical relationship is not a new topic. Only recently that it has been a focus of attention. Recent work has explored pedagogical relations in terms of relations between individuals and how those may be affected by being in educational settings [20]. As Noddings [21] noted, the pedagogical relation is a caring relation in which there is a concern for the benefits a specific individual relation can bring to a pupil's development. This perspective of relation as care has been particularly significant when analyzing the polysemy and multidimensionality of the concept of emotion and its role in, HE.

The immediacy of the teacher, "verbal and non-verbal signs of warmth, friendliness, and liking" [22], has been the main variable considered in the emotional side of teaching in HE. In recent years the focus was changed to the student emotional reactions in class [23]. Research has shown the importance of these warm and caring

relationships in cognitive and affective outcomes [24].

This article aims to bring to the fore the emotional dimension inherent to the pedagogical relationship that is at the heart of the teaching profession. Therefore, it seems legitimate and opportune to develop the data collected on the emotions felt by teachers in the pedagogical relationship and as they say in students. This perception makes it possible to indirectly estimate these teachers' capacity for emotional discrimination and compare the emotions of their students with those demonstrated in international studies.

## Method

The place of emotions in the pedagogical relationship is questioned, 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 acknowledge the perspectives of HE teachers regarding the emotional education of teachers and students at this level of education.

This 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.

This kind of interview enables information to be obtained in an open and in-depth manner [25]. All of them have over 20 years of professional experience, except one who had 11. Most of the teachers have held institutional positions, such as: department coordinator, or duties related to internationalization and inter-institutional relations. Seven teachers were female and five males. They all hold 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).

## Procedures

This exploratory study of a qualitative nature is based on the content analysis of semi-directive interviews. The interview focused on the main emotions experienced by these teachers in the face of the changes related to the Bologna Process and its perceived impacts.

Participants were interviewed for 1 to 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. A full transcription of the interviews was carried out, to remain faithful to the interviewees' statements.

The analysis was based on inductive content analysis [26]. 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.

### Presentation and discussion of data

The data obtained from the content analysis of the speeches of twelve interviewed teachers is presented. The main results discussed pertain to; i. the participants' emotional experiences as a whole; ii. the way the two main emotions referred (gratification and disenchantment) impact the relationship with students; iii. How proximity and challenging contexts lead to strong trusting relationships; and iv. emotional education of teachers and students is seen as essential in the higher education context.

### Participants' emotional experiences

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. Nonetheless, 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.", 2P.

"You know, 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! [smile] I don't know how I manage my own feelings (...) I am restrained in how I do so to a certain extent (...)", 6PF.

In this context, we intended to know the emotions that higher education teachers experience in contact with students. The emotions described by the interviewees were analyzed considering the category system of Parrot [27] 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), which 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

... I also really like the history of science", 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), 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.

Female teachers mentioned having experienced emotions of fear and anger (5 out of 6), and 1 of the 6 male teachers referred to these same emotions. A similar tendency was observed with the emotion surprise, experienced by 4 female teachers and by one male teacher.

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, right?", 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.

### Gratification and disenchantment in the relationship with students

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 [28,29]. 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.

Only polytechnic teachers understand innovation as a rewarding aspect, and student feedback is more referred as rewarding by university teachers and also by women (4 women and 1 men). 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 polytechnic and 1 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.

“For many years I was a supervisor, so as a supervisor and I really like helping the future teacher to reflect on his work, looking for the improvement of his practices, that I like, I really like this type of work”, 9UF.

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 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 [30]. According to this 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. But, in our sample, even the teachers who focus on student success give a very particular value to the learning and skills development of the students and lower value to the institutional dimensions (obtaining degrees, namely).

Arvaja [31] 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 [12,29,32].

Nevertheless, a certain level of disenchantment in relationships 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” (7UM).

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 are 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, two female teachers perceive student

evaluation like the least rewarding aspect of the pedagogical relationship, although somewhat dramatically, when there is a disagreement between the assessment and the student's expectation, in particular. 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 [33]. 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.

### Proximity and 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 supervising postgraduate students, 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 drew 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 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 [34].

Most interviewees were not affected by the transformations in the pedagogical relationship due to using new technologies, probably because it was not an innovation for them. Those who expressed themselves about the impact of technology revealed different or ambiguous positions, as technologies represent a new burden for teachers, but are also a means of approaching and facilitating students' autonomy.

### Emotional education of HE teachers and students

We believe it is important to know the views of these teachers regarding the possible emotional education of teachers and students in higher education. The majority of those interviewed spoke out on the subject, being in favor of it and detailing some possible training modalities.

### Perspectives on the possible emotional training of teachers

With the exception of one interviewee who considers this training useless because it is redundant in relation to the pedagogical training that polytechnics, in general, provide, the remaining interviewees agreed, even after the initial strangeness that the question raised in two interviewees. However, degrees of acceptance can be distinguished, ranging from an emphatic acceptance ("I think so, I think so, I think so", 8UF), to a simple acceptance ("it would make sense", 7UM) to a reticent acceptance ("as long as it is adjusted" 10UF, "if it is useful", 2PF). Two of the interviewees responded in an ambiguous way by stating that "more than training, joint work would be necessary" (11UM) and "Reflection groups yes, that thing about having classes for this, no" (12UM), denying a formal training, but affirming non-formal training through dialogue between teachers focused on teaching activities.

The justifications for this acceptance varied, with some underlying the defense of professionalism (the teacher as an example and the reproductive influence on students of their behaviors) and professionalism translated by skills of self-knowledge and self-awareness ("sometimes I have the feeling that we are not aware of our own aggressiveness", 8UF), of observation and analysis of situations, of managing emotions and of interrelation skills in a profession that works with others.

Regarding the modalities that this emotional education could take, the answers are hesitant from most respondents, with one even declaring that he did not know. They can be grouped into five subcategories: theory followed by practice, practice followed by theory, essentially practice, self-teaching (readings), essentially theoretical (courses, short courses).

The strategies mobilized can be grouped into two groups: oriented towards self-knowledge and control (introspection, self-observation, identification of reaction patterns, videoscope, relaxation exercises...) and oriented towards the relationship with others (hetero-observation, dynamic group), analysis of situations brought up by teachers. The theoretical base would come essentially from psychology.

### Perspectives on students' emotional education

The opinion about the emotional education of students is similarly favorable to the emotional education of teachers. Nonetheless, there are some reservations ("as long as it doesn't take too much time for other activities; as long as it produces harmony", for example). We only found an unfavorable opinion in one interviewee from the health area who considers that there is already training of this type in the study plans.

The justifications for the favorable opinion bring together different types of reasons: i. the importance today given to emotional intelligence, the management and expression of emotions; ii. compensatory training for gaps in current education (facilitating and non-responsible; technological aspect overlapping with the emotional aspect); iii. especially relevant needs in courses that involve caring for others (Nursing, Medicine...) and iv. in students who move from their area of residence, namely students on international mobility, Erasmus, or others, who deserve special attention in this field. One of the university teachers considers that the emotional education of students should be provided through teaching itself, articulating this theme with ethical aspects (11UM). There are also those who declare that they never thought about it and there is also a case in which, by mistake, the interviewee was not confronted with the issue.

The modalities of this training would be essentially practical and oriented towards self- and hetero knowledge, involving a variety of exercises, from relaxation, relationship games, group dynamics, conflict management, but also participation in activities outside of school, such as volunteering and work, for short periods outside of school. However, two of the interviewees imagine theoretical training consisting of short courses or modules within other disciplines.

### Final considerations

Pedagogical relationships are a space for the affirmation, autonomy, and the positive confirmation of these teachers' professional identity.

Participants reveal warmth and caring in the relationships they establish with their students. Moreover, 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, due to the changes introduced to HE. It is here where teachers seem to seek a balance between the changes in the teaching paradigm linked to Bologna and their own convictions resulting from their personal experience and idiosyncrasies. 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. Nonetheless, 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.

Qualitative differences between male and female teachers were apparent in this research, thus suggesting the need for studies with larger samples and using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Most of the teachers interviewed seem to have internalized a new way of being a teacher. They acknowledge that scientific competence is not enough, and that today's teachers must have emotional competence. Moreover, these teachers seem to agree that teaching does not dissolve itself into learning, but rather opens existential possibilities [11]. 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 a continuous enrichment, when exercised in a multicultural and interdisciplinary context capable of increasing the understanding of others, respect, and tolerance. This 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. In addition, the 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. In fact, Higher Education, like all education, is an emotional endeavor in which pedagogical relationships play an important role. In this sense, the teachers participating in this study emphasize the need for emotional education of teachers and students at this educational level and value experienced and participated training modalities, without neglecting theoretical training.

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## Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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