Paper Code: 00463

How Three Tasmanian Teachers Use and Respond to
Emotion in the Secondary English Classroom

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Abstract

This paper explores how three secondary English teachers use and respond to emotion in the classroom. By examining the perceptions and experiences of three experienced teachers, valuable insights can be gained in relation to the significance and subsequent impact of these teachers' own emotions, their students' emotions and the value and significance of emotion in the secondary English discipline.

According to Arnon and Reichel (2007), programs for teacher education are being "extensively challenged and intensively re-worked" (p. 443). This evolution in teacher education is, at least in part, the result of changing perspectives of both the 'ideal' teacher and the most appropriate means of preparing trainee teachers for the demands of the modern classroom (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001). One of these demands was clearly articulated in the findings of the Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) Student Social and Emotional Health Report (Bernard, Stephanou, & Urbach, 2007). It revealed that "significant percentages of students are experiencing social and emotional difficulties during their schooling" (p. 5), a finding which supports the contention that greater emphasis must be placed upon "the significance of students' social and emotional health and wellbeing during teacher training" (Bernard, 2007, p. 122).

The findings of this study are particularly relevant for English teachers, given that English is the only compulsory subject in which teachers have significant opportunity to nurture emotional development and understanding, which has been shown to be of significant benefit to increasing student motivation, engagement and cognitive development. This is not to suggest that other opportunities for the nurturing and development of emotional development and understanding can not occur within broader aspects of personal and social learning; rather this is acknowledging the unique opportunity that exists for this to occur within subject English. Secondary English teachers need to recognise the implications of emotion within their classroom and the means by which it might be effectively utilised to benefit secondary English learning. This integration must be more than a small challenge to the oft repeated dictum that a new teacher 'should not smile before Easter', for an understanding of the role of emotion must underpin the entire educative experience. For as Sutton (2005) states, "teachers' emotional experiences and expression influence their classroom effectiveness" (p. 232) and thus they will inform their professional practice from their very first days in the classroom. This paper provides insights into the significance of how these experiences and expressions specifically impact upon secondary English classroom teaching practice and learning. By examining their perceptions and experiences we can gain valuable insights into the value and significance of emotion into secondary English in the classroom context.

Key Words

Secondary English, Pre-service Teachers, Secondary Education, Emotion, Critical Literacy.

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Introduction

Emotions are varied and manifest for most of us daily in multiple ways, affecting our interactions, decisions and outcomes. According to Swartz (2001), "our lives are constantly charged with a myriad of emotions, influencing our likes, dislikes, satisfactions, and displeasures, that not only guide us successfully but also enrich the quality of our experience" (p.164). Emotion can have a significant impact on our everyday lives, subsequently influencing the choices, actions and decisions we make. It is not surprising, therefore, that this has serious repercussions for teachers.

Recent research demonstrates that the emotional context of learning is becoming increasingly important (Bernard, Stephanou, Urbach, 2007; Caine & Caine, 1997; Eisner, 1986, 1998). Considering that "there are often times within daily classroom life that students and teachers are required to, or feel compelled to, regulate their emotions" (Fried, 2011, p. 117), it is becoming more difficult to ignore the implications emotion has for teaching and learning. Teachers, and those charged with the responsibility of training them would find it beneficial, therefore, to explore, nurture, and further understand emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The manner in which we deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasm, motivations and attitudes is of significance to teaching practice and students' learning (Swartz, 2001). Boler (1997) states that almost anyone who has spent time in a classroom can attest that they have felt and expressed emotions and the "phenomenon of the ignorance of emotion, and the unpopularity of this subject, is worthy of its own study" (p. 203). This is indicative of not only the obvious presence of emotion in the classroom, but also highlights an aversion which might be either subconscious or conscious to acknowledging its place and role within the classroom context.

Context

The three participants in this study are all secondary English teachers with extensive school teaching experience. They represent both Independent and Government schools in the Australian state of Tasmania. The following pseudonyms are given to each participant: Alex, Ted and Alice. Alex had been teaching English for almost 40 years and is currently based in a northern Independent school. Ted has been teaching in public high schools on the north-west coast of Tasmania for over 20 years and is currently teaching in the same school he attended as a student. Alice has taught in a northern public college for 17 years before moving to the northern Independent school in which she currently works.

Within Tasmania there are 202 government schools, excluding colleges, which are grouped into four areas: North, North-West, South and South-East. There are 30 secondary or high schools catering for students from Years 7 – 10, and 26 district high or combined schools meeting the

needs of students from Kindergarten to Year 10. There are also eight senior secondary colleges for Year 11 and 12 students. Some of the high and district high schools offer a limited range of senior secondary courses.

Theoretical Background

Recent research indicates that schools are increasingly focussing on academic knowledge at the expense of social and emotional skills (Schonert-Reichl & Hymel, 2007). For the teacher, reason often holds precedence over emotion in classroom (Zembylas & Fendler, 2007; Titsworth, Quinlan, & Mazer, 2010), despite evidence that suggests "emotion is both culturally and cognitively a driving force behind human action" (Titsworth, Quinlan, & Mazer, 2010). Findings such as these have resulted in increased awareness of the critical value of emotion and its importance to successful teaching and learning (Bernard, 2007; Bernard, Stephanou, & Urbach, 2007; Schonert-Reichl & Hymel, 2007). Sutton (2005) attempts to rationalise the apparent tendency to dismiss the significance of emotion in teaching and learning by proposing that "emotions have often been thought of as out of control, destructive, and primitive rather than thoughtful, civilised and adult" (p. 229), or considered "a distraction . . . to be contended with" (Dewey, 1944, p. 141). Contrary to this position is the proposition that teaching in itself is "an emotional endeavour" (Sutton, Mudrey-Caminor, & Knight, 2009, p.130), and emotions are an essential part of a productive life (Costa, 2001; Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001). It is also suggested that within the context of learning, various emotions have the capacity to convey valuable information and enhance cognitive processes and they may therefore be perceived as integral to the learning process (Fried, 2011; Schutz & Lanehart, 2002).

Contention pertaining to what emotion is and is not, has been long debated (Deigh, 1994; Ekman & Davidson, 1994; Griffiths, 1997; Goldie, 2007; Palencik, 2011). This contention proved problematic when trying to articulate a universally agreed upon definition of emotion for the purpose of this paper. Rather than provide a distinct definition that has the potential to risk inaccuracy, detail of agreed upon features, qualities and outcomes pertinent to emotion are provided within the contextual discussion of this paper. According to Palencik (2011), "many emotions, joy and sorrow among them, are inexorable features of the human condition" (p. 2). Emotions are worth exploring for this very reason; they are tied to everything from our ability to reason to our capacity for finding beauty in the world (Palencik, 2011).

The prevalence of emotion within the classroom context and its impact upon teaching and learning has been well documented. Hargreaves (2000) states that "emotions are an integral part of education", and that "teachers and learners, at various times and for various reasons, experience

and express a myriad of emotions" (p. 812). As a result of the impact of emotion upon teaching and learning, Elksnin and Elksnin (2003) state that "teachers face enormous challenges meeting both the academic and social needs of learners in their classrooms" (p. 63). Although evidence exists to affirm the acknowledged impact of emotion upon teaching and learning, Boler (1997) suggests that some educators and cultural theorists often question how emotions can contribute to knowledge and learning. Historically,"emotion has been an often under-theorized aspect of philosophy and education" (p. 204). This aversion to acknowledging the power and place of emotion in the classroom context may be due to emotion being difficult to define (Deigh, 1994; Ekman & Davidson, 1994; Griffiths, 1997; Goldie, 2007; Palencik, 2011), which has implications for how it can be understood.

Empirical studies have shown that emotions that are evoked by language can be powerful (Velten, 1968), and can impact upon judgments (Johnson & Tversky, 1983). Despite this, Havas, Glenberg and Rinck (2007) suggest that "the interaction between emotion and language is not well understood" (p. 436). Holland (1968) proposes that "emotions seem neater somehow and less messy when we respond to literature instead of everyday life" (p. 283). Allowing students to explore emotions through, reading, writing and thinking provides significant opportunity for emotional development and wellbeing. Costa (2001) suggests that "students should come to value reading and thinking as important windows that can be used to look onto the world anew and learn more about what we, as people, at our highest levels of ability can become" (p. 294). By exploring the parallels between students' own emotional states and those emotional states of characters in texts, secondary English students can gain access to the "core of self from which stronger, more profound emotions spring" (Holland, 1968, p. 283). Holland (1968) also notes that "the results of this process may not only lead to an explanation of our affective response to literature, but also to a deeper understanding of our emotions in life" (p. 307). It is evident that through further exploration, understanding and consideration of emotion in secondary English learning contexts, teachers and students can glean a deeper understanding of their own and others' emotions.

As a secondary subject, English provides important opportunities for the exploration of emotion through creative literary exercises and experiences. These could be in the form of creative writing from someone else's view point, responding to critical events, or emotive exploration and expression through poetry and prose writing. It could also be used to examine the affective nature of emotion, creating a greater awareness of the reason for particular responses. According to Costa (2001), students can discover that by engaging in stories, they "free their creativity, think empathetically for characters in texts, value their own worth as thinkers and readers, and interpret ideas in the broader contexts of their own lives" (p. 295). Analysis and exploration of textual character traits are strategies recommended by the ASG Student Social and Emotional Health

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Report (Bernard, Stephanou, & Urbach, 2007) as "being effective in promoting students' emotional learning in subject English" (p.110). This allows students to make connections between real and implied emotion, and to consider what these connections can mean to and for them.

Teachers face enormous challenges meeting both the academic and social-emotional needs of learners in their classrooms (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2003, p. 63). Teaching is an emotional practice. Hargreaves (2000) suggests that "as emotional practitioners, teachers can make classrooms exciting or dull" (p. 812). Teachers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, the emotional dynamics of the classroom, their own emotional states and those of their students. It is essential and beneficial for teachers to be aware of and understand the complex nature of emotion (Kaufhold & Johnson, 2005, p. 616). In order for teachers to provide effective learning experiences which enable their students to further explore and develop emotionally, it would also be beneficial for teachers to have a heightened awareness and understanding of the implications of their own and their students' emotions in the learning process. A way in which teachers may be able to achieve this is through an increased understanding of emotional intelligence. Mayer and Salovey (1997) articulate the benefit of nurturing, exploring and understanding emotions through emotional intelligence, which they describe as "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (p. 5).

Research indicates teachers who value, are sensitive to and are aware of their own and others emotions have increased empathy and subsequently punish and discipline more fairly (Morris, Urbanski, & Fuller; 2005; Quebberman & Rozell, 2002). It is therefore implied that a deeper understanding and awareness of emotion, and learning how to modify or regulate emotions while teaching should strengthen teachers' effectiveness (Sutton & Knight, 2004). The ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report (Bernard, Stephanou, & Urbach, 2007) which has been the most extensive research project undertaken into the social and emotional health of Australian students, reveals that many students are experiencing significant social and emotional difficulties. Bernard (2007) implies that it is crucial for teachers to realise their role as being able to affect and foster students' social and emotional health, and that the report reveals "teachers' behaviour has a direct correlation to student social and emotional health" (Bernard, 2007, p. 2). Specifically, Bernard (2007) suggests that from the teachers' perspective, an ability to positively manage students' emotions and to successfully model this management to students, has significant positive implications for the students' own social and emotional health.

The work on emotional intelligence by Goleman (1995;1998) builds upon earlier research undertaken by Mayer and Salovey (1990) and identifies three key components of emotional intelligence: emotion awareness, emotion recognition and emotion regulation. These principle components encompass knowing how to express one's emotions; managing one's moods; empathising with the emotional states of others; motivating oneself and others; and the ability to exercise a wide range of social skills. The importance of these emotional competencies is supported by other academics as essential to achieving and understanding emotional intelligence (Kaufhold & Johnson, 2005; Morris, Urbanski, Fuller, 2005). Each of these competencies can be related directly to the classroom context as being desirable qualities of both teachers and students. Ashkanasy (2006) contends that "an awareness of emotional intelligence may be the key to better recognising, understanding and managing our own and students' emotions" (p. 466). Although there is no single shared definition of emotional intelligence, emotion awareness, recognition, regulation and resilience are regarded by theorists as central to realising emotional intelligence (Ashkanasy, 2006; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1990; 1997).

Kaufhold and Johnson (2005) suggest that by exploring, understanding and applying emotional intelligence skills in the classroom, students' learning can be transformed. Arnold (2005) notes that a teacher might use the emotional knowledge of themselves and their students "to determine the most appropriate classroom dynamics and tasks likely to achieve an outcome, such as the mastering of a concept or skill" (p. 26). The literature appears to confirm the significance and prevalence of emotion in teaching and learning, and implies that an understanding and awareness of emotional intelligence may be of benefit to teachers' practice and student learning.

Methods and Techniques

This paper has adopted a constructivist paradigm which follows the naturalistic qualitative methods approach, utilising the methodology of narrative inquiry (Hatch, 2002). According to Jalongo and Isenberg (1995), narratives allow individual teachers to make sense of teaching, and also enable other teachers to connect with the larger picture. Narratives can give meaning to our unique lived experiences through reconstructing the past and guiding future decisions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Tappan & Packer, 1991). Narrative inquiry captures and investigates experiences as human beings live them in time, in space, in person, and in relationships (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Wood, 2001). In this study the classroom context and teachers' lives have both affected and informed the data gathered.

Narrative inquiry places emphasis and value upon teachers' knowledge and experience (Cortazzi, 1993). This was facilitated in the study by ensuring that the teachers' voices remained central to

both the research and the subsequent writing of the narratives. Semi-structured interviews and the co-construction of narratives which focussed on the stories of the secondary English teachers were utilised to reveal the reality of the participants' practical experiences, values and beliefs. Narrative inquiry provides a deeply thorough insight into the lives of the participants, by allowing "rich, in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences" (Cresswell, 2005, p. 475).

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participating teachers to initially generate field texts and then interim texts. The first interview revealed important themes and the second interview allowed for further investigation of the themes and co-construction towards the final narratives. The participants were given the interview transcripts to verify, reflect upon, add to, and/or make changes before the second semi-structured interviews, where narrative co-construction with the researcher occurred.

Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to co-construct the story of the participants' experiences with the participant. For Clandinin and Connelly (2000) these experiences in narrative inquiry are: personal – what the individual experiences, and social – how the individual interacts with others. This interaction results in a greater intimacy between researcher and participant, providing insights that cannot be gained through a structured interview process. Themes derived from the narratives will be presented in the following section.

This research gained ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network and was given the approval number: H9409.

Discussion – Themes from the Narratives

The narratives provided important insights into the various ways that the three teachers use and respond to emotion in the secondary English classroom, and assisted in the identification of the following themes: Theory, curriculum and pedagogy; Spontaneity; Emotion exploration through characters in text; Integrating visual art and English; and Gender. The sections in italics are direct extracts from the participants' narratives and are included in the discussion of each theme.

Theory, curriculum and pedagogy

When asked to identify approaches, strategies or techniques which the teachers implemented in their secondary English classrooms to access and cater for emotional learning, two of the participants conceded that their current pedagogy made no allowance for this type of learning. The teacher whose pedagogy was informed by an awareness of emotional learning embraces John Dixon's Personal Growth Model (1967), and values the notion of students being able to grow

through their experience of texts in relation to their own lived experiences of the world. This view is supported by research conducted by Swartz (2001) and Holland (1968) who established that emotion is a significant element within the subject English (Swartz, 2001; Holland, 1968), and excellent opportunities to cater for the necessary emotional aspects of learning within English teaching pedagogy have likewise been identified (Cambourne, 1988 Morgan, 1996; Sawyer, 2004). However, the narratives suggest a sense of apathy towards teaching theory, curriculum and pedagogy. It is suggested that this may be due to the perception that *sufficiently effective teaching strategies were not provided* to the teachers in their training.

One teacher suggested that the theory he was exposed to during his teacher training was *interesting but ultimately disappointing*, particularly in relation to managing behaviour problems. Behaviour problems have been identified as often resulting from students' decreased emotional health and wellbeing (Bernard, Stephanou & Urbach, 2007; Hargreaves, 2000; Swartz, 2001). If, as Eisner (1998) proposes "curriculum, pedagogy and teaching really are at the heart of the process of creating minds" (p. 3), then this teacher's sense of the inadequacy of his teacher training may well be indicative of a wider problem. This view is supported by the ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report (Bernard, Stephanou & Urbach, 2007) which noted that the lack of sufficient training into the implications of students' emotional health and wellbeing is still a significant problem for current pre-service teachers.

According to Hale (2005), teachers' understandings of the multiple complexities of teaching deepen within the first years of teaching. Yet if teachers are consistently confronted by the emotional aspects of classroom practice without sufficient preparation in how to effectively respond, or unable to implement understandings of relevant pedagogy or theory, there is clearly a need for an alteration in teacher training.

Spontaneity

Sutton (2005) suggests that some teachers avoid utilising emotion in the classroom due to the perception that "emotions have often been thought of as out of control, destructive, and primitive rather than thoughtful, civilised and adult" (p. 229). However, the research findings indicate that the three participating teachers encourage the exploration of spontaneous emotional expression as an effective means of engaging students in discussion. Hargreaves (2000) agrees that "emotions are an integral part of education", and that "teachers and learners, at various times and for various reasons, experience and express a myriad of emotions" (p. 812); which as the three participating teachers attest; serves to colour and enhance the classroom experience. All three teachers value the occurrence of spontaneity in their lessons, and often encourage students to further explore

tangents and varying perspectives that arise during class discussion. They imply that spontaneity usually occurs in the classroom as a result of students or teachers reacting emotionally to a topic, issue, idea or discussion. As Cornett (2007) notes, "enthusiasm for learning can be sparked when students feel the joys of playing with ideas" (p. 156). Spontaneity was valued by the three teachers for just this reason, for each recognised its potential for capturing students' attention and to motivate learning.

One of the teachers suggested that despite spontaneity typically resulting in students *getting really off track*, it was possible to *draw them back*, and as a result of allowing them to engage in self directed, spontaneous discussion, the students subsequently *worked really well*. Bernard (2007) suggests that teachers who permit and encourage the occurrence and exploration of spontaneity encourage students' investigative interests. This has been established as being part of effective teaching practice (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Sutton, 2005) which benefits students' social and emotional development. Furthermore, allowing students to instigate spontaneity in discussions "provides students with responsibilities and involvement in classroom decision making and promotes class activities that accommodate their personal, experiential, social, artistic, and investigative interests" (Bernard, Stephanou & Urbach, 2007, p. 111).

Emotion exploration through characters in text

Consistent with the available literature, the research findings confirm the significant opportunity for students' emotional learning through character exploration in texts. Swartz (2001) states that "there is no better way for students to think about emotions than through the characters in the literature that they read about and identify with" (p. 169). Analysis and exploration of textual character traits is also a strategy recommended by the ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report (Bernard, Stephanou & Urbach, 2007, p. 110) as being effective in promoting students' emotional learning in secondary English, thereby increasing students' ability to empathise.

Swartz (2001) suggests that "thinking can have a dramatic impact on our emotions, not just on what we should do once we have these emotions, *but on the emotions themselves"* [emphasis in original] (p. 167)*.* In order for teachers to effectively guide and better manage this exploration of emotion to the full benefit of their students, research suggests that it is beneficial for teachers to have an awareness and understanding of the nature of emotion and emotional intelligence (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2003; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Kaufhold & Johnson, 2005). The research revealed that teachers value the concept of emotional intelligence and acknowledge that further understanding of *it could definitely be of benefit to their teaching practice.* It is unreasonable to expect however, that emotional intelligence can be nurtured in school curricula when an overarching, credible and

uncontested definition of emotional intelligence in the classroom context does not exist (Ashkanasy & Dasborough, 2003; Boler, 1997, 1999).

The research indicates that character exploration provides effective opportunities for students to explore, express and empathise emotionally, which is pertinent, according to Bernard (2007) to enhancing students' social and emotional health and wellbeing. Secondary English arguably provides the most significant context and environment for this type of activity to occur, as character exploration in texts allows students to "engage in metacognitive activities around thinking about their emotions and those of others" (Swartz, 2001, p. 168).

Integrating visual art and English

Two of the teachers considered that, in addition to secondary English, other expressive disciplines such as visual art provided significant opportunities for students to engage, express and explore their emotions and the emotions of others. The specific benefits of arts practice and appreciation with literature is well documented (Deasy, 2002; Eisner, 2003, Horowitz, 2004). It was suggested by two of the teachers that it is beneficial to integrate visual arts into English learning, as an effective means of encouraging further exploration and expression of emotion. The benefit of arts integration is confirmed by Haas-Dyson (1992), who proposes that "arts integration diversifies and intensifies students' experiences" (as cited in Wright, 2003, p. 24).

The research revealed that the participants saw an overlap with art and literature, where students have the opportunity to respond emotionally, not necessarily verbally or in writing, but through graphic means. There is extensive literature attesting to the potential of art as being an effective means for students to access, express and explore emotions (Cornett, 2007; Eisner, 2003; Wright, 2003). However, not all students enjoy art or will choose to do art throughout their secondary education. Therefore, it is proposed that English as a compulsory core subject for most students potentially provides an almost unrivalled opportunity for teachers to access and further increase students emotional learning, subsequently enhancing emotional health and wellbeing.

Gender

The objective of education must be to "enable all students, irrespective of their sex or other background factors, to achieve their full potential" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, p. 40), However, the research findings indicate that teachers are not sufficiently prepared to address the different social and emotional learning needs of both boys and girls (Bernard, Stephanou, & Urbach, 2007). The teachers all spoke of their concerns in relation to the successful and *positive engagement of boys emotionally in the classroom*. This is indicative of a deficiency in teacher preparation in order to properly address the differing emotional needs across genders. The link

between awareness, understanding and expression of emotion, academic achievement and the gender of students was mentioned by two of the participants. They implied that there was a *distinct need for teachers to be open to exploring a variety of texts, topics and issues as boys and girls did not always respond to, or engage with, similar texts.* In order to address this issue, teachers must be better educated in the emotional learning requirements of both boys and girls.

Research reveals that there are distinct differences in the manner in which boys and girls regulate emotions (Brenner & Salovey, 1997, as cited in Bernard, 2007, p. 5). According to Bernard, boys are more likely than girls to rely on social support in order to express emotion, so it is imperative that the teacher fosters a classroom environment where this social support is encouraged (Gilbert, 2003, p. 23). This is supported by the Commonwealth of Australia Report into the Education of Boys (House of Representatives, 2002), which notes that "developing higher quality interpersonal relationships between teachers and students will promote better learning and improve social harmony in schools" (p. 152).

Two of the teachers had experienced *difficulty in engaging boys emotionally in the secondary English classroom*. Research indicates that, on average, boys do not perform as well as girls in the areas of literacy, reading, writing, listening, viewing and speaking. This underperformance is most pronounced in the expressive modes of literacy (Bernard, Stephanou, & Urbach, 2007; Commonwealth of Australia, 2002).

Research indicates that there are significant differences in the learning needs and requirements of both genders (Bernard, Stephanou, & Urbach, 2007; Brenner & Salovey, 1997; Gilbert, 2003). The research also suggests that boys are generally not performing as well as girls in literacy (Bernard, Stephanou & Urbach, 2007; Brenner and Salovey, 1997; Commonwealth of Australia, 2002), which is reaffirmed through the difficulties experienced by the three teachers in relation to engaging boys emotionally in the classroom.

Conclusion

It is crucial that the various implications of social and emotional health upon learning and teaching are made explicit and given greater prominence in teacher training. The three participating English teachers have acknowledged the significant opportunities to examine and explore complex emotions within their subject area. Recent research demonstrates that the emotional context of learning is becoming increasingly important, and teachers are reflecting more seriously upon the types of holistic education their students require (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Fried, 2011; Gardner, 1993, 1999; Gamwell, 2002; Titsworth, Quinlan, & Mazer, 2010). The findings suggest that the

value teachers place on emotional awareness and sensitivity could significantly impact upon students' emotional learning. Mayer and Salovey (1997) imply that there is significant benefit in nurturing, exploring and understanding emotions. The findings also indicate that it is important to encourage and embrace emotional learning in the secondary English classroom, and that this particular subject provides an effective means of exploring and nurturing students' emotional learning. The research has also revealed the importance for secondary English teachers' to understand, explore and empathise with their own and students' emotions and responses.

The secondary English classroom has been identified in this research as being a most suitable and effective context for students' emotional exploration, understanding, expression and learning. Subsequently, this may increase expectations placed upon, and responsibilities entrusted to, the secondary English teacher. All three participants warned of the potential for harbouring emotional burden as a secondary English teacher, and that it was crucial for teachers, particularly inexperienced teachers, to seek the support of colleagues when addressing emotionally challenging situations. It is essential for pre-service teachers to have an increased awareness of how their own and their students' emotions will permeate the classroom and influence their goals, motivation, problem solving and teaching strategies (Hargreaves, 2000; Sutton & Wheatley 2003; Sutton, 2007).

By embracing lifelong emotional learning and increasing awareness of emotional intelligence, educators are engaging in necessary professional development and lessening the risk of psychological burnout. The potential for teachers to utilise emotional intelligence as a means of gaining a more complete picture of individual students is becoming of increasing interest and significance to educational researchers and practitioners (Kaufhold & Johnson, 2005, p. 616).

Consistent with the literature, a deeper theoretical understanding and appreciation of the principles of emotional intelligence, such as emotion awareness, recognition, regulation and resilience, and further understanding of the implications of emotional health and well being upon student learning, can better prepare both the secondary English teacher and pre-service teacher to understand and manage their own and their students' emotions. This research also responds to the apparent aversion in acknowledging the emotional implications of teaching and learning as being crucial to effective teaching practice and significant to students' emotional health and wellbeing.

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