Emotions and confidence within teaching in higher education

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Teaching is connected with a variety of emotions, but research on this area is scarce in the field of higher education. The present study explores the role of emotions and confidence within six different teacher profiles. Furthermore, the study aims to analyse emotions that arise during participation in courses on university pedagogy. Altogether 97 university teachers were interviewed. The method of content analysis was used to identify descriptions related to emotions and confidence. The results implied that teachers with consonant learning-focused profiles had the most positively charged emotions regarding teaching. However, those with consonant content-focused profiles had neutral or negative feelings about teaching and about the development of teaching. Confusion characterised those who were in a developmental phase in their teaching. Furthermore, the results showed that the emotional aspect was evident in the pedagogical training of university teachers.

Keywords: emotions; confidence; university teaching; pedagogical training; teacher profiles

Introduction

Research in the field of teaching in higher education has focused on two main areas. First, several studies have focused on teachers’ conceptions of teaching, and these have been shown to vary from conceiving of teaching as imparting information from the teacher to the students to constructing knowledge with the students through interaction (e.g. Kember and Kwan 2000; Prosser, Trigwell, and Taylor 1994; Samuelowicz and Bain 1992, 2001). Second, researchers have concentrated on teachers’ approaches to teaching; that is, how teachers actually go about their teaching. Teachers have been shown to approach teaching either in learning-focused or content-focused ways. The student-centred approach is described as a way of teaching which sees teaching as facilitating the students’ learning processes. The teacher-centred approach, on the other hand, is described as a way of teaching in which students are considered to be more or less the passive recipients of information transmitted from the teacher to the students. Approaches to teaching are greatly influenced by conceptions of teaching (e.g. Kember and Kwan 2000; Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne 2008; Trigwell, Prosser, and Taylor 1994). Most teachers, however, combine these two approaches in one way or another in their own teaching (Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne 2008).

Although a range of research on teaching in higher education has been the focus of several studies, the role of emotions has been almost entirely ignored, even though

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teaching is charged with a variety of emotions. In their review of teachers’ emotions and teaching, Sutton and Wheatley (2003) noted that researchers know surprisingly little about the role of emotions in learning to teach, and about how teachers’ emotional experiences relate to their teaching practices. They point out that research on teachers’ emotions has been conducted mostly in the field of teacher education. They suggest that the role of emotions in teaching might be neglected in research due to the irrational tone of emotions. Emotions are often thought of as out of control, primitive and childish. These images are incompatible with the civilised nature of the academic world.

Teaching is predominantly seen to be a matter of mastering the subject and appropriate teaching methods. Researchers have gradually begun to emphasise that teachers do express a variety of emotions when they describe their teaching (e.g. Entwistle et al. 2000; Hargreaves 1998). Excellence in university teaching involves mastery of the subject matter as well as enthusiasm and other emotions (Martin and Lueckenhansen 2005). When exploring university teachers’ development, Åkerlind (2003) found that teachers experienced development as an increase not only in their knowledge and skills, but also in comfort with teaching. The teachers felt more confident as teachers or they felt that teaching became less effortful. Furthermore, emotions are likely to influence teachers’ cognition and motivation (Sutton and Wheatley 2003). Therefore, knowledge of teachers’ emotions, besides knowledge of teachers’ motivation and cognition, is essential in understanding teachers and teaching.

Sutton and Wheatley (2003) list positive and negative emotions experienced by teachers. The positive emotions most often discussed in the literature are love and caring. Teachers also talk about the joy, satisfaction and pleasure associated with teaching. Some teachers find teaching exciting, which is associated with the unpredictability of teaching. The most commonly experienced negative emotions include anger and frustration.

A few studies have shown connections between teaching and emotions in higher education contexts. Martin and Lueckenhansen (2005) showed that teachers with more developed understandings of teaching and learning are the most emotionally affected, while confusion and anxiety characterise those involved in the biggest changes. In a recent study, Trigwell (2009) reported on the connections between higher education teachers’ emotions and approaches to teaching. He found that positive emotions are related to the adoption of a student-focused, conceptual change approach to teaching, while negative emotions and a teacher-focused, information transmission approach to teaching are related to each other. Furthermore, Sutton and Wheatley (2003) showed that beginning teachers often experience anxiety because of the complexity of learning to teach and the uncertainty of achieving goals. Zhang and Zhu (2008) have shown that some college teachers tend to hide their actual emotions (e.g. anger and disappointment), yet they show humour and enthusiasm rather than being authentic. The emotional dissonance between inner feelings and outside expressions might lead to dissatisfaction and even burnout.

There is an interactive relationship between teachers’ and students’ emotions and behaviour. Students are aware of and influenced by teachers’ emotions (Sutton and Wheatley 2003), and, conversely, teachers’ emotions are influenced by students’ behaviour and progress (e.g. Hargreaves 2000). It has been found that teachers’ satisfaction and pleasure is likely to arise from progress made by their students, and from the responsive and cooperative behaviour of their students. On the other hand, students’ laziness, lack of concentration and other misbehaviours cause anger and frustration among teachers (Hargreaves 2000). When there is a challenge in the classroom,
teachers are particularly affected. When academics’ identity and integrity is challenged, they respond with a range of emotions (Martin and Lueckenhausen 2005).

A number of studies have investigated the relationship between teacher confidence and approach to teaching (e.g. Åkerlind 2007; Sadler 2009). A study by Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, and Nevgi (2007) implied that, when teachers describe a greater level of student-centredness, they also describe a greater level of self-efficacy. Conversely, when they describe a lower level of student-centredness, self-efficacy beliefs are described to be similarly lower. It has been proposed that teachers with a more student-centred approach to teaching are likely to have greater self-efficacy due to the nature of this type of teaching (Gordon, Petocz, and Reid 2007).

When examining beginning university teachers, Sadler (2009) found that confidence was regularly described in relation to an individual’s perceived content and pedagogical knowledge; however, often it was content knowledge that appeared to predominate. If the teachers perceived that they had a good level of content knowledge, confidence tended to be high. A greater level of confidence was often described in conjunction with taking risks and trying out new ways of teaching. A ‘fear of taking risks’ might prevent teachers from engaging in new or challenging situations, and, therefore, they fail to gain different experiences on which they can reflect and develop knowledge (McAlpine et al. 1999).

There is disagreement about the meaning and nature of ‘emotion’ (see Zembylas 2002). In the present study, emotions are viewed as a fundamental factor of human mental operations, along with motivation and cognition. Furthermore, emotions are considered to be influenced not only by teachers’ individual reality, but also by social interactions with others and the surrounding culture (see Sutton and Wheatley 2003; Zembylas 2002).

The present interview study explores the role of emotions and confidence within six different teacher profiles, and analyses the emotions that arise during participation in courses on university pedagogy. The six teacher profiles were identified in a previous study (see Table 1). Some of the teachers’ profiles were clearly and systematically either learning- or content-focused, making their profiles consonant. On the other hand, the profiles of some of the teachers consisted of combinations of learning- and content-focused approaches or conceptions, making their profiles dissonant. Three types of dissonance were identified. Some teachers used both learning- and content-focused expressions when describing their teaching conceptions and strategies, and their profiles were categorised as being systematically dissonant. In the group of contextually varying profiles, the teachers’ conceptions of teaching and learning were categorised as being clearly learning-focused. However, their descriptions of their teaching strategies reflected both learning- and content-focused approaches. These teachers described applying different teaching styles in different teaching contexts. Teachers who were categorised as having a developing profile also used both learning- and content-focused expressions when describing their teaching strategies, but their conceptions of teaching were systematically learning focused. These teachers’ profiles were clearly developing towards consonant learning-focused profiles.

While analysing teachers’ profiles, we noticed that emotions related to teaching clearly emerged from the interview data. Therefore, a separate study on the role of emotions in teaching was conducted. Based on the different nature of the profiles, we hypothesised that there are differences between the profile groups in how teachers describe emotions related to their teaching and what kind of emotions are described. Teachers in the consonant learning-focused profile groups might describe teaching in
a more positive manner than teachers in the consonant content-focused profile group. Furthermore, we expect teachers in the consonant learning-focused profile groups to be the most confident as teachers.

Methodology

Participants

Of the 97 participants, 95 were teachers at the University of Helsinki and two teachers came from the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration. The teachers represented disciplines from the faculties of Theology, Law, Arts, Medicine, Science, Behavioural Sciences, Agriculture and Forestry, Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy. The two teachers from the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration represented commercial sciences. Each of the faculties comprises several disciplines. Forty-two (43%) participants represented soft sciences (such as history, education or social sciences) and 55 (57%) hard sciences (such as chemistry, mathematics or medicine) (see, for example, Biglan 1973). Thirty-five (36%) teachers were men and 62 (64%) were women. The teachers’ ages varied from 27 to 58 years. Six teachers did not report their age. The teaching experience of the teachers varied from a few months to 30 years.

There were no statistical differences in terms of age, gender and teaching experience between the six profile groups. However, there were disciplinary differences. Teachers whose profiles were consonant and learning-focused more often represented soft sciences than hard sciences, but teachers whose profiles included dissonant elements, or were systematically content focused, more often represented hard sciences than soft sciences. A chi-square test showed that the disciplinary differences between the six profile groups were statistically significant.

Of the 97 teachers, 56 had participated in pedagogical training for university teachers, while 37 had had no pedagogical training. Four teachers did not report whether they had participated in training or not. In the contextually varying profiles, systematically dissonant profiles and systematically content-focused profiles groups, around half of the teachers had participated in pedagogical courses organised for university teachers. However, in the reflectively learning-focused profiles, systematically learning-focused profiles and developing profiles groups, the majority of the teachers had participated in such courses.

Interviews

The participants attended a voluntary interview between the years 2003 and 2005. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, and all interviews were recorded and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant content-focused profiles (n = 6)</th>
<th>Dissonant profiles (n = 29)</th>
<th>Towards learning-focused profiles (n = 22)</th>
<th>Consonant learning-focused profiles (n = 40)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Systematically content-focused profiles (n = 6)</td>
<td>Systematically dissonant profiles (n = 29)</td>
<td>Contextually varying profiles (n = 10)</td>
<td>Developing profiles (n = 12)</td>
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transcribed. The interviews lasted from 26 to 95 minutes. The themes of the semi-structured interviews focused broadly on issues related to teaching. For example, the teachers were asked to describe themselves as teachers, their teaching strategies, the most important elements in their teaching, their evaluations of the effect of teaching experience, pedagogical training and the nature of their discipline as it affects their teaching. Emotions related to teaching or teachers’ confidence were not specifically addressed in the questions, but many teachers spontaneously mentioned emotions and confidence related to teaching. By not asking the teachers directly about their emotions it was possible to analyse whether the teachers experienced emotions as a central part of teaching when describing, for example, the most important elements in their teaching. On the other hand, asking them directly about emotions might have provided a fuller and a different set of data. However, more general questions provided information about the role of emotions within teaching. The interviewers asked some clarifying questions, or asked the teachers to describe some aspects in more detail, if something remained unclear to the interviewer or if the responses were not sufficiently detailed.

**Analyses**

The method of content analysis was used to identify any descriptions referring to emotions, and confidence related to the teaching and pedagogical training of university teachers. First, all the descriptions related to emotional aspects of teaching or confidence were listed, and any descriptions related to emotions or feelings were included in the analysis. Second, the descriptions of positive and negative emotions were separated and grouped under diverse categories. Third, the interview transcripts were read through once again in order to identify which categories were mentioned by each teacher. Finally, the analysis focused on exploring the variation in emotions and confidence between the six different teacher profiles.

The analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted by both authors. The first author independently analysed all the interviews, while the second author analysed the interviews of the 56 teachers who had participated in pedagogical training. Both authors identified similar descriptions referring to emotions and confidence. The authors cooperated to group the descriptions under the different categories.

**Results**

**Emotions and confidence related to teaching practice**

Of the 97 teachers, 92 described emotions in some way in the interviews. However, around half of the teachers described emotions very narrowly, often with only one emotional description. The teachers described both positive and negative emotions related to teaching, but positive emotions were described clearly more often than negative emotions. Approximately two-thirds of the descriptions related to emotions concerned positive emotions, while one-third dealt with negative emotions. The most commonly mentioned positive emotions were enjoyment of teaching and enthusiasm towards teaching, which were mentioned by more than half of the teachers. However, some teachers were only enthusiastic about teaching their own research areas. Empathy or respect towards students was mentioned by one-third of the teachers. Furthermore, one-quarter of the teachers regarded teaching as rewarding or exciting, as they had the possibility to follow the learning process of their students and see where learning
occurs. A few of the teachers mentioned that they were very relaxed about teaching, or that their identity as a teacher did not differ from their identity as a human being, and that they behaved the same way as a teacher as outside their work. A few teachers mentioned that they enjoyed teaching more than research.

Negative emotions also emerged from the data, although these were mentioned less often than positive emotions. Only a few teachers said that they did not like teaching. For them teaching was an obligatory duty, and they identified themselves more as researchers. A couple of these teachers mentioned that their intention had not been to become a teacher but that it had just happened. The most commonly mentioned negative emotion was reluctance towards a certain form of teaching or towards a certain teaching method, which was mentioned by one-fifth of the teachers. Lecturing was mentioned most often as a disliked form of teaching. However, a few teachers mentioned that they did not like to apply group methods or teaching methods that aim to activate students (such as discussions), or that they had no interest in such methods. A few teachers mentioned that they had experienced teaching as very demanding in a negative sense. Fear or nervousness towards teaching was mentioned only rarely. Frustration was mentioned by only one teacher.

The descriptions related to the teachers’ confidence revealed that one-third of the teachers emphasised their expertise in their own field or their mastery of the contents of their own field. Contrarily, a few teachers had the feeling of not being able to master the contents very deeply. More often low confidence was related to teaching skills than mastery of the contents. Around 20 teachers said that they were uncertain of their teaching skills. The majority of these teachers felt that they were not able to apply student-centred teaching methods in their own teaching, or that they had a fear of applying such methods. Ten teachers brought up that they were not afraid of their students’ questions, or more broadly, that they were not afraid of the feedback they receive from their students. One-fifth of the teachers said that they had the encouragement to carry out different kinds of experiments (e.g. new teaching methods) in their own teaching.

**Emotions related to the pedagogical training of university teachers**

The results showed that the emotional aspect was evident in pedagogical training. More than half of the 66 teachers who had participated in training mentioned strong positive experiences concerning peer support during the training. It was important for the teachers to realise that they were not alone, and that other teachers had had the same problems and had dealt with similar feelings as themselves.

Negative emotions related to pedagogical training were not mentioned. However, a few teachers did not report any emotional reactions to pedagogical training: they concentrated in the interviews more on the pedagogical knowledge that they learned, and the tools that they were provided with to develop their teaching.

The majority of the teachers felt that their self-confidence as teachers was strengthened during the training. In particular, they felt that they now had more confidence to develop their own teaching and to take their students more into account, both in planning and during teaching. More than half of the teachers also indicated that they now had the courage to apply student-focused teaching methods. They also mentioned that their motivation to further develop their own teaching had risen. Some of the teachers said that they were no longer afraid of their students, and the students’ questions and comments, after participating in the courses. Furthermore, participation in
courses on university pedagogy had helped a few teachers to cope in their work. Around one-quarter of the teachers who had participated in pedagogical courses evaluated that they had become more relaxed as teachers and that they enjoyed teaching more after the training.

**Emotions and confidence within different teacher profiles**

When exploring the emotions and confidence within the six different teacher profiles, clear variation between the profiles was identified.

**Consonant learning-focused profiles**

The results showed that the 40 teachers categorised as expressing a consonant learning-focused profile mostly described feelings of enthusiasm when describing their teaching. Overall, these teachers mentioned emotions related to teaching clearly more often than the teachers in the other profile groups. Almost all of them described experiencing enjoyment of teaching, and they were comfortable with their teaching duties. Furthermore, the majority of the teachers in this profile group described a strong empathy towards their students. They wanted, for example, to listen to their students’ hopes, views and opinions, and take these into consideration in their teaching. Furthermore, they wanted to know what and how their students were learning. Around half of these teachers said that they wanted to have a casual relationship with their students, and to create a safe learning atmosphere where both the teacher and the student feel comfortable. One-quarter of the teachers in this profile group described teaching as exciting and rewarding, since they were able to follow the learning process of their students and see when and how learning occurs. Similarly, one-quarter described being relaxed about teaching without feeling stress about their teaching duties; they felt that they were able to be themselves when teaching. The following interview quotation describes how a teacher who was categorised in this profile group describes the positive emotions related to teaching:

> I don’t take any role when I teach; I just want to be myself and enjoy it. I want to have a real connection with my students. I want to share my enthusiasm with my students, otherwise I can’t teach. (Female teacher, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry)

These teachers described only few negative emotions, mostly referring to a dislike of teaching big audiences or to teaching in a content-focused manner without using any activating elements (mentioned by 11 teachers):

> Many times when I go to a lecture I feel like I don’t want to do this … performing in front of a big audience … But if you get the students involved in it, it creates a nice feeling … (Male teacher, Faculty of Social Sciences)

Most of these teachers described being confident as teachers. Half of these teachers described being confident about mastering the contents of what they were teaching, and half of them described being confident that they could teach those contents to their students well. The following quotation illustrates teacher confidence:

> I have a reputation as a motivating, inspiring and a very good teacher. I am a demanding teacher, but inspiring as well. I am also an intuitive teacher and I can sense my students’ reactions. (Female teacher, Faculty of Social Sciences)
These teachers described having mostly extremely positive experiences of pedagogical training. A few of them stated that their identity as a teacher had changed or that they learned to enjoy teaching after the training. One teacher said that his ‘pedagogical world’ has completely changed. One-third of the teachers in this profile group mentioned that the training had mostly affected their awareness of pedagogical issues or of themselves as teachers, which had made them more confident as teachers. More than half stated that they valued conversations with other teachers during the courses. Overall, the teachers in this profile group described experiences of pedagogical training more emotionally than the teachers in the other profile groups. In the following quotation a teacher describes how pedagogical training had affected his teaching:

After participating in a pedagogical course, my life changed. Teaching became enjoyable and more interactive … When I teach, there are sparks, and hopefully my students can sense it. (Male teacher, Faculty of Arts)

Contextually varying profiles and developing profiles

The 22 teachers categorised as having a contextually varying profile or a developing profile mostly described feelings of enthusiasm towards teaching and their enjoyment of teaching. Almost half of them described feelings of empathy towards their students. However, almost all of them described feelings of confusion as well. In the following quotation a teacher was asked to describe himself as a teacher:

Well, I find this a difficult question … I have been disappointed with some of the teaching methods as a student so I try to avoid such methods and I try to find ways to activate students and take responsibility … but well … it is difficult to describe myself better as a teacher, I am only a beginner, somehow I try to do what I consider is the best way, that there is no … I don’t yet have any standard ways. (Male teacher, Faculty of Science)

The level of confidence of the teachers in this group seemed to vary depending on the teaching context, and sometimes they expressed having problems with their teaching. The majority described being confident of their ability to manage the substance of their field. However, quite often they admitted that they did not have the tools to teach their students, or that they were unsure about how they should teach their students. Some of these teachers said that they did not have the tools or the encouragement to apply activating teaching methods, even though they would have liked to apply such methods. However, a few teachers mentioned that they had the courage to apply different kinds of teaching methods due to participating in pedagogical courses, or that they were gradually applying different methods as their teaching experience increased. In the following interview quotation one teacher describes herself as a teacher. This quotation illustrates well how teachers who were categorised in this profile group often described being unsure of themselves as teachers:

Maybe I am nervous … Can I do this well enough? Do I have authority enough? … I think that my conception of teaching is very student-centred, but I’m not sure if I can really do it in practice. (Female teacher, Faculty of Law)

When describing the effects of pedagogical training, almost all of these teachers described an increase in their confidence to teach and encouragement to apply different teaching methods. However, a few teachers stated that they became more confused
after the training, since they realised that their teaching skills were not as good as they had imagined, as the following example shows:

My image of myself as a teacher is different from what it was before the course … I feel that I am even a worse teacher than I thought I would be. (Female teacher, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry)

Systematically dissonant profiles

The 29 teachers whose profiles were categorised as *systematically dissonant* rarely described emotions related to teaching. However, negative descriptions were more numerous than positive descriptions. These teachers seemed to be the most dissatisfied with their teaching. A few of them described a high level of reluctance towards teaching. Around one-third of them described feelings of enthusiasm or enjoyment while teaching their own research areas. A few of them described having experienced stress because of their teaching duties. These teachers were clearly more oriented towards doing research than teaching, which becomes evident in the following quotation:

I think I am a very typical teacher in the hard sciences. I am used to doing things as they have been done over the last hundred years. I have learned that we are primarily researchers. At least we think that research is the most important thing and teaching is a duty. (Male teacher, Faculty of Biosciences)

Almost all of these teachers strongly emphasised that they have mastered the substance of their own field and that they were confident about their content knowledge. When describing their teaching, they did not mention having confidence about their teaching skills. Overall, they had difficulty in describing themselves as teachers or their teaching in general. Confidence in mastering the knowledge of their own field was a dominant feature in the interviews, but they could not describe themselves as teachers more deeply. This becomes evident in the following quotation, where a teacher was asked to describe himself as a teacher:

Well, I don’t know [what kind of a teacher I am]. It is not clear to me. I feel that I am an expert in my own field. (Male teacher, Faculty of Arts)

When describing their experiences of pedagogical training, only a few emotional descriptions emerged. A few teachers mentioned that the training was inspiring, but yet they had not changed their teaching style after the training. Increased confidence was mentioned by only a few teachers.

Consonant content-focused profiles

The six teachers who were categorised as having a *consonant content-focused profile* described few or no feelings towards teaching. Three of them described not being passionate about teaching, and all of them emphasised that doing research was their primary focus. However, two of these teachers mentioned that they enjoyed teaching their own research areas, but otherwise they were reluctant to teach. Half of these teachers said that they never intended to be teachers, but that it is an obligatory duty alongside research. In addition, two teachers in this group described that teaching was very demanding in a negative sense. Some of them had experienced teaching as
stressful. In general, these teachers seemed to have neutral or negative feelings about teaching, and about the development of their own teaching. The following interview quotation illustrates a negative description related to teaching:

I am not a passionate teacher; I never aimed to be a teacher … Sometimes I wonder if there is something I should give to the students or if this is just fulfilling my duty. (Male teacher, Faculty of Medicine)

All of these teachers emphasised their expertise in their own field, and they were very confident about managing the contents of their own field. Surprisingly, the majority of these teachers did not question their ability to teach the contents to their students, although two teachers felt that they did not have the tools to teach their students well. Thus, the level of confidence regarding their ability to teach their students varied, but all of them described a high level of confidence regarding the mastery of the contents of their field, which is evident in the following quotation:

It’s not a good thing if I’m not the one who knows the most about the contents of the course. Students can get the most out of the course if I deliver them my own knowledge. (Female teacher, Faculty of Law)

Three of the six teachers in this profile group had participated in pedagogical training organised for university teachers. They did not describe the results of the training emotionally. One of them did not value the course very much, and felt that it was not very useful. One teacher described some positive experiences of the training, but could not explicate what kind of effect it had on her teaching.

The results regarding the emotional descriptions of teaching and teacher confidence within each profile group are summarised in Table 2.

Discussion
The present study identified a range of emotions experienced by university teachers. The most commonly mentioned positive emotions were enjoyment of teaching and enthusiasm towards teaching. Empathy and respect towards students were also often described. The positive emotions identified in this study are quite similar to those presented by Sutton and Wheatley (2003). Negative emotions also emerged from the data, although these were mentioned less often than the positive ones. The most commonly mentioned negative emotion was reluctance towards a certain form of teaching or towards a certain teaching method. Sutton and Wheatley (2003) reported that the most commonly experienced negative emotions among teachers included anger and frustration. However, teachers in the present study applied milder expressions when describing their negative emotions. This might be due to the nature of the interviews, which did not address the role of emotions specifically.

The results imply that the teachers with consonant learning-focused profiles were the most positively emotionally charged with teaching, and that they were the most emotionally affected, as hypothesised. These findings support the findings of studies showing a relation between high-quality teaching, or developed understandings of teaching, and positive emotions related to teaching (Åkerlind 2003; Martin and Lueckenhansen 2005; Trigwell 2009). Furthermore, the teachers with consonant learning-focused profiles seemed to be more aware of themselves as teachers than the teachers who were categorised in the other profile groups. Reflection has been shown
Table 2. The most common descriptions related to emotions and confidence within the six profile groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most common descriptions related to positive emotions</th>
<th>Consonant learning-focused profiles</th>
<th>Contextually varying and developing profiles</th>
<th>Systematically dissonant profiles</th>
<th>Consonant content-focused profiles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• lots of positive emotions described</td>
<td>• only few descriptions</td>
<td>• lots of negative emotions described</td>
<td>• only few descriptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• enthusiasm and enjoyment</td>
<td>• enthusiasm and enjoyment</td>
<td>• dissatisfaction and reluctance towards teaching</td>
<td>• enjoyment of teaching own research areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• empathy</td>
<td>• only few descriptions</td>
<td>• stress about teaching</td>
<td>• reluctance towards teaching</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• limited confidence about mastering the contents of the courses</td>
<td>• stress about teaching</td>
<td>• teaching is demanding and stressful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• extremely confident about mastering the contents of the courses</td>
<td>• encouragement to apply different teaching methods</td>
<td>• very confident about mastering the contents of the courses</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• confidence regarding teaching not described</td>
<td>• a few emotional descriptions, e.g. being inspired and increased confidence</td>
<td>• confidence regarding teaching skills varied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• several descriptions of positive emotions related to training (e.g. changes in teacher identity, enjoyment of teaching due to training)</td>
<td>• a few emotional descriptions, e.g. being inspired and increased confidence</td>
<td>• no emotional descriptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most common descriptions related to negative emotions</td>
<td>• confusion</td>
<td>• lots of negative emotions described</td>
<td>• only few descriptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• only few descriptions</td>
<td>• difficulties with teaching, e.g. fear of applying new teaching methods</td>
<td>• dissatisfaction and reluctance towards teaching</td>
<td>• enjoyment of teaching own research areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>• reluctance towards teaching big audiences or teaching without activating elements</td>
<td>• stress about teaching</td>
<td>• stress about teaching</td>
<td>• teaching is demanding and stressful</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Most common descriptions related to confidence</td>
<td>• limited confidence about one’s own teaching skills</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• encouragement to apply different teaching methods</td>
<td>• confidence regarding teaching skills varied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Descriptions of pedagogical training related to emotions or confidence</td>
<td>• several descriptions of positive emotions related to training (e.g. changes in teacher identity, enjoyment of teaching due to training)</td>
<td>• encouragement to apply different teaching methods</td>
<td>• a few emotional descriptions, e.g. being inspired and increased confidence</td>
<td>• no emotional descriptions</td>
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to be the key to becoming more aware of one’s values and preferences, being genuine and open as a teacher, and being more passionate about teaching (Cranton and Carusetta 2004). Also, Mälkki and Lindblom-Ylänne (forthcoming) show that a fluent connection between reflection and action among university teachers is loaded with enthusiasm and satisfaction. The enjoyment of work was apparent when the teachers were able to live up to their pedagogical views and values.

The teachers with consonant content-focused profiles and systematically dissonant profiles did not express their emotions strongly, and they described teaching in a more negative manner. Previous research has shown similarly that lower quality teaching is related to dissatisfaction and negative emotions (Martin and Lueckenhausen 2005; Trigwell 2009) and that some teachers tend to hide their actual emotions (Zhang and Zhu 2008).

The teachers mentioned diverse emotional aspects of participation in pedagogical training, implying that emotions have a central role in such training. Therefore, the emotional aspects of teaching should be dealt with during pedagogical training, alongside theoretical and practical information concerning teaching and learning. Some of the teachers did not mention any kind of emotions concerning pedagogical training in their replies. For these teachers, explication of their emotions during training could make them more aware of their teaching and of themselves as teachers. Furthermore, peer support should be a key element in such training, in order to make it possible for teachers to share their feelings and get support from each other.

The present study showed that the teachers in the different profile groups valued pedagogical courses in different ways. First, the teachers with consonant content-focused profiles or with systematically dissonant profiles seemed to value pedagogical courses less than the teachers in the other profile groups, since they did not express positive emotions related to pedagogical training. Åkerlind (2007) has noticed that academics who believe that the best route to improving teaching is to focus on becoming more familiar with what and how to teach through increasing content knowledge see no purpose to such courses. In the present study, the teachers with consonant content-focused profiles emphasised the role of content knowledge, and thus were likely to underestimate the value of the courses.

Second, the teachers who were categorised as expressing a contextually varying profile or a developing profile emphasised that pedagogical courses gave them courage to apply diverse teaching methods. Åkerlind (2007) found that academics who see the best route to improving as a teacher as building up a repertoire of teaching strategies may value teaching development courses as such, but only if they focus on teaching methods in an instrumental fashion. Third, the teachers with consonant learning-focused profiles described pedagogical courses the most emotionally. Åkerlind (2007) found that the academics who are likely to value a theoretically oriented course are those who see the best route to improving as a teacher as becoming more effective in facilitating students’ learning.

As hypothesised, confidence was very high among the teachers with consonant learning-focused profiles. They were confident about mastering the contents of their discipline, as well as about being able to teach their students well. However, confidence about mastering the contents was emphasised even more among teachers who were categorised as having a systematically dissonant or consonant content-focused profile. Sadler (2009) found similarly among novice teachers that content knowledge appeared to be predominant, although confidence was also described in relation to pedagogical knowledge. The teachers who were in a developmental phase in their
teaching seemed to experience some confusion, and their confidence regarding their ability to teach was limited. This result strongly supports previous results suggesting that teachers involved in changes often experience anxiety and confusion (Martin and Lueckenhause 2005). Åkerlind (2003) found that increase in teaching confidence is evident in developing as a university teacher.

Some of the teachers with dissonant profiles had a learning-focused conception of teaching, but in practice their teaching included content-focused elements. These teachers seemed to have a fear of applying new methods, or they did not have the courage to apply alternative methods (see Postareff et al. 2008). Sadler (2009) found similar results and suggested that low confidence might prevent teachers from teaching according to their conception of teaching.

It seems that when teachers perceive that they have a good level of content knowledge, confidence tends to be high. This might also result in perceiving oneself as pedagogically competent to teach those contents to the students. However, the consonant content-focused teachers did not problematise their pedagogical skills, even though their approach to teaching was content focused. It has been found that more teacher-centred understandings of teaching are associated with more teacher-centred understandings of teaching development or change, while more student-centred understandings of teaching are associated with more student-centred understandings of teaching development or change (Åkerlind 2003). The consonant content-focused and consonant learning-focused teachers seemed to have a different approach to growing and developing as a university teacher. These different approaches have been identified by Åkerlind (2007). Consonant content-focused teachers seem to emphasise the importance of building up a better knowledge of one’s content area, in order to become more familiar with what to teach, while consonant learning-focused teachers seek to continually increase their understanding of what works and does not work for students, in order to become more effective in facilitating student learning (see Åkerlind 2007).

Limitations of the study and future research

The results are based on teachers’ general descriptions of their own teaching. A broader picture of emotions related to teaching could have been gained if the role of emotions had been addressed in the interviews. On the other hand, the present study showed that emotions play a central role in teaching because a range of emotions emerged from the data even though they were not addressed in the interviews.

The data was biased in that the majority of the teachers were interested in the development of teaching. The majority of the teachers in the present study had participated in pedagogical training, and 40 of the 97 teachers were categorised as having a consonant learning-focused profile. Only six teachers were diagnosed as having a consonant content-focused profile. It is difficult to recruit teachers who are not interested in teaching development to participate in this type of interview. Thus, more negative descriptions could have emerged if a broader sample of teachers had participated in the study.

Thus far we are aware of the range of emotions university teachers experience in their academic work. However, we do not know much about how diverse emotions influence diverse aspects in academic settings. For example, research conducted among university students has shown that their emotions are significantly related to, for example, motivation, learning strategies, cognitive recourses and academic achievement. It is assumed that emotions influence students’ cognitive processes and
performance as well as their psychological and physical health (Pekrun et al. 2002). It is likely that a similar effect can be found amongst university teachers, and further research should be focused on the influences of diverse emotions.

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