

# Development of Emotional Intelligence in Pre-Service Teachers' To Increase Professional Well-Being



**Sabina N Valente<sup>1,2\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Research Center in Education and Psychology, University of Évora, Portugal

<sup>2</sup>VALORIZA-Research Centre for Endogenous Resource Valorization, Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre, Portugal

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**\*Corresponding author:** Sabina N Valente (sabinav@uevora.pt), Research Center in Education and Psychology, Colégio Pedro da Fonseca, Universidade de Évora, Apartado 94, 7002-554 Évora, Portugal

## Abstract

Teaching is a demanding profession, thus is a need to acknowledge the complexities of this job and care for teachers' well-being. Well-being is fundamental to their professional success and also to the development of their students. Teachers increasingly respond to demanding classroom situations and many of these lead to emotional distress and have serious consequences for their health. In this sense, it is increasingly necessary to have tools to respond to emotional situations in the classroom and to know how to better manage emotions. So, the way teachers handle their emotions and those of their learners is central to the success of their well-being. Studies show that emotionally intelligent teachers stay emotionally healthy since emotional abilities protect the teachers' well-being. Focused on the emotional intelligence role in teachers' well-being, this opinion paper presents the importance of developing emotional skills in pre-service teachers' to increase professional well-being. Thus, new model training for pre-service teachers' is needed that includes the promotion of emotional skills through the benefits they present to their professional well-being.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence; Teachers' Training; Professional Well-Being

**Abbreviations:** EI: Emotional Intelligence

## Introduction

Few psychological constructs in recent decades have attracted the interest of psychologists, educators, trainers, and human resources technicians as the emotional intelligence (EI) concept [1]. The ability model defines EI as the capacity to perceive, assimilate, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others [2].

Considering that effective teaching concerns more than just pedagogical and content knowledge, and that is an intrinsically emotional exercise, given the centrality of the emotion, teachers need to be emotionally intelligent. Thus, emotional processes are evident in the classroom, where interpersonal relationships can create the development of a positive pedagogical relationship, as well as the emotional weariness of teachers and students [3]. Teachers increasingly respond to classroom emotional situations that lead to emotional distress and have serious consequences for their well-being. Therefore, EI is widely known to be crucial for

professional development in education [4]. Likewise, educational research shows that EI is a key personal resource for teachers due to its association with reduced teacher burnout [5]. Thus, having strong emotional skills helps teachers and keeps them emotionally healthy. This way, this opinion paper synthesized some research about EI and the teachers' well-being and points to the significance of a new model for teachers' training that includes emotional education.

## Theoretical Framework

Teaching is a demanding profession, thus is a need to acknowledge the complexities of this job and maintain teachers' emotional well-being [6]. The concept of well-being used in this paper is work-related and corresponds to the construct of occupational well-being. The conceptual construct defines teachers' occupational well-being as "teachers' responses to cognitive, emotional, health, and social conditions related to their

work and profession" [7]. It should be noted that international research has established that well-being, engagement and belonging are crucial factors for establishing and maintaining positive learning environments in schools [8]. In this context, it is urgent to know the variables that contribute to teacher well-being.

Currently, the teaching activity is strongly associated with unpleasant emotions, as well as negative experiences resulting from undisciplined actions leading to stress [9]. Therefore, unmanageable job demands and stressful working conditions can lead to low job satisfaction and well-being, low levels of commitment and burnout [10]. Moreover, modern education systems move in a context of growing teacher shortages, high turnover and low popularity of the profession. Thus, there are high levels of stress involved in the educational process and all the disruptive behaviors currently occurring in the classroom put teachers in hard emotional situations. A study with 16,000 Portuguese teachers indicates that almost half of them show worrying signs of "emotional exhaustion", caused by causes such as excessive bureaucracy and indiscipline among students [11]. Also, recent data from the report *Teachers in Europe: Careers, Development and Well-being* show that stress is common among European teachers, with Portuguese teachers showing the highest levels of stress compared to other teachers' of European countries [12]. It is also essential note that these findings belong to data collected before the covid-19 pandemic.

The EI, that is, the ability to perceive, understand and regulate one's own emotions and that of others [2], has been seen as an important component of the teaching activity, and several studies have shown that EI is one of the personality traits that affect the teachers' well-being [13-15]. In that regard, several studies show that teachers with higher emotional capacities report lower levels of stress and burnout [16,17]. Consequently, EI plays a central role in teachers' occupational health models [18].

The Côté [19] findings suggest that the ability to deal with own and others' emotions might play a key role in promoting well-being and positive emotions between teachers, which could influence a variety of individual and job outcomes among teachers [16]. Concerning teachers' well-being, some other studies show that EI is a major resource for teachers' due to its positive associations to the teacher-student relationship [20], the increased satisfaction for teaching [21], the students' satisfaction [22], and to the classroom conflict management [3].

A systematic review on EI and burnout in teachers shows promising results for the reduction of this psychosocial problem through training in emotional skills [5]. Also, the Schoeps et al. [23] study shows that teacher emotional skills training contribute to burnout prevention. However, and despite the existence of methods to promote and develop teachers' EI, education largely ignores them as far as their practical application in the pre-service teachers' development. In this regard, different studies show the

importance of integrating emotional components in the contents of training programs, especially in those of an educational nature, for the development of teachers' emotional skills [24,25].

Based on this, it can be said that a new model of training for pre-service teachers' is urgently necessary. With a demanding activity, teachers need to have tools that allow them to develop their emotional skills. Being a teacher is not just about knowing the syllabus, it is essential to have skills and emotional capacities. However, teacher education is not geared toward the development of emotional skills. Also, data from the World Economic Forum [26] indicate that capabilities such as EI, persuasion, negotiation, or coordination with others will have a greater impact than the scientific and technical capabilities in higher education training. However, pre-service teachers' professional developments still seem too far from the real professional context.

### Conclusion

Teachers increasingly respond to emotional situations in the classroom, situations that lead to emotional distress and have serious consequences for their well-being. In this sense, training pre-service teachers' in emotional skills are central to the success of their well-being. Yet, although teachers' well-being is the pillar on which the teaching and learning process is built, teachers' training has not adopted the emotional education construct as a central part of its assignment in most countries. In this sense, it is necessary to include the promotion of emotional skills in teacher training. Thus, a new model of pre-service teacher education is needed that includes emotional education, as necessary training for the well-being of future teachers.

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