



Teacher education is a deeply pedagogical process rooted in values, ethics, and the social purpose of schooling. Globally, it sits at the core of educational quality and fairness, as research in comparative and international education demonstrates: the training of teachers directly influences students' learning chances, social inclusion, and the democratic aims of schools. Teachers are not simply transmitters of curricula, but active professionals whose convictions, reflective skills, and ability to manage the complexities of classroom life give shape and substance to the educational experience itself.

The pedagogical dimension of teacher education frames teaching as a relational, context-aware, and ethically grounded profession rather than just a set of procedural skills. From a research perspective, this demands robust research methodologies that can critically examine the complex realities of schools and inform evidence-based policies. Equally important is the connection between theory and practice, which helps to bridge the persistent gap between universities and schools.

The contributions gathered in this volume reflect the richness and diversity of experiences showcased during the ATEE Spring Conference 2024, held at the University of Bergamo from May 29 to June 1, 2024. The volume presents 70 selected papers out of more than 300 presented by researchers representing over 40 countries.

This broad spectrum of studies highlights promising directions that can inspire renewed inquiry and concrete proposals aimed at improving contemporary educational systems.

FRANCESCO MAGNI is an Associate Professor of General and Social Pedagogy (PAED-01/A) at the Department of Human and Social Sciences, University of Bergamo, Italy. He is a member of the board and Deputy Director of CQIIA (Center for the Quality of Teaching, Didactic Innovation, and Learning). He is also a member of the ATEE - Association for Teacher Education in Europe.

NICOLE BIANQUIN is an Associate Professor of Didactics and Special Education (PAED-02/A) at the Department of Human and Social Sciences, University of the Aosta Valley, Aosta, Italy. She is a member of the ATEE - Association for Teacher Education in Europe.

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Teacher education research in Europe: trends, challenges, practices and perspectives

May 29th – June 1st, 2024
S. Agostino, Bergamo



Edited by Nicole Bianquin and Francesco Magni





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BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

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Rethinking Teacher Training in Emotional Education Through Sports

Sabrina Natali, *University of Turin*, sabrina.natali@unito.it

Abstract

The article illustrates the theoretical approach, and the example of a strategy aimed at integrating school and sports contexts, recognizing and assigning a central role to emotional education in teacher training curricula. In an era of digital and cultural transition, acquiring such awareness can indeed contribute to improving the management of classroom dynamics and to developing and supporting students' emotional skills. These skills, ranging from self-awareness to self-regulation, from motivation to social management, are essential for addressing the social and emotional complexities of life.

Keywords: teacher training; emotional education; sport; reflective educational practices.

1. Managing emotions in the era of transition

Emotional education today assumes an even more crucial role due to the ongoing transition from analogue to digital environments, which is radically redefining the way people live, processing emotions, and developing their emotional skills.

Contemporary society is experiencing a transformation of emotional experience that, becoming more diversified and pervasive compared to the past, is increasingly difficult to manage. This complexity leads to a perception of reality as even more accelerated, fragmented, and contingent than it already appears. Rosa (2013) analyzes this phenomenon in terms of "social acceleration," highlighting how rapid technological progress shortens the timeframes of emotional interactions, requiring increasingly quick adaptations compared to the recent past.

Social complexity and acceleration have, in fact, a profound impact on emotions and life, creating a paradox in which the increase in speed generates a sense of timelessness and detachment (Rosa, 2013).

The frantic and fragmented nature of modern life, driven by digitalization, has reduced the capacity for empathy and the ability to form deep emotional connections, giving rise to the phenomenon of "moral blindness" (Bauman, Donskis, 2013). This phenomenon emerges within accelerated life rhythms and constant social flows, which increase complexity and make emotional responses increasingly contingent and situational.

The transition from an "analogue dimension," characterized by prolonged timeframes, to a "digital dimension," marked by instant communication and constant connectivity, dominated by technological devices that enable rapid access to situations, has profoundly altered the way emotions are experienced and expressed. This shift highlights the need to identify new experiential categories to understand and manage emotions in today's context, bringing to light new needs and requiring the development of innovative pedagogical frameworks and approaches to explore and teach emotional experiences.

To bridge the gap, which often sees emotional skills relegated to the background compared to cognitive skills, it is necessary to rethink and expand the scope of teacher training, incorporating into curricula the tools best suited to navigate complex dynamics and contribute to shaping emotional awareness.

The educational intervention of teachers is crucial to help students navigate the complexities of modern emotional experiences (Ewing, Waugh, Smith, 2021), mediating them through extracurricular activities such as sports, which provide practical contexts for developing emotional awareness and resilience. Integrating sports into the contemporary educational framework thus represents a dynamic and engaging way to explore and understand emotions, making it an essential component of contemporary emotional education strategies (Jones, 2006).

2. The benefits of emotional education for teachers

Teachers with well-developed emotional skills are better able to manage classroom dynamics, understand and respond to students' emotional needs, and create a positive and supportive learning environment, thereby helping to reduce conflicts.

Emotional intelligence enables teachers to build empathetic and strong relationships with their students, which are essential for fostering engagement, motivation, and academic success. In fact, only when students feel understood and supported do they actively participate in their learning process, achieving better outcomes.

Teaching can be a highly stressful profession, with educators often exposed to emotional challenges such as burnout, frustration, and anxiety. Teachers with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to face these challenges, maintaining greater balance in their well-being and job satisfaction.

Emotional intelligence is also closely linked to professional growth and leadership. For this reason, teachers with strong emotional skills tend to engage in reflective practices and seek continuous

feedback to pursue ongoing professional improvement. Moreover, they are better prepared to take on leadership roles within schools, contributing to the creation of a positive school culture and climate.

3. The benefits of emotional education for students

Emotionally trained teachers directly influence their students' emotional education by teaching and fostering the same skills in them, promoting the creation of a school environment focused on emotional well-being.

Research shows that students with high emotional intelligence tend to achieve better academic results. Skills such as self-regulation and motivation enhance students' ability to focus, manage time effectively, and face challenges.

Emotional education helps students develop essential social skills, including communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution. These abilities are fundamental for building healthy relationships and participating in collaborative learning activities.

Emotional intelligence also contributes to maintaining mental health by providing students with the tools to manage stress and face difficulties while maintaining a positive outlook.

Integrating emotional education into school curricula and teacher training programs represents a key strategy for addressing the challenges of the digital era while ensuring the emotional well-being and academic success of future generations.

Consequently, teachers must rethink emotional education by incorporating extracurricular areas, particularly sports, which are recognized as an important part of the educational experience for discovering, understanding, and managing emotions. This complexity in education, therefore, requires a shift from linear models to more dynamic ones, interconnecting approaches and reflecting the diverse and intricate realities of learning environments (Hager & Beckett, 2019).

4. A multifactorial challenge

The transition from analogue to increasing digital models represents a multifactorial cultural challenge. At the anthropological level, it alters the ways emotions are experienced and expressed in different cultural contexts; at the sociological level, it introduces new forms of communication and interaction, transforming social relationships and the associated emotional experiences; at the psychological level, it negatively impacts emotional well-being, making new strategies for regulation and resilience necessary; and at the pedagogical level, it compels educators to identify and develop innovative methodologies to address these changes.

However, this transition and the multifactorial challenge it creates can also represent a significant opportunity and a source of personal and social enrichment. It promotes greater awareness of the ongoing changes and encourages attention to emerging needs, which must be addressed with care and renewed sensitivity.

5. Cultural and methodological perspectives of emotional education

Mastering emotional awareness is a shared challenge for teachers and sports educators, which can be addressed from two main perspectives: the cultural perspective, focused on the relevance of emotional education, and the methodological perspective, centered on the need to develop appropriate formative methodologies.

The cultural perspective involves recognizing the importance of emotional education as a fundamental element for the harmonious growth of individuals in contemporary society. Emotional awareness is essential not only for personal well-being but also for success in social and professional interactions. Consequently, the cultural perspective emphasizes the need to acknowledge and value emotional education as a crucial component of the educational curriculum.

The methodological perspective, on the other hand, focuses on the need to develop and implement suitable methodologies for emotional education. This perspective highlights the importance of updating the training of teachers and, simultaneously, that of sports educators, using specific, experiential, engaging, and adaptable methodologies and techniques, capable of ensuring effective teaching for the promotion of emotional intelligence.

In this context, a research group from the University of Turin has sought to integrate the fields of teaching and sports, building a dialogue between them with the aim of fostering emotional growth through innovative formative methodologies inspired by reflective educational practices.

Reflective practices, as discussed by Formenti and West (2016), can be instrumental in helping students process their emotional experiences and develop a deeper understanding of their feelings. By encouraging self-reflection and critical thinking, teachers can promote emotional growth and resilience.

6. The Stereo project: an opportunity to build a dialogue between school and sport

The dual challenge of mastering emotional awareness in educational contexts has been embraced by the Stereo Project (Sports Educator for New Society), designed and developed by a research team from the University of Turin.

This approach allows participants (selected on a voluntary basis from the sports and educational sectors within a specific geographical area) to put themselves to the test, in group settings, through educational situations shared between teachers and sports coaches, within school and sports contexts, with the aim of practicing and enhancing pedagogical skills. The training is structured around a pathway that employs a specific reflective-educational methodology called 3R-Play, based on the Pretext device. This device enables participants to engage in simulated educational situations to practice and strengthen their pedagogical competencies.

The initiative aims to establish a dialogue between school and sport, providing teachers and sports coaches/educators with practical tools to improve their mediation and teaching skills in emotional education. This is achieved through an approach based on humble inquiry, which fosters a culture of mutual respect and understanding (Schein & Schein, 2021).

This integrated approach fosters emotional awareness by promoting critical thinking through the problematization of educational scenarios introduced using a Pretext, a suspended situation visually represented in the form of a comic strip. It also strengthens the ability to analyze and respond to complex pedagogical challenges. Through this methodology, educators cultivate their own emotional awareness, which can in turn help develop in their students.

The results, still under analysis, will help outline the next steps planned for the research, allowing for reflection on potential future developments and directions for further exploration.

7. Methodology and tools (3R-Play)

The 3R-Play methodology belongs to the category of reflective-educational methodologies. Its practical application encourages teachers and sports educators to engage in three shared actions (represented by the initials of the three "R's"):

Reflect: Teachers analyze and explore various educational situations using the Pretext device to better understand emotional dynamics.

Research: Teachers apply these insights to their teaching practices.

Reply: Teachers implement changes to improve student engagement and emotional understanding.

This approach uses the methodological device of the Pretext (which takes the form of a comic strip simulating suspended and challenging educational scenarios), enabling participants to practice specific educational situations through a method based on problematization and inquiry. This approach is essential for developing critical thinking and consolidating reflective-critical skills.

Frame reflection involves examining underlying assumptions and beliefs, a critical process for addressing and resolving complex issues (Schön, 1995).

The 3R-Play educational approach uses the Pretext to stimulate critical reflection on hypothetical or real situations. These practices emphasize the importance of reflection, resilience, and relational skills in education, facilitating the development of innovative pedagogical solutions (Nosari & Guarcello, 2019, 2023).

Pretext is an exercise designed to stimulate reflection, deepen understanding, and develop critical judgment. It uses a specific methodological approach that creates a "suspended" situation, an open, non-hierarchical space where questions are not predetermined, and there are no better or worse questions, nor right or wrong answers. In this space, responses are meant to emerge gradually rather than immediately, and they are considered provisional rather than final.

Pretext must also be introduced with the "right distance", allowing participants to see themselves in the characters involved without fully identifying with them.

Mastering emotional awareness is a shared challenge for teachers and sports educators. The Stereo Project represents a viable model, providing teachers with the necessary tools to acquire and transmit emotional awareness through a shared dialogue with the extracurricular world, particularly that of sports.

8. Conclusion

The transformation of emotional experience in contemporary society, driven by the shift from analogue to digital dimensions, necessitates innovative teaching methodologies. Educators, by integrating sports and other extracurricular activities, can better prepare students to face the emotional challenges of the digital age, fostering emotional growth and resilience (Bauman and Donskis, 2013; Rosa, 2013; Ewing, Waugh, and Smith, 2021; Jones, 2006).

From a pedagogical perspective, the evolution of emotional experiences requires society to rethink the ways in which teaching and learning are approached. This challenge places teachers in a crucial role as mediators and educators of new generations, tasked with developing strategies to cultivate emotional awareness and sensitivity among students and to guide them with care and attention through the complexities of modern emotional life.

This demands a dual focus: on the one hand, recognizing the cultural importance of emotional education, which must be valued as an essential component of individual and social well-being; on the other, adopting innovative methodological approaches based on

reflexivity and the enhancement of critical thinking, which are indispensable for its implementation.

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