

**Artefact 7**  
**Final Term Paper**  
**Expression and Embodiment of Emotions in Learning**  
**EDST 645 Curriculum: Provoking Inquiry**  
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Summary

This class was by far my favorite. This course led me to consider the learning and teaching implications within workplace learning. This piece is important in my academic journey as I was able to bring together knowledge from a variety of disciplines including psychology, neuroscience, and education. I was also able to focus the location of my research to workplace learning, and I was able to address the role of the educator as they move with students as well as through learning spaces. Finally, I was able to address the important and complex role that emotions play in learning and in workplace settings. All of these have been a source of my curiosity for many years. I feel like I was finally able to combine the different elements in a way that was fulfilling for me as a curious person, for me as a student of the MAIS program and as an interdisciplinary researcher.

In this paper I first define emotions in a variety of different expressions and through a variety of different theories including transformative learning theory and constructivist learning theory. I then move on to articulating the sites of the body where emotions and learning occur. I brought in theories from Freire, Dewey and even Aristotle. I look at the spaces for the display of emotions, primarily between the teaching body and the student body. I notice how each “body” expresses, causes, and feels emotions. Lastly, I talk about the sites of learning and their connection with emotions and emotional learning bringing in discussions from feminist theory in the workplace.

One of my main goals has been to uncover the role of emotions in learning. When I began my MAIS journey, I focused on happiness and its relationship to cognition, but as I progressed, I realized that most corporate spaces are void of all emotion and all emotions are valid. I was interested in the role of happiness due to my profession which has centered around play and playfulness. My curiosity began during my undergrad and has grown throughout my 18-year career in children's museums. Since my new career goal was to study workplace learning I wanted to bring what I knew about emotions and explore a new site for their expression. I soon realized that many emotions are just as interesting as happiness and the reasons I sought happiness were personal.

## **Expression and Embodiment of Emotions in Learning**

### Introduction

My understanding of emotions and learning have been rooted in early childhood education where awe and excitement resulted in fertile learning environments. Children are expected to bring to learning their bodies and mind and express themselves fully. How does this application change in adult learning settings? I want to explore the relationship between emotions and cognition. Expressions and feelings of emotion play a fundamental role in learning and are intertwined with what it means to be human. Cognition is associated with the thinking brain, it is a thought process, whereas emotions are associated with obscure movements of the heart and soul. As educators we experience our own emotions plus the emotions of our students, as the person in charge of the learning space, what are the correlations between the body and emotions, how does the teaching body affect the learning body? What is the role of emotions in emotional learning in organizations and or corporations? If emotions are a result of cognitions, and are intrinsically intertwined, what are the benefits to bringing emotions to the forefront of learning within corporations? I was drawn to this concept of “curriculum and the cultural body” that we are studying in this course. I was fascinated with the implications of this concept for knowing and learning, how does curriculum shape the self? What is the connection between learning and what it means to be human?

## Emotion and Learning

Learning is a deeply emotional process, from feelings of frustration triggered by the unknown to feelings of elation as one reaches a new level of understanding: learning involves emotions. The expression of these emotions is a complicated act, as is it dependent on culture, location and the sociopolitical allowances of the space where they occur and the people expressing and receiving them. Learning theories approach emotions in a variety of ways, first transformative learning theory looks at the neurobiological perspective and its role in emotions. First proposed by Jack Mezirow in 1978, transformative learning is defined as the social process of constructing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action (Ali & Tan, 2022). In 2001, Taylor was among the first to place emotions at the center of transformative learning theory; he proposed that without emotions rationality cannot walk (Taylor, 2001). This contrasts with the constructionist view that would argue that without rationality emotions do not exist (Ali & Tan, 2022). Both theories incorporate emotions into the learning process.

Bower (1992) mentions that emotions make up the cognitive architecture, they are evolution's way of giving life meaning. The way that emotions are part of everyday responses to situations are stored in memory and are a collection of past experiences (Bower, 1992). Bower identified several learning types including omitted learning, which refers to learning that should have taken place in childhood but didn't. He describes that when someone is missing this type of information, particularly around core needs or common-sense skills or knowledge, it can be an important predictor for later learning behavior. Second, he discussed distorted learning, which is learning that was given in a

way that painted an inaccurate picture of reality. This type of learning reflects the needs of the “teacher” rather than of the learner, the teacher will tell the learner that they are stupid, clumsy, talented, lovely, or pretty in a way that is dishonest, exaggerated or untrue. Lastly, Bower (1992) discusses distressed learning, which is reinforced by distress either in the form of hurt, pain, real or imagined punishment. All of these have lasting impacts on the emotions that are expressed in learning experiences throughout life.

Emotions are an important element of the learning process and are considered precursors to learning as a motivational construct (Pintrich, 2004). In adult education settings, emotions are rarely seen as a target of learning, instead intellectual learning in the forms of facts, ideas, and problem solving are preferred. This avoidance of emotions can lead to an avoidance of education.

Emotions are stirred when there is an interaction between an individual and a situation, they are multifaceted and are formed in a four-step process: first is the situation, within the situation attention is drawn toward certain aspects; aspects are appraised, followed by an emotional response (Ben-Eliyahu, 2019). My understanding of emotions was centered around positive psychology, where positive emotions are the goal. Researchers have differentiated emotions into a variety of categories including activity emotions which are emotions that occur during the achievement of the activity such as enjoyment or frustration. Outcome emotions, which pertain to the outcome of an activity and include emotions like fear or hope. Emotions can also come from the anticipation of an activity such as anxiety, and emotions that come after the activity include emotions such as shame or pride, depending on the amount of control one has

over the outcome. Emotions are part of the learning episode and taught throughout life with early experiences influencing happening later ones (Pekrun et al., 2006, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Zeidner, 2007; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014).

Barret (2017) views emotions not as reactions but as constructs of the world, he sees emotions as the brain's predictive way to prepare for the future. Adult educators refer to personal or emotional issues adults bring to the educational setting as "baggage" or "barriers" to learning (Dirkx and Spurgin, 1992; Gray and Dirkx, 2000). If emotional issues are acknowledged by educators, it is often to provide opportunities for learners to "vent" and "get it off their chests" so they can get back to the "business of learning" (Dirkx, 2001). Educators within formal settings of adult learning seek to control, manage, limit, or redirect outward expressions of emotions and feelings (Dirkx, 2001). Students can be taught and retaught how to regulate their emotions through a variety of strategies including cognitive and behavioral strategies; strategies such as breathing and centering might help suppress and confront a variety of emotions. If educators place emotions as a goal, it is important to teach emotional identification alongside the intellectual content (Lea, Stephenson, & Troy, 2003). The positive outcome of this learning is that students will be able to take their emotional regulation skills outside the classrooms, teachers can be attuned to how student emotions are targeted and be able to enhance learning and keep the students engaged (Lea, Stephenson, & Troy, 2003). Ultimately, with proper attention to emotions and their triggers, students are better equipped to manage them, and will be more likely to face difficult situations in the classroom and beyond.

## **Soul and Learning**

Aristotle spoke about how humans seek happiness by developing the best form of themselves, to be better, he implied, people seek education and through education, they are transformed (Shaun, 2021). Both Freire and Dewey saw that individual excellence was tied to good citizenship and personal virtue is expressed through a community of practice (Shawn, 2021). Students express their personhood, or their soul, when they share their life goals, their frustrations and their exhilarations; each student has a singular life, and they experience the best form of themselves within learning environments (Shawn, 2021). An educator's role is to influence this transformation by creating learning environments, learning situations, and learning opportunities where students can become their best selves. This is one of the most inspiring revelations, as an educator, I am in constant interaction and observation with the transformation of my students.

In adult education settings, group discussion is considered the strongest education method because it exemplifies participatory, democratic principles; these discussion groups can create a variety of emotional experiences and expressions (Bower, 1992). Participating in discussion represents the quintessential adult learning experience which continues a long tradition evident in the writing of Freire and Mezirow, where participants practice democratic principles (Brookfield, 1993). Undeniably, these interactions are a battleground for emotions. Ben-Eliyahu (2019) has mapped out what they call the emotional learning cycle, which occurs when emotions are acquired from cognitive-based learning; they are emotions that are experienced through academic related topics throughout one's lifetime with early experiences influencing later ones.

This experience of emotion is intimately intertwined with what it means to be human (Lupton, 1988).

Another expression of the soul through learning is curiosity. Ali & Tan (2022) see curiosity as a predictor of the drive for lifelong learning. They see emotions as being formed in childhood because of encounters with certain situations or stimuli, a closed mindedness is an assertion that the same emotions will be felt when faced with the same stimuli. For example, if in childhood one had a negative, painful experience during a math test, a student may be more averse to seeking knowledge in mathematics later in life. Curiosity is a type of epistemic emotion that can close the gap in knowledge and understanding (Loewenstein, 1994). It makes sense that I have seen curiosity as a virtue, and I relish the curiosity expressed in childhood versus the lack of curiosity in adulthood. Shin and Kim (2019) discuss backward curiosity and forward curiosity: backward curiosity highlights errors in prediction within transformative learning theory. Forward curiosity has to do with being able to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity with an excited sense of discovery and action. Bower (1992) warned against relying solely on the action plan retrieved from memory, even if that action plan has been generally appropriate to that motive or emotion in similar situations. We can't grow as learners if our curiosity is stunted.

Aristotle also discusses how student's search for knowledge is like a puzzle they are trying to solve and looks to educators to help them solve it. Aristotle sees the soul manifesting in the action process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Shawn, 2021). Lastly, students bring self knowledge, abilities, habits, motivation, and their life experience to educational discussions, as

educators continue to foster a trusting relationship between us and the students, between the students themselves and between the students and the information. Aristotle sees this trust as soul work (Shawn, 2021). Dirkx, (2001) urges adult educators to explore imagination and profound meaningful experiences throughout learning; he encourages the use of journal writing, literature, poetry, art, movies, dance to foster the language of emotions. By approaching emotionally charged experiences with imagination rather than just conceptually, learners can begin to understand motives, themes, and deeper meaning in the relationship between emotions and learning (Dirkx, 2001). In early childhood education, we are taught the “name to tame” method, of explaining to children what they are feeling by putting a name to their emotions. If a child is having trouble putting on their shoes and is expressing anger and frustration, as an educator we would say “it looks like you are frustrated trying to put on your shoes, maybe try loosening the straps”. In this way children understand that frustration comes from a triggered experience and by focusing on the experience they can calm the frustration, instead of focusing on the emotions that experience creates.

### **Teaching and the Learning Body**

Teachers are also placed in a vulnerable position when teaching, both figuratively and physically. The notion of body position is used as a metaphor for thinking about the holistic nature of a teacher's work and education as an embodied activity (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003). Bodies in education have been ignored, considering it an object of the mind; knowledge was seen as being gathered from more distant senses of hearing, sight, and touch (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003). A phenomenological understanding of the body has helped to increase the significance of bodies, as bodies

can be considered active and intentional - to have a living physical presence is to exist. The phenomenological view also reveals that it is impossible to separate physical experiences from the emotional and cognitive because experiences are holistic (Husso, 1997).

If I were to reflect on the many physical positions that I have articulated throughout my career, there would be no positions left. Working with young children means I have found myself climbing on tables or crawling under chairs, working in dance means I have had to walk around literally pull children by their feet to their positions, I have carried babies over puddles, and have been in large auditoriums where I have been asked to make minimal movements as I was being taped and the mic would rattle if I moved. The notion of presence for teachers is a complicated one, teachers must be both on stage and in the audience with the pupils, even if one wants to, one cannot hide (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch). As a teacher in alternative learning settings such as museums and science centers, my voice is less important than what my body positions say. I can command a group of excited students by simply putting up my hand and waiting. Bodies are powerful, teachers and pupils produce power through embodied practices, both in how they move and how they respond physically (Moe, 2000).

Educators have a special power when in front of the classroom, and they do not always need to convey dominance; honesty, love, compassion also make up the embodied expressions of teachers. Teachers convey loving attention with every pupil through individual touch, a gaze with trust, supporting words or physical closeness (Farley, 1996). Because love and care also include access to power, it is a big

responsibility for teachers to control that power. That is why responsiveness becomes an essential part of loving and caring relationships (Goldstein 1997).

Teacher's bodies are also bodies of protection and are tasked with keeping children and students safe from physical harm (Ruddick, 1995). This is a hidden aspect of work that is rarely talked about. Adult students also face harm or risk through alcohol, drug use, emotional, physical, sexual abuse, unemployment, poverty, and exploitation. Teaching bodies also have a responsibility to listen to themselves, teachers perceive multisensory messages that tell stories about the embodiment of their work as teachers; when teachers take a position of listening to themselves, they will become better listeners to the needs of their students (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003). Teacher's bodies are moral and emotional voices, they are cultural constructs learned through practice and carry emotional messages. The location, the culture of that space dictate which body positions are appropriate, and which are not. As someone who taught physical literacy, my movements around the room and how I interacted with my child students told a very different story than when I was in front of an adult classroom. I felt my student's needs in my body (I carry their worry and share their excitement) and I reacted to their bodies and the stories they were telling me with physical attention, whether it was eye contact, or the tone of my voice.

The definition of a child learner that I like to use is that of a "mighty learner who brings body and soul to learning". This definition understands the learning body as taking up space to learn. The best educational experience occurs when both teachers and learners are "embodied" and the connection between cognition and emotion is recognized (Chapman, 1998). Educational events need to understand that body

knowledge has epistemic value and both body and mind have a place in learning spaces. As adult educators, we need to understand what has shaped the many bodies that enter our classroom, and what role we can play in remaking them. Student bodies are made up of identities, genders, characters, and joys that result from interactions with one another (Schatzki, 1996). Not all spaces are conducive to listening to the language of the body. As I move away from artistic and creative learning spaces for children to more corporate and classrooms for adult learners, how can I reconcile my own need to include bodies, and bodies that express emotion in the curriculum?

### **Learning in Organizations**

Academic and workplace learning tend to be de-emotionalized spaces where the process of teaching and learning are removed from overt emotional expressions (Zembylas, 2005). Academics and emotions are studied apart from emotional features, as in these spaces the “head work” comes before the “heart work” - emotion comes after knowledge. The power dynamics of gender also have a strong hand in the role of emotions in the workplace. Feminist theory says that emotions are discursive and part of cultural practices that are linked to material and historical inequalities; second emotions are embodied and performative, and we cannot understand emotion aside from power relations (Hochschild, 1983). Emotional expressions are a way of displaying the feelings learned through formal inputs (such as training courses or management education) and informal situations (such as the marketing of occupations, or social interactions in the course of the working day. During workplace socialization and throughout our careers, we continue to learn and reinforce the emotions that we must perform in our job, emotions become part of our job, and therefore part of what we

sell to others. We learn to display some emotions (for example interest and enthusiasm) and at the same time learn to suppress others (such as boredom, shame, and pleasure) (Weiss, 2000). The expression of emotions highlights power relations. Power in communities of practice, such as in workplace learning is made visible to highlight the political processes, their impact on the possibilities of learning and the accomplishment of organizational change (Coopey, 2004).

Emotions and cognition are intertwined, but expressing emotions in organizational settings can be seen as inappropriate because they are linked to the expressive arenas of life instead of the instrumental goal of the business world (Putnam & Muby, 1993). Simply suppressing emotions is not the correct course, as emotions are so closely tied to cognition. Corporate life should foster basic skills of emotional intelligence by helping workers learn together to work more effectively, boosting their collective emotional intelligence will help corporations thrive (Goleman, 1995). The most critical source of emotional expression that I have seen is during organizational change. Organizations will go through change to ensure their survival, investing in emotional intelligence training during these volatile times are essential for employee engagement.

Salovey & Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as the ability for an individual to monitor one's own and other's emotions; to discriminate among the positive and negative effects of emotions; and to use emotional information to guide one's actions. Their definition links emotions and cognition by highlighting emotional awareness, emotional facilitation, emotional knowledge, and emotional regulation (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). To be emotionally aware, means to have the ability to gauge one's experienced emotions, to be able to express those emotions and to convey one's

emotional needs to others. This includes be able to be aware of other's emotions and gauge other's honest and dishonest and accurate and inaccurate expressions of emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1997) Next being able to conduct emotional facilitations has to do with each individual's ability to use emotions to prioritize thinking; individuals will understand how important information causes certain emotions to be expressed. This factor also includes the ability to adopt multiple perspectives to assess a problem from all sides, including pessimistic and optimistic perspectives (Mayer & Salovey 1997). Just as important is emotional knowledge which refers to an individual's ability to understand emotional cycles and complex emotions which includes the ability to recognize the likely transitions between emotions, for example, moving from feelings of betrayal to feelings of anger and grief (Mayer & Salovey 1997). Lastly, emotional regulation revolves around emotional management which is an individual's ability to connect or disconnect from an emotion depending on its usefulness in any given situation (Mayer & Salovey 1997). This emotional knowledge makes a stronger engaged workforce.

## **Conclusion**

The relationship between learning and emotions is a complicated interconnected story. Emotions are expressions of learning, in early childhood the expression of emotions is welcomed but as children grow up, they are expected to have control of those emotions and once they reach the corporate world, the overt expression of emotions is no longer welcomed. Emotions are associated with what it means to be human. Aristotle spoke about learners becoming better versions of themselves through education, as educators we play a critical role in fostering their pursuits. Furthermore,

teachers need to pay attention to their own bodies in learning spaces, being present and taking up space facilitates learning and conveys emotion. Teacher's bodies command attention and reactions from their students. Knowing and understanding how teaching affects them emotionally will help teachers be better attuned to the needs of their students. Understanding emotional intelligence and bringing to the classroom the exploration, the understanding and the expression of emotions will help students in and outside of the classroom. In corporate learning settings, where emotions are rarely welcomed, teaching emotional intelligence and emotional awareness is incredibly important. Corporations and spaces of work are highly emotional spaces, eliminating the expression of emotions is not a solution, instead working through emotions, working with emotions is a far better humanistic way of teaching one another.

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