

The framework of professional teaching competencies or the importance of emotional competence training for teachers.

Recently, we have been introduced to the Final Report with the Proposal for the Framework of Professional Teaching Competencies, developed by the Teacher Training Working Group of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFPD). It is true that, overall, the report has been well received as it outlines the fundamental guidelines for teaching practice and, therefore, for the training of future teachers, regardless of the educational level in which they are involved.

However, it has also received some criticism, as it has not sufficiently emphasized the development of critical and creative education. Some have even equated it to a mere handbook, without delving into significant aspects of contemporary education (Permanent Commission, “For a New Educational Policy. Seville Forum,” 2024), such as “understanding education in its complexity; integrating and applying knowledge in diverse contexts; teaching competencies based on diversity and inclusion; ethical and political commitment to human rights; democracy and the common good; or the ability to tackle complex situations with consolidated and innovative methodologies.”

Of the eleven competencies proposed in the aforementioned report, Competency 4 focuses on the holistic development and well-being of both students and teachers. This competency is further broken down into two descriptors, which “determine the professional identity of teachers”: on one hand, student well-being, prevention, and action regarding student health; and on the other hand, teacher well-being, prevention, and action regarding teacher health.

In this editorial, we focus on the second descriptor, referring to teacher well-being. In the four levels outlined in this descriptor, the need for teachers to engage in actions that improve their emotional health is emphasized. These actions include understanding, planning, implementing, evaluating, improving, and transferring practices that enhance emotional well-being, in addition to promoting initiatives with the primary objective of preventing and detecting elements that threaten their personal well-being. Despite this, and interestingly, one of the criticisms the document received from the Permanent Commission “For a New Educational Policy. Seville Forum” (2024) is the call for greater training in socio-emotional skills and empathy, as advocated by UNESCO.

Scientific literature has revealed that teachers possess a personal resource, which can be trained and developed, and which significantly influences their emotional and professional well-being. This is reflected in increased commitment and enthusiasm for their work (engagement), greater occupational commitment—especially relevant for novice teachers—and fewer symptoms of burnout. We are referring to emotional competencies, which should be the focus of attention for those responsible for training future teachers.

EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES OF TEACHERS

Numerous publications have highlighted that teachers with higher emotional skills exhibit fewer symptoms of burnout and higher levels of work engagement (Pena & Extremera, 2012). In other words, teachers who can accurately perceive and express their emotions, as well as those of others; who understand the reasons behind their feelings or are capable of empathizing with others; and who regulate their emotions and those of others by generating positive emotions like joy, while not being overwhelmed by negative emotions such as fear, anger, or sadness, show greater vigor, dedication, and absorption in their daily work. These three characteristics define work engagement.

In this regard, Extremera et al. (2019) jointly examined the role of a personal resource—such as emotional ability—and a work-related resource—such as support from colleagues and the management team—in explaining teachers' level of work engagement. Their results suggest that when teachers perceive insufficient support from colleagues or management teams, emotional competencies become increasingly necessary to maintain work engagement. Thus, it is evident that emotional competencies are especially crucial in professional contexts where teachers perceive lower support from colleagues or management, as these competencies allow teachers to maintain a positive, active, and persistent attitude in the classroom.

Now, is the relationship between emotional competencies and work engagement a direct one, or is it mediated by some other variable? In this sense, Mérida-López et al. (2020) concluded that teachers with high emotional abilities cope with daily challenges at school in a more effective manner, showing greater resilience and employing less pessimistic strategies. They focus on the positive aspects of situations when solving problems, which results in higher energy, dedication, and enthusiasm for their work. Therefore, this resilient coping explains the relationship between these two variables.

If we consider another concept, occupational commitment—defined as the desire to work in a specific profession—we observe its inverse relationship with the intention to leave the profession. According to Mérida-López et al. (2023), as

in the case of emotional competencies and engagement mentioned earlier, these authors emphasize that resilient coping mediates and explains the relationship between emotional intelligence and teachers' occupational commitment. Their research results confirm the hypothesis that novice teachers with higher emotional perception, understanding, and regulation competencies are more likely to use "cognitive and behavioral coping strategies to face adversity, focusing on achieving goals and personal growth," leading to higher occupational commitment.

Furthermore, teachers with higher emotional skills reported lower symptoms associated with burnout syndrome; that is, lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, along with a higher degree of personal accomplishment. Mérida-López and Extremera (2016, 2017) conducted a systematic review of studies addressing this issue among teacher samples, confirming the negative relationship between emotional competencies and burnout, particularly among secondary education teachers, compared to other educational levels. However, the authors point out the scarcity of research in early childhood and university education, emphasizing the need for more studies to confirm this hypothesis.

From all of the above, we can conclude the importance of training and guidance in emotional competencies for future teachers. To this end, universities offer different programs, including their own qualifications and summer extension courses. Autonomous communities can provide teacher training through teacher resource centers (CPR) or similar institutions. Additionally, there are numerous scientific and popular journals specializing in teacher training. Furthermore, there are many published programs on emotional competency training.

In our view, the most effective actions are structural ones—those that do not depend on the initiative of a particular person but, in some way, "force" those involved to implement them. This highlights the need to incorporate courses that focus on socio-emotional competencies into teacher training curricula (Porrás et al., 2020). In this regard, the National University of Distance Education (UNED) has incorporated the course "Emotional and Social Learning" into the curriculum of the Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education. This is a basic training course, worth 6 ECTS, placed in the second year of the degree, under the subject "Childhood, Health, and Nutrition" and within the professional module "Socio-Affective Development."

As noted in the course's basic bibliography (Hernández et al., 2024), the competencies that students are expected to achieve align with those outlined in the current legislative text, the Organic Law of Education 3/2020 (LOMLOE, 2020), and its curricular specification through Royal Decree 95/2022 of February 1, 2022.

In this course, through synchronous sessions between the teaching team and students, continuous assessment tests (CAT), non-graded training activities—such as emotional support sessions through storytelling—and self-assessments, the goal

is for students to achieve learning outcomes such as interpreting socio-emotional development in diverse educational contexts as healthy behavior; distinguishing socio-emotional learning theories in the family and school; recognizing different types of emotions applied to childhood; identifying socio-emotional competencies in children based on the analysis of socio-educational situations and their benefits for well-being and health; understanding educational intervention programs and specific resources for emotional and social learning as a factor in preventing emotional deprivation and well-being for both children and teachers; creating teaching materials for socio-emotional learning in early childhood education; and identifying socio-emotional training needs for early childhood education professionals.

The importance that students have placed on this course is reflected in satisfaction survey results, ranking it as the second most highly rated course in the degree program, just behind an elective. This is just one example of the importance of incorporating solid emotional training into the curricula for future teachers.

CONCLUSIÓN

The journal *Educación XX1* has not been indifferent to this topic or the interest it has generated among researchers. In fact, Mérida-López et al. (2022) addressed the issue, concluding that emotional competencies of teachers constitute an essential personal resource with positive consequences for both the personal and professional well-being of teachers. These authors published the findings of a novel study in which they simultaneously examined the relationships between contextual factors (demands and work resources) and personal factors (emotional competencies) with work engagement and teachers' work attitudes. The objective of their research was to analyze the "relationships between antecedents (demands and work resources) and consequences of teacher engagement (work attitudes), as well as the potential moderating effect of emotional intelligence." They concluded that, in the face of the daily work demands imposed by students, parents, colleagues, management teams, tasks, etc., those teachers with sufficient emotional skills will demonstrate higher levels of enthusiasm for their work.

Therefore, as a conclusion, we could affirm with Porras et al. (2020) that the passage of time does not improve the acquisition of emotional interpersonal skills such as empathy. All the research cited highlights the importance of intentionally training teachers in the ability to empathize, regulate emotions in interpersonal relationships, and accurately perceive others' emotions, as this brings invaluable work-related benefits.

For this reason, educational administrations—whether national, regional, or provincial—cannot remain indifferent to the promotion of intentional and systematic

teacher training in emotional skills, allocating the necessary material, financial, and human resources. At the same time, they must strengthen working conditions that enhance engagement and occupational commitment while minimizing teacher burnout (e.g., improving student-teacher ratios, increasing salaries, providing more personal support in the classroom, reducing administrative tasks, etc.).

As Mérida-López et al. (2020, p.73) state, “teacher training programs focused on creating positive learning environments could include modules that train teachers to identify daily conflicts and setbacks, help them recognize negative emotions and how they affect their performance and the classroom climate, and ultimately teach them effective ways to regulate the emotions caused by these adversities. This would help them feel more confident in implementing regulatory and resilient strategies in their daily professional practice, strengthening their perception that their work is challenging and stimulating, and thus increasing their levels of teaching enthusiasm.”

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