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**MANAGEMENT OF EMOTIONS IN STUDENTS' TEACHING
PRACTICE PLACEMENTS**

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Abstract

The paper presents practical examples of developing the emotional intelligence of teacher-to-be students in seminars of self-knowledge and personal development focused on managing emotions on a personal level by developing the capacity of emotional self-control, the intelligence to manage positive and negative emotions, but also at the interpersonal level, by adjustment of the emotional exchanges between the main actors involved in teaching practice placements. The purpose of the research was to investigate to what extent students' emotions can be managed effectively through learned emotional control strategies and to what extent these emotions predict changes in professional behaviours learned and experienced in the teaching practice placements of teacher-to-be students. Students were taught how to mobilize their psychoneurological energy in an effective management of emotions, how to activate and restructure themselves from the point of view of energy fast enough to successfully cope with the exercise of teaching and overcoming obstacles to the effective control of emotions triggered by simulating the actual teaching situation. Students talked about their emotions at the start and throughout the teaching practice, about emotional blockages and obstacles. The conclusions of this paper highlight the praxiologic aspects of developing the emotional self-control capacity of teacher-to-be students, their ability to self-adjust emotions, to control and adjust emotional responses to stimuli, the tendency to consciously influence the course of the emotions experienced in teaching and training practice placements, as well as the way in which these are displayed, expressed, externalized.

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1. Introduction

According to analytical psychology, emotions are sources of knowledge and self-knowledge. We have emotional feelings in relation to others and, this way, we become increasingly aware of them, we learn to communicate emotionally with others, and, above all, to be in touch with our own emotions. During the practical training for the teaching profession, students are faced with effective teaching and live with intensity the emotions of the first lessons taught at the chair, as well as the interaction with the classroom. Therefore, emotional self-control techniques can help students manage their emotions effectively in the practical exercise of initial training for the teaching profession. In the context of this research there were highlighted those emotionally-charged moments of teaching practice experienced by students and as well as those strategies of emotional regulation that have proven effective in the management of emotions in teaching practice.

2. Problem Statement

The specialized literature on emotions research in teaching has a wide variety of concepts associated to the specific feelings, emotional states and emotions experienced by teachers in their didactic relation to students (Hargreaves, 1998; Sutton, 2004; Oplatka 2007). From the perspective of the rational-emotive and behavioural therapy (Ellis & Whiteley, 1979), emotions are determined by cognitions and by the interpretation that we give to the events that are triggering these cognitions. The intensity of an emotional event improves our subjective sense of enthusiasm and the accuracy of the memories of that event. Salovey and Mayer (1990) believe that emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive emotions as accurately as possible and to express them, to generate feelings when they facilitate thought, as well as the ability to regulate them for emotional and intellectual development. Izard (2007) proposed the concept of “cognitive development” to explain the process which combines a basic emotion with other mental states that are not emotions, for example with thoughts, resulting in a complex emotion. Gross (2002) distinguishes between the adaptive functions of emotion, respectively between the intraindividual regulatory functions that adjust the cognitive style according to the situational requirements, facilitate decision making, prepare the individual for fast motor responses and promote learning, and interindividual regulatory functions (social) that provide information on behavioural intentions, give an indication of the good or bad character of the stimuli, allow compliance with the complex social behavioural scenarios. Thompson’s model (1991) of the cognitive process of emotional regulation differentiates between the following regulatory strategies on emotions depending on the position in the development of an emotional episode: situation selection, situation, modification, implementation of attention, cognitive change and response modulation. He describes emotional regulation as the ability to control experience and expressions of emotion. In his view, there are two main categories of emotional regulation strategies: prevention (selected situations, modified situations, implementation of attention and cognitive changes) and response (emotional change, emotional expression and emotional physiological response).

3. Research Questions

The researcher focused the interview-based survey and collected the survey data based on the following questions:

- “What emotions did you have in the act of teaching during the teaching practice?
- What made you feel that emotion/those emotions?
- How did you react when you were filled with emotions during the teaching practice?
- How did you control the emotions/feelings experienced?
- How do you know to use the emotions experienced in the future?”

4. Purpose of the Study

This research aims to identify how the students feel during their teaching practice, what strategies they use to regulate their own emotions in the act of teaching, to what extent these emotions predict changes in professional behaviours learned and experienced in teaching practice placements and how these emotional feelings are perceived by other actors involved in the teaching practice. The research objectives aimed at developing the students’ ability to recognize and interpret their own emotions and those of the other parties involved in teaching practice, as well as the ability to adequately manage emotionally-charged situations within teaching practice placements in order to streamline the process of initial formation for the teaching career and increase teaching performance in the classroom. The research hypothesis was concentrated on the idea that the more students apply in teaching practice placements the emotional control strategies they learnt, the better can their emotions be managed and the more effectively they manage their teaching act.

5. Research Methods

The research methodology is qualitative. The data were collected based on both qualitative interviews conducted with students (around 20 and 21 years old) from the 2nd year of study that participated in the study (10), from the specialization Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-school Education (Faculty of Education Sciences, Social Sciences and Psychology, University of Pitesti), as well as based on systematic observations of behavior of the students that took part in the study during practical training and during the seminar activities (at the subject Self-knowledge and Personal Development) focused on emotional training and on training/developing the students’ emotional skills, on developing the emotional self-control skill, on developing the intelligence to manage positive and negative emotions, but also at the interpersonal level, of regulating the emotional exchanges between the key stakeholders involved in teaching placements (students, mentors, tutors, pupils). The research period was March to June 2018. The interview-based investigation allowed the identification, expression, understanding, regulation and use of emotions for personal development and performance in teaching. The encoding of the data obtained through interviews was performed in accordance with the method of analysis per interview that started from the premise of the singularity of each individual option and allowed the capitalization of the uniqueness of the viewpoints expressed. The systematic observation of the students’ behaviour during the teaching practice consisted in the intentional monitoring and accurate, systematic recording based on observation grids for the different behaviours of the student practitioner in the situational context of behaviour manifestation. Systematic observation offers the advantage of describing in detail certain behaviours of the research subjects, allowing the investigation of their behaviour in their natural environment. The limits of observation arise mainly from the descriptive nature of the data obtained.

6. Findings

Both during the socio-emotional training and during teaching practice the students surveyed applied differentiated emotional regulation strategies. Students talked about their emotions at the onset, but also during the teaching practice, about the blockages and emotional obstacles, about emotional cues, which trigger a series of tendencies of coordinated responses involving experiential, behavioural and physiological systems. For illustration purpose, we provide below some opinions of practitioner students expressed during the interview about their emotional reactions in the act of teaching during the teaching practice:

-“Ever since my preparing for the training placement I have experienced many emotions: fear and impatience, concern and anxiety at the same time. I did not know how students would react and that gave me no peace. The moment I was put in a position to effectively work with them, many of my thoughts and emotions disappeared and I tried to catch their attention and teach them everything I knew it would be useful to them. It was a very pleasant feeling, I had managed to overcome my fears, as well as my emotions ...” (P.M., interview)

-“After a period of classroom observations, the mentor asked me if I was ready to teach in a team and suddenly I blushed, I felt very nervous, I started to shake and to stutter. I virtually froze... I would have liked to teach, but I was so scared of my own reaction that I sought a refuge. It is a sure thing that I was not emotionally ready to teach.”(A.M, interview)

-“During the teaching practice I realized that being a teacher is not easy and you have to be fully involved and forget your emotions. I was shivering after I taught and I did not realize that until a student asked me if I was cold. I experienced a contradictory feeling of fear and excitement at the same time. I was afraid of I forgetting anything that I had prepared for teaching and I was deeply moved when I saw so many watchful eyes on me. I felt great joy when students asked me if I would come back to teach them next time.”(S.L., interview)

-“I had many exercises prepared for language education activity, but the minute I saw myself in front of the students, I started sweating and to search for my words. The mentor immediately felt my emotions and came near me. He sustained my look and then led the lesson as if nothing had happened. I had understood the message from his look. I blushed and did not know how to react. I was very confused ... ”(L.O., interview)

-“I carefully observed the tone of voice, the mentor’s manner of communication with the students, how to work with each student, how to listen to them and be patient, how to use teaching materials for the activities. One question was permanently in my mind: Will I ever be able to teach so beautifully and naturally?”. (R.A.M., interview)

During the 4 seminars of self-development and personal development the researcher trained students in the emotional dimension of teaching and explained to them what emotional intelligence, emotional understanding, emotional labour, emotional stages, emotional regulation mean. Concomitantly, the seminar activities aimed at developing the main socio-emotional competences: experiencing (living) and expressing emotions by the students, understanding and recognition of their own emotions and emotional self-regulation in the course of teaching during teaching practice. Real prerequisites have been created to meet the needs of emotional self-development, rational-behavioural education and of optimization of affective skills and of the social behaviours needed to achieve desirable results in teaching practice placements.

As a dynamic variable, active emotions are difficult to quantify and measure given their measurement characteristics (reliability, validity). This study used as research tools the interview-based survey and systematic observation. The interview allowed the identification, expression and understanding of emotions in personal development, but also in teaching. The encoding of the data obtained through interviews was performed in accordance with the method of analysis per interview that started from the premise of the singularity of each individual option and allowed the capitalization of the uniqueness of the viewpoints expressed. The systematic observation of the behaviour of students in teaching practice and at the seminars of self-reflection and personal development consisted in intentional monitoring and accurate, systematic recording based on grids of observation of the different behaviours of students in situational contexts of expression and practice of professional behaviour. Systematic observation offers the advantage of describing in detail certain behaviours of the research subjects, allowing the investigation of their behaviour in their natural environment. The limits of observation arise mainly from the descriptive nature of the data obtained

7. Conclusion

The conclusions of this report highlight the praxiologic aspects of the development of the self-control emotional capacity of the teacher-to-be students, their ability to self-regulate emotions, to control and adjust emotional responses to stimuli, the tendency to consciously influence the course of emotions experienced during the stages of teaching and practical training and the manner in which they are displayed, expressed, externalised. Emotional regulation in teaching practice activities is the ability to control the experience of teaching and the expressions of emotions occurring in the practicing of professional behaviours. In the actual teaching placement there were applied response strategies that implied emotional change, emotional expression and emotional physiological response, and when training students in the seminar activities of self-development the stress was laid on strategies of prevention in which emotional situations were selected and then modified, to follow in fact cognitive change based on focused attention. We conclude by saying that in the teaching process emotional intelligence is very important because it allows the teacher to recognize emotions and manage them in the most appropriate way and, at the same time, to recognize the students' emotions and thus way to establish a positive and rewarding relationship with them. Moreover, emotional intelligence allows teachers to motivate themselves in order to achieve the goals they have set.

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