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'I don't think I could, you know, just teach without any emotion': exploring the nature and origin of university teachers' emotions

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'I don't think I could, you know, just teach without any emotion': exploring the nature and origin of university teachers' emotions

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This article addresses the issue of university teachers' emotions generated through teaching and interacting with students. While research on school teachers' emotions is on the increase, interest in the significance of university teachers' emotions is still limited. In light of the growing attention given to the quality of university teaching around the world, and evidence of the impact of emotions on school teachers' well-being and teaching practice, a better understanding of the origin and nature of emotions experienced by university teachers is needed. This article presents the findings of a small longitudinal study with 15 university teachers from two public Australian universities. Two in-depth interviews with each teacher generated rich accounts, examples and reflections on their emotional experiences during teaching. The qualitative analysis revealed the range of positive and negative emotions triggered in specific teaching–learning situations. Three major themes related to the emergence of emotions were identified: first, the importance of the intrinsic value and social nature of the professional practice of teaching; second, the criticality of the degree to which expectations of students' engagement were fulfilled or not; and third, the realisation that the professional practice of teaching was only partly controllable. The findings are discussed with reference to previous research, limitations are addressed, and directions for future research are proposed.

Keywords: higher education; emotions; teacher emotions; student–teacher relationship

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Introduction

Hargreaves (1998)'s statement that teaching is an 'emotional practice' is well supported by research on teachers' emotional experiences at school (Hargreaves 1998, 2000, 2005; Sutton, Mudray-Camino, and Knight 2009; Riley 2011; for a review see Sutton and Wheatley 2003). That body of research suggests two main reasons why conducting research on teacher emotions is of significance for education: firstly, it reveals that teachers experience a variety of emotions, including positive (e.g. joy, satisfaction and pride) and negative emotions (e.g. anxiety, anger, frustration, sadness and shame) (Demetriou, Wilson, and Winterbottom 2009). These emotional experiences impact on teachers' well-being, teaching satisfaction, burn-out risk and retention in the teaching profession (e.g. Chang 2009). Secondly, teachers' emotions and emotional or affective bonds formed with their students inform their teaching practice. Decisions about teaching strategies, curriculum

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selection and lesson planning are made on this affective relational basis. Consequently, and among other factors, teaching quality depends on teachers' emotions and the established bonds that impact on these emotions (Hargreaves 1998, 2005; Martin and Lueckenhausen 2005).

In light of increasing research on teacher emotions in the school setting (Zembylas 2005), the paucity of empirical work in higher education contexts is noticeable and suggests an underexplored area of research (Woods 2010; Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne 2011). The study presented in this paper addresses this gap by seeking insights into university teachers' emotional experiences emerging during teaching practice and interacting with students, from a cognitive and social psychological perspective.

A cognitive and social psychological perspective on teacher emotions in education

A fundamental assumption underlying the nature of teachers' emotions is their social nature, which reflects that teaching is a social practice (Zembylas 2005). An object triggers emotions in that context and that 'object' is frequently a person or a group of people (I-h/she or I-them emotions, Wosnitza and Volet 2005). In this paper, we account for the social nature of teacher emotions by following a social–psychological-orientated approach to understanding teacher emotions (e.g. Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstaed 2005; Fischer and van Kleef 2010) when teaching and interacting with students. Consistent with sociological-orientated approaches to teacher emotions (e.g. Zembylas 2005), a social–psychological approach to emotions posits that emotions, their eliciting conditions and their consequences can only be understood when the social setting and the relationships that are formed within that social context are considered adequately (Parkinson 1996). Social–psychological approaches to emotions are in agreement with purely cognitive approaches to emotions (= appraisal theories, e.g. Lazarus 1999; Ellsworth and Scherer 2003) insofar as they consider the cognitive evaluation (= appraisal) of a situation as emotion-relevant. However, these appraisals are informed by the social nature of the situation and are not solely processes of the individual as commonly stated in cognitive approaches to emotions. In a formal teaching–learning setting, relationships are formed between teachers and students and the history of that relationship and interactions, as well as its accompanied normative and anticipatory expectations (Rosemann 1978) influence teachers' and students' emotional experiences. Furthermore, not only the consideration of the relationships is of importance for an understanding of teacher emotions (Fischer and van Kleef 2010) but also institutional and cultural aspects need to be taken into account. The 'appropriateness' of emotional experiences and expression is strongly context-dependent based on underlying institutional and cultural norms, values and practices. The concept of 'emotional contagion' (Fischer 2007), for example, captures the social nature of emotions in social settings:

> (…) emotions are, in large part, elicited because people catch each other's emotions: People become sad, elated, frightened, or angry because they see others in their immediate surroundings experiencing these emotions. (Fischer 2007, 291; for emotion transmission at school, see Frenzel, Goetz, Luedtke et al. 2009)

For Fischer (2007), empathy is a necessary precondition for emotion contagion to take place and the quality of the relationships forms a significant moderator variable. It can be assumed that the closer the relationships are, the more frequently emotional contagion takes place.

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Teacher emotions in higher education

While there is a substantial body of literature on school teachers and emotions, limited research to date has investigated university teachers' emotions. Most studies on emotions in higher education are either focused on the students' emotions (e.g. Beard, Clegg, and Smith 2007; Titsworth, Quinlan, and Mazer 2010; Stephanou and Kyridis 2012; Storrs 2012; White 2012), or on profession-related emotions experienced by university staff, such as stress, well-being or burn-out symptoms, including so-called 'emotional exhaustion' (e.g. Navarro, Mas, and Jiménez 2010). Although still in its infancy, research into university teachers' emotions related to teaching and interacting with students, and their implications for higher education teachers' health and professional practice, is increasing slowly but steadily (Woods 2010). Most of the existing research has focused on emotion management. These studies are mainly based on the sociological concept of 'emotional labour' (Hochschild 1979). A few studies have focused on the concept of 'emotional intelligence' (Perry and Ball 2005), for example, qualities of the 'emotionally intelligent lecturer', with the capacity to deliberately manage her or his emotions, as well as those of their students (Mortiboys 2002, 2005). In an empirical study exploring emotional labour in higher education, Zhang and Zhu (2008) revealed that the more university teachers concealed their feelings (= surface acting), the more they were at risk for developing burn-out symptoms. Similarly, Constanti and Gibbs (2004) found connections between the experience of frustration and the requirement to suppress stress and negative feelings in the workplace. Gates (2000) argued that teachers' emotion management was required for both job satisfaction and successful teaching, and consequently, effective student learning in the classroom. In a qualitative field study with nine university lecturers (using observations, field notes and interview data), Gates found that an appropriate use of emotional expression and suppression was believed by teachers to be an important tool to facilitate student learning (e.g. showing enthusiasm as a tool to enhance student motivation for a subject area: masking disappointment in order to show faith in students).

Overall, while there is a small body of research dedicated to the management of emotions and some attention paid to emotions related to the teaching profession as a whole (e.g. Cowie 2011), there is a paucity of empirical research on emotions related to *teaching practice at the university level* as an emotion-relevant context with emotion-triggering impacts of teaching and interaction situations. Cowie's study showed that university teachers' emotions can be evoked by a variety of factors such as job demands (e.g. publication pressure), institutional constraints or interactions with colleagues. But the significance of teaching and teacher–student interactions for teachers' emotions and, consequently, teaching practice also needs to be examined, as suggested by research in school contexts (Sutton 2007; O'Connor 2008; Abel and Sewell 1999).

To date only a few studies have focused on such issues in the university context (e.g. Stough and Emmer 1998; Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne 2011; and Trigwell, 2012).

Stough and Emmer (1998) explored teachers' emotions generated in one specific aspect of teacher–student interaction, namely, assessment feedback. In that study, teachers reported experiencing assessment feedback situations as emotionally challenging, often inducing negative, stress-related emotions such as annoyance, anger or anxiety. Two recent studies (Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne 2011; Trigwell

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2012) investigated the interrelation of teachers' emotion and teaching practice in general. Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne (2011) carried out a qualitative interview study on issues related to higher education teaching (e.g. teaching strategies) that included data on university teachers' emotions. Although these teachers reported experiencing various positive and negative emotions, positive emotional experiences were dominant in their accounts. The results showed that the more the university teachers from different departments (including the so-called 'soft' and 'hard' sciences) identified themselves as teachers, the more positive emotions they reported, in particular joy and enthusiasm towards teaching. It was also found that these enthusiastic teachers reported mainly a student-centred learning-focused approach to teaching. The link between approach to teaching and emotions related to teaching was also found in Trigwell's (2012) research using questionnaire data (Emotions in Teaching Inventory and Approaches to Teaching Inventory). Trigwell found that transmission-focused approaches to teaching were more likely to be accompanied with negative feelings, while student-centred approaches to teaching were linked to positive emotional experiences. However, Trigwell's instrument, 'Emotions in Teaching Inventory' displays a lack of coherence between theoretical assumptions derived from emotion theories and the empirical operationalisation of emotional experiences. For example, distinct emotions were merged into one category (e.g. embarrassment and annoyance were labelled as 'embarrassment'). Furthermore, 'motivation' is not treated as a distinct construct from emotion but rather was integrated as a sub-dimension of emotions. Measurement tools for investigating university teachers' emotions during teaching are still in a nascent phase, and will require further development and validation.

In sum, this brief literature review on teacher emotions in higher education highlights that this is an underresearched field. Extrapolating from the extant literature related to school teachers' emotions may lead to the expectation that university teachers experience similar emotions and that these emotions are experienced in similar ways. However, it is also reasonable to expect that the specific characteristics of the university setting (e.g. characteristics of adult learners, role expectation of teachers and students as well as the nature of the learning activities) may play out differently on teachers' emotions.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to make a contribution to research on university teachers' emotions that are evoked during teaching and teacher–student interactions, and treating emotions as a social phenomenon (Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstaed 2005). The study addressed the following specific aims: (1) to gain insight into the emotional experiences of university teachers while teaching and interacting with students in one-on-one or in small group teaching settings; (2) to identify factors, events or circumstances leading to pleasant or unpleasant teacher emotions.

Methodology

Design and participants

The data reported here are part of a larger longitudinal programme of research on teacher–student relationships and emotions at university. The present study explored 15 university teachers' experiences related to teaching first-year students in pre-service education. The participants (six males and nine females) were from two public Australian universities. Data were collected at two time points. The first round of data

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collection took place before the academic year commenced and the second during the first academic semester. Only nine (four males and five females) of the 15 participants participated in the second interview round, as the others were not teaching first-year students that semester. Most teachers had many years of teaching experience at university, only three were relatively new to the university environment (less than three years of experience), but they had taught in schools for many years before. These teachers represented a cross section of the subject areas taught in teacher education (e.g. maths education, literacy education, science education and curriculum planning).

Interviews and procedure

In order to elicit the emotional experiences and reflections of university teachers, this research employed a qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The authors approached all interviewees personally. Permission to conduct research was granted by the universities' ethics committee and informed consent of all participants was obtained prior to participation. The interviews lasted between 50 and 75 min in the first round, and between 35 and 70 min in the second round. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. All personal information that could identify the person was deleted and each transcript was assigned a code that guaranteed anonymity.

All interviews were conducted in an informal, conversational style that encouraged the interviewees to talk about their experiences in a spirit of collegiality. In the first interview, teachers were invited to share any thoughts that came to mind when hearing the statement 'teaching is an emotional practice' in connection to teaching first-year students in small group teaching contexts (<30 students in a class) or interacting on a one-to-one basis. Prompts were used for elaboration of the responses and teachers were invited to illustrate their answers by giving concrete examples of emotional teaching situations they had experienced during teaching. The second interview aimed at further exploring the contextual nature of emotionally loaded teaching situations, by asking teachers to recall concrete examples of such situations with a group of students they were teaching in the current semester. Together, the two interviews provided fruitful insight in the emotional experiences of teachers when teaching first-year students, including rich situation descriptions and interpretations.

Data analysis

Data analysis followed a phenomenological approach and included three main steps: coding emotions; identifying or inferring causes of emotions; and identification of themes.

Coding emotions

Firstly, the interview transcripts were searched for text passages that contained information about teachers' emotions and an emotion coding scheme was applied. According to Saldaña (2009, 86) '*emotion codes* label the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant'. It is a form of descriptive coding. The emotions were divided up into 'positive emotions' and 'negative emotions', and contained codes labelling the range of concrete teacher emotions (e.g. annoyance, sadness, joy and happiness).

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Table 1. Extract of the used emotion-coding scheme.

Emotion code	Code description	Example
Sadness	This code was used when the teacher reported the feeling of sadness.	And they come back and I say: Oh yeah. Have another go, you know, really go! And they leave … ahm … for various reasons. So there is a sad … you know, sadness, about that, I suppose. That you don't feel you've succeeded with everybody.
Happiness/satisfaction	This code was used when a teacher reported happiness (about something). Happiness is treated as an outcome emotion and includes enjoyment and satisfaction with specific outcomes. *Important: Differentiate from 'enjoyment!'* (*process-related*)	I think that … the need to feel connected with other people is really important for me, so … um … being connected with students simply because it's a pleasant thing. It makes me happy. *But:* Ahm, I enjoy their company. You know, I enjoy going on the campus and seeing people I know and having a conversation, that sort of thing. (*enjoying of interaction; happy about being connected*)

This first step of analysis was undertaken using the software MAXQDA, which assists in data management and coding. Table 1 presents an extract of the coding scheme with related examples. The extract is for the emotion codes of sadness and happiness.

Identifying or inferring causes of emotions

This second step of the analysis was driven by the question: *why* did the teacher experience emotion xyz in that situation, based on their accounts and reflections? This step involved scrutinising the text passages within each code (e.g. within frustration). The answers to this question were first paraphrased from the interviewees' narratives, and then brought to a more generalised level as described within qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2010; see Table 2). Episodes and statements that described the same cause were merged (= reduction), and a summary of the mentioned or inferred causes was made for each emotion.

Identifying themes

The third step of the analysis complemented the analysis of the causes of teacher emotions, through the identification of overall themes. It involved going back and forth between the original transcript passages to ensure that no relevant aspect had been omitted through paraphrasing and summarising of the interviewees' thoughts. By looking at the causes of both negative and positive distinct emotions, three general themes involving both positive and negative emotions were identified, and subsequently used to organise the findings:

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Table 2. Example of coding the causes of emotions within the emotion code of 'annoyance'.

Interview number – Emotional code	Transcript passage	Paraphrase	Cause of emotion
I10-Annoyance	But … um … So I get a bit annoyed if students, I think, are not engaging or you know not … Come on, we have such a limited time, you know. And I think … And they're paying good money for it.	Teacher gets annoyed if students' do not engage in the classroom.	Lack of engagement in the classroom
I13-Annoyance	Yeah! (laughs). Are you actually saying that boys are better than girls on that? Now, think about that! Let's think about that! Do you really …? (laughs) You know so …some critical thinking about those types of statements. So … and honestly, gender statements annoy me.	Teacher gets annoyed if students' make gender statements without critically thinking about it.	Students' attitudes and opinions towards particular topics do not match the teachers' attitudes/ opinions/views

Table 3. Identified positive and negative emotions allocated to the three main themes.

Themes	Identified positive emotions	Identified negative emotions
Emotions referring to the intrinsic value and social nature of teaching	Passion/enthusiasm; an overall 'good' feeling when teaching (including various positive emotions, such as joy and happiness); excitement	Frustration; annoyance
Emotions referring to the degree to which expectations of students' engagement were fulfilled	Joy (including enjoying humour); happiness/ satisfaction; excitement; (positive) surprise; pride	Annoyance; anger; frustration; dissatisfaction; irritation; disappointment; boredom; (negative) surprise; embarrassment
Emotions generated by a realisation that the professional practice of teaching is only partly controllable	Hope; excitement; relief; (positive) surprise	Insecurity; nervousness/ anxiety; worry/concern; sadness; exhaustion

(1) Emotions referring to the intrinsic value and social nature of professional practice.
(2) Emotions triggered by the degree to which expectations of students' engagement were fulfilled.
(3) Emotions generated by a realisation that the professional practice of teaching is only partly controllable.

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Table 3 presents an overview of how the emotions identified in the data are represented in the three themes, and which specific emotions were found across themes.

Results

This section starts with an overview of the emotions reported by the teachers. After that, the results are presented around the three broad themes that emerged from the data analysis.

The range of the emotions experienced by the teachers

The teachers in this study reported a variety of emotions experienced while teaching and interacting with their first-year students. Comparing the frequency of negative and positive emotions showed nearly the same number of situation descriptions that could be allocated either to positive or negative emotional experiences. In terms of negative emotions, annoyance and insecurity were mentioned most frequently among various other negative emotions (see Figure 1). With regard to positive emotions, teachers consistently reported joy and happiness/satisfaction, followed by emotions such as hope, passion/enthusiasm and others (see Figure 2).

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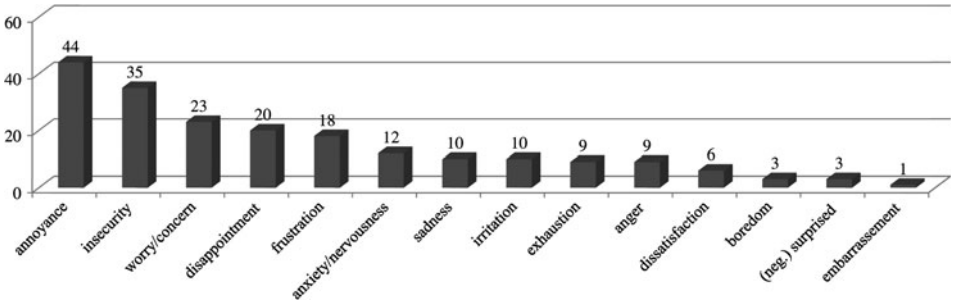

Figure 1. Frequency of reported distinct negative emotions.

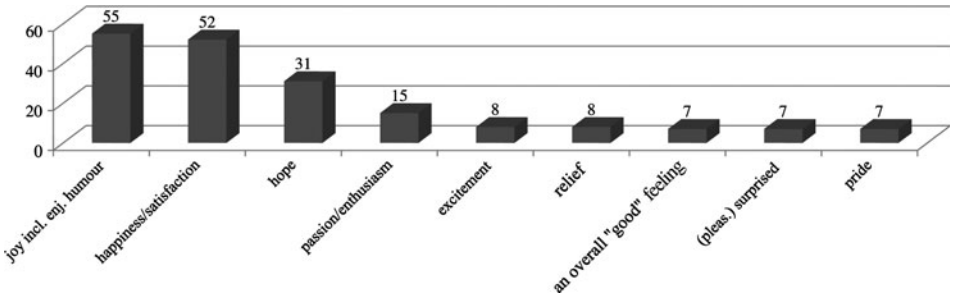

Figure 2. Frequency of reported distinct positive emotions.

Emotions referring to the intrinsic value and social nature of professional practice

The first overarching finding was that all teachers who participated in this study appeared to be highly committed to their job as teacher educators. None of them gave the impression that they were using simply a transmission approach to teaching as described by Trigwell (2012). The majority of the teachers emphasised the significance of a relational and student-centred approach and described how they integrated explicit strategies into their teaching practice to initiate and sustain productive relationships with students and promote positive interactions among the students (see also Salisbury, Jephcote, and Roberts 2009, for further education teachers). All of these teachers regarded teaching as a profession that fulfils an important function in society, and consequently their role in educating pre-service teachers as of intrinsic value, with a moral dimension. This was reflected in numerous accounts that teaching is an important job that triggers enthusiasm, passion and joy. For example,

> It's not a job. It's a career, but it's … it's a passion and it's really important … it's an important part of society that we still have a love of learning, care of one another and so it's more than just a job to fulfil. (I12/1)[1]

However, although many teachers mentioned how passionate they were about their job, the quality of their emotions appeared to depend to a large extent on students' behaviours and attitudes in and out of class, and to the relationship that as teachers they had been able to build with their students. The inherently social nature of teaching was highlighted in many teachers' observations that different groups reacted differently to the same teaching approach, the same content and the same teaching strategies. If students contributed actively in class, teachers experienced positive feelings during teaching, as illustrated in the following quote:

> So then I'm going into my next lesson knowing, you know, I am still tired and it's not my perfect lesson … um … But you know, walking in that class and the students are just so amazingly alive and dynamic and giving, that I just … it just lifts me. And I just go into it with a completely different mood and I just … The lesson is brilliant, you know. (I6/2)

Another source of positive energy was good relationships with students during the class:

> And it's … it's such a lovely, happy group to be part of this. It's just a blessing. You know, I feel … I, I just feel always so happy when I finish. You know, you're asking about feelings … You know, it's a real feel-good class. (I4/2)

In contrast, other accounts revealed how a passion for teaching could be challenged. For example,

> […] It [the group] was full of people who only registered for their classes at the last minute and went into the leftover group. So it was a group that was just very disparate, hard, you know, very unengaged … um … it was a challenge. So you know you go home after that class thinking: Oh! That's awful! I don't wanna work with that group! (I10/2)

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Overall, teachers' accounts highlighted how their passion for teaching could be either rewarded or challenged through professional practice, with a major impact on their emotions. In the following section, the origin of teachers' emotions is explored in greater depth, within a perspective of expectation fulfilment or non-fulfilment.

Emotions triggered by the degree to which teachers' expectations of students' engagement were fulfilled

A major source of emotions appeared to be linked to whether the expectations that teachers held about students' engagement with their learning were fulfilled or not. Teachers expected students to undertake their student role effectively, which they saw as indispensable for them to be able to perform their teacher's role successfully. From these teachers' perspective, an effective learner was expected to take responsibility over their own learning process and exercise self-direction in an autonomous way. Typically, teachers expressed positive emotions when their expectations were fulfilled and negative emotions when they were not. Teachers' expectations about the behaviour of students and subsequent emotions when expectations were met or not met reflected the two-way successful relationship they were trying to form with their students, in their complementary roles as responsible teachers and effective learners, respectively.

Negative emotions when expectations were not fulfilled

The negative emotions that were most frequently mentioned in connection to students who did not fulfil their students' role or were not behaving professionally according to the future teachers' role were frustration, disappointment, annoyance, irritation and bewilderment. Teachers experienced these emotions mostly due to students' demonstrated lack of interest and motivation or lack of engagement in class. This could extend to a lack of engagement in fulfilling the requirements of assignments and course-related activities (e.g. completion of weekly readings). One teacher described 'lack of engagement' as a form of passive students' disruptive behaviour, which this respondent considered as a characteristic of the university setting, in the same way as 'active disruptive behaviour' impedes successful and satisfying teaching and classroom learning.

In contrast to research in school contexts, very few teachers reported having to deal with active student disruptive behaviour in the classroom. However, there was evidence of misbehaviour in class such as coming late to class or not at all, using mobile phones, chatting or doing crosswords during class. Teachers noted that these behaviours were most frequently displayed by the younger students, whom teachers perceived as still in the process of adapting to the role of a university student. Such behaviours were considered by the teachers to be unprofessional and demonstrating a lack of respect:

> They are really still caught-up in their adolescent sub-culture. […] But they will overstep that. […] They haven't yet taken on board the role of being an independent … ahm … tertiary student in charge of their own affairs and responsible for making progress and so on. They are still in that kind of school … school-girl, school-boy – mode … Which is pretty normal at this ... this stage. Halfway through first semester […] um ... So I probably do get a bit annoyed. Not sort of … um … openly. I mentally sigh and say: I wish they would kind of grow up a little bit. (I7/2)

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Teachers frequently mentioned the importance of a give-and-take basis in the professional teacher–student relationship. From their perspective as teachers, they had to do their best to fulfil their job in supporting students' learning but reciprocally, they expected their students to do their job, for example, contributing in class discussion, doing their homework and handing in assignments on time. Disappointment and frustration were expressed as a result of situations in which teachers reported taking a highly caring attitude and had tried hard to assist students with difficulties, and those students had not made efforts to make use of extra assistance that had been offered.

> You feel quite disappointed, you feel a bit dejected when, yeah, you put your best forward to do everything and they … and some students don't take advantage of it. They don't do the work […]. (I9/1)

But while limited engagement from students could lead to negative teacher emotions, overengagement by students could also lead to negative emotions. Students who were perceived as contributing too much in class, being too dominant, asking too many questions or having fixed opinions about issues and being not willing to discuss them constructively, also contributed to teachers' negative feelings, in particular annoyance. From a teachers' perspective, too many questions from one person could take the classroom time and interfere with a fair classroom environment, where all students should have an equal opportunity to participate. Strong opinions also did not agree with teachers' view of critical learners, expected to listen respectfully to the opinions of their peers and adjust their views when appropriate.

Students' behaviours that crossed the boundaries of the teacher–student relationship could also generate negative emotions, such as feeling uncomfortable or annoyed (e.g. phoning the teacher during the weekend; treating the teacher like a 'friend'). A few teachers mentioned social media (e.g. Facebook) and the likelihood that boundaries would be crossed there, as self-disclosure is much higher when teachers and students are 'friended' through Facebook. Consequently, some teachers mentioned they were not comfortable about befriending their students via Facebook, and most of them chose not to.

Interestingly, and in contrast to the research findings in the school context, hardly any teacher reported anger in connection to students who did not fulfil their role in the teacher–student professional relationship. When probed, some teachers referred to the assumption of students as independent and adult learners as the main reason for the lack of anger.

> You know, I mean, I've had conversations with students that … um … that have said they gonna do stuff and they haven't and … But it doesn't get me angry as such. You know, it's like, well you said you're gonna do it and you didn't. So it's up to you. It's … You know, they've been given the opportunity and that's … yeah … You are the one who has to do it, not me. So, I let them know that they … that you're disappointed that they didn't do it. (I8/1)

However, when students' non-fulfilment of their role affected the progress of the whole class, teachers reported that they could become angry or annoyed; a less intense form of anger.

Only a few teachers referred to negative emotions generated by them not having fulfilled their expectations of the teacher's role. Emotions displayed on those

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occasions were mainly dissatisfaction, anger with oneself, or irritation. This is reflected in the following example:

> But I might be cross with myself for confusing people. If I think that I've confused them, I think: Oh, what've I done? (I7/2)

In terms of source of reported emotional situations, self-generated emotions (self-directed emotions) were much less frequently reported compared to those created by student interaction (other-directed emotions).

Positive emotions when expectations were fulfilled

Positive emotions were reported in regard to both one-to-one, teacher–student, and one-to-many, teacher–group of students relationships. Such relationships were perceived as productive and generated positive emotions when students were regarded by the teachers as having fulfilled the expectations that go along with their students' and future-teachers' roles. Many teachers reported delight in observing students who were motivated to learn, and contributed and engaged constructively in class discussions. They reported pleasure from seeing their students progress and succeed, as well as enjoying relating and interacting with their students.

> And every … every desk was full. They were all sitting there with their pens, papers. I walked in and said: My gosh! I have got the perfect class! Yeah! And you know, look, and I said: You are all here! You are all looking interested! You have got something to write on! Oh!!! I am in paradise! I am in heaven! You know. (I10/1)

> I enjoy their company. You know, I enjoy going on the campus and seeing people I know and having a conversation, that sort of thing. So I think, it has certainly … um … to do with well-being at work and making … making a workplace a better place to be in, you know, a place where you feel connected. (I4/1)

In one-on-one interactions, these positive kinds of interactions were enhanced when students and teachers had something in common they could share (e.g. a hobby, an interest …). Interestingly, some teachers reported that they enjoyed interactions with mature-aged students the most. They explained that they could identify best with them due to similar life experiences. The motivation of these students and their frequently engaged study behaviour were appreciated. Furthermore, in classroom environments where both teachers and students behaved according to their professional role and the interpersonal relationships were pleasant, teachers enjoyed sharing humour and jokes, which helped to facilitate a relaxed classroom atmosphere and a good rapport with students.

Teaching first-year students was perceived as a particularly challenging task. Nevertheless, seeing students grow and succeed was considered to contribute to making both teachers and students happy – an emotion that could be contagious:

> So the one that was doing really well, I am excited. So I mean, that was great because I came away really excited and happy and so you know, her … her attitude and her feelings and her emotions rubbed off on my emotions. So, yeah, you have your highs … I would say you go the highs with the highs and you go the lows with the lows. (I8/2)

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Teachers also reported that their students' achievement represented indirect feedback that their teaching approach was successful, and that the expectations they had placed on themselves as teachers had been fulfilled. When direct feedback from students was provided, teachers reported feelings of happiness or of pride, as illustrated in the following example:

> After I gave my lecture in [the teaching subject; anonymized] I have a few students who … who … thought it was very good. And then they posted online comments which … nice compliments from them … and it's very rare, you know, for students to sort of … it might appear uncool, you know, to say … but they actually did, which I was happy about (laughs slightly). That was positive. (I1/2)

In sum, the data revealed that the expectations teachers had of themselves, and, in particular, of their students, and whether or not these were fulfilled, represented a significant source of positive and negative emotional experiences. Furthermore, the data provided empirical evidence of emotion transmission taking place between students and teachers, sometimes without any explicit cognitive evaluation of the situation involving expectations (= emotions 'rub off'). Yet, not only normative expectations about students' role led to positive emotions, but there was some evidence that anticipated negative expectations based on prior interaction with students, if not fulfilled, could lead to positive emotions. For example, one teacher reported being pleasantly surprised about a student's success because she had not expected it from that student's prior behaviour. Overall, however, the experiences that triggered teachers' emotions were dominantly linked to violation or fulfilment of a normative expectation of a professional 'working' student-teacher relationship.

Emotions generated by a realisation that the professional practice of teaching is only partly controllable

As stressed in the introduction, teaching is an inherently social profession. Teachers and students, as well as the broader social context in which teachers operate, all co-contribute to the teaching–learning process. From this holistic perspective, successful teaching and learning is the result of multiple contributions that teachers are only partly in control of. The insecurity created by limited control over the teaching situation emerged from the data as another factor triggering teachers' emotions.

Although most of the teachers interviewed in this study were experienced teachers, some of them reported still being nervous or slightly anxious at the beginning of a new semester. They admitted worrying about whether everything would work out well and whether good relationships with students would be established. Marking assignments also appeared to cause feelings of insecurity, as essays – a common form of assessing students in education – do not have clearly 'wrong' or 'right' answers, which means that failing students always involves some subjectivity in the evaluation. As would be expected, teachers who had limited teaching experience or felt somewhat unfamiliar with the teaching content were those who felt the most insecure, nervous or anxious. With time and more teaching experience, teachers gradually felt more relaxed, as the following example illustrates:

> When I was first, particularly when I was first in university, I was terrified of the students. Because I thought, oh they are going to be so smart. And they are going to sort of, you know, find all my weak points, ahm, they are going to be critical … um

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> … So, it took me a long time to relax. um … but the more … I found, the more I relax in the classroom the more … um … I kind of let go this fear of being caught up … the more successful things are. (I4/1)

In the same way as teaching a new group of students appeared to generate some insecurity, teaching in a new educational context was also reported as emotionally unsettling. Teaching in a new environment (e.g. another university) was mentioned as unsettling because of lack of familiarity with local expectations, norms and practices. Insecurity appeared exacerbated in the case of teachers coming from another country and a different cultural–educational background. According to some teachers, this was because social and educational practices considered appropriate in one context were not necessarily appropriate in another. In the Australian context, the expected informality between teachers and students and the indirect way of correcting students' misunderstandings were noted as an example of cultural difference, and reported as the cause of initial uncomfortable feelings.

> And it's cultural as well. Sometimes if they are wrong: How to correct them without hurting or without putting them in a bad light? You know, you know … I find that very hard to do. (I1/1)

Cultural differences were also noted in regard to gendered expectations and appropriateness of behaviours. Such differences could unsettle teachers who were used to different styles of communication between genders, as the following statement illustrates:

> I don't know: males and females. You have different tones. […] Look, it's difficult … um … female students ... it's hard for them to understand where I am coming from. (I1/1)

Even teachers who had come from another English-speaking country reported problems of adaptation – and related emotions – linked to adjustment to different cultural–educational practices.

> And I have the language. And almost every English migrant I've ever spoken to would say between 2 and 3 years to get used to the different culture. And a lot of this … is this sort of laid-back Australian thing. (I3/1)

Overall, it seemed that anything that was perceived as 'new' could make teachers feel unsettled, uncomfortable, insecure, anxious or nervous. This could involve, for example, trying a new teaching strategy, teaching a new class, working with new colleagues at another institution, teaching in a foreign country, being new in the teaching profession or being confronted with unexpected issues in one-on-one interactions (e.g. a student with a mental illness approaches a teacher: how do I react appropriately?).

Another type of emotion frequently mentioned in the interviews was feeling worried or concerned about particular students. Such emotions could frequently be traced back to the unpredictable nature of teaching. Some teachers admitted that they could only help students to a certain extent to succeed in their studies. They pointed to many uncontrollable factors, often private issues, which could interfere with students' success. Given these teachers cared about their students' well-being,

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students' difficulties appeared to affect them emotionally. A number of teachers reported being worried about students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, since these students were observed as frequently struggling. Discussing students' problems with colleagues and sharing the worry and concern were reported by teachers as a way to help better appraise situations.

> […] but I think it's good for all the people who are working with first-years to be on the same wavelength. um, to talk about the students and say … um … I see you have got so and so in your literacy class. How is he going? How is she going? And she might say: Oh, No. I am worried about her. And I say: Oh, I am worried about her too. So, okay, what do you think the problem is? Is she gonna make it or not? So what can we do and help her to get through? Or is the gap … does he need to repeat? Is the gap too great? And so, I think being aware … in that way you can support them better… by being aware of them and sharing with colleagues. (I9/1)

Not all teachers, though, took the opportunity of sharing their concerns with colleagues. A few teachers described university teaching as a lonely profession that involved limited social interactions among colleagues, and in turn triggered dissatisfaction and feelings of isolation. Generally, and although not the topic of this study, the overall workplace was often reported as a source of negative emotions, typically linked to high workloads but also predefined unit content, and occasional difficult interactions with colleagues.

Finally, teachers' feelings of insecurity, anxiety or concern and worry also appeared inextricably linked to hope, and depending on the outcome of a difficult situation, to teachers' feelings of relief, happiness or sadness. A number of teachers talked about the hope that their chosen teaching strategies would work well in terms of achieving valuable educational goals (e.g. motivating students, building relationships with them, transferring knowledge, changing attitudes, role modelling good teaching practices which leads to transfer effects, etc.). Consistent with their overwhelmingly caring attitude towards their students, they also expressed hope that students who were experiencing difficulties would overcome these, which was not always the case. The following example reflects a situation where the teacher's hope was not fulfilled and resulted in the teacher's sadness:

> And actually one of my students, she left. This was a quite a sad story. […] um, she was really struggling, just found it completely overwhelming. And I think she would have been a very really good teacher as well. '[…] So, we, you know, went through and I was helping … […] And so I spent actually quite a long time talking to her and … um … I put on touch with things and went through all this stuff with her […] But actually we did lose her. (I6/2)

In sum and from the perspective of teachers, the social, thus often unpredictable, nature of the teaching profession generates a whole range of negative emotions such as nervousness, anxiety, insecurity or worry. Depending on the outcome of challenging teaching–learning situations, a range of positive and negative emotions such as relief and happiness, or sadness and disappointment, can be triggered.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate university teachers' emotional experiences when teaching first-year students in pre-service education. Similar to the school level,

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their accounts and reflections gathered from two in-depth individual interviews support the assumption that teaching is experienced emotionally at university level. In this study, teachers' emotions were linked to their beliefs about the intrinsic value of teaching as a profession, to the degree to which their expectations on students' engagement within the student–teacher relationship were met, and to their experience that professional teaching practice was only partly controllable.

Firstly, the data revealed that teaching was experienced emotionally by teachers due to the intrinsic value of teaching as a profession. Their intrinsic motivation for teaching generated feelings such as passion and enthusiasm. This finding is consistent with Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne's (2011) study, where most of the teachers they interviewed also highlighted the innate joy triggered by the practice of teaching (see also Cranton and Carusetta 2004). However, a few teachers in the study of Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne regarded teaching as a duty that had to be fulfilled, due to a perception that teaching was not as valued as research within their institution and within their own professional identity (see also Elen, Lindblom-Ylänne, and Clement 2007). This finding suggests that not all university teachers share the same intrinsic motivation to teach and the same desire to form strong relationships with their students as found in the present study, as sometimes teaching motivation is externally driven. This parallels the results of Watt et al. (2012) in the school setting. Watt et al.'s findings reveal different motivations that inform school teachers' choice of starting a teaching career. While the intrinsic value of the teaching profession also had the strongest impact on the career choice of school teachers, other more external driven motives were reported as well (e.g. job security, time for family etc.).

In addition, this study provided empirical evidence of the 'social nature' of teaching (e.g. Zembylas 2005), as the teachers' emotions appeared to be dependent on students' behaviours and the nature of their relationships with them. These behaviours and relationships could sometimes enhance teachers' positive emotional experiences and, at other times, turn initially positive emotions into negative ones (Boiger and Mesquita 2012). This might be explained by the strong interdependence of the intrinsic and social motivation inherent in teaching. Teachers in Watt et al.'s (2012) study frequently reported a high motivation to embark on a teaching career due to the intrinsic value of teaching accompanied by a high motivation to work with children and adolescents.

Moreover, based on the social nature of teaching, the interview data also revealed empirical evidence of emotional transfer. For example, several teachers volunteered that if a student did not succeed, they felt sad themselves; an example of emotions being 'transferred' (Frenzel, Goetz, Stephens et al. 2009). Alternatively, a number of teachers mentioned that students' achievement made both teachers and students happy. Clark, Fitness, and Brisette (2003) described these emotions as 'empathic emotions', which are caused by the 'contagious' nature of emotions (Fischer 2007). According to Clark, Fitness, and Brisette (2003) empathic emotions are more likely to occur if someone feels responsible for others, just as teachers frequently do, at least to some extent, for their students.

Secondly, the present study showed that teachers' emotions depended on whether the expectations teachers held about their students' engagement with their learning and achievement were fulfilled or not. Teaching does not take place in a 'vacuum'. Instead, a relationship between teachers and students is formed that informs the situational evaluation (appraisal), and the generated emotions (Boiger and Mesquita 2012). The results of this study indicated that teachers enjoyed teaching best in

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classes where teacher–students relationships were perceived as productive *professionally* (e.g. students engage in classroom learning, students ask questions, students do not interrupt) and *personally* (e.g. building bonds or rapport with students). This is consistent with the findings of a study by Klassen, Perry, and Frenzel (2012) that demonstrated the predictive function of positive relationships between students and teachers for teachers' enjoyment. However, while all of the teachers in the present study considered a positive professional teacher–student 'working' relationship as essential for their own positive emotional experiences, the degree to which they also regarded personal bonding with students as a pre-condition for their positive feelings was dependent on teachers' 'relational attitude' (Pearce and Down 2011), which relates to teachers' relational or social goals (Butler 2012).

One emotion frequently reported by school teachers in connection with expectation violation is anger (Sutton 2007). In our study, hardly any teachers mentioned anger as an emotion related to teaching. Closest to anger were expressions of annoyance or frustration when students did not behave according to teachers' expectations. Possible reasons for university teachers' limited experience of anger, in comparison to their school counterparts, could be linked to the fact that university students are adult learners. This was alluded to by some of the teachers in the interviews, with reference to university students who they expected to act as autonomous, self-regulated learners who take responsibility for their own learning. As a consequence, they did not take on the full responsibility for students' lack of success or lack of motivated behaviour in classroom, which would contribute to the occurrence of strong negative emotional responses, such as anger. A second possible explanation is that anger may be perceived as not compatible with the professional role of a teacher. Thus, anger might be avoided, regulated and suppressed, as reported in a study by Liljestrom, Roulston, and Demarrais (2007), in relation to female high school teachers taking the gender dependency of particular emotions and their appropriate expression into account. A third possible explanation emerged from some teachers' comments that university teachers are less likely to encounter students' disruptive or learning-refusing misbehaviour. This contrasts with the school context, where students' misbehaviours appear to contribute to teachers' stress, anger and emotional exhaustion (Abel and Sewell 1999; Tsouloupas et al. 2010).

Thirdly, teachers' limited control over the teaching and learning success of students led to various teacher emotions. This finding is consistent with cognitive approaches to emotions, which consider appraisals on the controllability and certainty of the situation as relevant cognitive antecedents of emotions (Ellsworth and Smith 1988). Thus, as found in this study, situations that cannot be fully controlled can cause feelings such as anxiety, fear, nervousness or insecurity. Depending on the outcome of teaching–learning situations that are only partly controllable by them, many teachers reported experiencing either relief/happiness (if the outcome was positive) or sadness (if the outcome was negative).

There was also evidence that alongside the pursuit of teachers' achievement goals, socio-emotional goals were generated as well. The multiplicity of teachers' goals has been examined in recent literature (e.g. Nitsche et al. 2011; Butler 2012). As a consequence of the multiplicity of goals, teachers in the present study were not only concerned/worried about the success of their teaching (which reflects underlying achievement goals), but also about the quality of the relationship with their students or about students who were experiencing difficulties (which reflects underlying social goals).

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Finally, the findings of this study indicate that the beginning of a teaching career at university, like starting teaching in a new educational environment, also triggered emotions, since uncertainty is higher in the early stages of a teaching career. Research on school teachers at the early stage of their career has documented their experience of intense negative emotions, alongside enthusiasm (e.g. Ria et al. 2003; Jakhelln 2011). Similarly, affected by high levels of uncertainty are international teachers. This study provided some evidence of intense emotions experienced by international academics. Unfamiliarity with the host countries' norms, rules, and role expectations led to insecurity about the appropriateness of teaching behaviour/teaching strategies. The issue of the subjective nature of appropriateness and the emotional dimensions experienced in transfer of learning across cultural–educational settings has already been addressed in research with international students (e.g. Volet 1999), and seems to impact on international staff as well (e.g. Hsieh 2012).

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Study limitations, future research, and practical implications

Taken together, the findings of this study stress the emotional nature of teaching practice in higher education settings and the social origin of teachers' emotions. Before pointing to future research and practical implications, a few limitations have to be noted.

The sample used in this study was selective, focusing exclusively on teachers in pre-service education, and all interviewees displaying a high level of commitment to the job as university teachers. Furthermore, participants were invited to refer to emotions experienced in the context of teaching first-year students, in small groups or one-to-one situations. Emotional challenges experienced with students in their later years of study and in large group teaching, such as lectures, might be different (Hogan and Kwiatkowski 1998). Furthermore, as already mentioned, the findings of Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne (2011) have shown that university teachers with a strong research commitment had difficulties identifying themselves as teachers. It is possible that university teachers who self-identify more strongly as researchers than as teachers may experience different emotions, or more or less intense emotions, due to different value they place on the teaching component of their academic work. This suggests that teacher emotions should be further investigated across different groups of teachers (e.g. beginning teachers, experienced teachers, external teachers and teachers in distant education), different groups of students (e.g. first years, last years, school leavers, mature-aged students and across gender), different teaching settings (e.g. workshops, seminars, labs and lectures), different subjects of study (e.g. 'hard' and 'soft' sciences), different institutions (e.g. public universities and private universities; research-intensive universities etc.), as well as different cultural–educational settings.

Another limitation is related to the exclusive use of self-report, namely interviews. In this study, in-depth interviews were ideal for eliciting rich situational descriptions of teachers' emotional experiences. A disadvantage of this method, however, is the retrospective focus as well as the dependency on teachers' ability and willingness to remember emotional situations. Although participants had been asked to make short notes after each lesson of any emotional relevant situations and to bring them to the second interview, some of them admitted having difficulties remembering such situations, which led to answers such as: 'It's been just happy days, really' (I12/2). The difficulty recalling past emotions, or willingness to report (intense) negative

emotions, has been addressed in the emotion literature (e.g. Scherer, Schorr, and Johnstone 2001). This problem may partly be addressed by using measurement approaches that are more situative in nature (e.g. experience sampling methods in the form of diary entries and repeated administration of short-questionnaires at critical points). However, teachers' less frequent report of intense emotions might also be interpreted as a tentative support for the assumption that teachers' emotions are strongly context-bound including the relationships formed in that context (Parkinson, Fischer, and Manstead 2005; Boiger and Mesquita 2012). As the university context allows for less frequent interactions between students and teachers (e.g. 2-h workshop once a week) compared to school, this may create relationships of a different nature (e.g. higher independence of students and adult–adult relationship). Relationships are likely to be less close, require less responsibility by teachers for their students' learning, and as a consequence students' behaviours might have a less impact on teachers' emotions. This explanation would be in agreement with Hargreaves' (2000) findings of differences between primary and secondary school teachers' emotional experiences explained by different relational contextual conditions. However, this context-based assumption will need further empirical investigation.

A number of directions for future research emerged from the present study.

Firstly, the significance and impact of the emotions experienced by beginning teachers, needs to be better understood. Although research on entry into the teaching profession, and subsequent academic development is quite extensive (e.g. Åkerlind 2003, 2007), the role of emotions in the process of growth and development has attracted limited attention. Furthermore, in the context of increased staff mobility and internationalisation of higher education around the world, the challenging experience of international academic staff moving across countries needs to be examined. Green and Myatt's (2011) research highlighted the resilience and strength needed by international teachers to adapt to their new environment, in the context of institutional constraints. How the adaptation process of international staff, including their emotional well-being, can be supported relies on empirical evidence of the nature of their socio-emotional experiences.

Another possible extension of research on teachers' emotion would be to examine how teachers manage and regulate their emotions. Some of the participants in this study made references to how they handled their emotions to achieve satisfactory outcomes and maintain their well-being. Prior research has mainly focused on the concept of emotional labour or emotional intelligence when discussing emotion management. Applying a psychological-orientated framework underpinned by basic emotion regulation research (e.g. Gross 1998, 2002), and combined with a relational approach to emotions (e.g. Van Kleef 2009), would add a significant, new theoretical angle in discussing emotion management strategies of university teachers.

Furthermore, given that teaching and learning in higher education classrooms is transactional in nature, future studies should try to account for these reciprocal influences and portray students' and teachers' emotions in real-life classroom situations. To date, researchers studying emotions in educational environments have mostly focused either on students' emotions or on teachers' emotions but the results of students and teacher emotions are rarely linked. This suggests that multi-perspectives and multi-methods may be required (e.g. by combining observational approaches with self-description approaches) in order to gain insight into the complex, inextricably linked, dynamic and emotionally loaded interactional processes between teachers and students in classroom settings.

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In terms of practical implications, the results of the present study stress how university teachers are affected by various emotions during teaching and interacting with students. While competence in handling such emotions may develop through experience, new teachers may need support to prevent emotional exhaustion/emotional overload. Fostering the development of strategies to build positive relationships with students may be beneficial given the research findings that relationships and emotions are strongly interconnected. Thus, professional development courses in higher education should consider integrating emotional and relational issues in their curricula.

In addition, beginning teachers and teachers who are new to an institution should be counselled during their first few weeks/months in the workplace, as this study reveals that they frequently experience insecurity, worry or anxiety. Higher education support systems could address this issue in mentoring schemes or through partnerships between experienced teachers and new teachers (similar to buddy systems for first-year students and international students) and even among groups of new teachers themselves.

Taken together, the findings of the present study suggest practical implications for professional development in higher education, and several areas for future research. University teachers' emotions represent a new, significant and still under-explored field of research. The present study sheds some light on this phenomenon, by bringing to light the range of emotions that are experienced by university lecturers during teaching. In doing so, the results of the present study question the still prominent view that university teaching as essentially a cognitive endeavour involving the application of effective strategies to maximise students' knowledge acquisition and understanding. Furthermore, this study contributes to a better understanding of emotion relevant teaching situations (= antecedents of emotions), whereas previous studies have mainly focused on the handling of emotions and its effects (consequences). By continuously enriching our knowledge on the wider picture of teacher emotions in higher education, their antecedents and consequences, a long-term objective lies in the development of a psychological-orientated theory on teacher emotions in higher education that parallels what is observed in school-based teacher emotion research (Frenzel, Goetz, Stephens et al. 2009).

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Note

1. I 12/1 indicates that the quote comes from: Interviewee 12; Interview 1.

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