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Emotional Intelligence as a Predisposition to Pursue the Teaching Profession

Abstract

One of the significant predispositions of the teacher is the ability to cope with emotions, which is recognized as emotional intelligence.

The study was conducted among the students of the Academy of Physical Education in Wroclaw (263 individuals). In a group of students some were selected who declared their intention to work as teachers (95 people); the remaining students were the control group.

According to the collected data, emotional intelligence of most of the students is average, and the belief concerning the level of this competence is overestimated in many cases. This result is particularly unsatisfactory for those associating their future with the teaching profession, for they are expected to have better interpersonal skills.

Keywords: *emotional intelligence, professional predisposition, teacher, student*

Introduction

Psychological competence of the teacher as an important determinant of the quality of teaching and education is an interesting and important subject of scientific reflection and empirical research (Kobylecka, 2005; Barberry, 1990; Żukowska, 1970). These competences can be developed and strengthened by the teacher at every stage of their professional life, with conscious work and various forms of education. However, it should be remembered that the competences are based on more stable, and thus more difficult to train, individually different psychological dispositions that

can be described as professional skills. Predispositions of teachers and candidates to the profession should be diagnosed as early as possible, enabling them both to select and systematically develop their professional qualifications.

One of the significant predispositions of the teacher, regardless of the specialty, is the ability to cope with their own and other people's emotions (Przybylska, 2006; Zabłocka, 1998). Today, this area of expertise, but also the ability (or disposition conditioned by genetic endowment and early stages of development) is recognized as emotional intelligence. Variously conceptualized, still subjected to theoretical categorisation and empirical verification, it may be defined as a set of features allowing for monitoring the feelings and emotions, and utilising of this information for controlling their own and other people's behavior (Mayer et al., 1999). According to Salovey, Mayer and Caruso, emotional intelligence constitutes a quaternary construct. The first component is the perception and expression of emotions, the ability to perceive and recognize emotions in oneself and others. The second component is the ability to assimilate emotions to support cognitive processes. The third component, understanding emotions, includes knowledge about the experience of the emotional sphere. The fourth component, managing emotions, is the capability of the conscious regulation of one's own and other people's emotions and moods.

The importance of this kind of emotional intelligence in the work of the teacher is quite obvious, as it is also confirmed by empirical studies. It is a disposition which not only determines the communication and educational skills (Barberry, op.cit.), but is also positively associated with the sense of mission and job satisfaction, and resistance to stress and burnout, which are relevant risks (Bajcar et al., 2011).

Emotional intelligence as a psychological construct has a multilayer structure-on more primal abilities, such as perception and adequate recognition of emotions in one's own experiences, or the faces of other people, there are mounted more complex skills- like the ability to use emotions in decision-making and creative thinking, the ability to understand and differentiate the specificity of individual feelings, or the ability to manage moods and motivate oneself and others. All of these components fit well into the optimum personality profile of the teacher who, watching and understanding the variables and individually varied emotional life of his students, builds adequate and effective rules of cooperation and communication, but also as an educator- skillfully exciting the interest and cognitive curiosity, effectively motivating both himself and the students to explore and capture new knowledge and skills. Emotional intelligence is especially useful in educational interactions, which are currently the biggest problem for teachers, and at the same time they are paid insufficient attention in pedagogical education (cf., Romanowska-Tołoczko et al., 2011).

As already mentioned, the competences that make up emotional intelligence can be developed to some extent, which should take place primarily in the course of study preparing for the teaching profession, but it is equally important to educate teachers who are already professionally active. Interpersonal effectiveness can and should be shaped by all kinds of stimuli relating to social behavior.

Having the competence to effectively manage emotional life is, therefore, what helps teacher candidates to start the profession and to reach satisfaction, therefore, the important and practical questions seem to be: what is the average level of emotional intelligence in candidates for the teaching profession, or does a person choosing this profession make an accurate self-diagnosis of the level of their emotional competences and what standardized tools can support them through an external evaluation of these competences?

Nowadays, for the measurement of emotional intelligence various psychological tools are used, diagnosing a variety of its aspects. First of all, it is worth distinguishing between the tools based on self-report that de facto test the level of the conviction of possession of selected competences, and the tools that include various forms of tests- tasks which check the actual level of competence (Śmieja et al., 2008). Although in the process of constructing and verifying the accuracy of the self descriptive tool, the authors try to achieve a satisfactory level of compliance of results with those of other tools, but the measurement is imperfect so much as that it is based on subjective beliefs or even mere declarations of a subject (depending, among other things, on the subject's need for approval, and his/her perceived validity of tested variable, e.g., mental health). The more reliable, but requiring more time, is regarded as a measuring type of test tools. It seems that the use of both types of tools, i.e., basing on the self, and using measuring tests, in one group of subjects, increases the reliability of the results obtained, and furthermore allows for the compliance of their beliefs about their own level of competence with the factual level (only to some extent, as the components of the various tools measured may not overlap). In order to answer the above questions regarding the diagnosis of emotional intelligence as the test of the suitability of candidates for teachers, the study with the participation of university students from the Academy of Physical Education was designed and conducted. The faculty prepares the students for the teaching profession in Physical Education, but among its students only some declare their willingness to work in this profession. This creates the opportunity to compare the candidates for teachers with other students in terms of their level of predisposition, the self-diagnosis in this area and its convergence with career plans.

Methodology

For the empirical verification of the above problems, the following specific research questions were formulated:

1. What is the average level of emotional intelligence (EI) measured by three different tools, among the students of the Academy of Physical Education, a group of students of Physical Education and students of other faculties (Physiotherapy and Sports) and in the subgroups of students planning and not planning to pursue the teaching profession?

2. Does the average measurement of EI, in a group of students declaring their willingness to work as a teacher, differ significantly from the results of the students who do not declare such plans?

3. In the study group and subgroups, is there a correlation between the EI results, measured with a tool basing on the self-description, and the results obtained from the studies conducted with executional tools?

The study was conducted in 2014 among the students of the Academy of Physical Education in Wroclaw. 263 first and second year students (129 women and 134 men) from three departments were examined: Physical Education, Physiotherapy, and Sports, studying in the intra-mural mode. In the group of students of the Faculty of Physical Education, there were those who declared their intention to work as a teacher (95 people) and a group of people not declaring such an intention (50 persons); other students were the control group.

In the study, the following measurement tools of emotional intelligence were applied:

1. Questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence (INTE)

The INTE questionnaire (Jaworska et al., 2008) is used to measure emotional intelligence, understood as the ability to recognize, understand and control one's own emotions, and the emotions of others, as well as the ability to effectively use emotions for influencing one's own and others' actions. The INTE consists of 33 items of self-descriptive character, in which the subjects assess themselves on a five-point scale. Only the overall score of this scale was analysed, which is an indicator of emotional intelligence, understood as a set of cognitive abilities, by which one uses his/her emotions when solving problems. They are related to the ability of raising awareness of one's own emotions, the understanding of their causes and consequences, which may result in the disclosure of their feelings, but at the same time controlling them when the situation demands it, as well as recognizing and understanding the emotions experienced by other

people. The overall result obtained in the scale of the test is in the range of 33–165 points.

2. Emotional Intelligence Scale- Faces (SIE-T)

The scale of SIE-T (Matczak et al., 2005), is used to assess the ability to recognize facial expressions, which is regarded as one of the basic components of emotional intelligence. The scale has an executional character. The test material consists of 18 photographs of faces (male and female in equal proportions). Individual photographs are assigned sets of six names of emotions. The test determines whether the face visible in the photograph expresses the enlisted emotions. The total number of test items is 108 (18 x 6 photographs of emotions). The tool is intended to study adolescents over 16 years of age and adults, and can be used in group studies. The overall result can take a value between 0-108 points.

3. Two-dimensional Emotional Intelligence Inventory (DINEMO)

The DINEMO Questionnaire (Matczak et al., 2006) is designed to measure basic components of emotional intelligence, such as the ability to access their own and others' emotions, respecting them and understanding their functions. These abilities are evaluated on the basis of how the respondent interprets the different situations that cause emotions and how willing he/she is to respond. The DINEMO consists of 33 items, including descriptions of various situations which are sources of emotions. In each case there are four different ways to respond. The subject selects the reaction which is his most typical in each instance. The inventory allows for the interpretation of the results for the two factorial scales and obtaining a general result (ranging from 0 to 33 points). The scales included in the DINEMO are "OTHERS," which measures the ability to recognize, understand and respect other people's emotions (results are in the range of 0-21poins), and "I", which measures the ability to become aware of, understand, respect and express one's own emotions (results are in the range of 0-14 points).

Results and interpretation

The average results obtained in the study group and subgroups of students (by gender) are presented in Table 1. In the DINEMO study the average scale score in the whole group, as well as the results of the subscales of "I" and "OTHERS", compared with standartized studies, both women and men appear to be at an average level. Similarly, the results in the subgroups of students declaring and not

declaring planning to join the teaching profession are average. The study scale SIE-T has also produced average results as in the whole group and subgroups the values determined in clinical standardization are close to medium. The average results of the self-report scale INTE in almost all the subgroups also oscillate around the average performance in the population. The values indicating the standard deviation of the results focus mostly around the specified medium. Only the average score in the group of men of the Sport major achieves a very high level.

Table 1. Average results of the three emotional intelligence tools for particular groups of students; n-number of the group, r- the average score for the group, f- the average score for women, m- the average score for men, σ- standard deviation

Measurement tool of EI	Group	All surveyed students (n = 263)	Students of Physical Education who plan to join the teaching profession (n = 95)	Students of Physical Education who do not plan to join the teaching profession (n = 50)	Students of Physiotherapy (n = 71)	Students of Sports (n = 47)
DINEMO „I"	r	8.72	8.46	8.48	9.08	8.95
	σ	1.99	2.07	2.05	1.86	1.92
	f	8.76	8.80	8.50	9.15	8.58
	m	8.63	812	8.46	8.89	9.08
DINEMO „Others"	r	12.79	13.12	12.48	12.81	12.43
	σ	3.47	3.44	3.73	3.20	3.7
	f	13.82	14.68	13.83	12.53	14.25
	m	12.16	11.60	11.1	13.57	11.79
DINEMO General Result	r	19.90	19.97	19.36	20.26	19.78
	σ	4.10	4.06	4.77	3.69	4.04
	f	20.73	21.78	20.61	20.21	20.33
	m	19.21	18.20	18.65	20.42	19.8
INTE	r	130.69	126.48	126.14	123.19	55.91
	σ	86.74	11.85	13.8	11.8	25.23
	f	126.15	128.49	124.22	121.90	130
	m	135.89	124.52	127.22	126.74	165.06
SIE-T	r	74.08	74.45	73.18	73.63	75.00
	σ	9.97	8.85	12.23	10.57	8.59
	f	74.94	74.49	75.44	72.98	76.83
	m	74.02	74.41	71.90	75.42	74.35

In an attempt to answer the second research question, the results obtained in these two subgroups of students of Physical Education: planning and not planning to pursue the teaching profession were statistically analyzed using the NIR test (Least Significant Difference) in Statistica 10.0 program. As demonstrated by the results of this analysis, for any of the three tools used in the measurement result of the IE WF group of students declaring their intention to exercise the teaching profession, there is no significant difference from the measurement result of the IE WF group of students who do not have such plans.

Table 2. Indicators of significance of differences in mean scores of emotional intelligence obtained in the groups of students demonstrating and not showing an intention to work as a teacher

Measurement tool of EI	Indicator of significance of differences between groups
DINEMO "I"	0.961361
DINEMO "Others"	0.289274
DINEMO General Result	0.390015
SIE-T	0.467494
INTE	0.981834

During the verification of the third question, the statistical analyses (the correlation factor of r-Pearson at the significance level $p < 0.05$) shows the strength of the relationship between the results of the self-descriptive measurement tool (INTE), and the results of the measurement tools of executional character, i.e., testing the levels of emotional intelligence (DINEMO overall score and subscales of "I" and "OTHERS" and the SIE-T). In the group of people declaring their intention of becoming a teacher, the results of the self-descriptive tool showed no significant associations with any of the executional tests. In the group of students not planning to work as a teacher, a significant positive correlationwas found between the results of the general scale DINEMO and the results of the self-descriptive INTE questionnaire ($r = 0.29$ $p < 0.05$), which means that the level of emotional intelligence auto-diagnosed by those surveyed was the higher, the better they coped with the tasks which tested its levels. In addition, a group of students of the Sports faculty showed a significantly negative relationship between the results and the INTE SIE-T scale ($r = -0.29$, $p < 0.05$), which means that the higher the score on the self-descriptive questionnaire, the weaker the ability to recognize emotions on the faces.

As shown in the survey conducted among the students of the Academy of Physical Education, the group has the average level of emotional intelligence, and the women do not differ in this respect from the men. Interestingly, the students wishing to work at school, in terms of emotional competence do not differ as a group from those who do not want to join the teaching profession. You can hypothesize that in this group of career choice to a small extent based on an assessment of their interpersonal aptitudes. It would be useful to verify this hypothesis in future studies and reveal any other factors which could influence students. Moreover, the teacher candidates' belief about the levels of their own emotional competence does not correlate with the actual level of the skill being checked in the test, while the students who do not plan to work at school seem to accurately assess their level of emotional intelligence, at least to the extent which is verified by the scale based on the reading and naming emotions visible on faces. Both of these subgroups obtained better results than the subgroup of students of Sport, in which there was not only a tendency to maximize their own emotional competence, but also to demonstrate a negative relationship between this optimistic belief in oneself and the actual skills in recognizing emotions on faces.

Conclusions

Based on the collected data, it can be concluded that the emotional intelligence of most of the students is average, and beliefs about the level of these competences in many cases differ from the real skills. This result is particularly unsatisfactory in relation to those connecting their plans with the teaching profession. The people who choose this profession are expected to have better interpersonal aptitudes, as it is required by the specific nature of the work they intend to perform.

With regard to the emotional and social competence, one can argue that having or not having certain personality predispositions largely determines the competences of candidates. However, essentially the same predispositions may not be sufficient, but in their absence it is possible to learn the behaviors and skills which boost the quality of such competences. Direct development can be achieved by so-called social training, performed in everyday life, learning and work situations, as well as that which is executed in the course of particular training.

Thus, in the preparation of candidates for future teachers it is extremely important that in addition to substantive knowledge and skills, there should be also a focus on developing their personal qualities and social and emotional competences. Despite that, it is a much neglected sphere in the education of col-

lege students. Universities only occasionally conduct special classes which aim at developing interpersonal skills (Romanowska-Tołłoczko et al., 2012).

The methods of such activities have been widespread in the United States for many years already. The offers of training courses are addressed to persons who are engaged in the so-called caring professions, in which it is necessary to have a high emotional competence and social skills to cope with stress.

The starting point for the creation of educational programs, among other things, is the concept of emotional intelligence, whose elements allow for establishing the general framework of emotional competences, both personal and social, which determine the effective functioning in the professional role (Lewandowska, 2009). Therefore, these programs include self-awareness improving activities, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Among the latter, the most important skills are: creating relationships, leadership, communication, influencing the lives of others, catalyzing change and mitigation of conflicts (Goleman, 1999).

Classes focused on developing the above-mentioned skills and influencing personal development of students should be conducted in all universities, and especially in these which are preparing their students to work in direct and close contact with other people.

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