

**Emotional Self-awareness: An Ongoing Process for a Healthy Construction of Teacher  
Identity**

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### **Abstract**

Teachers throughout their training and practice process have been faced with the construction of their teacher identity, which has been influenced by different factors such as social, educational, personal, and professional factors. In this process of constructing the teacher identity, emotional intelligence has played an important role in terms of making decisions when facing constraints in daily professional practice. In the process of building the identity of the teacher, emotional self-awareness plays an important role because that is when the need or having this kind of awareness is seen to create awareness that it is important to know, as teachers, their own emotions which allow an ongoing process for a construction of teacher identity. In this research, a categorical matrix was developed that made it possible to propose categories related to the recognition of emotions, their management and the teaching identity, which allowed the design of specific questions for the collection of data referring to the awareness of emotions by the teachers interviewed. The analysis of these data yielded important information regarding the conception that teachers have of emotions and their management in the formation of their identity, which represents an important field to be known in education.

**Keywords:** Teacher Identity, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Self-awareness.

## Resumen

Los docentes a lo largo de su proceso de formación y práctica se han enfrentado a la construcción de su identidad docente, la cual ha sido influenciada por diferentes factores tales como: factores sociales, educativos, personales y profesionales. En este proceso de construcción de la identidad docente, la inteligencia emocional ha jugado un papel importante en la toma de decisiones ante las limitaciones de la práctica profesional diaria. En el proceso de construcción de la identidad del docente juega un papel importante la autoconciencia emocional, porque es entonces cuando se ve la necesidad de tener este tipo de conocimiento para crear conciencia de la importancia de conocer como docentes sus propias emociones, las cuales permiten un proceso continuo de construcción de la identidad docente. En esta investigación se desarrolló una matriz categorial que permitió plantear categorías relacionadas con la el reconocimiento de las emociones, el manejo de las mismas y la identidad docente, lo que permitió diseñar preguntas específicas para la recolección de datos que referentes a la conciencia de las emociones por parte de los docentes entrevistados. El análisis de estos datos arrojó información importante respecto a la concepción que tienen los docentes de las emociones y el manejo de estas en la formación de su identidad, lo que representa un campo importante a conocer en la educación.

**Palabras clave:** Identidad docente, Inteligencia emocional, Autoconciencia emocional.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

This research focused on self-awareness in the field of emotional intelligence and how it defines the construction of the teacher identity. We have seen the necessity of a broad construction of this concept that will help other teachers to objectively generate a “healthy concept” of themselves. Emotional self-awareness undoubtedly has an impact on the construction of a teacher identity, because keeping conscious of our self-perception, emotions, practices, likes, and beliefs leads to a strong and healthy construction of the identity that we assume as ours.

Due to the current situation the world is going through that has had as a consequence the lack of opportunities to interact with cooperating teachers and students; we have chosen our own personal experiences as the basis to study the influence of self-awareness in the construction of the teacher identity. Based on what we as pre-service teachers have lived, we would like to contribute to the field of emotional intelligence, by presenting inquiry related to our experiences in managing emotions, as teachers and students, and by investigating other teachers. All these factors are within our immediate context in terms of providing useful information about a field that has been little researched or published in the city.

### **1.2 Purpose**

With this study we want to explore the field of emotional intelligence concerning self-awareness as a key point in the construction of teacher identity during professional practices. The idea is to deepen the concept of self-awareness in terms of understanding how the presence or lack of mental practices associated to it influence the construction of a teacher’s identity. We want to know how being aware of our feelings, emotions and desires leads to a healthier construction of self, and thereby contribute to the field of emotional intelligence and teacher identity into our specific context, where such exploration is needed.

### **1.3 Conceptual Framework**

This section contains definitions about emotional intelligence, teacher identity and emotional self-awareness. Salovey and Meyer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as “the set of skills hypothesized to contribute to the accurate appraisal and expression of emotion in oneself and others, the effective regulation of emotion in self and others, and the use of feelings to motivate, plan and achieve in one's life” (p.185). Emotional intelligence means reasoning

about one's and others' emotions (Mayer et al., 2008). Such reasoning commonly operates in four ways: appraisal of one's emotion, understanding of others' emotion, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion.

Regarding teacher identity, Vaillant (2007) defines it as a "construction referring to the history of teachers and their social characteristics but also as a collective construction linked to the context in which they work. The teacher's identity is part of their social identity and is conceived as the teacher's definition of themselves" (p. 4). Palmer (1997) argues that the configuration of the professional teaching identity occurs at the moment when the teacher begins to search for a way of teaching that is integral to their own nature, since the key to its success depends on the coherence between the method and the being itself and the understanding of one's own being as an inherent part of the construction of identity (p.37).

Identity is moreover the sense which a person has of the self as an individual, including the person's self-image and self-awareness as may be captured in the stories which the person tells about themselves and also as this is projected to and understood by others. A person's self-image and sense of identity is based on values and beliefs about how people should conduct their lives and behave in front of others (Richards, 2015).

Lane et al. (1997) defined emotional self-awareness as a cognitive skill that develops in Piaget's life stages. At the most basic level, emotional self-awareness begins with awareness of interoceptive sensation. This progresses eventually to action and general affect awareness, and then to awareness of single discrete emotional states, before finally moving onto more complex blends of emotions. The level at which an individual is performing is usually assessed with the "Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale" (LEAS), a free-writing vignette task in which individuals imagine themselves in various emotional scenarios and describe how they would feel in such a situation. (p.3)

#### **1.4 Research Question**

How does emotional self-awareness contribute a group of in-service teachers from Itagüi construct their teacher identity?

## **1.5 Research Objectives**

### ***1.5.1 General Objective***

To explore the contribution of self-awareness to the construction of a healthy teacher identity in a group of in-service language teachers from Itagüí.

### ***1.5.2 Specific Objectives***

- 1)** To identify periods during the teaching exercise of high emotional charge for teachers.
- 2)** To establish the level of teachers' emotional self-awareness and its impact on decision-making.
- 3)** To explain how emotional self-awareness influences the construction of the teachers' identity.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Methodology**

This study is based on a qualitative approach. According to Hernández Sampieri (2006) “qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena, exploring them from participants' perspectives in a natural environment and in relation with their context” (p. 358). The idea was to explore the phenomena of self-awareness from the perspective of the teachers who were interviewed in an environment as natural and personal as possible.

Furthermore, the study conformed to the interpretive-constructivist paradigm. According to Taylor and Medina (2013), the interpretive paradigm aims to “understand the culturally different ‘other’ by learning to ‘stand in their shoes’”. Moreover, it focuses on an epistemology of inter-subjective knowledge which, in the educational field, “enables researchers to build rich local understandings of the life-world experiences of teachers and students and of the cultures of classrooms, schools and the communities they serve” (p. 5). This perspective guided the collection of data and the construction of knowledge in this study that focused on these teachers' experiences.

Narrative inquiry is a pretty accurate methodology because it leads us to a very genuine experience told by the participants during their life and professional experiences. According to Webster and Mertova, (2007) “People make sense of their lives according to the narrative

available to them. Stories are constantly being restructured in the light of new events... shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives” (p. 2).

Even Though, we developed an interview, the possible answers were the narrative obtained as a result of the interaction through this instrument. The writing inquiry was a key moment in our research; when we got all the data from our participants, we transcribed the audio obtained in the interview. Transcription is the process of turning recorded speech into written form. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) view transcriptions as translations from the oral to the written form, which should be done with transparency and consistency.

## 2.2 Context

This research was developed in the municipality of Itagüí. San José school is located in the neighborhood of San José, a stratum-three place. The institution is more than 50 years old and is an only-girls school. Participants were English teachers who belong to the public sector.

## 2.3 Sample

Through purposeful random sampling (Patton, 2001), we worked with four in-service English teachers from San Jose Public School from Itagüí. All of them had a Bachelor’s degree in English teaching. They worked with students from 6th grade to 11th grade. They had worked with elementary and middle school students. Table 1 below shows the demographic information of the teachers.

**Table 1. Demographic Information of Participating Teachers**

Criteria	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
Age	49	43	58	35
Place of Birth	Bogotá	Medellín	Medellín	Cúcuta
Place of Residence	Medellín	Medellín	Medellín	Medellín
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
Social Stratum	4	3	4	2
English Level	B1	C1	C1	C1
Work Location	I.E San José	I.E San José	I.E San José	I.E San José
Type of school	Public	Public	Public	Public
Teaching Grade	8°	6°	10°	11°
Years of experience	16	19	35	13



## **2.4 Data Collection**

For this study, the main instrument for data collection was a semi-structured interview (oral narrative). We decided to do the interviews in Spanish considering that, in order to express emotions, teachers felt more comfortable expressing them in their mother tongue. We conducted through a conferencing digital platform like Google Meet with four in-service teachers from San José Public School in Itagüí. Carried it out in a place that is convenient for all. In case this is not possible because of the current situation, the interviews were carried out through a Google Meet session.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

We proceed to analyze the information obtained from the different interviews, we used the transcriptions and read one by one of the interviews to select or highlight the parts that were related for us to our four main categories in our research. We made a format where we summarized, and categorized the answers that were a key point in our research and that was most closed to answered our main questions and objectives. We also made specific comments and analysis of each of the main selected answers from each category to then relate every category responding to our main objectives and purpose of the research. Table 2 shows the category matrix.

**Table 2.**  
**Category Matrix**

**Objective 1: Periods of high emotional charge**

Emotions during practicum (Teng, 2017)	<b>Periods of High Emotional Charge:</b> Refers to periods in the developmental journey of a teacher in which they experience emotional ups and downs. These periods are usually characterized by crises that affect their identity construction.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Novice teaching period (first three years)</li> <li>2) Expert teaching/development - (5 – 20 years)</li> <li>3) Critical changes: institution, travelling, courses</li> </ol>	Semi-structured interviews (oral narrative)
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**Objective 2: Emotional self-awareness and its impact on decision-making.**

<b>Emotional Intelligence</b> (Goleman, 1996; Salovey and Meyer, 1990; Mayer et al., 2008).	<b>Category 2: Emotional Intelligence:</b> defined as the set of skills that contribute in the assessment and expression of emotions in one-self and the others. Emotional intelligence as a concept needed for the understanding of emotions and behaviors present in our daily lives and practices in terms of using that understanding to motivate, achieve and plan.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Recognize emotions</li> <li>2) Express them</li> <li>3) Use them in decision making and impulse control</li> <li>4) Self-regulate emotions, and motivation.</li> </ol>	Semi-structured interviews (oral narrative)
<b>Emotional Self-Awareness</b> (Lane et al., 1990)	<b>Category 3: Emotional self-Awareness:</b> Emotional self-awareness as the ability to recognize and understand their own emotions and how it impacts their practices in teaching. Emotional Self-awareness also requires that the teacher learn to distinguish and recognize their own emotions in order to control them and be aware of how they face situations that affect their identity.		

**Objective 3: Emotional self-awareness on the construction of teachers' identity.**

Teacher Identity (Vaillant, 2007; Palmer, 1997)	<b>Category 4: Teacher Identity</b> Is the self-concept ejected from an ongoing process of construction defined by some external factors such as professional and personal experiences, social context, culture and internal factors such as values, beliefs and subjectivity of a teacher during his or her life.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Self-concept.</li> <li>2) Emotional personal experiences.</li> <li>3) Crucial Professional experiences.</li> <li>4) Influence of the context on emotions and identity</li> <li>5) Emotional self-awareness in teachers' identity</li> </ol>	Semi-structured interviews (oral narrative)
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### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Finding 1: Periods of high emotional charge

The first one was the category called periods of high emotional charge. In this area we proposed 3 subcategories: novice teaching (First three years), expert teaching, and critical changes. We found out that teachers identified their emotions regarding these processes of adaptation and classroom management (regardless of whether those emotions were positive or negative); they especially identified critical changes that triggered a high emotional charge, because they started feeling emotions such as anxiety, surprise and uncertainty as they did not know what they would be facing. Critical changes involved other types of methodologies, administrators, school contexts with new students, and different backgrounds and they required a different behavior from what they were used to doing.

- *“But to face an adolescent population when I was already used to work with older students, it always shows you an emotional shock of anxiety and uncertainty” (T4.AR3)*
- *“So those first three years are definitely at the beginning like a heap of surprise and at the same time of uncertainty because you are just there with a lot of things you learned in the university but with no idea on how to apply them.” (T1.AR5)*

In the first subcategory that is the novice teaching period we found that teachers identified feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and surprise during their first years of experience mainly as a result of their inexperience in the field. They also relate their stress caused by the school’s requirements and the parents’ pressure regarding students’ results. Data also suggests that regardless of the teachers’ expectations and fear because of facing the new experience, they also recognized feelings of happiness and excitement.

- *“From those options, I would say happiness, but mostly I was being expectant of what I could find, of many things. I mean, I always found different and new things, thus it triggered that expectant attitude towards work” (T3.AR2)*

In the second subcategory, that is the expert teaching and their development as teachers in general, we found that after the first years, teachers realized that the next challenge they would be facing was group management, that is, students’ behaviors and attitudes. They identified these aspects as the most stressful and challenging as they recognized that students’ emotions and attitudes regarding the class directly affected their own emotions as well.

- *“Definitely, the kids that were too noisy and naughty in the classroom, so to speak... “Those are students which attention lasts only 5 minutes. So, that is always something really stressful for one as a teacher,*

*but at the same time, challenging” ... “That is what stresses me the most, because today I can't say I already have a formula, because human beings are different” (T4.AR6)*

- *“Those situations infect you too, so student’s attitude has a lot to do” (T4.AR6)*

In the third subcategory that was critical changes (institution, travelling, courses), we found that teachers identified school changes as emotional charges as they caused anxiety and stress because they were supposed to adapt to another curriculum, methodologies and ideologies. Then, these changes caused insecurity and fear as a result of the expectation, the doubt, and the necessity of adaptation to the new environment. Also, teachers had created a certain emotional link or commitment to the institution in which they were working, so when an unexpected change occurred, they feel emotionally unstable and started to feel anxious about the new change or the new environment.

- *“I had a change of institution which I was not expecting. And that change generated on me anxiety, like a number of things and even more when you are not prepared to that change” (T2.AR6)*
- *“Because in a private institution your position is a game in November, uncertainty arrives about if you are going to continue with your job or not. It is the same but every day is different, a different mood every day, a different attitude, and you have to learn how to read that and also to know how to manage it the whole class. In an academy, you have a maximum of 2 students, in a school you have 40 or 50 and that is a lot of difference” (T4.AR7)*

### **3.2 Finding 2: Emotional self-awareness and Decision-Making**

The second one was the category called emotional self-awareness and its impact on decision-making. In this category we proposed four categories: Recognizing emotions; expressing emotions; using emotions in decision making and impulse control; and self-regulating emotions and motivation. Teachers had a manner to autoregulate themselves in the way of expressing their emotions, especially the negative ones because teachers are expected and always have the need to be “in control” of everything in their educational environment, in this case, the classroom. So that starts affecting the way they express their feelings and even the way the teachers perceive themselves.

Then, teachers create an emotional-self-awareness and identity towards students and the decisions that affect them. Also, we can say that teachers may be unconsciously negotiating their emotions and hence their identity to take care of their students’ wellness and fit expectations. Therefore, the conscious management of their emotions was part of their identity.

- *“I always gather and thanks to my personality, I have known how to gather my emotions because if you say like anger, no, or say like you will be always happy, it is a big lie. You will face all the time*

*disappointment towards any situations or specifically when you design a whole class, very specific, so structure it but when the time comes by and then you realize that you never connected the class with a real situation and need of the context, when you are charged with extra-work, because you like to collab, but then they take advantage of it, is really frustrating... when you do not receive the credit for your hard work, there are things that always generate frustration and you do not feel appreciated... ” (T2.BR1)*

- *“In relation to my positive emotions I do express them, but when it comes to the negative ones, I refuse to do it. Maybe, expressing them in certainness occasions generates disappointment, And I can even say that my students noticed because of how I might react, for sure I am not aggressive, but based on what I just said, directly to evidence or expressing negative emotions, no.” (T2.CR3)*

The first sub category, which is to recognize emotions, showed that teachers had a high emotional awareness regarding their emotions in general, especially talking about those “negative” ones, which reminded them of the necessity of working on them, as their management would determine their personal and professional development.

- *“The first one empathy, the second one could be love, happiness, joy, frustration and worries, the last two emotions might be negative ones, but at the same time they are like blasting caps. Those emotions become in that specific time as the guide in mind thinking if I need to move on, look forward and go back and then keep going, this is not working for me, definitely I cannot keep going like this because If I am feeling frustrated and worried because of what I am doing is not working is a bad decision and then became the light I needed” (T1.BR1)*

The second subcategory is to express emotions and this one proposed that teachers possessed an awareness regarding the importance of communicating emotions, in terms of having a good environment with students and during the classes, as this has an impact on their stability too. But when it comes to negative emotions, they stood in two positions: the first one related with the capacity of expressing them in a controlled way, and the other one as the option of just not expressing them because they did not have enough control of them or because the “control” relies on the ability of not manifesting them if there is not a good way to do so.

- *Well, I try to be... and no doubt that is really hard. Communicate them is easy, but control them it is not. There, it is too hard to control what we are feeling, as if we are disappointed. For example, when it is something really good, I celebrate it but when it is something I do not like, I do not know how to communicate but with the time you will get into it. But there are still some situations with my student in which it is really hard because we think things like this got me shook or uncomfortable, I do not know how to express it. Doing things really objective and correct. Because you won't be the best teacher ever.” (T3.CR4)*

The third subcategory is related to the use of emotions in decision making and impulse control. Teachers related the regulation of their emotions in decision making and impulse control with the fact that they work with human beings, which requires a higher awareness and control of their emotions, as well as objectivity, consciousness about others' feelings and reflection about how our emotions and attitudes have an influence on others. For that reason, teachers recognized that in this profession it is important to have emotional self-awareness because all the time they are having interaction with human beings, and it implies that teachers should recognize their emotions because they cannot pretend that they can unburden their emotions on their students because this can affect not only the environment but also students' emotions.

- *"It is important because in this direct work with other human beings I have to learn to handle it because otherwise it would be crazy, because the day I have a problem here at home and I am going to transfer that problem to my space, my workplace, my situation and my students, I will be overwhelmed with all that bad temper. That's why sometimes the students wonder what happened to the teacher because she can't even stand it in her own body. So, it is very important because we are in contact with human beings. If I were a worker or a farmer, I would be working the land or harvesting potatoes. But no, I am a teacher between human beings" (T3.CR5)*
- *"As much as one wants to be objective, we are dealing with human beings and there must be a subjectivity in the fact that one must understand the realities and act accordingly." (T2.BR5)*

The third subcategory is self-regulation of emotions and motivation, which suggests that teachers were aware of the importance of regulating their emotions and motivation to take care of their students' emotions. Teachers knew that their personal feelings and situations, if not controlled, would have negative effects on their students. So they worked on being more patient, positive and calm, in terms of not influencing students in a bad way. Again, teachers were focusing their attention on the impact of their emotions on students, rather than on the impact they could have on themselves.

- *"So, I always manage the enthusiasm of always being on top and talking with energy and helping them to talk in the same way. If there is a contrary feeling of anger, rage, anger, sadness, I also try to control it in the sense that you can't take it out on a student. So that's the worst mistake you can make as a teacher to let emotionality win out in front of them." (T2.CR2)*
- *"First understand their reality from their personality itself, because emotions strengthen that personality. Obviously, always seek to show the positive rather than the negative, that it is normal to have a negative reaction to a negative situation, but that this reaction is not so negative for the students." (T2.CR5)*

### 3.3 Finding 3: Emotional self-awareness on the construction of teachers' identity

The third one was called emotional self-awareness on the construction of teachers' identity. In this category we proposed five subcategories: Self-concept, emotional personal experiences, crucial professional experiences, influence of the context on emotions and identity, and emotional self-awareness in teachers' identity. We found that there is a relation between the way teachers describe themselves and how they construct their identity based on the social and administrative expectations regarding their teaching role. Teachers believed they needed to perform all those roles society has assigned them and such huge charges brought new challenges in the way they perceived and managed all the emotions that came with the failures of performing such difficult roles.

The fact that teachers believed they needed to know it all, to always be happy, polite, funny, and patient created a big expectation on themselves regarding what they thought they deserved to feel and how they should feel it, face it, and express it. Also, we found what we can call an ongoing process of building the identity, in which they had the opportunity to go back in their memories and work on themselves. This process made them aware of the bases/roots of their whole emotionality.

- *"I do not know if you have heard that a teacher is a lawyer, a politician, a doctor, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and it is true, you have to be everything. So, it generates a little bit of frustration"* (T4.BR1)
- *"More than being just teachers we should also be psychologists, right? I do not know if you have heard that. Why psychologists? because psychology is in a certain way the art of learning to know, to know all that it happens and how it happens. So as far as you know what happens to you and how it happens, because it is not the same to be a person that is not interested about how my relationships are with the other one, why does this cause me such much trouble, or with my brother or my co-worker with my mother, or my partner. If I am indifferent and it causes nothing to me, it will happen the same on my labor sphere. Right? I won't wonder why this kid annoys me that way, or why do they ask me to repeat five hundred times the same thing I already explained, and the one who asks me to repeat is the same that was distracted all the time, that does frustrate me! I would like, like "hugh!) you know. Because it is going to happen all the time, and actually it happens all the time, but if you know yourself and you have managed your emotions in your personal sphere, sure it is going to be easier"* (T1.CR5)

The first subcategory is self-concept: Teachers were aware of their ego as an essential part of their identity. Teachers had been in charge of so many roles and challenges in society, they had been recognized as an ideal or model to follow, as empathic, dynamic, patient, eloquent, and funny. They had also got to believe these ideals and that became a load on their job and their identity.

- *“On the other hand, the fact that we are public figures, I mean, we are like a “standard” we always should look for the way of having a model behavior, or model reactions... A very sociable, eloquent and experienced person. A patient and tolerant person, also a person with many expectations and challenges, our labor carries a lot of challenges with many competences” (T2.BR2)*
- *“From the very beginning, one like with such amount of knowledge we have, sometimes we are pedantic with knowledge, very proud of that knowledge, and as we say it has to be, period. But not anymore.” (T2.CR4)*

The second subcategory is emotional personal experience: Data suggests that teachers were loaded with past personal experiences that were crucial in the construction of their identity, such as their childhood. That is a key moment when the most important aspects of the personality of a human being are constructed, and when the environment also influences them in their emotional awareness. Those are situations that need to be faced by the teachers, who need to work in themselves as part of the healthy construction of their identity. So, teachers knew about these personal feelings that may affect their classroom environment, but they seemed to be working more on hiding them than on healing them.

- *“I think on this profession it is really hard to develop like that pattern, but that also allowed me seeing myself as a kid, having control of everything, I am the sister number two and I always have had more control than the oldest sister, imagine that since I was a little girl having control” (T1.CR2)*
- *“One of the pillars that every teacher should have, unquestionably, is to have that healing with their life situation when we bring experiences from our childhood, from our adolescence that have marked us and to the extent that I can manage what happened and why it hurt me and how this marked me, I will be able to be freer in this present, because unquestionably the past experiences begin to flow now in adulthood and especially in the work environment, there you can see those scratches as they say colloquially that we bring from children and adolescents and really if it becomes very evident in some and in others suddenly more disguised.” (T1.CR6)*

The third subcategory is crucial professional experiences. We found that teachers realized that their state of self-confidence was based on crucial or meaningful professional experiences, which allowed them to reflect upon their insecurities and let them start working on them, as a part of their professional practices.

- *“It helps me a lot with my confidence and I felt even more comfortable and secure with my English, even though I taught in the academy I had to be good at it because the academy could grade you as good or bad and based on that you could keep going or just, they leave you out, so that's why i knew I had to be good and more self-confidence.” (T4.AR5)*



- *“So that helped my identity, it helped me to be more self-confident. That a teacher, without having graduated, trusted me to delegate a job to me.” (T3.CR2)*

The fourth subcategory is influence of the context on emotion and identity. We found that teachers identified that different aspects of their context highly influenced their emotions and identity. Aspects such as working in a public or private school, the socioeconomic stratum of the school, its context, the partners they worked and interacted with, and the school managers. Teachers expressed that all these factors played a significant role in the way they acted and felt at their workplace.

- *“I am happy here in this school because I have a very good population of committed students, let's say that the girls are somewhat cultured for a public school. So there are no conflicting situations of violence, pregnancy, drug addiction and those kinds of things that are not present in the school where I am. And that helps a lot with all this beauty that I am telling you right now would not be so beautiful.” (T4.CR4)*
- *“It's like I can't let go, what I would like to enjoy in the classroom. Before I say that I was much happier, but that depends on the immediate boss that one cannot get out of the pre-established scheme.” (T3.CR1)*

The fifth subcategory is emotional self-awareness in teachers' identity. Teachers were aware of the necessity of knowing their emotions, identifying them and working on them, especially in this profession, as doing it represents an essential aspect of their emotional and professional state. They recognized that they got to know themselves through the recognition of their emotions, and the importance they attributed to them. Teachers know that self-awareness, self-care and self-concept should be part of their daily practices.

- *“To the extent that you know yourself, the teacher or the professional who has worked, it is much easier in this profession because there are professions that do not require much in this situation. This profession generates a lot of emotional situations, so if you do not have it clear, and you are a person who is suddenly very unstable emotionally, this profession will be much more chaotic.” (T1.CR5)*

#### **4. Discussion**

Once we had the results of this research, we have found that there is a big influence of emotions in the construction of teachers' identity. Teachers have a certain awareness of their emotions, of periods that have high emotional charge regarding their professional practices, and of their influence on their identity. According to this, teachers need to keep on improving their emotional self-awareness in terms of being prepared to face the constant emotional challenges their profession will bring. Teachers need to be aware of the kinds of emotions they face to learn how to control and express them in the context where they are immersed, because

context is always interfering in the teachers' life and it can affect their emotions, and those emotions are part of the construction of teachers' identity.

Teachers also need to push themselves to recognize their emotions to know how to face or control situations regarding students' emotions because teachers most of the time are in a classroom with many students and each student has different emotions. The teachers who recognize their emotions can recognize the emotions of their students and know how to work in front of them by making decisions that do not affect the classroom environment.

As the participants recognize, teaching is a highly emotional profession because teachers work with human beings who also have emotions (even more unstable when they are teenagers), so there is always going to be a fluctuation of emotions in the classroom that need to be funneled by the most experienced one, in this case, the teacher. Still, even when teachers show an awareness of the role of their emotions in the classroom and in the construction of a healthy identity, they often have a hard time expressing those emotions that are considered as "negative" or "bad".

This is, at the same time, shaped by the idea that those emotions that do not please others, are not supposed to be expressed. The difficulty to express emotions is even worse, when teachers have been idealized with a mistaken social role. Teachers fear in the attempt to express some negative emotions because of the presence of their self-concept as egocentric, and because of the inexperience when it comes to communicating negative feelings in a polite manner. All this shows the importance of promoting ideas not only of increasing knowledge about emotions (which teachers know they have a lot), but also to teach teachers ways of identifying negative emotions, getting to correctly manage them and expressing them, in the way of constructing a healthier identity where all emotions are comprehended, understood, accepted, and worked on.

#### **4.1 Conclusion**

Emotional self-awareness undoubtedly has an impact on the construction of a teacher identity and plays an important role in teachers' knowledge about their own emotions, which allow for an ongoing process of construction of the teacher identity. It requires that the teacher learn to distinguish and recognize their own emotions in order to control them and be aware of how they can face those situations that affect their teacher identity.

We have discovered that teachers also create a self-awareness within the experience, in the sense of how to cope with the emotions, how to express them, how to be sufficiently conscious about them, how to be sufficiently objective in the classroom and how to overcome any emotional situation during their practices.

Barrett (2017) suggests that emotions are constructed and inferred from interoception (the sense of the internal body), as well as from external context and prior learning (p. 1). That is why emotions play a significant role in the process of defining teacher identity. The way teachers recognize and manage their emotions is part of who they are and, in this case, how they identify themselves as teachers capable of performing the challenges present in a class.

Our research with the teachers from this public school showed us that teachers have an awareness of their emotions, and there are different factors that contribute to their own emotions such as context, personal problems, students, and previous experiences, but how teachers deal with these factors is an object yet to be further studied. We as teachers need to develop not only an awareness of those positive emotions that emerge inside the class, but also of those negative ones that many times we attempt to recognize and regulate, but end up in denial of those important feelings that are also part of our growth and learning. Besides, we need to be constantly working on the self-regulation of our emotions, in order to fulfill the necessary requirements to be emotionally efficient and deal with any situation in the best positive way that contributes to our interpersonal development.

Finally, teachers need to talk more about their emotions, need to go back in a deep-thought processing and need to reflect on themselves as part of the ongoing process of the construction of an identity, and this is what we define as the healthy construction of our identity as teachers: the opportunity to work in ourselves as part of our profession, to analyze the bases of our feelings and how they make part of us.

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## **Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview**

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### **A. PERIODS OF HIGH EMOTIONAL CHARGE:**

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1. What initially motivated you to study a bachelor's degree in English??
  2. Among the following emotions: joy, sadness, fear, anger, displeasure and surprise. Which ones would you highlight as the most outstanding during your initial practice process?
  3. What emotionally significant experiences / moments do you highlight from the first 3 years of teaching?
  4. After the first 3 years, what classroom situations generated the most stress or emotional burden for you?
  5. What changes at a personal or institutional level have you felt that have generated an emotional charge?
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### **B. PERIODS OF HIGH EMOTIONAL CHARGE**

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1. List from 1 to 5, being 1 the most outstanding, the emotions that have stood out the most during your professional experience.
  2. Which of these emotions would you classify as good and bad?
  3. Do you consider all your emotions necessary? How do you approach them when they appear?
  4. How easy do you recognize your emotions in the classroom?
  5. How recognition of emotions helps in the process of making objective decisions about problem situations with students?
  6. In the process of emotional self-awareness, how impulse control has been in terms of face emotions?
  7. How can managing of your emotions influence decision making in the classroom?
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### **C. EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS ON THE CONSTRUCTION TEACHERS' IDENTITY**

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1. How do you perceive yourself as a teacher? Give a short description
  2. What experiences in terms of the management your own emotions have been crucial in the construction of your teaching identity?
  3. How have your beliefs changed regarding the role of emotions in teaching from your initial process up to now?
  4. How do you communicate your emotions efficiently to your students through the use of a second language?
  5. How the awareness of your emotions contributes to the construction of your identity as a teacher.
  6. Which is the way how you relate emotions to the identity of the teacher.
  7. What role do you consider that the teacher's awareness play on his emotions in the way he builds his professional identity?
  8. What recommendations would you make to teachers in general, from the awareness and management of their emotions, can build a solid and healthy professional identity?
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