

# Emotions in Learning

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## INTRODUCTION

# **Emotions in learning: Understanding and intervention**

Francisco Pons, Dawson Hancock, Louise Lafortune,  
and Pierre-André Doudin

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This book is the result of the collaboration by scholars in developmental psychology and educational sciences from Europe (Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Switzerland, and United Kingdom) and North America (Canada and United States). It provides an overview of innovative research on emotions in learning from psychological and pedagogical points of view. Indeed, emotions have recently emerged as one of the main factors of learning. With this book, the reader will achieve not only an understanding of emotions in learning but also propositions for interventions seeking to help children, adolescents (pupils, students), and adults (teachers) to improve their emotional experience and emotion comprehension in the context of learning and teaching. The book is divided into eight chapters. Each chapter is summarized below.

During the past decade, several studies have shown that children's comprehension of emotions is linked with their school integration. This comprehension is a good index for the quality of children's social relationships with peers and adults at school. These studies raise the interesting question of whether it is possible to improve children's emotion comprehension. Although the importance of helping children in this domain has long been emphasized in clinical psychology, there has been little research on this issue in developmental and educational psychology. In the first chapter, Pons, Doudin, Harris, and de Rosnay

discuss the possibility of teaching emotion comprehension to typical and non-typical children.

Abuses (physical, psychological, sexual, and neglect) may have a dramatic effect on children's psychological and social development. In addition to social services, school may reduce the negative impact of these abuses. Many studies have shown that good school integration has positive consequences on children's long-term development (e.g., reduction of the risk of delinquency, improvement of professional, and social integration). Therefore, it is important to support the school integration of abused children. In the second chapter, Doudin, Pons, Pfulg, and Martin present and discuss the evaluation of an intervention program seeking to improve the school integration of abused children.

Many authors believe that school may play an important role in the prevention of violence and that interventions must begin as soon as children enter elementary school. In the third chapter, Daniel, Auriac-Peyronnet, and Schleifer suggest that prevention should begin as early as the preschool level. The support they suggest is situated in the perspective of the Philosophy for Children, found in a collection of philosophical stories, *The Tales of Audrey-Anne*. Its purpose is to stimulate 5-year-old children's thinking and ability to conduct dialogue regarding emotions, body and violence.

School has a strong tendency to encourage the development of rationality and to neglect emotions because they are considered to be suspicious. Emotions carry the risk of unmanageable judgment and make the pupil as an individual who is submitted to his/her passions and therefore incapable of a rational choice. An alternative would admit not to separate emotion and rationality but to recognize the role of emotions in the learning process. In the fourth chapter, Audigier defines different intervention criteria to integrate emotions into this learning process.

In the fifth chapter, Gläser-Zikuda and Mayring report that in the last fifty years, research on learning and teaching has been dominated by cognitive factors. The emotional dimension of learning at school has been widely neglected and mentioned only within theories of motivation. But more recently, a change in learning research has become evident. Psychology of emotion, emotion and learning, and emotional intelligence are becoming important topics in research on learning processes. The

ways in which emotions can be influenced during instruction is also becoming an important question for teachers and educators.

The most complex years of one's life are those that surround young adolescence. During these years, young people experience profound physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and social growth unlike any other years in life. As a result of these changes, many youth experience a significant amount of emotional confusion and discomfort, sometimes resulting in poor decision-making skills and habits. Inappropriate decision-making skills and habits dramatically impact the social and academic paths that young adults travel in later life. In the sixth chapter, Jones and Hancock describe the emotional beliefs and concerns of contemporary thirteen-year-old adolescents. They examine classroom teachers' use of realistic fiction as a curriculum and instructional strategy to guide students in healthy emotional, social and academic directions.

Anxiety can prevent students from exercising all of their capacities and can, in some cases, prevent doing any mathematical reasoning altogether. Anxiety also influences the functioning of metacognition. Certain students feel that when mathematical explanations are given, a veil, even a wall, suddenly appears in front of them, stopping them from reaching the concentration level necessary for understanding what they are being shown. They are thus prevented from evaluating their metacognitive knowledge and from engaging in the metacognitive processes necessary to solve the problems. In the seventh chapter, Lafortune and Pons explain anxiety towards mathematics and its relation with metacognition and present interventions to help students to minimize that negative influence.

In the last chapter, Jensen discusses the relation between emotions, feelings, and learning processes. Emotions and feelings are discussed in relation to evolution, neuropsychology, and theory of attachment. The analysis focuses on the characteristics related to learning found in three empirical cases from literature concerning learning disabilities, teaching of physics, and apprentices in electronics. Points are made concerning co-learning. In addition, Jensen suggests various ways in which students might take responsibility for their own learning processes.

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