

# A TEACHER OR AN ACTOR? ON EMOTIONS AND THE EMOTIONAL LABOR AMONG TEACHERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Nagham Farah <sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*The teaching profession involves demands of various kinds as recently more and more space has been given to the emotional aspect that emerges from teaching. This trend stems from the awareness that teachers need to cope not only with pedagogical tasks but also with emotional burdens since teaching does not only involve pedagogical training as it carries many emotional aspects. In recent years, more and more studies address the issue of emotions in teaching. The concept of emotional labor refers to the ability to regulate emotions in an occupational setting. Studies on emotional labor among teachers have been conducted in the United States, in Europe and Asia. The concept of emotional work was first coined in 1983 by the American sociologist Arlie Hochschild. Two main techniques (strategies) have been identified: "surface acting" - the expression of an ideal emotion that is inconsistent with the authentic emotion and "deep acting" - turning the ideal emotion into an authentic emotion in order to match the expression of the emotions demanded by the organization. Based on studies that have indicated the relevance of emotional labor to teaching, this study seeks to review the topic of emotional labor and demonstrate a link between emotional labor and emotional regulation among teachers..*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

An important theoretical contribution that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s concerned the issue of discrete emotions. Theorists assumed that there is a limited number of basic emotions - sadness, anger, fear, shame, joy, interest, contempt, disgust, and surprise - each having distinctive neurophysiological, physiognomic, motivational, and phenomenological characteristics. For example, there are unique motivational characteristics associated with each emotion such as fear motivates escape, anger motivates aggression, shame leads to withdrawal and more. Emotions are also conceived as having dimensional properties within the framework of discrete emotions. In other words, emotions can vary in

frequency, intensity, their hedonic tone and arousal level (Magai, 2001; Panksepp, 1998). The importance of these theories is that they undermine the view that emotions are merely disruptive and maladaptive forces in human life (Magai, 2001) and in fact, these theories place emotions at the center of many contexts in our lives. One of these contexts is the subject of emotional labor.

The concept of "emotional labor" was coined by the American sociologist Arlie Hochschild in her book *The Managed Heart* (1983). Hochschild described the work of emotions as necessary to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (p. 7). The

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: Nagem Farrah  
Email: [fnagham@gmail.com](mailto:fnagham@gmail.com)

concept can be interpreted in many ways, but if we simplify, we can argue that we engage in emotional labor when we feel the need to suppress our emotions. That is, keep a smile on all day, even if it is a fake smile, because if you work in a service provider industry, you cannot exhibit a sad or depressed face at work despite what you feel inside. Hochschild cited as an example, flight attendants who are expected to smile and be friendly even in stressful situations. According to Hochschild's definition, emotional labor is a combination of emotional management and life management. This is the invisible labor, for which we are not paid, that we perform to keep our environment and those surrounding us happy and comfortable. The concept includes many aspects of therapy such as, for example, emotional labor, mental load, mental burden, home management, clerical work, invisible labor (Hochschild, 1983). The expression of emotional labor stems from situations in which we actually work.

According to this theory, Hochschild (1983) argued that in a certain sense, we all engage in playacting all the time. However, our acting can be expressed in two strategies: External acting and deep acting. The external acting focuses on changing emotional expressions while deep acting concentrates on transforming internal emotions to express the desired emotion. The external acting that is done on the surface, include forging emotions that are not really felt, and hiding real emotions. For example, the way we sometimes change our outward appearance that is expressed in body language, the posed shrug, the controlled sigh (Hochschild, 1983). Whereas deep acting changes internal emotional states to truly experience the desired emotion (Grandey, 2000). Here, what we present is the result of working on our feelings. As the Russian director Constantin Stanislavski described as physical behavior that comes from a deep place of feeling. That is, the person who is acting, does not try to look happy or sad, but conveys what he supposedly feels and others may not know that the person they're facing is not feeling what outwardly, they seem to be feeling (Hochschild, 1983).

It is evident that these acting strategies are significant since a study by Hülshager and Schewe (2011) found that in organizations, external acting was positively associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and psychological health, which are causes of burnout. In contrast, deep acting was positively associated with emotional performance, customer satisfaction, and a sense of personal achievement (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Hülshager&Schewe, 2011; Johnson & Spector, 2007). In the broader sense of emotional management to meet Hochschild's organizational norms, Grandey (2000) argued that emotional labor is a process of transforming internal emotions and external expressions, in order to reach organizational goals. Since Hochschild's pioneering research on stewardship (Hochschild, 1983), several other professions related to emotion management at work have been explored. For example,

emotional labor has been shown to be performed on a daily basis by nurses, police officers, salespeople, bank employees and hotel workers (Chou et al., 2012; Gray, 2010; Lv et al., 2012; Moon & Hur, 2011; Schaible & Gecas, 2010). The present study discusses the field of emotional labor in the context of the teaching profession.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

It has become increasingly clear that the teaching profession places many emotional demands on those who practice it, along with the pedagogical-educational requirements of the profession (Schutz et al., 2006; Zembylas & Schutz, 2009). The literature suggests that teaching is an emotionally demanding profession because the work and the environment are vague and conflictual in nature and involve many stressors (Conley & You, 2014; Schutz & Lanehart, 2002; Somech, 2016). Studies have shown that teachers' emotions are crucial in a variety of aspects related to their work at school: in teaching practices, the relationship between them and their students, issues related to reform and change processes, and understanding the power relations and social structures within the school and the wider social circles around it (Zembylas&Schutz, 2009).

Teachers face a plethora of emotions in the classroom. Among the different emotions of teachers, positive emotions such as pleasure and pride were examined (Frenzel et al., 2009b; Sutton, 2007). Winograd (2003) lists five positive emotions that are included in the emotional demands of the teaching profession. First, students' love and enthusiasm, showing passion and enthusiasm for the current subject, avoiding both extreme and negative emotions, love their work and show a sense of humor and laughter in the face of their own mistakes as teachers. However, teachers also have to cope with negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and frustration. Teachers experience negative emotions and strong pressure in dealing with the demands placed on them by different stakeholders, with aggressive behaviors on the part of students and parents, with intense ongoing activities and with pressures to meet external standards (Day, 2013; James, 2011; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Because teachers often experience such feelings, they can affect classroom teaching and student learning (Frenzel et al., 2009b; Sutton, 2007) as well as negatively affect the conduct of the school organization (Ashforth & Kreiner; Frenzel et al., 2009a).

In order to conceptualize teachers' emotions, one can use the control-value theory of achievement emotions that Pekrun (2006) developed. According to this theory, subjective control and value appraisals precede students' emotional experiences in the learning and achievement context. Building on Pekrun's theory of student emotions, Frenzel et al., (2009b) applied the theory principles to teachers. According to these principles, teachers' emotions are created as a result of their

assessments or judgments which are related to specific situations in the classroom, with teachers' goals playing a central role in the assessment process. Thus, the teachers' assessments of the classroom situation precede the teachers' feelings. That is, the teachers may experience positive emotions such as pleasure or pride if the classroom situation is appraised by them as being consistent with their goals. Conversely, they may experience negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, or frustration if the classroom situation is inconsistent with their goals. In other words, teachers will experience pleasure when they see their students display an understanding of the material being taught, and will also feel pride when students successfully complete important tasks. On the other hand, teachers may feel anxious when they are unsure if students are constantly following the classroom assignments, and anger when the path to their goals is blocked due to students' negative behavior, and frustration when students do not understand the material, despite the teacher's effort (Frenzel et al., 2009b).

Various studies have found that teaching requires high levels of emotional investment from its practitioners, no less and perhaps even more, than service providers in the business sector, as this occupation requires daily, prolonged and intensive face-to-face interaction between the teacher and their students and many other factors. This profession has definite rules associated with demonstrating positive and negative emotions. Presumably, the fact that teachers are required to make an emotional investment in the face of a long list of objects when a different type of emotional investment is required for each of them, also adds to the emotional burden placed on the teacher (Ginat, 2011).

The reality in Israel, as in other countries, positions teachers as service providers, students and their parents as customers and the school administration, the supervisor and the office as principals and employers. This is all the more noticeable following the policy of opening school registration areas and creating competition between schools in some cities, which has created new rules of emotions. These rules are aimed primarily at keeping students in school where the teacher is expected to avoid expressing too negative feelings towards students for the fear that they would leave the school. There is an ethical critique of the concept of the teacher as a "service provider", since the requirement towards service providers to manage their emotions in accordance with the school's marketing interests, is in stark contrast to the rules related to demonstrating feelings as part of the internal goals of education and teaching - their educational perception and the declared school's perception. As a result, in extreme situations, a teacher will smile at their students because it benefits the school image and not necessarily because a smile and emotional support are essential to the student's development (Opletka, 2011).

Today it seems clear that emotions play an important role in the workplace. This can be particularly true in the case of teachers whose job is not only to teach, but

also to create and preserve a learning-friendly environment. This means showing enthusiasm during lessons, empathic response to students' needs and concerns, hiding fatigue and anger or presenting positive emotions even when the students are stacking difficulties and behaving rudely. Teachers must teach them and simultaneously, manage their own feelings in order to meet expectations related to their profession (Cheung et al., 2011; Philipp & Schüpbach, 2010). Actions that define the concept of emotional labor. However, compared to other professions, especially commercial ones, it turned out that teachers' emotional labor has unique characteristics since interactions with students, as opposed to interactions with commercial service customers, are often long-term and repetitive. A study conducted in Poland, showed that teachers' work with students was particularly demanding, as teachers were repeatedly exposed to the negative behavior of their students (Pyzalski, 2008).

Not only do emotions interfere with the teaching process, but they also seem to be the leading contributors to emotional exhaustion. For example, it can be exceedingly difficult to control anger or irritation, when communicating with students who ignore requests or harass other students. In addition, in the education system, some students may have special educational needs, which not only affect their ability to study, but also require more attention from their teachers. Teachers are supposed to help these children overcome obstacles by providing adequate support, reorganize lessons or provide extra time. Thus, working with children with learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral difficulties, health problems or other needs, can be particularly stressful and emotional (Antoniou et al., 2000; Male & May, 1997; Mackenzie, 2012).

### **3. EMOTIONAL LABOR AMONG TEACHERS**

Studies have shown that teachers believe they should act according to display rules that include expressing positive emotions and suppressing negative emotions (Schutz et al., 2007; Sutton, 2004; Zembylas, 2003). Levine-Brown (2011) found that the rules associated with demonstrating emotions in the teaching profession are in fact the product of teachers' own inference as a derivative of the image of the "ideal teacher." The teachers who participated in the study admitted that they found themselves "playing the role" through pretending to express warmth and caring (Levine-Brown, 2011). Wróbel (2013), who researched the rules associated with demonstrating emotions in the Polish education system, also noted that these rules are not as clear and explicit as in other service professions, although in practice, teachers are required to face high expectations of being nice and patient all the time, and never tired or angry (Wróbel, 2013). Studies that focused on teachers as emotional laborers, found that emotional involvement is an integral part of the teaching profession (Näring et

al., 2006; Philipp & Schüpbach, 2010; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Zapf & Holz, 2006). These rules of playacting stem from teachers' perceptions of appropriate behavior toward their students (Keller et al., 2014). The efforts that teachers make to follow these rules are actually related to the concept of emotional labor (Lee et al., 2018). Similar findings to studies that have examined emotional labor in organizations (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Hülshager & Schewe, 2011; Johnson & Spector, 2007) were found in research about the acting strategies, both surface and deep acting, among teachers. The study by Näring et al. (2006) explored how the acting strategies discussed by Hochschild (1983) associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement of teachers. The study found that surface acting was found to be positively associated with teachers' emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and was negatively related to their personal achievements, whereas the opposite was found for deep acting (Näring et al., 2006). Furthermore, in their longitudinal study, Philipp & Schüpbach (2010) found that teachers who tended to external acting, exhibited more emotional exhaustion, whereas teachers who employed a deep acting strategy, exhibited less significant emotional exhaustion after one year (Philipp & Schüpbach, 2010) and enhanced their job performance over time (Hülshager et al., 2010). These findings suggest that a deep acting strategy may be a more beneficial emotional labor strategy for teachers.

Keller et al. (2014) who examined the correlations between teachers' emotional labor strategies and their discrete emotions, found that negative enjoyment, anxiety, and anger, positively predicted the adoption of on the surface acting strategies. In addition, Lee et al. (2014) found that acting on the surface was in a positive correlation with anxiety, anger and frustration, and in a negative correlation with pleasure. In contrast, deep acting was found in a positive correlation with pleasure, and in a negative correlation with anxiety, anger, and frustration. These findings suggest the beneficial effects of deep acting on teachers' emotional experiences. Given that teachers' emotional labor and discrete emotions have been found to be factors in explaining emotional exhaustion (Keller et al., 2014), it can be argued that there is relevance to the question of what discrete emotions teachers actually express, fake and hide, while they are teaching (Lee & Van Vlack, 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). A study conducted in the United States on emotional investment among teachers, focused mainly on the expression of positive emotions and the suppression of negative emotions, based on the assumption that good teaching is charged with positive emotions. In order for teachers to meet their job requirements, they are required to fake positive emotion, or reinforce such emotions, even when they do not actually experience these feelings (Pfister, 2015). Thus, there is great importance to research examining how teachers' emotions are correlated with their

emotional labor strategies and their emotional regulation.

#### **4. EMOTIONAL LABOR AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION AMONG TEACHERS**

There are three aspects to emotional regulation. First, although most of the time, humans try to reduce the negative emotion, emotional regulation is not just about that. People amplify, maintain, and lower both negative and positive emotions (Parrott, 1993). Second, many situations in which emotional regulation is activated are conscious, such as a decision to make a dramatic change or to restrain oneself when being angry. However, emotional regulation can also occur subconsciously, when for instance, a person exaggerates in their enthusiastic response to a gift they have received, that is not particularly attractive (Cole, 1986), or when a person quickly diverts attention from something annoying (Boden & Baunieisier, 1997). Third, emotional regulation cannot be viewed as a positive or negative phenomenon since the same emotion regulation strategies that allow physicians, for example, to perform their work successfully (Smith & Kleinman, 1989) can also neutralize empathy among people engaged in interrogation and torture (Bandura, 1977).

Emotions and emotional reactions can serve people well, however, there are events where the emotional reactions do more harm than good. According to Gross (2002) such situations support the idea that emotions need to be regulated, which is particularly relevant in a school setting where there are rules for social conduct. Gross' definition of emotional regulation is the ability to control the experience and the expression of emotions. That is, emotions do not force us to react as we react but only increase the chance that we will react in this way. This flexibility allows us to regulate our emotions. For example, when we are afraid, we can flee, but do not always do so. When we are angry, we can hit, but not always do it and when we are very amused, we can laugh out loud, but not always do so. The way we regulate our emotions is important, since our well-being is inextricably linked to our emotions (Gross, 2002).

Emotional regulation is considered to be one of the three general aspects required for emotional skill. The other two are: (a) understanding or appreciating emotion - the ability to correctly identify, evaluate and understand a person's emotional expressions and internal emotional states; (b) expression of emotion - a person's ability to transmit his emotions by verbal (language) and non-verbal means (facial and voice expressions, gestures, posture) (Weare, 2004). Although understanding emotions, emotional expression and emotional regulation are often referred to as separate concepts, understanding and expressing emotion are in fact important stages of emotional regulation (Gross & Thompson, 2006), which is actually corresponds with emotional labor.

Theoretically, although the body of research discusses the similarities between emotion regulation (Gross, 1998) and emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983), empirical studies on the relationship between them is lacking. Such research was conducted by Lee et al. (2016). The authors examined the relationship between the two structures, emotional labor and emotional regulation, as well as their relationships with discreet emotions of high school teachers (Lee et al., 2016). The study found positive correlation between reappraisal and deep acting, and between suppressive strategies and surface acting. However, a weak correlation was found between emotional labor and emotional regulation, suggesting that cognitive reappraisal and deep acting, as well as oppression and surface acting, are not entirely geared to the same emotional management strategies, despite their similar ideas in the two research approaches. The authors explained this by implying that sometimes emotional labor strategies are related to specific motives while emotional regulation strategies are unrelated. For example, when people fake or hide their emotions, they act cynically, however, when they strive to change their emotions, they are honest. In contrast, people can also use emotional regulation strategies for various reasons. They can reappraise or suppress emotions for honest or cynical reasons. However, the study findings showed strong correlation to emotional labor when deep acting was positively related to teachers' positive emotions and suppression and surface strategies were positively related to negative emotions (i.e., suppression with anxiety; surface acting with anxiety, anger, and frustration) (Lee et al., 2016). In general, emotional labor strategies seem to be more related to teachers' emotions than emotional regulation strategies. In particular it seems that as in other studies cited in this paper, surface acting is the strategy with the biggest drawbacks for use by teachers.

## 5. SUMMARY

Teachers adapt themselves to their job definitions and take on the image involved in the job and the meanings stem from it. Therefore, they adopt an expression of emotion adjusted to the "role code". For example, they show enthusiasm or stay calm, even when their students are interfering in class. In fact, it is a suppression of emotions (e.g. anger) or faking a positive emotion to maintain the image that the role requires. Although the study by Lee et al. (2016) did not find significant positive relations between emotional labor and emotional regulation, the present paper shows that there must be a strong link between the two. Hochschild (1983) coined the term "emotional labor" to describe how employees express feelings that suit the rules of the organization or the job and they actually lose an authentic sense of identity and inner coherence to their true values and feelings. The term "deep acting" by which Hochschild described a situation in which individuals adapt their feelings to society's expectations

of them, versus "surface acting" which is a representation of external behavior without matching the internal emotions of the person that acts. Thus, in order to be successful in the labor of displaying emotions, one must control the type of emotions experienced or those expressed, and this requires a skill of emotional regulation, response-focused, in which true emotions are hidden, or falsified.

According to Hochschild (1983) any form of acting, based on levels of self-deception, can affect an individual's authentic sense of identity. It can be concluded that emotional labor, in both its strategies, surface and deep, requires emotional regulation. When one fakes his or her negative emotions, in order to conform to the role code and the rules of the place, not only does one feel these negative emotions within him, it can also provoke anger within and be upsetting. That is, the very fact that a person has to pretend and falsify positive emotions when they feel negative emotions, and in that process, they do not react in anger, requires from such a person emotional regulation. It apply to the second strategy of emotional labor as well, the deep acting, where a person needs to actually "convince" oneself to enter into a "mode" of positive emotions when they do not feel such emotions, requires emotional regulation since in this process, a person needs to restrain, actually transcend above his or her, true feelings, and adopt not only a positive response in situations where their emotions are negative, but to work on their negative emotions and actually change them, to feel and communicate positive feelings. In other words, suppress their true emotions.

Thus, this study, which indeed discusses mainly teachers, can be applied to any other profession. The researcher's recommendation is to conduct further studies that will examine in depth, the relations between emotional labor and emotional regulation among teachers since teachers are in different situations from commercial organizations. As mentioned earlier, teachers do not "sell" goods and do not receive a monetary benefit, the more they sell. The role of the teacher is more often than not, being performed out of a sense of a mission and their "customers", i.e., the students, cannot, as in the commercial world, switch to another supplier if they are not satisfied with the service. Thus, it is in fact a unique system of interactions that must be examined in a unique and specific way to the world of teaching and be cautious in applying the principles that are in the commercial world.

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**Nagem Farrah**

Namık Kemal University ,

Israel

fnagham@gmail.com

**ORCID:**

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