



Beyond Emotion Regulation: Reframing Emotional Containment as a Core Professional Disposition in Pre-Service Educator Preparation

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Abstract

Teaching is a highly emotional profession requiring sustained relational presence under conditions of affective intensity. However, models of teacher preparation inadequately theorize the developmental capacities that make such presence possible. This paper advances emotional containment as an integrative construct bridging emotion theory, relational psychology, and professional identity formation. Distinct from emotion regulation theory, emotional containment refers to the capacity to metabolize affect within relational systems while maintaining intentional professional enactment. Importantly, emotional containment does not eliminate emotional experience; it reorganizes it into reasonable professional action. I propose a dynamic developmental model in which emotional containment functions as a mediating capacity connecting affective activation to professional agency, relational safety, and identity consolidation. By articulating emotional containment as teachable and malleable rather than trait-based, this framework offers a unifying theoretical foundation for rethinking emotional readiness in pre-service educator preparation and establishes a programmatic agenda for future empirical research and investigation.

Keywords: emotional containment, relational psychology, professional identity, dynamic developmental model, teacher preparation