

Emotion has (No) Voice: Training -Emotions Relationship Survey

Ramona Tranquillo¹

Abstract

The society in which we live suffers from a lack of authentic communication and in this scenario empathy is a relational and dialogical competence, which is in some way necessary. However, it is not always perceived as a fundamental need and there are educational contexts marked by empathic inaccuracy. Adolescents' request for listening and help is cleverly disguised and it is very difficult for them to raise the over request to be helped because any demonstration of this nature would speculatively invoke the idea of failure. The questions that guided the article were as follows: are emotions found in training? What is the prevailing emotion in the classroom? Do teachers succeed in emotionally engaging their students by making them feel important and valued? The analysis coming from the answers of 83 teachers and 116 students involved in the survey will show how, unfortunately, the needs of adolescents remain continuously unmet, leaving them simultaneously more fragile and more alone.

Keywords: emotions- school- training- education- teachers- students.

1. Introduction

Neuroscience studies confirm and revive the close connection between reason and affectivity, therefore it is necessary to acknowledge that emotions are not obstacles that disturb a reflective approach to problems, but, on the contrary, they are effective guides for action and understanding. All this is relevant in the pedagogical field, since a greater emotional balance would determine a better school performance.

The resolution would be to develop emotional intelligence, a complex skill defined as:

"The ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions."²

Therefore combining the idea that it is possible to link intelligence to emotion.

Consequently, a positive emotional reaction (as well as a negative one) when expressed, through the imitative process would activate in others the same neuronal response that they would have if they had experienced that mood in first person, but not only: what we learn and then remember is related to the constant presence of emotions. This figure in particular is relevant not only for its scientific or psychological importance but also for its pedagogical importance. The research "Emotions: a training resource" aims to identify the way in which the training-emotion relationship is perceived. In detail, teachers and students will be asked to fill out a questionnaire in order to carry out a comprehensive research aimed at analyzing the prevailing emotions within the classroom and the characteristics of the actors present in it.

2. Theoretical principles

Before getting to the description of the research work, it would be useful to summarize the theoretical principles that have guided this path and that, therefore constitute a frame of reference.

The first reflections arose as a result of recent scientific discoveries coming specifically from the field of neuroscience, continuing with Goleman's studies on emotional intelligence.

*"Today it is precisely neuroscience that supports the need to take emotions very seriously"*³.

¹ 74, Via Bernardo Cavallino, 80128 Naples, Italy, ramonatanquillo@gmail.com

² Mayer J., Salovey P. (1990) Emotional Intelligence, in *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, vol. 9 (3).

Goleman was the first psychologist to carry out the first studies on emotional intelligence when only rational intelligence was considered, noting that there was no correlation factor between people who were successful in life and IQ.

The human being is a totality integrated within a social context and there is osmosis between the affective and cognitive spheres. Consequently, emotions constitute attitudes that influence all the person's capabilities. The development of intellectual competence is interconnected with the development of emotions, which in the meantime is connected with neurological, cognitive and social maturation processes. This is a holistic approach that focuses on the complete development of the personality, both emotionally and intellectually.

This was first proposed in schools by Maria Montessori, who saw learning as something meaningful. For she believed that learning should not be mnemonic or passive, but should be experience-based and capable of raising the vital interests of the learner.

Carl Rogers developed this approach, his idea of school is a didactic system tuned on the expression of feelings and needs, in particular on empathy and listening, therefore on the relational atmosphere more appropriate to favor the development of the person.

All of this is part of the theory of emotional intelligence that refers precisely to the ability of recognizing our feelings and those of others, motivating ourselves in the positive management of emotions.

It is from this point of view that after having explored various areas and beliefs on emotions, such as the relationship with neuroscience, emotions in psychology and emotional intelligence, we slowly narrowed the field of action down to an educational perspective.

Why school? The definition of school as a learning community is inspired by the socio-dynamic approach: teachers, students, parents, program, social context and physical environment are involved in the educational process. In this sense, the class shares the rules that organize the group consisting of teachers and students and the awareness of the obligations which each member has towards the others.

Adults, through educational action, are therefore the major shareholders of the brains of children and young people.

Ultimately, it's worth underlying, although not necessary, that to have a vademecum on how to be good emotional coaches would be useful for both parents and teachers. A guide on what should be done to build and achieve a good relationship with children and students and on what should be avoided: willingness to listen, significant time to devote and authority to contain appear to be the best ingredients to administer an effective emotional education.

Emotions should not be silenced because, if they are not appropriately expressed, they tend to discharge immediately in the form of impulses. Aggression, bullying, excessive closure, most of the hyperactive behaviors are nothing but the result of a difficulty or an inability to recognize and manage their moods, thus remaining trapped in impulsive actions that, without the necessary filters of control, lead to maladaptive behavior.

3. Emotions: training resource

The central theme of the following research concerns the pairing of emotions and training. In order to understand how this relationship is perceived, two questionnaires were administered to teachers (Appendix 1) and students (Appendix 2) with the similar heading: "Emotions: a training resource". In both cases, the questionnaire appears to be divided into three sections:

1. Emotions within the classroom
2. Characteristics of the teacher/student
3. Personal data

The questionnaire was administered online via google forms. Specifically, 199 questionnaires were collected, distributed as follows: 116 responses from students and 83 responses from teachers. As you can observe this is an exploratory research because of the low numbers.

The self-completed questionnaire is presented with a battery of closed questions and a few open questions with exploratory purposes (mostly identified with the optional wording "Other").

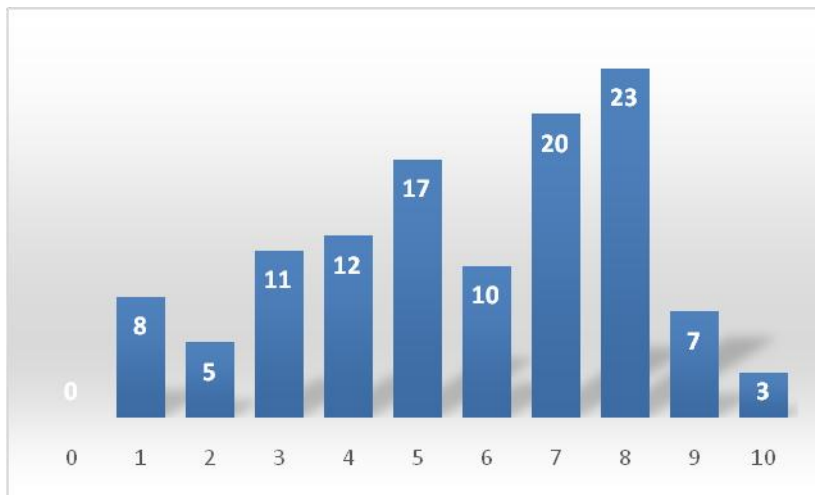
³Goleman, D. (2001) *Emotional intelligence*, BUR Saggi, Milan, p.9.

The instrument, therefore, combines closed questions and open questions for the purpose of detecting the experiences of the respondents on issues related to training and the emotions connected to it.

The goal turns out to be not only to understand the relationship between training and emotions, but above all to identify the possibilities of using emotions effectively in the training context.

3.1 Reviews

The survey "Emotions: training resource" aimed to investigate the training-emotions relationship. Before asking the students how they deal with their emotions in the classroom and, above all, whether the teachers stimulate this type of sharing, it has been considered appropriate to understand the average level of satisfaction regarding the management of emotions in social life.



Graph 1

Graphic 1, in fact, is the iconographic demonstration of an overwhelming result: the average achieved is equal to the value of 5.7. This means that the students are not sufficiently satisfied with their emotional management within their social lives. For exploratory purposes, an open question followed the closed one, under the heading "Justify your answer".

Although there was no obligation to respond, more than half of the students felt it appropriate to express themselves openly, resulting in the collection of important evidence about the discomfort experienced by the interviewees.

It is possible to group the responses into three main categories:

1. The dissatisfied, characterized by the inability to control and manage emotions;
2. Those who are trying, that is, those who are reacting to make significant improvements in their daily lives;
3. The satisfied, those who consider themselves balanced and mature enough to be able to manage their emotions in society.

Starting with the first group, the inability to control emerges as the key concept. As evidence of this statement it is possible to read comments such as: "Emotions manage me, not the other way around"; "Sometimes I don't know how to manage the strongest emotions"; "I can't regulate them at all, either I manifest them in an exaggerated way through crying without being able to contain myself or I hide all kinds of emotions even when I would like or it would be normal to manifest them, and I don't know why"; "I often don't express my true emotions"; "I often can't manage them"; "I'm working on it"; "I'm emotionally unstable"; "Very often I act impulsively and can't control my emotions"; "I'm in perpetual mental breakdown so I certainly can't get any worse"; "I'm overly sensitive and emotional and very often can't control my emotions"; "I can't always express how I feel"; "I wish I could control them a little more"; "I'm not very good at expressing my emotions when I should"; "My emotions often take over the decisions I make or even the words I express"; "I feel like I could do more"; "They often take over limiting my strength"; "I can't always control my emotions, sometimes they betray me".

As we can see from the words reported, most of the respondents complain about their inability to control and manage their emotions, which often result in compromising their daily lives. In spite of this, many students admit their weaknesses and take advantage of the space below to motivate the answer previously given.

Anxiety emerged as an additional key concept. It turns out that many students do not know how to manage it in relationships. Anxiety is often confused with fear. Fear is a normal emotional reaction that can stimulate us to work harder. Anxiety, on the other hand, is accompanied by a devaluation of oneself and one's resources. As evidence of this, the respective comments follow: "I think anxiety conditions me too much at times"; "Recently the prevailing emotion is anxiety"; "Socially I don't have a problem with my emotions, maybe just a little anxiety"; "TOO much anxiety"; "I struggle to control my anxiety and my insecurity limits me a lot".

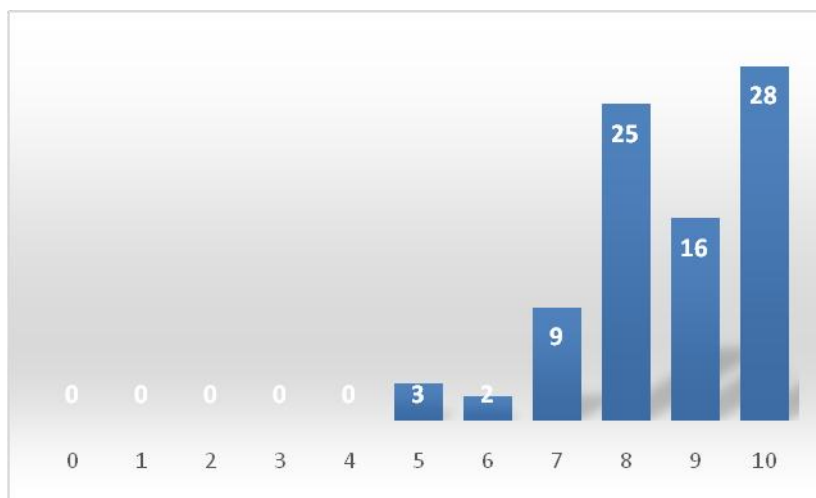
Even though students were not explicitly asked to express themselves by referring to the classroom context, some comments were directed primarily at it: "There are professors who are very attentive to the moods of us students...but the vast majority come to school just to talk for a few hours and then leave"; "I'm too emotional in a class of superficial people".

Turning to the examination of the second group, you can see comments from youngsters who admit it wasn't easy, but over time have learned to manage their emotions or are working on it: "With time I have learned to modify my temperament in angry situations by trying to calm down; also I have learned to show more often when I am happy so as to steal a smile from others too"; "I am working on it"; "I feel that I could do more"; "I can express my emotions but I tend not to be empathetic enough, something that I am trying to improve"; "I am quite satisfied because with time I have managed to smooth out many of my edges, managing to interact even with people who are completely different from me".

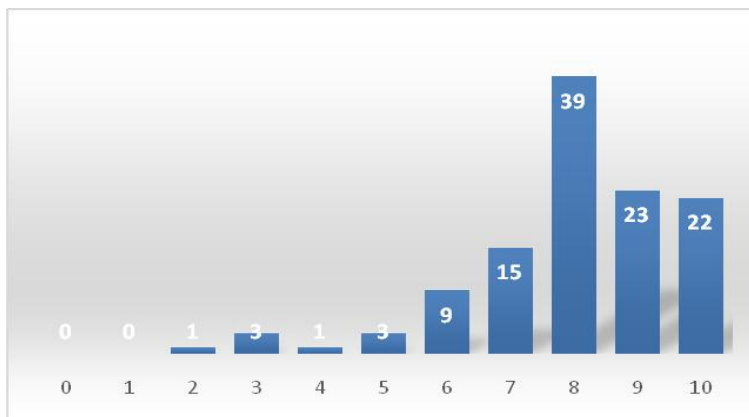
Although the vast majority of comments seem to confirm the tendency to be dissatisfied with the management of their emotions in everyday life, there is no lack of comments from young people who see balance as a key word, who consider themselves satisfied and mature enough to declare that they are not afraid to express anything. As a testament to the third group: "I have reasonable self-control, I like to listen to others and share without fear"; "I consider myself a very mature person, who manages to control their emotions even in the most stressful situations"; "The management of emotions is very easy for me in daily life, I don't let them affect my performance or my relationships"; "I can manage everything without causing repercussions on others"; "I consider myself a fairly objective and rational person, which allows me to manage emotions, good or bad"; "I feel at ease easily, I can manage my emotions quite well".

In the first section, called "Emotions in the Classroom," students and teachers were asked to express themselves in reference to their school experience.

The first question, "On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much), how much do you think emotions have a role in education?"



Graph 2A



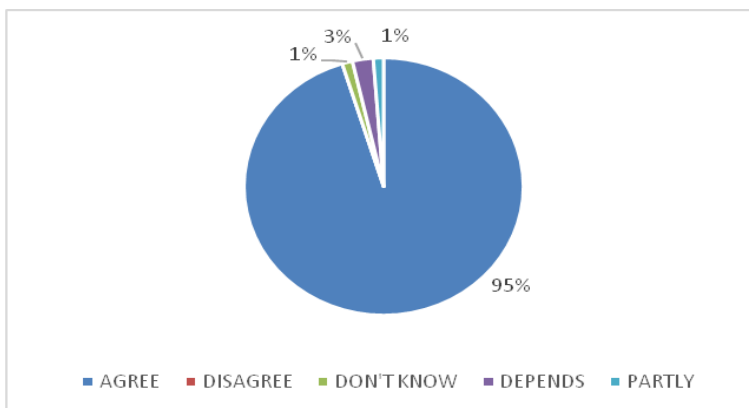
Graph 2B

Graphic 2A and 2B saw the following results: an average of 8.6 for teachers and an average of 8.0 for students.

On the second question, "In your experience, can you name the emotion that prevails within the classroom?"

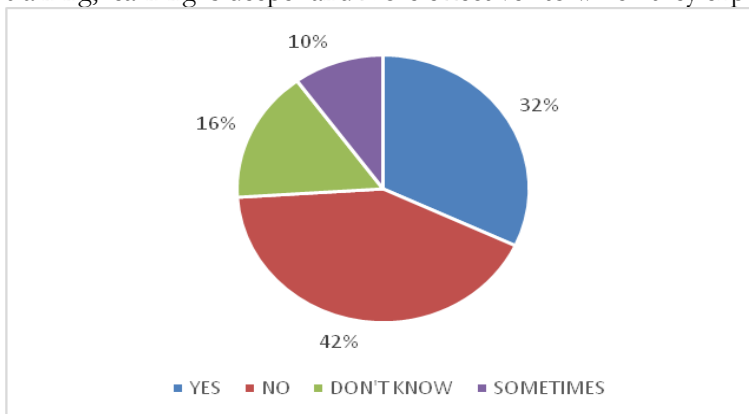
Teachers responded with the primary emotion "surprise" agreeing for 45% while students responded with a more varied picture, identifying the majority, which is 28%, as "happiness". Next, it was asked to identify what could be the most productive emotion for classroom work, finding out that teachers and students agree in the need of serenity (in addition to identifying once more the primary emotion as "happiness").

In the second section, called "Teacher/Student Characteristics" students are asked to reflect on their teachers and vice versa. They are asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement by specifying in "other" any comments. Questions closely interrelated for comparative purposes are presented below.



Graph 3A

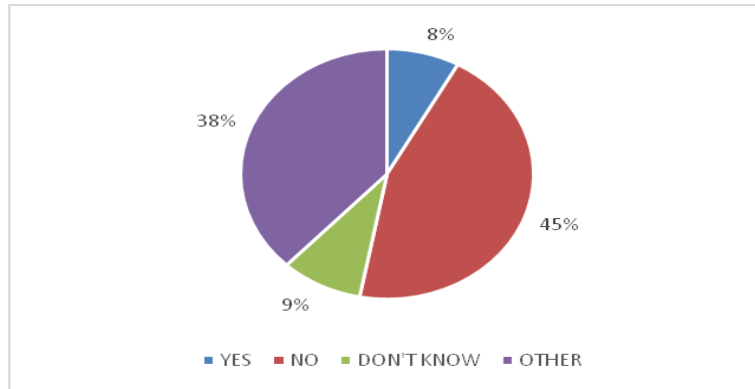
Specifically, teachers were asked the following statement: "When I ask my students to share personal experiences and drop them into the training, learning is deeper and more effective" to which they expressed 95% agreement.



Graph 3B

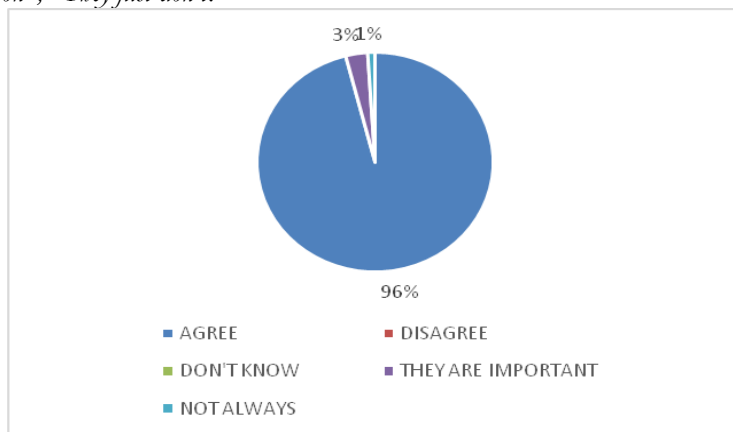
Comparing the respective statement posed to students, "Most of my teachers ask to share personal experiences in order to drop them into the training, so that learning becomes deeper and more effective", for 42% we notice a negative response. In the category "Other..." some students (about 16%) did not remain confined in the closed answer but testified as follows: "Just a few ask and when they do it is always nicer to study then"; "It only happens in case of notable changes in my mood and that later affects my performance".

Closely related to this statement was the request to express any discomfort if teachers asked about students' personal experiences.



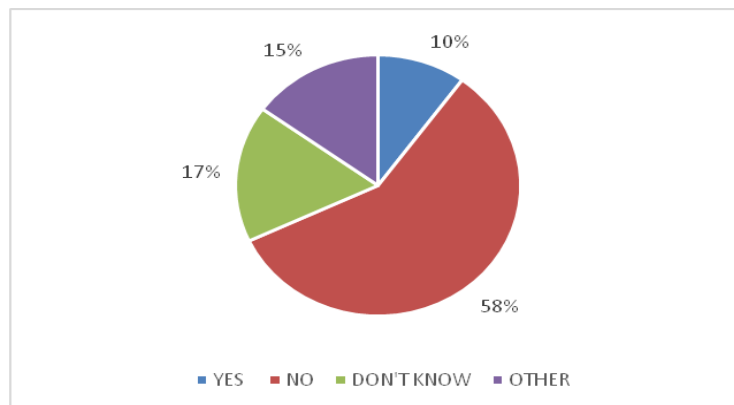
Graph 4

Approximately 8% of the students stated with a "Yes" the feeling of any discomfort, yet the majority completed their thoughts as follows: "It makes me uncomfortable that they almost never ask how we feel or, if it happens, they don't pay the slightest attention"; "They just don't."



Graph 5A

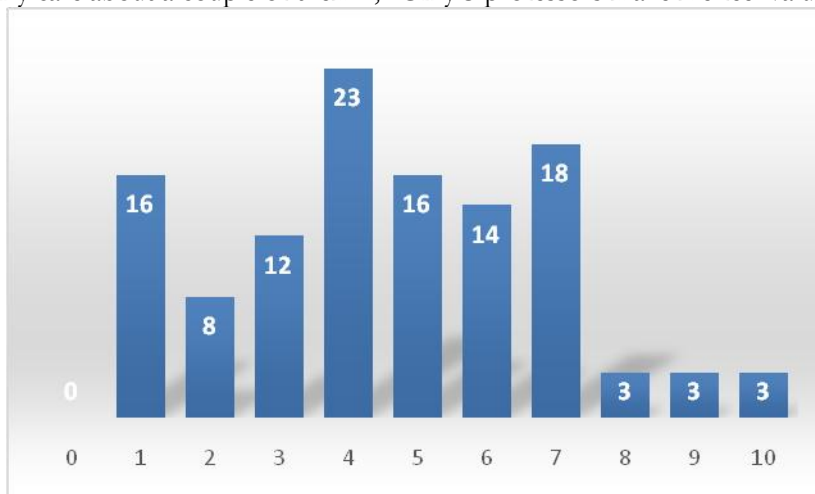
Teachers were asked the following statement, "When I can get students emotionally involved, making them feel important and valued, it is also successful in increasing their motivation to learn" to which they expressed their degree of agreement, except for a couple of comments in the "Other..." category such as "Not always and not with all students"; "They ARE important".



Graph 5B

Verifying the corresponding results from the students, to the statement "Most of my teachers manage to involve me emotionally, making me feel important and valued" a lot of them responded in a negative manner commenting as follows: "not all of them unfortunately...";

"Unfortunately not, but maybe it is due to my personal difficulty in opening up"; "Only a small part of my faculty group"; "I Only care about a couple of them "; "Only 3 professors make me feel valued".



Graph 6

As for the last question of the session, students were asked if professors push for emotional sharing among students in the classroom and during lectures. As analyzed in the previous section, the average was (on a scale of 0 to 10) 4.6. For exploratory purposes, if you answered yes, you were asked to briefly describe how. Among the 27 open responses received, the most relevant are: "There are moments of sharing one's emotions, insecurities and doubts, especially about the future"; "Through group work in which communicating (even emotionally) is fundamental"; "By making us connect the topics which deal with our own experiences"; "By pushing us to make projects together"; "By being the first to get involved".

References to the difficult situation that is affecting the school because of COVID-19 were also found: "Very often some people ask us how we are spending this difficult period emotionally and this lets us vent".

There is no lack, however, of "criticism" about the effectiveness or authentic intentionality of the gesture requested: "They just ask us to confront ourselves, nothing more"; "Sometimes they ask us how we are, but when we make them part of our discomfort, they do not commit themselves to helping us"; "Sometimes they ask us how we are, but they do not dwell on the individual".

4. Conclusions

There is no doubt that there are many intelligences and among them there is the ability to manage one's own emotions. Probably, from the educational point of view, this is paradoxically the intelligence on which we work the least but which has the greatest impact on unhappiness or happiness in life.

Raising sensitive and emotionally competent children and young people clearly requires that educators take the most unconscious and hidden part of themselves seriously. Generally, people have little inclination to define their own states of mind, and this lack of awareness always stems from a low level of emotional competence and poor relational skills that lead the person to react in an inadequate way to defeat. Hence pessimism arises or even depression, leading to isolation. This, in the case of a student, would result in poor academic performance.

It is useful, for these reasons, to teach students relaxation strategies, and the ability to talk to each other in a kind and encouraging way, but very few teachers take care of these human aspects. When in difficulty at school the student needs to be encouraged to believe more in themselves and the esteem of the teacher is a great motivational force, that few can offer to their students. There are not many teachers who care about the emotional and existential disorientation of adolescents, creating for them a comfortable place and aggregation.

The invitation is to use these testimonies and to value the "passionate teachers", because students are waiting for nothing else, as one of them testifies: *"the emotional sharing happens rarely, but when it is activated it all starts from the passion transmitted by the teachers during their lessons"*.

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Appendix 1- "Emotions: a training resource" (teachers version).

Dear Teacher,

I would like to ask for your cooperation in completing the following questionnaire "Emotions: a training resource", aimed at collecting data that will be used for the development of a thesis.

I guarantee that the answers provided will remain anonymous.

The questionnaire is short in duration.

Your contribution will be essential to understanding the way the training-emotion relationship is perceived.

Section 1 - Emotions in the Classroom

We ask you to answer spontaneously and truthfully. There are no right or wrong answers.

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely) how much do emotions come into play in training?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In your experience, can you point to the prevailing emotion within the classroom?

- Happiness
- Fear
- Anger
- Disgust
- Sadness

- Surprise

What emotion could make classroom work more productive?

SECTION 2 - STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The following statements ask you to reflect on your students and respond by expressing your degree of agreement or disagreement specifying in "other..." any comments.

When students feel an emotion, facts are imprinted in their minds in a stronger and more lasting way.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- Other

Students consider emotions that strongly link to an event or context to be a stimulus.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- Other

When I ask my students to share personal experiences and drop them into the training, the learning is deeper and more effective.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- Other

When I can emotionally engage students, by making them feel important and valued, it is also successful in increasing their motivation to learning.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- Other

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely) how well do you manage your and your students' emotions for the benefit of teaching?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SECTION 3 - PERSONAL DATA

Gender

- M
- F
- I prefer not to declare

Age

- 19-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- Over 56

Study Title

.....

What region do you teach in?

.....

Type of school where you teach

- Middle school
- Secondary school
- Other

Teaching subject

.....

Appendix 2- "Emotions: a training resource" (students version).

Dear student,

I am asking for your cooperation in filling out the following questionnaire "Emotions: a training resource", aimed at collecting data that will be used for the development of a thesis.

I guarantee that the answers provided will remain anonymous.

The questionnaire has a short duration.

Your contribution will be essential to understanding the way the training-emotion relationship is perceived.

SECTION 1 - EMOTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

We ask you to answer spontaneously and truthfully. There are no right or wrong answers.

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely) how satisfied are you with your management of emotions in your social life?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Justify your answer

.....

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely) how much do emotions come into play in training?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Can you indicate (among the six primary emotions) which emotion prevails among your faculty as soon as they enter the classroom?

- Happiness
- Fear
- Anger
- Disgust
- Sadness
- Surprise

What emotion could make classroom work more productive?

.....

SECTION 2- TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

On the following statements you are asked to reflect on your teachers and answer according to the yes/no dichotomy, specifying in "other..." any comments.

Are most of my faculty able to convey positive emotions?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Other

Most of my teachers ask to share personal experiences in order to bring them into the training, so that the learning becomes deeper and more effective.

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

- Other

If you said yes, does that make you uncomfortable?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Other

Most of my faculty manage to engage me emotionally, making me feel important and valued.

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Other

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely) how satisfied are you with the role that emotions play in your daily experience?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely) do faculty push to activate emotional sharing among students in the classroom and during instruction?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

If you said yes, briefly describe how

.....

SECTION 3 - PERSONAL DATA

Gender

- M
- F
- I prefer not to declare

Age

- <12
- 12-14
- 15-17
- >18

In which region is the school you attend?

.....

What school do you attend?

- Middle school
- Secondary school
- Other