

The construct of emotional wellbeing in the professional development of language teachers: A comparative study between Spain and Denmark

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Abstract

In recent years, the burnout paradigm in the teaching profession, focused on emotional exhaustion and diminishing of professional outcomes, has been replaced by an alternative line of research centred upon teacher wellbeing. Such line addresses the factors required to ensure the satisfaction and wellbeing of teachers. However, there are to date very few studies attempting to investigate the wellbeing of foreign language teachers in particular, in spite of the fact that this condition has proved to be subject-dependent. Furthermore, well-established findings pertaining to the unique nature of the very processes of language teaching and learning justify the need for specific studies. In this paper, we a) approach the concept of emotional wellbeing and b) report on a research study carried out in order to diagnose language teachers' perceptions of their own wellbeing.

We will begin by providing an epistemological analysis of the constructs of emotional wellbeing and *hygge* (a condition of wellbeing regarded as a defining characteristic of Danish culture). Current conceptualizations of the very term wellbeing from both a psychological and an educational perspective will be considered. Next, we will pay attention to the particularities of language teaching. Thus, the relationship between language and identity and the role of language and discourse in the construction of the self are aspects worthy of consideration when dealing with both the emotional and cognitive processes involved in language learning and teaching.

Next, we will present the design, progress and outcomes of a research project financed by the Spanish Ministry. As part of the project, interviews, discussion groups and case studies were conducted in order to bring the teachers' voices centre stage. In this sense, a comparison will be established between the discourses and narratives of both Spanish and Danish teachers, in the light of both educational systems. Likewise, we will compare the manner in which wellbeing is integrated in the teacher education curricula of both countries.

Keywords: wellbeing, language education, resistance, professional development of teachers