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EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF FUTURE TEACHERS

Jindra Vondroušová (a), Daniela Vrabcová (b), Jitka Kaplanová (c), Kateřina Juklová (d)*, Marie Hynková (e)
*Corresponding author

(a) University of Hradec Králové, Rokitanského 62, 50003 Hradec Králové, Czech Republic.
E-mail: jindra.vondrousova@uhk.cz
(b) University of Hradec Králové, Rokitanského 62, 50003 Hradec Králové, Czech Republic.
E-mail: daniela.vrabcova@uhk.cz
(c) University of Hradec Králové, Rokitanského 62, 50003 Hradec Králové, Czech Republic.
E-mail: jitka.kaplanova@uhk.cz
(d) University of Hradec Králové, Rokitanského 62, 50003 Hradec Králové, Czech Republic.
E-mail: katerina.juklova@uhk.cz
(e) University of Hradec Králové, Rokitanského 62, 50003 Hradec Králové, Czech Republic.
E-mail: marie.hynkova@uhk.cz

Abstract

The submitted contribution focuses on emotional regulation in novice teachers and compares it with how teachers with more practical experience work with emotions. Depending on these strategies, not only pupils are affected, for instance by the classroom climate, but also teachers and their satisfaction with their occupation, self-efficacy, etc. The research was conducted by means of a qualitative questionnaire with open-ended questions and the results were analysed and subsequently compared to a similar research study by Sutton. The comparison showed a tendency in novice teachers to be authentic in their emotions, mainly in terms of positive emotions, and to most often use responsive strategies for their regulation. Their motive is mainly self-preservation, compared to more experienced teachers who regulate their emotions mainly for the purpose of learning efficiency. Novice teachers used suppression, pretence and masking as strategies. More experienced teachers used preventive strategies more, to prevent triggers and situations in which unwanted emotions appeared.

Keywords: Teacher, novice teacher, emotions, emotional regulation, strategies for coping with emotions.

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1. Introduction

The current trend in education greatly favours reflective skills, not only in pupils, but also in teachers. One of the areas teachers should be able to reflect on is the emotions experienced vis-à-vis their occupation, their pupils, their instruction, and many other factors which affect them at school. The school – both the classroom and the teachers' room – is an environment where very strong emotions arise and subsequently affect self-efficacy and work satisfaction (Becker-Kurz & Morris, 2015; Garner, 2010). Without work satisfaction, exhaustion often occurs whose secondary cause could be the inability or unwillingness of the teacher to engage him/herself in emotion work. This leads to occupational stress, burnout syndrome, or even leaving the profession. Therefore, the issue of perceiving, regulating and coping with one's own emotions is very important in relation to the teaching profession.

Emotions can be viewed from many angles. For the purposes of our contribution, the cultural and social angle is important, as emotions often originate in interactions with other individuals in a society formed by a cultural environment. This becomes an important determinant of displaying emotions, based on which so-called display rules are created (Slaměník, 2011). These rules determine the methods and situations in which respective emotions can be displayed and which should be suppressed (Garner, 2010). By means of observational learning, an individual acquires knowledge, skills, strategies, values and beliefs, as well as the aforementioned display rules (see the Bobo doll experiment by Bandura, 1976). Most significantly, these display rules are influenced by one's family, but teachers, who should be a "healthy" model worth following, significantly contribute to them.

Emotion is a reaction to (a) a trigger, followed by (b) alertness, (c) evaluation related to subjective experience, and (d) a reaction which includes physiological changes and emotional expression (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Pekrun & Stöber, 2004; Kim & Hodges, 2012). For the purposes of our contribution, the first stage in this sequence will be important (we will ask about what triggers certain emotions in teachers), as will be the last stage, which includes a reaction that can be spontaneous or deliberately influenced/regulated.

1.1. Emotional regulation

In connection with our contribution, the issue of emotional regulation is essential, because, among other things, it determines the nature of the resulting emotion and influences not only how one relates to others, but also one's health. In a simplified manner, emotional regulation could be defined as a deliberate or automated effort by an individual to influence what emotions one has, when one has them, and how they are felt and expressed (Mauss, Bunge, & Gross, 2007).

There is a whole range of regulation strategies an individual can use, including reframing, suppression, fabulation, avoidance, distraction and habituation (Stuchlíková, 2002). Some are considered less efficient, even harmful in the end, but there still are not enough studies which confirm this with certainty. Therefore, it seems to be important for the individual to be able to identify his/her own strategies for coping with emotions and to work on those that yield positive results. Similarly to individuals being different in their temperament, personality and experience, they also differ in their regulation strategies. Therefore, one cannot expect a given regulation strategy to work universally.

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1.2. Emotions at school

With regard to the focus of our study, we will concentrate in the following text on the teacher's emotional experience, not the pupil's, even though these two factors significantly influence each other. For instance, this is attested to by Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun, and Sutton (2009), who describes a so-called reciprocal model in which the classroom climate is directly influenced by the teacher's perception of pupils' behaviour and the objectives the teacher sets for them. The teacher's demands will have a strong impact on students' objectives, which will influence their future behaviour and set conditions that will create the classroom climate. Teachers' emotions therefore contribute to their personal well-being and teaching style, which affects pupils' emotions and achievements (Becker-Kurz & Morris, 2015). For teachers, it is of the utmost importance to recognise their own emotional triggers, because they are then able to deal with them in a more considered manner, use them, and control them. These are not just triggers of negative emotions, but also of positive ones. These triggers were investigated in a study by Sutton (2004) and Frenzel et al. (2009), for instance, and have become the subject of our research as well.

Emotional regulation can be investigated from multiple perspectives which in a school environment, according to Fried (2001), include cases where (a) the teacher regulates the pupil's emotions, (b) the pupil regulates his/her own emotions and the teacher regulates his/her own, and (c) the pupil regulates the emotions of others. For us, the pivotal perspective will be the teacher's regulation of his/her own emotions, mainly for the reason that the teacher is very often a model or an example of emotional regulation for his/her pupils. The results of this process undoubtedly influence learning processes in the classroom and determine its social climate.

A number of studies have dealt with various emotional aspects and are focused mainly on pupils – their experience, enthusiasm about learning, emotional regulation focused on academic achievement, etc. (Linnenbrink-Garcia & Pekrun, 2011; Kim, 2012). Compared to pupils' emotions, teachers' emotions have not been investigated to the same extent. For instance, Frenzel et al., (2009) used an Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ) to investigate emotions in students and teachers and focused on positive emotions – joy and enthusiasm. The study showed a transfer of positive emotions from teachers to students, who enjoyed the subject being taught more and had better results. However, the most important study for us was conducted by Sutton (2004), who looked into strategies for emotional regulation used by teachers during instruction and the reasons for this regulation. For that purpose, she used a semi-structured interview which became an inspiration for our own research.

2. Problem Statement

The study's objective was to map how teachers work with their emotions while teaching and what the impact is on them and on their pupils. Furthermore, we tried to determine teachers' goals for regulating their emotions and what strategies they use in this regard. Since we assumed different experiences and behaviour in student teachers and working teachers, we decided to compare the results with a similar study that investigated respondents with more practical experience: middle-grade teachers (Sutton, 2004).

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3. Research Questions

The following research sub-questions were formulated:

- What emotions do teachers experience during a lesson?
- What significance do teachers ascribe to emotional regulation and why do they regulate their emotions?
- What are the emotional triggers for teachers within the context of instruction?
- What strategies for emotional regulation are used by teachers?
- What display rules (idealised notions about teachers and their display of emotion) do teachers have?
- Does teachers' emotional regulation impact the classroom climate and pupils' achievements?
- Are there differences in emotion work between novice teachers and experienced teachers?

4. Research Methods

To fulfil our intention, we were inspired by Sutton's semi-structured interview (2004) whose selected questions were adapted to the instruction of student teachers, taking place mainly within the framework of practical experience, or their own pedagogical activities that, however, did not last longer than one year. Even though Sutton used an interview, we opted for a questionnaire that could also be used for investigating emotions and whose validity was proven, for instance, in Pekrun's questionnaire focused on the emotions of achievement (Linnenbrink-Garcia & Pekrun, 2011). Therefore, Sutton's research provided the selected questions and categories needed to code the answers of our respondents. The categories were as follows:

- Types of emotions and their triggers
- Frequency, significance and goals of emotional regulation
- Methods of emotional regulation and display rules
- Strategies for emotional regulation
    - Preventive
    - Responsive
- Impacts of emotional regulation on the class

The students were motivated to provide responses which were as honest and as detailed as possible, with the option to remain anonymous.

4.1. Research cohort

The respondents were 29 novice teachers and students from the University of Hradec Králové's Faculty of Education (Czech Republic), of whom 19 were women and 10 were men. In the text that follows, this group will be called "novice teachers" or "student teachers". Their teaching experience was gained mainly through practical experience within the framework of their five-year study programme, under the supervision of a faculty teacher who supervises their teaching and provides feedback. Some of these students started teaching at a primary or secondary school during their studies, and their practical experience

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was up to one year long. However, one has to take into account that within the framework of these activities, the respondents did not perform all teaching functions (such as being a class teacher), only minimally participated in the life of the teachers' room, and were in touch with this environment for a significantly shorter period of time than a full-time employed teacher. These complementary teaching activities consisted of helping out at a primary or secondary school or doing private instruction or tutoring. With regard to the fact that these activities were rare, we did not differentiate these individuals in the results from those who gained their experience solely within the framework of practical experience. The respondents were told in advance about the purpose of the questions and were asked for their responses to be as detailed as possible. They responded in a relaxed manner and had enough time to sufficiently think about their answers. At the same time, at their request, they were assured that the information they would provide and that might be sensitive would remain secure.

As mentioned earlier, the intention of the research was also to compare the results of novice teachers and teachers with more experience, but also from a different cultural environment. In the text that follows, this group of respondents will be called "more experienced teachers" or "teachers with longer practice". Therefore, here we provide information about the respondents in Sutton's research (2004). In it, 30 teachers participated whose average age was 30−34 years and their length of practice was 1−28 years. These were middle-grade teachers who taught pupils between the ages of 10 and 15. The respondents consisted of 19 women and 11 men.

5. Findings

In the following text, the main findings resulting from our research are provided, with actual investigations into the emotions of novice teachers, but also within the framework of comparing them with those of more experienced teachers.

5.1. Types of emotions and their triggers

In the first questions, we tried to determine what emotions were recalled by novice teachers/Faculty of Education students in connection with their practical experience and whether they regulated them. Only one respondent said he did not regulate his emotions; however, others considered emotional regulation important and practiced it. Ambivalent emotions were often mentioned by the respondents; for instance, they experienced fear and joy during the same lesson. One of the female respondents mentioned the term *"rollercoaster"*, which became one of the observed in vivo codes: *"I recall a rollercoaster. When I started my practical experience, it was up and down. I was looking forward to it as much as I was scared and nervous."* When mentioning the emotions that appeared during instruction (they could choose one to three emotions from among anger, fear, sadness, joy, disgust, surprise, and love/affection), pleasant emotions (chosen 63 times) prevailed slightly over unpleasant ones (chosen 53 times), which confirms a certain ambivalence. Fear of the unknown, of failure, of not being accepted by the pupils, of responsibility, or of insufficient knowledge was often mentioned. On the other hand, joy was mentioned in connection with successful instruction, pupils' enthusiasm for the instruction, and their understanding of the discussed subject matter.

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Overall, the reasons for positive emotions were as follows: pupils' knowledge, the efficiency of the methods chosen by the teacher, the teacher's work being meaningful, and the instruction taking place according to the respondent's ideas, in other words being a success. Negative emotions were related to pupils' disinterest, one's own mistakes, pupils' insufficient motivation, fear of embarrassment, the need to pretend, being in the spotlight, etc.

Emotional triggers during instruction are also related to this topic. Some of them have already been mentioned, so the following are just additional. Negative emotions were triggered the most by situations in which pupils showed disinterest, did not cooperate, were too noisy, or tried the teacher's limits. Additional triggers came when pupils refused to work, made derisive comments when the teacher made a mistake, did not respect the teacher or his/her preparation for the lesson by talking during his/her explanations, etc.

On the other hand, positive emotions were triggered by the pupils' interest, amusement, enthusiasm about the instruction and prepared activities, willingness to communicate with the teacher, effort, and acknowledgement: *"Miss, we want to have you for the next lesson, too!"* Sutton (2004) mentions triggers in more experienced teachers only in general and only with regard to behaviours that cause negative emotions, such as inappropriate behaviour, lack of effort, disruption in class by pupils, and inattention. One can thus infer that negative emotions in teachers are triggered by very similar situations.

5.2. Frequency, significance and goals of emotional regulation

With regard to the number of emotions that appear during instruction, our respondents assigned great importance to their regulation. However, this relates mainly to negative emotions, as they prefer positive ones to be shown with spontaneity and authenticity. They still use regulation in this case as well, however, as mentioned by one of the female respondents, who *"doesn't allow herself to jump for joy or laugh like mad during the lesson."* In terms of the frequency of emotional regulation, the possibilities "often", "usually" and "always" were chosen most frequently. No differences in emotional regulation were found between women and men.

Compared to the research findings of Sutton (2004), one can say that teachers assign great importance to emotional regulation and focus it mainly on negative emotions – here, Sutton's research and our own are in accord. However, teachers with longer practice described the frequency in more intense terms such as "daily" or "every second", the underlying reasons being their longer experience and the display rules for the given culture.

Through additional questions, we attempted to determine why novice teachers regulated their emotions. We found that it was mainly for their *"own survival"* or their own safety, for covering their weaknesses, but also so that pupils could not use the displayed emotions against them. Other reasons included *"preserving their professionalism and respect",* preventing *"losing control over the class"*, losing face, and benevolent action. It appears from these responses that the primary motivation for emotional regulation in novice teachers is to preserve themselves, their authority and respect, and a certain professionalism, while the advantages or consequences of emotional regulation are mainly for the teacher him/herself. The effects on pupils' learning or the classroom climate are not a priority for novice teachers. Their priority is to orient themselves in a new situation, in which novice teachers first try to find out how they come across to the pupils, how the pupils accept them, and how to influence the pupils. Here it should

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be noted that these were "borrowed" classes in which the influence on longer-term factors such as classroom climate was minimal.

Exceptionally, some novice teachers did think about the efficiency of regulating their emotions also in terms of the impact on the pupils or class. For instance, by supporting, helping or praising pupils, they targeted their motivation, also due to the belief that teachers should be positively attuned for their pupils to respect them. They also mentioned (not surprisingly with regard to the issue of emotional regulation) the tendency to be authentic in their emotions and come across to the pupils in such a way that they do not feel like the teacher is pretending or acting.

Compared to the teachers in Sutton's research (2004), there were interesting differences. More experienced teachers said that they regulated their emotions mainly to achieve higher efficiency and a greater positive impact on the pupils. They were convinced that regulating their negative emotions would lead to pupils' higher achievement that they would manage to do more, that they would not transfer their bad mood onto their pupils, or that they would be able to hold their attention better. These teachers did not mention their professionalism or revelation of weaknesses. However, there was agreement in their perception of negative emotional displays as being inefficient, while expressing authentic emotions was seen as beneficial.

5.3. Methods of emotional regulation and display rules

In the next set of questions, the respondents spontaneously described their ideas and beliefs with regard to how teachers should or should not express their emotions, and which ones, and with regard to what is suitable and what is unacceptable. Three respondents described the need for a *"switch"* (an in vivo code), in other words a method to separate their private life from their work life, a certain strategy that could protect the teacher as well as the pupils. One respondent said: *"A teacher has his own personal life which should not be projected into instruction. The same applies to exaggerated reactions: they need to be regulated in a lesson; the teacher is always the more reasonable and more restrained person from whom appropriate behaviour is expected (I can't hit a student)."* Three respondents said that a teacher should not act in affect, i.e. under the influence of strong emotions, at any price: *"It's not suitable to show anger, annoyance or irritation."* Furthermore, the need to *"present oneself as an authority"* and the importance of doing one's job, of not losing control over one's actions, and of not being de-motivated were mentioned: *"A de-motivated pedagogue has no chance to motivate his pupils […]; an unbalanced and pessimistic teacher has huge difficulties keeping his pupils under control and transmitting the subject matter in the most active manner."*

A comparison of novice teachers and teachers with longer practice (Sutton, 2004) leads to the discovery that there is prevailing agreement on this issue. They perceive that emotional regulation is part of their job, that they have to maintain professionalism related to their objectives, that they want to motivate their pupils, and that they definitely do not want to harm them or injure them verbally, humiliate them, etc., as such actions hinder interpersonal relations. There was also agreement on the issue of the authenticity of emotions: "*I've gotten much better at masking my emotions in the classroom. I do like to have some emotion in there. I don't want to appear like a robot; I want the students to be interested. I want them to trust me and have faith in what I say. I want them to know when I'm not happy and when I am […]"* (Sutton, 2004,

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p. 387). The teachers in our research had similar things to say: *"In terms of positive emotions, I want to show them to pupils and others so that they see me as a real human being, not as a robot-teacher. I don't want to mask emotions such as joy, satisfaction, surprise and others. I don't want my pupils to mask them either."* However, one difference was detected: more experienced teachers perceived emotional regulation as important also due to the fact that they were models for their pupils.

One can therefore say that teachers primarily try to be professionals who will not let their emotions run away with them but who will control them; on the other hand, they try to authentically show positive emotions, as this makes them more human in the eyes of their pupils and improves their relationship with them. Furthermore, teachers perceive that it is important to separate their personal life from their work life. With longer experience, teachers also view emotional regulation from the perspective of being a role model for their pupils.

5.4. Strategies for emotional regulation

During coding we first classified the strategies for emotional regulation, such as distraction, habituation, suppression, avoidance (e.g. of triggers), pretence, reappraisal, awareness of the emotion, and pausing. We adapted the results to the classification by Sutton (2004), who divided these strategies into preventive and responsible. We created an overview which can be seen in Table 01; the results from Sutton's research can be seen in Table 02 (Sutton, 2004, p. 389). The frequencies in both figures were affected by the respondents mentioning more than one strategy multiple times.

Table 01. Preventative and responsive strategies reported by teachers

Strategies	When the strategy is used	N using strategy	Examples of strategies
Preventative strategies			
Modifying situations	Before school	7	Be authentic, adapt the lesson, switch off and leave personal affairs behind a closed door, express positive emotions. Self-reflect/plan/review preparations to prevent negative and support positive emotions.
	At the emotion cue	0	
Attention deployment	Before school	2	Distract, ignore
	At the emotion cue	3	Concentrate on something else (e.g. begin explaining a topic), divert pupils' attention by assigning a task (exercise, contemplation, brainstorming).
Cognitive change	Before school	0	
	At the emotion cue	0	
Responsive strategies			
Behavioral strategies	At the emotion cue	4	Take a moment of silence = be silent, breathe, leave and consider things in quiet, move around the classroom, control body language
	After school	3	Vent emotions = cry, stroll in nature, do a hobby, sleep
Cognitive strategies	At the emotion cue	13	Suppress, ignore, mask, pretend, reappraise, pause (metaposition, "traffic light")

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	After school	3	Communicate with friends and colleagues, relax by means of music or creative activity, unwind through a sport or other activity
Non classifiable	Immediate	16	General statement on emotional regulation

Table 02. Preventative and responsive strategies reported by teachers (Sutton, 2004, p. 389)

Strategies	When the strategy is used	N using strategy	Examples of strategies
Preventative strategies			
Modifying situations	Before school	17	Prepare/revise lessons, tell students I'm not feeling well
	At the emotion cue	15	Use a specific teaching or management strategy e.g., Have class do something quiet, ask questions, tell individual student to see me after class, make a joke.
Attention deployment	Before school	22	Talk to colleagues, self talk, think positive thoughts, sit in classroom room, pause, get to school early
	At the emotion cue	3	Divert attention, ignore
Cognitive change	Before school	0	
	At the emotion cue	8	Self talk
Responsive strategies			
Behavioral strategies	At the emotion cue	15	Physically withdraw, pause, deep breathe, get quiet, control facial features
	After school	14	Sit in a quiet place, exercise
Cognitive strategies	At the emotion cue	7	Reflect, think positive thoughts, visualize.
	After school	24	Talk to peers, talk to family and friends, do an intellectual hobby, prepare for tomorrow's classes
Non classifiable	Immediate	5	"Just to it", "hold it in"

There are obvious significant differences when comparing the figures. More experienced teachers use a large number of preventive strategies when they try to modify situations even before school by preparing their class well, reviewing their preparation, or telling students they do not feel well. Most frequently, however, they try to use the strategy of attention deployment in the form of talking to their colleagues, self-talk, positive thinking, early arrival, etc.

In novice teachers, attention deployment was used significantly fewer times, as was the effort to modify situations. They prevailingly used responsive strategies, in particular suppression of emotions, ignorance, masking, and pretence, which, however, usually result in occupational dissatisfaction and can be harmful. We consider reappraisal (6 respondents) and pausing, when an individual pauses to think about the emotion he/she is experiencing and acts based on that (the "traffic light" strategy), to be more beneficial, longer-term strategies. Some respondents said that they were forced to suppress their emotions, while others claimed that they had not figured out which strategies were efficient yet and still had to find that out. We consider it a very important finding that experienced teachers mentioned "unhealthy" strategies such as suppression, masking and hiding only very rarely, and therefore we consider them to be inefficient strategies which one stops using with longer practice and greater experience. However, novice teachers

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used efficient strategies we could also see in teachers with longer practice, for instance taking a moment of silence, talking to someone, reappraising the situation, etc.

5.5. Impacts of emotional regulation on the class

Novice teachers mentioned the issue of regulating their own emotions and their impact on the atmosphere or climate in the classroom only minimally, probably also due to the low amount of experience and instruction during practical experience, which, unfortunately, still has a relatively low number of prescribed hours in teachers' occupational preparation. Therefore, students do not have many opportunities to see the impacts of their behaviour on the class. Exceptionally, the respondents commented on the impacts of their behaviour, for instance in connection with masking: *"I noticed that some pupils recognised that I had tried to hide that I felt bad about their behaviour, and therefore had behaved unnaturally. I had the impression that they felt a certain victory and that I had looked bad."* The impact of one's own mood on the pupils is also obvious from the following statement: *"I think that the classroom climate is a mirror of my own internal climate."*

We did not do a comparison with more experienced teachers here, as this category was not part of Sutton's research (2004).

6. Conclusion

The objective of the research and this contribution was to answer questions related to the identification of teachers' emotions, their triggers, the frequency of goals of and methods for their regulation and expected impacts, and to thoughts about ideal emotion work in teachers – this all within the context of instruction. Our research focused on novice teachers/student teachers who shared their experience mainly from pedagogical practical experience. The research results were then compared with Sutton's research (2004), which looked at more experienced teachers, and we reached some interesting conclusions.

During the survey, the in vivo code "rollercoaster" appeared, which captured the changes in emotions during instruction. In general, we can say that teachers tried not to behave like robots or ice queens and that they tried to show positive emotions authentically while regulating their negative emotions. Among novice teachers and more experienced teachers, we observed agreement in the significance teachers assigned to emotions and the frequency with which teachers regulated their emotions. The majority of teachers tried to be authentic in their emotions, especially when it came to positive emotions, as it contributed not only to their good mental state and emotional well-being, but also to pupils' commitment and motivation during instruction.

Differences were observed in the goals of and reasons for emotional regulation. More experienced teachers tried to increase the efficiency of their instruction and were aware of the positive impact of their actions on the pupils, whereas the goal of novice teachers was to preserve themselves, to survive the lesson, or to retain their professionalism, which corresponded to earlier findings about teachers' developmental stages, within the framework of which the first one is called self-protective (see Loevinger, 1976, as cited in Oja, 1990). Therefore, we observed a certain shift: at the beginning of their career, teachers focused more

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on themselves, while with increased experience they transferred their attention onto the pupils, were aware of themselves as an example, and became role models.

In general, negative emotions in teachers were triggered by pupils' inappropriate behaviour, insufficient effort, or lack of attention. Positive emotions were triggered by their interest, effort, and willingness to communicate with the teacher.

With regard to the strategies used for emotional regulation, it was shown that novice teachers used responsive strategies more, which was expected to a certain extent, as they had not gained enough experience and did not know exactly what to prepare for, what could surprise them, or what could cause negative emotions. Novice teachers used suppression, pretence and masking as strategies. With increased practical experience, there was a shift. More experienced teachers used preventive strategies more, to prevent triggers and situations in which unwanted emotions appeared. They tried to prepare for class better, reviewed their preparations, and talked to their colleagues, family and acquaintances.

The respondents in our research were only minimally able to infer the impacts of their emotional regulation on the classroom climate and the class as a whole. Instead, they mentioned momentary impacts on the atmosphere, which seemed natural with regard to the short duration of their practical experience. Teachers are able to transfer their attention more to the class and to not dwell so much on themselves only with longer practice.

Even though there are obvious limitations in our comparison stemming from the difference in the cultural environment of the compared groups, the results of our research hint at the development of emotional regulation during a teacher's career. This is an issue that has so far been looked into very little and that deserves a more thorough investigation.

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