

Edu World 2016
7th International Conference

**THE EMOTIONAL DIMENSION AS PART OF PRE-SERVICE
TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMMES**

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Abstract

Recent theoretical approaches as well as current know-how perspectives highlight the dimension of emotional culture in teacher training with a view to enhancing professionalization. Though a comprehensive in-depth investigation, emotional culture development has chartered new territories in recent years.

As teacher's roles have multiplied, teaching has been understood as highly demanding. However, this may lead to increased fatigue, emotional wear-off, downgrading of the affective involvement within the school.

The teacher's emotional culture divided into multi-layered emotional competencies is crucial in teaching professionalization: if not properly developed, it can trigger overwhelming conditions (mental and emotional wear-off, resentment and fears), causing further negative effects on networking and interpersonal communication.

The concept of *emotional culture* incorporates emotional, communicative and personal-adjusting skills and competencies to ensure increased awareness, acceptance and remedial work on personal states and feelings as well as of the others, thus, enhancing productivity, networking and personal growth. Mainstream literature dwells on-oriented mechanism in different situations, the way we use our own capabilities to understand the others and increase our self-affective control.

Our paper is premised by the idea that teachers' emotional culture is built gradually. Thus, we aim at identifying prospective trainees' perception with regard to the importance of emotional culture development. The integration of key emotional values that fully round the contemporary teacher profile may also contribute to the learners' emotional development.

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Keywords: Emotional intelligence; emotional culture; teacher professionalization.



1. Introduction

The concept of *teacher professionalization* (Lang, 1999), drawing on the Anglo-Saxon literature and echoing in the 1980s in France, has gained ever increased importance in recent decades.

Framing teacher professionalization is a complex process, linking epistemological, political, sociological, institutional and economic arguments - and materialises as a novel approach in education, a field still lacking valid experiences and models, mainly developed by means of reflective practices (Martinet, 2001 in Joița, 2008).

With reference to the phenomenon of career professionalization, Paun (2002) advocates that it is "a process of building a set of skills and competencies within a given field, as a result of knowledge (theoretical and practical) acquisition, a deductively controlled process via a specific pattern of a certain profession".

Re-thinking the teacher training field, with regard to both theoretical and practical competencies, has paved the way towards sustainable practical and theoretical arguments to support and validate the scientific and methodological impact of certain solutions concerning teacher professionalization and the intended profile of the teacher's competence.

Teacher's roles and the teaching-related activities are not static, but rather integrated to a dynamic process that leads to content changes in relation to the traditional roles and the emergence of new ones. An up-to-date vision upon the contemporary teaching career should incorporate current developments of these roles in a consistent and solid manner (Potolea, Toma, 2013).

Nonetheless, we state that the traditional context, with its strengths and weaknesses, facilitates the empirical validation of solutions to implement qualitative changes in teacher training.

Regardless of the paradigmatic position adopted, teacher's competence is the key concept of all training programmes. Throughout our present study, we use the term *competence*, i.e. teacher's competence to indicate: *a set of potential behaviours (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) enabling a teacher to carry out educational activities efficiently*. The findings of a study conducted by Langa (2014) have led to the identification of the importance of acquiring transversal competences by students in order for them to become experts in the field of educational sciences. This aspect is all the more important as persons with the same level and register of competences obtain different results in the activity, on the whole.

In this sense, Loredana Tudor considers that the actually educational paradigms promote a new conception on the selection and organization of contents, on the planning and organization of teaching and learning, which consists in the fact that the methodology of curriculum elaboration requires the educator to select, to use and to dose or to articulate all the components and stages of didactic activities according to objectives (Tudor, 2015)

Reconsidering the teacher's roles not only can improve the content, categories of teaching knowledge, but also training strategies and scientific perspectives (knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes) in relation to the teaching profession, and, not to job of teaching, since expertise development is placed at the intersection of a series of variables in education, professional development and academic development. (Adey, 2004).

2. Conceptual Framework: Emotional Intelligence - Emotional Culture

The term *emotional intelligence* was first put forward in a doctoral thesis in the U.S.A back in 1985. Wayne Leon Payne claimed that emotional intelligence is a skill that involves a creative relationship with states of fear, pain and desire. Studies on emotional intelligence are relatively new, by the turn of the 1990s.

A leading figure in the Romanian setting is Mihaela Roco, authoring "Creativitate și inteligență emoțională" ("Creativity and Emotional Intelligence") (2001). The author reviews the definitions of *emotional intelligence* and its dimensions, as well as its importance in the development of human personality. Mihaela Roco outlines three main directions in defining emotional intelligence: John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey (1990, 1993); Reuven Bar-On (1992); Daniel Goleman (1995).

Mayer and Salovey (1990, 1993) define *emotional intelligence* by highlighting the positive interconnection between emotion and cognition. The two scholars structure specific emotional intelligence capabilities in five areas: self-awareness of own emotions, emotion management, intrinsic motivation, empathy and initiation and cultivation of interpersonal relations.

Reuven Bar-On (1992) outlines the following components of emotional intelligence: the intrapersonal aspect (awareness of own emotions, optimism, respect, self-fulfilment, independence); the interpersonal aspect (empathy, interpersonal relationships, social responsibility); adaptability (problem solving, reality testing, flexibility); controlling stress (stress tolerance, impulse control); general attitude (happiness, optimism).

D. Goleman (1995) extends the concept of *emotional intelligence* by including the following components: self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, social skills.

Nowadays, as endorsed by Mihaela Roco (2001), the question of emotional intelligence is whether to feature it as an innate potential or a set of learned skills, competencies and habits. Although emotional intelligence is considered a relatively stable aptitude, it can be developed through special education programmes.

Emotional intelligence is also defined as the personal capacity to effectively identify and manage one's emotions in relation to personal goals. Thus, it acquires crucial importance in future educational activities as it ensures the effective management of the affective energy, emotional experiences, shaping an optimistic approach to measure one's emotional competence potential. An undeniable outcome of the professional culture development, emotional intelligence activates the potential to build practical skills based on certain factors: awareness of own emotions, reactions and resources, motivation, self-control, empathy, sociability. Emotional intelligence indicates the level achieved while transferring this potential to professional performance (Rusu, 2012).

Emotional culture capitalises emotional intelligence from a broader perspective. In terms of education it comprises: a) teaching outcomes - projects aimed at fulfilling psychological and socio-affective objectives; b) specialised institutions/organisations, targeting the ideal model of a "friendly school" c) formal and non-formal ways of communication, characterised by a specific affective condition, compulsory in the construction and implementation of any pedagogical message.

The concept of *emotional culture* features emotional and communicative skills and capabilities, personal-adjusting skills to ensure increased awareness, acceptance and adjustment of personal states and feelings as well as of the others, thus, boosting productivity, networking and personal growth.

Sorin Cristea (2016) frames the emotional culture of a teacher as a subdivision that activates his/her cultural expressive dimension:

a) alongside the other subdivisions of the expressive dimension (cognitive, motivational, volitional, of character);

b) provided that the expressive dimension is related to: the material dimension of the teacher's culture, generated within the existing relationship among the outcomes of his/her teaching activity (education, training, career orientation, classroom management, etc.) and his/her general, specific and practical teaching culture; the institutional/corporate dimension of the teacher's culture, built and continuously improved within the framework of the teaching process and education system, within the school as the basic unit, the classroom, etc.

The teacher's emotional culture, as an essential component of his/her teaching culture (psychological and social), is reflected in "the unity of the intrapersonal and the communicative-interpersonal dimensions." As a pedagogical concept, it lends a "broader meaning" to the affective universe, developed professionally and personally. Thus, it encompasses "a combination of emotional and communicative qualities and capabilities, personal-adjusting skills to secure awareness" and a positive exploitation of "one's states and feelings and of others'." The general function of the emotional culture is to fruitfully capitalise emotional intelligence as "emotional competence - a meta-competence that incorporates emotional, intellectual and human psyche-adjusting components, further converted in the achievement of professional goals and aspirations" (Cojocaru-Borozan, 2012).

3. Research Methodology

Our research paper mainly aimed at capturing to what extent emotional intelligence can enhance teacher professionalization, considering that emotional culture development within the Romanian teacher training framework is emerging. By adopting a theoretical and methodological approach, we sought to identify the prospective teachers' perception of the development of their own emotional culture. Moreover, the assimilation of key emotional values may also contribute to the learners' emotional development.

The free association method that we applied targeted 80 3rd-year year at the Faculty of Letters, also enrolled in the teacher training programme in January-February 2016. This method is qualitative method as described below.

Applying the free association method - in its oral form, we set up two triggers, i.e. *emotional intelligence* and *teaching career*. The subjects' task was to list the first five words that come to their mind when hearing the term *trigger*.

Each subject received a hand-out describing the above mentioned task, being further instructed to closely read it and provide solutions that best fit their beliefs, since there were no right or wrong answers. The subjects were asked to complete all five associations requested. The survey was individually solved; the time required to fill in ranged between 3 and 5 minutes.

The data obtained by applying the verbal free association method indicated a high degree of variation, and further categorisation was necessary. Under the circumstances, we established several categories of meaning for each of the two words surveyed.

Following the responses inventory of the free association task, we retrieved the words, phrases, and categories of meaning in relation to the highest frequency rate, i.e. over 30%, to highlight the dominant perspective regarding emotional intelligence and the teaching career. The words and phrases with a frequency rate below 5% could not be organised into categories of meaning, being excluded from our statistical analysis.

The categories illustrated below indicate a high degree of generalisation, in accordance with the answers provided, as well as particularities subsumed under each category.

Table 1. Categories of meaning following the free association task when selecting *emotional intelligence* as a trigger

Categories of meaning	Prospective teachers' answers
Self-awareness	34%
Self-adjustment	31%
Motivation	54%
Empathy	75%
Social skills	68%

In terms of emotional intelligence:

Self-awareness: self-confidence, emotion recognition, strength awareness, self-confidence;

Self-adjustment: flexibility, honesty, emotion management, accountability;

Motivation: involvement, initiative, optimism, perseverance;

Empathy: understanding the others, perceiving others' needs, anticipating others' desires;

Social skills: communication, collaboration, cooperation, persuasion.

Table 2. Categories of meaning following the free association task when selecting *teaching career* as a trigger

Categories of meaning	Future-teaching trainees responses
Scientific competence	55%
Communication skills	67%
Teaching skills	40%
Positive emotional states	60%
Negative emotional states	34%

In terms of teaching career:

Scientific competence: expertise, specialised knowledge;

Communication skills: networking with students, engaging communication with and among students;

Teaching skills: design of educational activities;

Positive emotional states: stability, enthusiasm to work with children, leisure time, job security;

Negative emotional states: insecurity, stress, lack of other options.

As regards the representation of emotional intelligence, the core as expressed by our prospective teachers displays empathy and social skills. The next important dimension, according to the survey, is motivation. Moving on to the analysis of peripheral categories of meaning, we identified self-awareness and self-adjustment. However, the peripheral ranking of these dimensions can be explained by our trainees' lack of experience. Our trainees experience real teaching in the classroom only for a limited number of hours.

With reference to the representation of the teaching career among the surveyed trainees, the data obtained endorse that, generally, scientific competencies and communication skills are prerequisites, followed by teaching competences. As trainees usually associate the teaching career with positive emotional states, we suggested a self-reflection on their emotional state as self-evaluation of their teaching practice. The majority of respondents exhibited a poor control over their emotions and often manifested a distorted perception of their emotional states. Some of them were overwhelmed by fear, worry, anxiety, even reaching a deadlock. Others confessed that their emotions were so strong that the intervention of their teaching practice mentor was required.

To investigate the role of emotions in pre-service teacher training we resorted to systematic and spontaneous observation, during the teaching practice, courses and completion of assignments. We found that emotionally, during the courses and practical assignments, affection remained neutral, being more visible during the teaching practice. This outcome led us to adjust the learning methodology for the subject of Classroom Management (direct involvement, content exploring effort, trainees' interpreting skills, solving real-life and simulated teaching problems, building their own reflections, cooperation and collaboration in making generalisations) that at first triggered opposition. To induce a state of confidence, we applied a series of procedures:

- Engaging trainees in real-life situations;
- Self-expression of their comprehension with regard to the theoretical and practical issues and description of feelings experienced in relation to their comprehension;
- Encouraging their own reflections;
- Participation in debates, building arguments and counterarguments.

Pre-service teacher teaching training programmes may no longer be reduced to the development of specialised professional and teaching competences, since they should be completed by an emotional component as well. The contemporary teacher profile is fully rounded by developing the emotional dimension in relation to the different teacher's roles caused by new paradigm shifts in education. Accordingly, it is highly essential for our trainees, as prospective teachers, to grow aware and train their dimensions of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995):

- Emotion self-awareness (the trainee should be able to distinguish and label them, understand their cause, distinguish between feelings and actions);
- Emotion management (the trainee should be able to control his/her anger and tolerate his/her frustrations, express anger non-aggressively, show self-respect, nourish positive feelings towards themselves and towards the others);

- Self-motivation (the trainee should be responsible, able to focus on a task, to exercise self-control);
- Empathy (the trainee should develop the ability to perceive reality from the others' perspective, he/she must learn to listen actively);
- Management of interpersonal relationships (the trainee should develop the ability to understand and analyse interpersonal relationships, be open to communication, show prosocial behaviour).

4. Conclusion

The teachers' level of emotional culture impacts on the quality of educational services (Gendrom, 2008) since the most complex and varied problems faced by teachers nowadays are emotional in nature.

Living in an unstable, uncertain and ever changing world, a huge machinery meant to fabricate responsibilities, obligations, threats, uncertainties and confusions, (considerably) numerous teachers express their worries. For many, their mind is overwhelmed with uncomfortable worries and anxieties and are neither able to control nor to remove them ... therefore, to our mind, it is time to realise that the development and the quality of education is clearly influenced by the mental strength or weakness manifested by the teacher in front of the class (Albu, 2013). In this context, new concerns have spread with reference to prospective teachers' emotional intelligence development to meet contemporary professional demands. Nonetheless, in Romania studies of the development of emotional intelligence in pre-service teacher training are incipient.

Our research highlighted the need to integrate programmes tailored emotional intelligence modules within pre-service teacher training, centred on: emotional involvement, positive emotional mobility, emotional activism, emotional expressivity, and emotional resistance to stress, in-depth emotional perception, emotional flexibility, and emotional creativity.

We further envisage sustainable socio-emotional development workshops focusing on two main dimensions: Emotion self-awareness / Emotion management; Empathy development. We strongly believe that pre-service teacher training programmes should include emotional intelligence development as a prerequisite for a faster and complete professional integration, generating less stress and anxiety.

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