Teaching and learning in higher education can evoke strong feelings, including confusion, anxiety, boredom, curiosity, surprise and exhilaration. These emotions affect students’ learning, progress and overall success. Teachers’ emotions affect how they teach and their relationships and communication with students. Yet the emotional dimensions of teachers’ and students’ experiences are rarely discussed in the context of improving higher education.

This book addresses that gap, offering short, evocative case studies to spark conversation among university teachers. It challenges readers to reflect on how higher education feels, to explore the emotional landscape of courses and programmes they create and consider the emotional effects of messages embedded in various policies and practices.

Following the student lifecycle from enrolment to reunion, each of the main chapters contains 10 to 15 accessible, emotionally-engaging poems that serve as succinct case studies highlighting how some aspect of learning, teaching or development in higher education feels. Each chapter also contains an expert scholarly commentary that identifies emergent themes across the cases and establishes connections to theory and practice in higher education. The poems-as-case-studies are ideal for use in faculty or educational development workshops or for individual reflection. A variety of theoretical perspectives and associated reflection prompts provide lenses for variously interpreting the poems. An appendix offers suggestions for structuring case discussions as part of educational development activities.

The book promotes a person-centered discourse, giving voice to previously neglected aspects of higher education and reminding us that education is essentially a human endeavor.
How Higher Education Feels
IMAGINATION AND PRAXIS: CRITICALITY AND CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

VOLUME 10

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SCOPE
Current educational reform rhetoric around the globe repeatedly invokes the language of 21st century learning and innovative thinking while contrarily re-enforcing, through government policy, high stakes testing and international competition, standardization of education that is exceedingly reminiscent of 19th century Taylorism and scientific management. Yet, as the steam engines of educational “progress” continue down an increasingly narrow, linear, and unified track, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the students in our classrooms are inheriting real world problems of economic instability, ecological damage, social inequality, and human suffering. If young people are to address these social problems, they will need to activate complex, interconnected, empathetic and multiple ways of thinking about the ways in which peoples of the world are interconnected as a global community in the living ecosystem of the world. Seeing the world as simultaneously local, global, political, economic, ecological, cultural and interconnected is far removed from the Enlightenment’s objectivist and mechanistic legacy that presently saturates the status quo of contemporary schooling. If we are to derail this positivist educational train and teach our students to see and be in the world differently, the educational community needs a serious dose of imagination. The goal of this book series is to assist students, practitioners, leaders, and researchers in looking beyond what they take for granted, questioning the normal, and amplifying our multiplicities of knowing, seeing, being and feeling to, ultimately, envision and create possibilities for positive social and educational change. The books featured in this series will explore ways of seeing, knowing, being, and learning that are frequently excluded in this global climate of standardized practices in the field of education. In particular, they will illuminate the ways in which imagination permeates every aspect of life and helps develop personal and political awareness. Featured works will be written in forms that range from academic to artistic, including original research in traditional scholarly format that addresses unconventional topics (e.g., play, gaming, ecopedagogy, aesthetics), as well as works that approach traditional and unconventional topics in unconventional formats (e.g., graphic novels, fiction, narrative forms, and multi-genre texts). Inspired by the work of Maxine Greene, this series will showcase works that “break through the limits of the conventional” and provoke readers to continue arousing themselves and their students to “begin again” (Greene, Releasing the Imagination, 1995, p. 109).

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How Higher Education Feels

Commentaries on Poems That Illuminate Emotions in Learning and Teaching

Kathleen M. Quinlan
Oxford Learning Institute, University of Oxford, UK
To the many teachers in higher education
whose dedication and caring are making a
difference in students’ lives
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First, I am grateful to all the contributors to this book. The poets were particularly patient, as the process from submission of poems to publication was more than two and a half years. I regret that I was not always immediately responsive to queries, and a few messages may have fallen through the cracks along the way. Yet, they have remained supportive, enthusiastic and good-humored. I thank them all for sharing their experience and offering it for interpretation and discussion by readers. Many of the authors are well-established both as poets and as teachers in higher education; unfortunately space did not permit biographies of each. I have tried to reference all previous publications of included poems by way of gratitude to and acknowledgement of the many (small, underfunded) literary publishers who keep poetry alive. Where previously published work is listed as a book title followed by publisher and date in parentheses, the poem has been printed in a collection (usually by that poet).

The commentators were charged with the unusual task of commenting on poems, which was a new experience for some of the scientists and social scientists. Their belief in the project and willingness to try something new encouraged and energized me. Their contributions transform this volume from anthology to academic book.

I appreciate the willingness of recent participants in the Developing Learning and Teaching seminars in the Social Sciences Division at Oxford University to trial and give feedback on early versions of materials that have been subsequently revised and incorporated into this book.

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Finally, I have dedicated the book to teachers who work hard every day to make a difference in students’ lives. I am fortunate to have had such teachers along the way; their dedication has been an inspiration. Their emotional as well as intellectual commitment to their profession has helped make me who I am today. Thank you.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this class we read slowly, taking time to shape each word with our lips and tongues ... There’s a sacramental quality ... all we need is a bit of bread – a crumb dipped in the wine of metaphor – and it becomes a whole loaf, a risen body. All we need is one poem – and it fills a whole class.

– Carol Tyx

My world was opening out... That day was my first glimpse of how one cultivates a soul.

– Linda Goodman Robiner

These excerpts highlight the passion associated with discovery; the delight in ideas that animates higher education. What scholar hasn’t felt the thrill of picking up a thread of an idea and chasing it to its logical conclusion? What teacher hasn’t exalted in a shared ‘aha’ moment, when a lightbulb goes on for a student or a class?

But teachers also know that higher education can evoke strong negative responses – anxiety, replete with beating hearts and sweaty palms; frustration, fear, guilt, shame. Students and teachers alike have experienced waking up breathless from a nightmare of arriving late to an exam or coming to class with the wrong materials. Yet these deeply felt experiences of teaching, learning, development and discovery in higher education – so familiar to teachers and students – are hardly discussed in the context of improving higher education.

The aim of this book is to help fill that gap, by supporting a person-centered discourse in higher education that enables us – as university teachers – to voice aspects of the experience of academia that have been hitherto silent. Education is, fundamentally, a human experience – one that involves feelings as well as thoughts.

However, the emotional experiences of teaching and learning in higher education have been neglected. There is little attention to the emotional challenges faced by teachers, with texts on teaching instead emphasizing conceptual change, expanding knowledge or theoretical grounding of practice. Likewise, books on teaching in higher education often focus on developing students’ thinking skills, mainly analytical and critical thinking. While cognition is certainly a key facet of learning in higher education, it does not capture the whole experience or all of the important goals we might have for university education. There is less attention to other ways in which students may be growing and developing as people during the formative years of higher education. Yet, challenges to attitudes and identities and the forging of new relationships and commitments in a culture beyond family and home communities
are all significant aspects of students’ experiences of higher education and are strongly emotional. In these ways, students are – first and foremost – humans who are in transition. To ensure that higher education succeeds as a learning environment that nurtures the growth of students – broadly conceived – teachers must consider the role that emotion plays in learning and teaching processes.

In academia, there is often a distrust of emotion; it is seen as a hindrance to the objectivity, distance and rational thinking that are the traditional hallmarks of universities (Leathwood & Hey, 2009). It is precisely this distrust, though, that leads to the ‘cognitive bias’ in education described in the previous paragraph (Liston & Garrison, 2004). It is not necessary to see emotion and cognition as opposed to one another, though. A variety of fields, including philosophy (e.g. Bolter, 1999), cognitive science (e.g. Maiese, 2010), cultural studies (e.g. Ahmed, 2004), sociology (e.g. Zembylas, 2007), politics (e.g. Clarke, Hoggett, & Thompson, 2006), neuroscience (e.g. Damasio, 1994) and education (e.g. Goleman, 1996; Beard, Clegg, & Smith, 2007; Hargreaves, 1998) are now embracing a more integrated view of cognition and emotion.

Although different disciplines and theorists conceptualize emotion differently (see chapter 2 for a discussion of different conceptual stances), there is general agreement that we cannot separate mind from body or feeling from thinking. Emotions cannot be neatly packed away while people are engaging in ‘rational’ thinking or public life. Feelings come into decision-making, problem-solving, learning and teaching. They are a part of our social institutions, from media and politics to religion and education.

Through this book, I intend to spark conversations among teachers about the emotional dimensions of learning and teaching in higher education. I hope this book challenges you to consider how you experience teaching and how your students experience their education with you. Through conversation with colleagues, I hope you will explore the emotional landscape of courses and programs you create and question the emotional messages your policies and practices send to students. I aim to contribute to our understanding of emotional experiences in higher education by offering a language, some key concepts and illustrative, emotive examples (as poems) of how emotion is entangled with thinking in higher education.

In chapters 3 through 11, case studies – written as poems – illuminate the integrated nature of education, with evocative representations of a wide range of emotions associated with learning, teaching and growing in higher education. The chapters are organized roughly to follow the lifecycle of students, starting with the transition to higher education, the associated challenges of belonging and identity and the implications of students’ struggles for teachers. Chapters 7 through 9 highlight the process of teaching and learning in particular subjects and the emotions these subjects prompt. Examinations characterize the end of courses and programs, thus the success and failure chapter comes toward the end of the book. Chapter 11 includes a number of poems that look back on the higher education experience from a distance.
INTRODUCTION

Each of the main chapters that follow, then, consists of: a very short introduction, some 10 to 15 poems that serve as case examples, and a commentary by a higher education scholar with theoretical and/or empirical expertise relevant to the chapter’s theme. The expert commentaries highlight emergent themes across the case examples and make connections to theory and practice in higher education.

This opening chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I briefly discuss the methods used in assembling this book, explaining why I chose to use poems as case studies and outlining the selection process. In the second section, I suggest how the book might be read and used. In the next chapter, I explore different conceptual stances on emotion and its role in higher education. These conceptual stances should enrich discussions about the poems and serve as reflection points.

AN ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGY TO ILLUMINATE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Most educational research is rooted in the social sciences. In conceiving this book, though, I sought to stretch the boundaries of educational research beyond the social sciences. Through various forms of qualitative inquiry, social scientists are challenging and reframing philosophical criteria of truth, re-making the social and political role of research, and exploring its potential for opening up new possible, previously unimagined worlds. This book was inspired by notions of ‘post-qualitative research’ (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013), poetic inquiry (Prendergast, 2009; Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009; McCulliss, 2013) and Ron Pelias’ (2004) book, *A Methodology of the Heart*.

Lather and St. Pierre (2013) argue that ‘post-qualitative’ research is about ‘imagining and accomplishing an inquiry that might produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently’ (p. 635). As an emergent process, it cannot be pinned down to particular methodologies that can be taught and systematized, but rather ‘in this methodology-to-come, we begin to do it differently wherever we are in our projects’ (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 635).

Pelias (2004) teaches by example how we might use other forms including dialogues, short stories, flash non-fiction (tiny pieces of prose), and poetry to better capture the heart of human experience. Such representations of knowledge take us into the arts, offering us insights and vignettes that touch us, stimulate new insights, stay in our memories and become a part of a culture’s collective unconscious.

Thus, in this project, I ‘begin to do it differently’ (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 635) by focusing first on a topic that has been previously under-researched and under-valued and, second, by reframing the relationship between researcher and researched. In researching higher education, we have the luxury of a highly literate group of colleagues who can serve as contributors to enriching our appreciation for the felt and lived holistic experience of higher education. I have tapped this experience by soliciting contemporary poems about teaching or learning in higher education from poetry communities around the English speaking world. Therefore,
the inputs to this book come from a large number of people who are writing reflectively, in their own ways, about their own experiences. They are not seeking to tell us everything about emotions in education or even about all of their experience. They are not drawing conclusions, but rather, opening up possibilities and inviting us, as readers, to join them.

I selected poems and organized them into chapters by themes. Commentators with expertise in the field of higher education then read and reflected on what the poets of their assigned chapters had written and intimated. Their charge was to connect emergent themes in the poetry to social scientific concepts, problems and, perhaps most importantly, opportunities and possibilities. In this way, the project might be considered post-qualitative insofar as ‘the ethical charge of our work as inquirers is surely to question our attachments that keep us from thinking and living differently’ (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 635).

**Why Poems?**

I wanted to offer the field a set of evocative, concise, beautifully-written case studies of experience. The norms of academic writing, while changing, still privilege detachment and analysis over emotive expression. Working inside these largely unspoken rules of academic social science discourse, it is difficult to convincingly embody felt experience. Even with developments like the use of ‘I’ and ‘we,’ academics still avoid emotionally charged language and strive for dispassionate representations of findings.

Literature – with its strong narrative structures, word-craft, emotive expression and use of metaphor, irony and humor – is an established way of representing certain human truths – particularly truths of the heart. Of the various literary forms, poetry’s economy of language distils experience to its essence. This book introduces poems into the higher education discourse, giving voice to aspects of the experiences of higher education that have been under-studied using traditional methods and writing conventions.

As Ruth Padel explains:

One of poetry’s jobs is to transform real life imaginatively so we understand our lives new-paintedly, more fully. To make familiar things look strange so you see them new. It does this through the ear, musically, and through the mind – both intellect and feeling – in relation to the world outside. (2002, p. 18)

Good poetry captures the imagination, connects author and reader and creates a lived, emotional experience in the reader. Padel invokes the famous English poet, Philip Larkin, to elucidate the emotional dimensions of poetry:

A poem can express deep, significant feeling and thought more concentratedly and lastingly than anything else. Poems move you – that’s what they are for. Larkin also said poetry begins with emotion in the poet, ends with the same
emotion in the reader, and the poem is the instrument that puts it there.’ (Padel, 2002, p. 18)

In short, poetry is a form uniquely suited to giving us insight into how learning, teaching, development and transformation feel in higher education. It is a form that lets us enter into the world of humans living holistic experiences and prompts us to rethink our own experiences.

The Process

I have solicited poems from a wide range of networks, using international classified ads for poets and writers and sending messages through listservs to local poetry communities and creative writing teachers. Through this wide and varied circulation, I hoped to capture a wide variation of experiences and high quality submissions. I received several hundred poems from more than 200 authors from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and South Africa between December 2013 and April 2014.

I selected poems based on the criteria below:

• Typical poetic criteria such as ability to engage the reader (does the reader feel, hear, touch, taste, see what the poet is conveying?), aesthetic and rhythmic qualities (e.g. does it sound good to the ear?) and imaginative use of language (e.g. vivid imagery, avoidance of clichés).

• Credibility. Is it believable? Does it seem to capture an important truth? Preferably, poems will be based on lived experience – the poet’s or that of someone they know, thus autobiographically or biographically inspired.

• Contribution to the theme. Does it illuminate the felt experience of higher education? Does it say something new? Do we learn something about higher education from it? While some poems might focus on classroom experiences of teaching or learning or interactions between teachers and students, other poems may highlight interactions with or responses to texts, ideas and disciplinary norms; changing perceptions of truth, knowledge and beauty that often happen as a consequence of higher learning; what it is like to live in a new environment; changes in relationships with home communities and values; and challenges to identity and intimacy.

• Accessibility and clarity (without descending to didactics). Can a reader understand what is going on? Accessibility is not always a criterion applied to contemporary poetry. For the purposes of this project, though, it is vital that readers who are not expert in reading and interpreting poetry can make meaning of the contributions.

AIMS AND USES

The primary aim of this book is to prompt reflection, dialogue and increased attention to the whole person in higher education, particularly the emotions associated with
learning, teaching and growing in higher education. To this end, it draws on poetry from a wide range of contributors to illustrate and illuminate the meaning of holistic education. As compact case studies, I hope the poems will be used as teaching cases and discussion starters among teachers and, perhaps, students in higher education. As Boler (1999; 2004) argues, most literature is silent on emotions. I hope these poems will break that silence and encourage others to begin to talk about this overlooked aspect of learning and teaching.

You may want to read the book from cover-to-cover, enabling you to appreciate first a range of ways of looking at the role of emotion in higher education (chapter 2), and then how emotional experiences unfold over the student’s lifecycle. You might, however, prefer to dip in and out of particular chapters that interest you. Each chapter is self-contained, allowing you to explore a particular aspect of teaching and learning in higher education through a variety of cases that highlight different angles and perspectives on the chapter’s theme. The commentary offers a research-informed perspective on the chapter’s themes, although you may wish to tell your own story of the experiences represented in the chapter. As you read a chapter, consider:

- How do you respond emotionally to the poems in this chapter?
- Are there some that particularly strike you? Why?
- Are they familiar? Have you experienced similar situations or issues? How did you resolve them? How else might you have resolved them?
- What themes emerge across poems?
- Are there tensions or contradictions between the poems?
- What do those themes or tensions tell us about the emotional challenges of teaching or learning?
- Do the poems problematize or call attention to some aspect of practice that is a common challenge in your field?
- Is there wisdom within the poems themselves that suggest solutions or good practice in education?

You may also want to test these poems against your understanding of the educational literature (and the various stances outlined in chapter 2):

- What theories of student development, learning or teaching in higher education or of emotion are illustrated by these poems? How?
- Are there any poems (case examples) that contradict, extend or add to existing theory or empirical literature? How? Why might that be?

Beyond private readings, I hope the poems will be used as case examples for discussion among colleagues. In this way, they may be used for faculty or educational development workshops, departmental retreats, or left on the table in a faculty lounge or common room. Some may serve as inspiring stories to include in talks at campus teaching and learning events. Appendix 1 offers some discussion prompts and suggestions for structuring case discussions, which may be helpful for discussion leaders.
If you are facilitating a discussion group, you may want to assemble your own selections from the collection – pulling examples from different chapters and juxtaposing them to stimulate discussion. For instance, you might seek out poems that focus on liberal education, ethics, medical education, inductions, rituals, living arrangements, teacher burnout, campus architecture or some other dimension of student or teacher experience. Because poems are open to multiple interpretations (and multiple readings), they are influenced by the context you place them in. Grouping poems in different ways from across the book will highlight different issues.

THE READER’S ROLE

Poetry is a collaboration between writer and reader. I offer the poems directly to you as the reader. Although I provide an introduction to each chapter and have categorized the cases in ways that fit with my reading of the poems and the higher education literature, you may read them differently and take away different interpretations. You’ll hear from expert commentators, but I hope you’ll draw your own conclusions and find your own applications and uses for the contents. You may find it helpful to read the poems aloud – you will hear and feel things you may miss reading silently. Reading aloud allows you to feel the rhythm of the language, hear the internal rhymes, tune in to the author’s tone (e.g. irony, humor, frustration), and involve your body in the experience conveyed in the poem. Don’t be afraid to re-read a poem; poems are often designed to unfold in layers of meaning over multiple readings. If you find yourself reading a poem two or three times, it is often a sign of success, not failure, on the part of both the reader and the poet. And finally, I hope you will share these with colleagues and begin a conversation about emotions in learning and teaching in higher education.

While I have sought accessibility and attempted to group poems thematically, the very form defies such simple linear classifications. The ambiguity of poetry and its potential for multiple meanings is one of its strengths. Revel in it. Run with it. Enjoy it.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER 1


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CHAPTER 2

SEVEN STANCES ON EMOTION IN EDUCATION

This chapter is intended to give you tools with which to label your assumptions and those of the speakers of the poems. It also makes various assumptions explicit, enabling us to frame (and re-frame) the situations presented in the case studies, opening up different possibilities for practice and policy. In this way, it offers a deeper, theoretical grounding for those who want a more scholarly foundation to their reading and discussions.

There has been a rapid increase in research attention to emotional experiences in higher education in the past 10 years. However, much of this research is under-theorized. Many research studies describe emotions, but they don’t necessarily seek to explain how these emotions arise, the relationship between the emotions and other aspects of the learning environment or the impact or effects of those emotions on learning. Existing theories (and their related literatures) are scattered across various disciplines. There are quite different foci of these theories and quite different assumptions about the role and importance of emotion in the teaching and learning experience.

In this chapter, I summarize seven different conceptual stances toward the role of emotion in learning and teaching in higher education. Arising from a wide-ranging review of the literature, these seven illustrative stances each offer different assumptions and educational implications. I summarize each with a sentence that roughly encapsulates the core belief about the role of emotion in education that unifies a group of theories (what I am calling a ‘stance’). The summary sentence is followed by an explanation, references to key literature, guidance about where more information can be found in this book and how this stance might be used by teachers. Each section concludes with reflection questions to help you apply theory to your own practice.

SEVEN STANCES

Stance 1: Emotions Are the Result of Appraisals Related to Our Goals

This stance makes two key assumptions. First, human action is seen as goal-directed. Linnenbrink (2006) explains that goals underpin our thinking, action and emotions and, therefore, are central to linking cognition, motivation and emotion in educational psychology. Second, humans are constantly interpreting and making judgments related to those goals, and those appraisals affect how we feel. Thus, emotions arise from judgments about how successful we are in achieving our goals,
how important those goals are, how much we feel in control and how able we feel to handle problems that might arise (e.g. Pekrun, Frenzel, Goetz, & Perry, 2007).

There are a number of different ways we might appraise our progress toward our goals. We may believe that we can control the outcome or feel that we are not in control of the outcome of a situation. These assessments affect how we feel as we approach a situation, while we are in it, and also how we feel in looking back on an event. If we achieve an important goal, and we think it is because we worked hard (i.e. we were in control), we will feel pride. If we are successful, but think it was beyond our control, we may feel relief or gratitude. If we failed and think it is someone else’s fault, we will be angry. Anxiety is triggered when people feel that they are not able to control whether important goals are achieved. Anxiety is a common feeling in higher education (for both students and teachers). Although a little anxiety can be motivating, excessive anxiety is detrimental to academic performance (Pekrun et al., 2007).

These theories emphasize achievement goals (such as getting good grades), though other researchers (Strayhorn, 2012; Weiner, 2007) have highlighted social goals such as a sense of belonging.

Reinhard Pekrun explicates the control-value theory of emotions in chapter 10 and how it applies to the poems in that chapter. Terrell Strayhorn discusses the importance of a sense of belonging to university students in chapter 3.

Reflection Questions

a. What goals are our students striving toward? How important are those goals to them? Do their goals match with our objectives for students?
b. How are we helping students toward reaching their goals?
c. How are we helping students to feel in control of their own learning and achievement of their goals? (And where are we inducing unhelpful anxiety)?
d. What are the pitfalls or limits of this stance?

Stance 2: Adults Should Be Able to Regulate and Manage Their Own Emotions

In this stance, adults are seen as able to actively regulate their own emotions (Gross, 2001; Gross & John, 2003; Gross, Richards, & John, 2006). Like the first stance, this one also focuses on how cognitive interpretations of a situation mediate between the stimulus and the feeling evoked. However, this model highlights several steps in the process where a person might actively intervene to change how they feel. Thus the emphasis is on how a person might exercise greater control over their emotions (which may include changing their appraisal of the importance of a goal, or any of a variety of other changes in perspective on the situation).

Emotional regulation can be seen as one part of a broader line of research on self-regulated learning (e.g. Op ’T Eynde, De Corte, & Verschaffel, 2007; Bakracevic, Vukman, & Licardo, 2010). Self-regulated learning emphasizes the processes that
learners use in planning their learning strategies, monitoring their learning and reflecting on it afterwards. Emotional management is one aspect of this process of regulating learning.

According to Gross’ (Gross, 2001; Gross & John, 2003; Gross, Richards, & John, 2006) model of adult emotional regulation, adults regulate their emotions at five points in the emotion generation process. Four of these points are prior to the emotional response itself, while the last (suppression) occurs as a way of modulating the physiological, emotional response once it is underway. The first four points include: (a) selecting the situation (avoiding negative situations or deliberately choosing happier situations); (b) modifying the situation once you are in it; (c) focusing attention on particular aspects; and (d) reappraisal, in which you take a different perspective on a situation or event and attach different meanings to it that have a different emotional consequence.

Thus adults consciously (and unconsciously) think and act to manipulate situations, the focus of their attention and the meaning they attach to events. Adults also modulate their emotion responses once they happen. Existing research focuses on contrasting reappraisal and suppression processes, demonstrating that, generally, reappraisal is a healthier process that is associated with better social and emotional results (Gross & John, 2003).

Interestingly, teacher’s reappraisal (rather than suppression) has been shown to be associated with learning-oriented teaching methods in higher education (Kordts-Freudinger, 2014). Student-centered teaching requires that teachers be able to regulate their own emotions well. Thus, Gross’ model may help us, as teachers, reflect on how we manage our own teaching-related emotions. We can analyze a specific situation to see what processes teachers are using to cope with various emotions, whether those are fear or boredom or excitement. We can then look at emotionally fraught situations we face and consciously choose to select or avoid them, modify them, focus our attention differently or re-appraise their meaning.

Reflection Questions

a. Reflecting on your own emotional responses to teaching situations, which of these regulatory processes do you actively use? Can you think of specific examples where you’ve used one approach or another? How else might you have regulated the situation? (e.g. could you have set up the situation differently, modified the situation once you were in it, focused your attention differently, or re-appraised the meaning of a comment or action)?

b. To what extent are your students aware of and practicing these processes to manage their own behaviors related to the classroom? Is this helpful or harmful? (e.g. are they suppressing when they could benefit from re-appraising? Avoiding a situation when they shouldn’t?).

c. What are the pitfalls (social, moral or educational) of expecting adults to regulate their own emotions (regardless of the situation)?
Stance 3: Emotional Intelligence Is a Set of Personal Success Skills That Can (and Should) Be Developed

This stance contains two key assumptions. First, as with the first two stances, it assumes that emotions are individual and personal. Second, it assumes that emotional regulation is possible and desirable. This stance, though, assumes that emotional intelligence is an ability, possessed (and, possibly, developed) like other kinds of intelligences. In this case, emotional intelligence refers to ‘a person’s ability to identify and process emotions’ (Allen, MacCann, Matthews, & Roberts, 2014, p. 163).

Like Stance 2, this theory also contains the idea that it is desirable (and important) to be able to manage one’s emotions. Rather than focusing on the process of regulation, though, the emphasis is more on the ability itself. Goleman (1996) first popularized the idea of emotional intelligence as (a) a set of desirable personal skills related to knowing oneself, managing oneself, motivating oneself and; (b) as social skills related to understanding others and their feelings and managing responses to others’ emotions.

While there have been a number of different theories of emotional intelligence (Allen, MacCann, Matthews, & Roberts, 2014), Mayer and Salovy’s (1997) model sets out four major branches of emotional intelligence: (a) emotion perception involves being able to perceive others’ emotions through, for example, facial expression, tone of voice and body language; (b) emotion facilitation involves using emotional information to help support one’s performance; (c) understanding emotions involves awareness of emotional terminology and how emotions work, change, blend together and interact with situations; (d) managing emotions deals with regulating one’s own emotions and effectively managing the emotions of others. The elements are step-wise in that they depend upon the previous branches. We cannot manage emotions without understanding them. We cannot use a piece of emotional information without perceiving it in the first place (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008).

Goleman (1996) argued that emotional intelligence can be more important to success in life than traditional concepts of intelligence, and that it can be taught. A meta-analysis shows that school children who participate in social emotional learning programs demonstrated significantly better social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior and academic performance than students in control groups (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

In this view, emotional intelligence is seen as a desirable outcome of higher education, something that can (and should?) be developed through educational interventions. In caring professions such as medicine, nursing, social work and teacher education, educators want students to be empathic in working with patients, clients and children in emotionally charged situations, without experiencing burnout. Various pedagogies are suggested for helping students manage and learn from their emotional experiences, including telling stories (Ahern, Doyle, Marquis,
Lesk, & Skrobik, 2012), mindfulness (Napoli & Bonifas, 2011), and reflective practice (Service, 2012).

In music, educators want students to tap their emotional responses as a key to making a musical performance more expressive (Wiggins, 2013). Although this is a quite different context than the caring professions, emotion still plays a functional role in the success of students as future professionals. Thus, in these various examples, emotional awareness and management are seen as instrumental; they are success skills that students need to develop.

Reflection Questions

a. What emotional abilities do you assume your students already have? Is this a fair assumption? What happens when they don’t demonstrate these abilities?
b. Are emotional abilities (emotional intelligence) something that universities should be developing in students?
c. What emotional abilities do you want your students to develop?
d. How does your teaching and curriculum support the development of emotional intelligence? Which branch of emotional intelligence are you enabling students to practice (perception, facilitation, understanding, managing)?
e. What are the pitfalls or limits of locating emotional intelligence as individual, personal success skills?

Stance 4: Some Emotions Are Remnants of Past, Unresolved Conflicts

This stance assumes that some emotions are triggered by memories or associations with past events, rather than offering a real response to a current situation. This stance emphasizes the relational dimension of emotions – how an emotion is triggered within a particular kind of relationship. This stance also emphasizes the personal histories that lead to particular interpretations and, thus, emotional responses within key relationships.

Slater and her colleagues (Slater, Veach, & Li, 2013) draw on theories that have been used in helping relationships, arguing along with Robertson (1996; 1999; 2000) that when teaching is conceived of as ‘facilitating learning’ it can also be seen as an educational helping relationship. The helping relationship is assumed to be comprised of three elements: a working alliance, the real relationship and the unreal or transference relationship (Gelso & Carter, 1985). The transference relationship involves participants projecting feelings, behaviors and perceptions onto each other that are carry-overs from previous relationships with significant others. In this way, the behaviors and emotions may not match the actual, current situation. When the person being helped projects such emotions, it is called transference. When the helper projects such emotions, it is called countertransference. Thus, students may experience transference and teachers may experience counter-transference.

In their study of expert teachers' experiences of counter-transference, Slater et al. (2013) defined counter-transference as ‘a universal phenomenon that occurs
in all human relationships. Counter-transference is a type of emotional reaction we experience in our interactions with others. It has been defined as ‘those reactions to others that stem from our own areas of personal conflict’ (p. 7). Yeh and Hayes (2011) argued that if people understand these emotional dynamics, they can reflect on these reactions to promote empathy and understanding.

Thus, this theory focuses on the two-way relationship between a student and a teacher. It also brings in the personal histories of the individuals in this relationship insofar as students and teachers may react to situations on the basis of personal conflicts that they bring from past experiences and project into current situations. This theory, then, reminds us that individuals have a past that colors interpretations of the present. It also suggests that we are not controlled by that past, but, through self-reflection and conversation with others, we can manage and learn from episodes in which transference or counter-transference are triggered (Yeh & Hayes, 2011).

This stance prompts us, as teachers, to question whether our own emotions are a response to the current situation, or whether we are having our ‘buttons pushed’ – whether the emotions we are experiencing are remnants of some unresolved situation with significant others, rather than a real response to the current situation. Similarly, we can remain alert to when students may also be projecting unresolved feelings from parental relationships into their relationship with us as a teacher. These situations may be more likely to arise in one-to-one interactions, such as consultations outside of class regarding pastoral care matters or in individual advising or supervision of projects. Celia Hunt explores these issues in chapter 5.

Reflection Questions

a. What experiences of transference you have had as a learner?

b. What experiences of countertransference you have had as a teacher? What impact did this have on the student(s)?

c. What experiences of a student’s transference to you as a teacher have you had? How did this affect you? The relationship?

d. How have you handled these past, unresolved conflicts?

e. How else might you handle these past, unresolved conflicts in your current teaching relationships?

f. What pitfalls are there in analyzing situations through this lens?

Stance 5: Students’ (and Teachers’) Emotions Can (and Should) Be Interrogated and Critiqued as Socio-Cultural Phenomenon

The previous four stances are distinctly psychological insofar as they situate emotions and responsibility for managing them in the individual person, isolated from his or her social and cultural context. A sociological perspective, though, views emotions as socio-cultural phenomena that are historically constructed and reproduced by schools, universities and other social institutions. When teachers (or students) must behave in particular ways to be socially acceptable (such as avoiding
expressions of anger, even when they might naturally feel angry (Liljestrom, Roulston, & Demarrais, 2007), they are said to be performing emotional labor. Teaching involves emotional labor (and being a student also often involves emotional labor) (Hargreaves, 1998).

Various sociologists have discussed the ways that organizations attempt to control and, therefore, benefit from the emotional labor of their members. Each organization has a set of implicit emotional rules. For example, teachers may be reluctant to disclose their own personal stories and histories. In other settings, such disclosure may be considered appropriate and useful. Whether it is acceptable for teachers to disclose personal details of their life history is one example of an emotional rule. Whether it is acceptable to cry in a class or during office hours or whether to resist unrealistic demands (from a supervisor or institutional policy) all constitute part of the emotional rules of the particular organization within which we work. These emotional rules have been described as ‘affective structures’ (Clegg, 2013) or ‘affective practices,’ a term that acknowledges individual agency within emotional rules (Wetherell, 2013). Affective practices may vary by country, institution and department, but are worth examining and critiquing. In this way, we see that emotional regulation is happening within a larger context that shapes how we appraise or interpret situations, express emotion – and, even, how we feel.

These sociological and cultural ideas have been particularly valuable in examining social tensions and cultural conflicts. Ahmed (2004), for instance, has highlighted the cultural politics of emotions, illustrating how sub-populations can perpetuate in-groups and out-groups through hatred, fear and distrust, creating powerful barriers to equality and peaceful relations (Ahmed, 2004). Zembylas (2002; 2007; 2012) has built on these ideas, urging relational rather than personal analyses of emotions. Adopting ‘pedagogies of discomfort’ (Boler, 2004) in which students become aware of, question and re-story their own feelings may be key to addressing racism, sexism and the associated cultural politics of emotion (Ahmed, 2004). In this stance, emotions and associated emotional rules are seen as social constructs that are manipulated by those in power and demand critical analysis and awareness-raising about the feelings and the processes that generate them.

The implications of this stance, then, are that we can view students’ emotions (and our own) as an educational object – i.e. something that can be interrogated and critiqued to better understand a variety of different situations. Michalinos Zembylas explores these issues in chapter 6. That chapter situates our teaching in broader socio-cultural contexts and considers the emotional implications of those broader contexts for teaching and learning.

Reflection Questions

a. What are the emotional rules (affective structures) in your own teaching context? Do they vary from one class to another?

b. How do you respond to those emotional rules – do you obey willingly, obey grudgingly or actively resist?
c. What emotional rules for students do you set up and enforce (consciously or unconsciously) in your own teaching?

d. How do these emotional rules serve you and your students? How do they unhelpfully constrain you?

e. How might you interrogate (and question) emotions, their role and their sources (i.e. the emotional rules) in your field? i.e. how might these become part of a curriculum?

f. What are the pitfalls or limitations of analyzing emotional episodes from this perspective?

**Stance 6: Emotional Disorientation Can Catalyze Changes in Perspectives or Identity. It Is a Natural and Necessary Part of the Learning Process**

The basic assumption of this stance is that education is a process of changing one’s perspectives, sense of self or identity. While education can be seen in other ways – as acquiring information; storing information that can be reproduced; acquiring facts, skills and methods that can be retained and used as necessary; or making sense or abstracting meaning from complex information or situations (Säljö, 1979), this stance is rooted in the assumption that education is a process of changing as a person. Some theories of adult development acknowledge the emotional challenges associated with transforming one’s world views, an experience that often accompanies the criticality cultivated in higher education, particularly in emancipatory or radical education.

Taylor and Jarecke (2009) extend Mezirow’s (1981) original transformative learning theory (which has been critiqued for being too rational) to show how emotional disorientation serves as a catalyst for transformative learning. Disorienting experiences destabilize students enough for them to re-analyze a situation, a necessary step in changing their frames of reference. This theory is invoked in numerous examples of students’ emotional experiences in higher education (e.g. case studies in Mezirow & Taylor, 2009; Wright & Hodge, 2012), elaborated by other writers (e.g. Dirkx, 2008) and updated to take a more holistic view of changes in identity (Illerus, 2014) and self (Tennant, 2012).

Theories of student development in higher education (e.g. Perry, 1968; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Baxter Magolda, 1992) also acknowledge the emotions that can accompany developmental changes. Studies conducted by these authors have found that students in American universities go through predictable stages of understanding about the nature of knowledge itself. Those immediately out of school, for instance, may see knowledge as ‘black and white’ or absolute, with right and wrong answers held and known by authorities. Over time, they come to see knowledge as uncertain (i.e. contested and contestable) and that authorities disagree, a stage often referred to as relativism. This step seeds independent knowing, in which students see that their opinion counts. In the independent knowing phase, students focus on developing their own perspectives. With further study, they understand that all perspectives are not equal; some knowledge claims are better than others in a
particular context. At this stage, it isn’t just independence in thinking that is valued, but the quality of the evidence and arguments. Knowledge must be integrated and applied in context (Baxter Magolda, 1992).

While Perry (1968), Belenky and her colleagues (1986) and Marcia Baxter Magolda (1992) focus on epistemological development – i.e. changes in how students view knowledge, Parks’ (2000) work focuses on spiritual development. She emphasizes how young adults (both traditional-aged students in higher education and young graduates) must, in the process of questioning and reinterpreting their worlds, reconstruct a sense of meaning. She emphasizes the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the struggle to remake meaning and faith (used in the broadest terms), having passed through an appreciation of relativism.

Parks (2000), writing of students experiencing a sense of ‘shipwreck’ when a worldview has been shattered, highlights the deep sense of threat, loss and hopelessness that can occur. University presents many opportunities for students to challenge received values (those from schools, churches, families) with alternative values. Thus, emotional turmoil is seen as a consequence of shattered world-views. As in Taylor and Jarecke’s (2009) model, this emotional disorientation may lead to establishing new perspectives and commitments.

In chapter 4 (Remaking Self-in-World) we see examples of students experiencing these kinds of transformation. Marcia Baxter Magolda provides commentary, drawing on literature on student development in higher education and highlighting the emotional dimensions of these transformations. In chapter 7, David Keplinger also explores education as a process of meaning-making in a world that often defies sense.

Reflection Questions

a. Do you recognize these stages in your students’ development? Are there particular activities or topics that tend to trigger changes in their view of the nature of knowledge, themselves, the world or your field? What emotions are prompted?
b. Do you use particular instructional strategies as emotional catalysts for students to re-think fundamental assumptions? (e.g. study abroad, service learning, placements, research experiences)?
c. How do you support students through these emotionally disruptive, transformative moments?
d. How do you help students regain stability (whether this is a sense of purpose, commitment or hope)?
e. What are the pitfalls or limits of applying this lens to your instruction?

Stance 7: Emotionalizing Education Is an Unwelcome Spread of Therapeutic Culture

Some authors criticize what they characterize as therapeutic approaches to education (Ecclestone, 2004; Furedi, 2004). Furedi (2004) perceives a rise in a ‘therapeutic’
ethos in Anglo-American society, causing normal difficult life events (e.g. grieving, separation from loved ones, anxiety) to be reframed in terms of emotional deficit. Therapeutic culture is presented as pervading many aspects of American and British culture, including education, justice, politics and work. In this view, education has become overly concerned with reducing stress, teaching people to cope with life, and thereby promoting a diminished self – one portrayed as weak, feeble and in need of constant counselling. These authors are particularly critical of psychological theories, such as stances 2, 3 and 4.

Reflection Questions

a. Why are many fields now acknowledging the affective? How is this affecting your own field?
b. How is education different from therapy (even when acknowledging the emotional dimensions of learning and teaching)?
c. How can we teach in emotionally sound ways without turning it into therapy?

CONCLUSION

This brief overview of seven key conceptual stances has suggested that emotion in higher education is conceived of in quite different ways, with significant and diverse implications for educational policy and practice. Psychological studies focus on emotions as individual phenomena arising from a person’s interpretations of situations. Emotions also can be seen and analysed as a set of individually possessed success skills that schools and universities might develop in their students by teaching self-awareness and regulatory strategies. Alternatively, emotional discomfort can be valuable insofar as it triggers or is the result of challenging world-views. In this way, it lies at the heart of adult development and transformation.

We have also seen how emotions are social and cultural phenomenon that are often historically constructed and reproduced by schools and other social institutions. Hatred, fear and distrust are prime examples of how in-groups and out-groups are created and perpetuated, creating powerful barriers to equality, peace, and constructive educational dialogue. Students might usefully open up their own feelings to questioning and alternative storying by being aware of the cultural politics of emotion and their own implication in existing cultural/emotional hegemonies (such as racism and sexism). Emotions, then, can become the object of curricular attention and, through that critical attention, sites of social resistance.

I present these different stances in order to help you reflect on your own assumptions about how emotions operate for you, your students and in your classrooms. As you look at the case studies in this book, you can see whether they illustrate one or more of these stances. What happens when we apply a different stance to the same scenario? Does it open up different interpretations and different courses of action? In the discussion questions provided in Appendix 1, I invite
readers to apply these different stances to the poems and to case examples from their own teaching experience.

REFERENCES


CHAPTER 2


SEVEN STANCES ON EMOTION IN EDUCATION


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