

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PEDAGOGICAL AND NON-PEDAGOGICAL PROFESSIONS-A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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The paper contains results of comparative research on emotional intelligence as a probable factor of vocational preferences. The author strongly advocates that emotional intelligence is an important component of professional preparation and competences in pedagogical professions.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, helping professions, teacher competences, socio-emotional competences, vocational preferences

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Since publication of *Emotional Intelligence* by D. Goleman, many people believe that emotional intelligence is far most important to succeed in personal and professional life than academic abilities. However, very attractive these assumption are being verified by appearing research data [1, p.415]. It seems reasonable to assume that people who barely cope with emerging emotions have difficulties in building rewarding interpersonal relationships, are more likely to experience emotional difficulties and as a result have less opportunities for success. Furthermore it seems that there are professions that especially require competences of emotional intelligence.

The purpose of this article is to find answers to questions whether emotional intelligence is important in professional orientation and competences? The inquiry was inspired by at least three reasons. The first are arguments about the importance of emotionally smart behavior in interpersonal relationships and pro social attitudes. Moreover, the growing interest in so-called soft competences and increasing expectations towards helping professions induce questions whether emotional intelligence predisposes to choose these professions. Further if these professionals are or should be more emotionally intelligent? Because helping professions are based on person-to-person interactions, understanding of yourself and another person, it seems that people emotionally intelligent are more likely to choose that kind of work as well as they self-actualize working with people. On the other hand if correlation between intelligent management of emotions and professional preferences and competences would be proved, professional preparation could be more methodical and effective. Assuming that on hand so many Polish pedagogues (teachers, educators, care-givers, counselors etc.) suffer from burn out and are not satisfied with the work and on the other clients, students are dissatisfied too, socio-emotional competences could be the

way out. Accordingly, category of emotional intelligence should be incorporated in the evaluation of socio-emotional maturity of workers, especially those working with children.

People value social skills in everyday life and working environment. Given that emotional intelligence potentially leads do social and emotional competences, it is an important ability in all professions which core is relation with people. Helping professions are based on communication and very often some kind of emotional relation with clients. Are emotional intelligence and competences the factor of vocational preferences? Do emotionally intelligent people tend to choose helping professions? Is there any emotional ability particularly important in being a teacher, counselor, care-giver etc.? These are the questions that should be answered if we seek for key competences of professionals in the area of pedagogical and social work.

Hypothesis that people who are fluent with emotions and emotional experience is important for them choose helping professions appear a convincing one. The presented research partially confirmed it. Although only on the basis of the diagnosis of emotional intelligence it would be difficult to distinguish whether emotional competences provoke to choose profession or they are the result of professional preparation. Most likely both thesis are possible and compatible.

According to the results of hitherto led studies emotional intelligence seems to play role in professional activity. Most of the works consider emotional intelligences in business professions and highlight communicative and social competences of workers, especially on managerial post. Research results vary what is dependent on different research tools, but numerous studies imply that people endowed with emotional regulations skills are judged as more reliable at work [2, p. 196-197]. People who can

recognize emotions of other people on the basis of behavior, facial expressions or the way of communication turned out to cope with society expectations, understand other people and help them. Couple of studies indicate that such people are perceived more positively [3, p. 91]. Pro-social attitudes, empathy, an urge to help are features often attributed to emotionally intelligent people. These features, as suggested by the studies [1, p. 210] to correlate with emotional intelligence to different extend. On the other hand there are research that imply emotional intelligence (diagnosed with MEIS test) correlates negatively with mathematical interests. Surveyed emotionally intelligent students chose mathematics, computer science, physics and technical subject more rare than those with lower emotional abilities [5, p. 1390]. Another relevant research area concerns what people most desire in their leaders and co-workers. Furnham found that people only considered positive characteristics such as ability, personality, behavioral and moral competences. Besides features such as being honest, competent, forward-looking, inspiring and intelligent, people most often indicated to emotional intelligence as the quality of good boss [6, p. ].

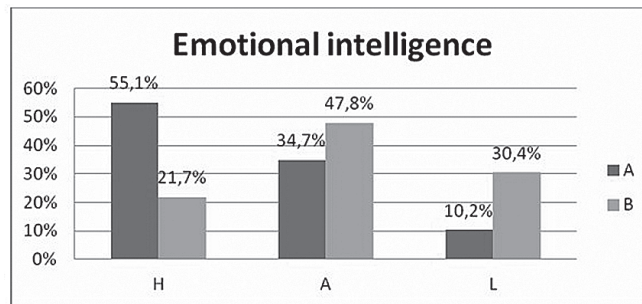
Given that abilities, needs, competences or interests and expectations influence vocational preferences the question is whether emotional intelligence abilities influence in any way the choice of profession? Mayer reports the study when students who achieved considerably higher scores in MSCEIT worked or declared the will to work in social profession [4, p. 206]. Surveyed group mentioned, inter alia, such professions as teacher, counselor and social worker. These professions are associated with helping people and do not provide high material status. Students rarely pointed out jobs that require enterprise, competition or office work. Mayer concluded

**Table 1.**

**Comparison of the research results in two groups of pedagogues and other professionals.**

|                | A          | B          |
|----------------|------------|------------|
| <b>H</b>       | <b>27</b>  | <b>10</b>  |
| <b>A</b>       | <b>17</b>  | <b>22</b>  |
| <b>L</b>       | <b>5</b>   | <b>14</b>  |
|                | <b>49</b>  | <b>46</b>  |
| <b>Average</b> | <b>137</b> | <b>128</b> |

**Diagram 1.**



Key: A-level of emotional intelligence of pedagogues; B-level of emotional intelligence in compared group (non-pedagogical); H- high scores; A-average scores; L-low scores in emotional intelligence questionnaire.

that highly emotionally intelligent person favors occupation that involve social interactions than clerical and administrative work[4, p. 206].

In occupations based on communication, perceiving and understanding other people’s emotions play crucial role. Rosenthal found, that the ability to recognize other people’s emotions can significantly differentiate professional achievements, as well customers opinion about employees [7]. Janovics research carried out in business companies provided evidence that more people appreciated their superiors with high level of emotional control and recognition. Similarly, customers evaluated competences of emotionally intelligent service providers considerably higher [4, p.207].

Taking into regard numerous research results on emotional intelligence at work, it can be assumed that this type of abilities is significant for job orientation and competences. In order to initially evaluate the accuracy of this assumption, survey in different occupational groups was planned and led. The four-branch model of emotional intelligence was implemented [8] to create emotional intelligence questionnaire. The questionnaire contains statements describing behavior and thoughts correlated to different extend with emotional intelligence. It was used to estimate emotional intelligences in areas: perceiving emotions in oneself and others, using emotions to facilitate decision making and thinking, understanding emotional meanings and managing emotions. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was estimated and statistically proved.

In the part of the pilot study 95 questionnaires were collected. The sample consisted of 95 working people at the age 20-48. 49 people performed jobs, briefly referred to as pedagogical (job counselor, social worker, pedagogue, teacher). Another 46 respondent had occupations which main aim isn’t helping people or caring about them: accountant, manager, office worker, surveyor, supervision inspector.

The results obtained in diagnose in both groups are presented in table 1 and figure 1 is a graphical, percentage representation of the data. At first glance, comparing the results of the two groups some significant differences can be noticed. In a diagram most visible is discrepancy in declared high and low levels of emotional intelligence. The group of pedagogues is emotionally intelligent. More than half of them (55,1%) declared high capacities in all branches of emotional intelligence. In comparison in the other group significantly less respondents (21,7%) had chosen answers indicating emotionally intelligent behavior. Non-pedagogical workers achieved average level of emotional intelligence (47,8%). In the case of low-performance the trend is reversed, almost 3 times more often (30,4%) “not pedagogical” workers» achieved low scores, declaring difficulties in dealing with emotions. Pedagogical workers are generally more reflective about their emotions, they declare better self-control and understanding of emotional situations. What seems especially important in pedagogical professions is recognizing and reflective following emotions of others. These socio-emotional abilities are better

developed in pedagogical group. Generally, manifestations of emotional illiteracy are more frequent in the responses of non-pedagogical employees.

The differences between groups turned out to be significant. Taking into account the arithmetic means of the results in both groups, professionals working in pedagogical professions tend to have higher emotional intelligence. The average results in that group amounted to 137 points in the questionnaire (150 was possible), and the opposite group-126. In order to assess the significance of these differences t-student test was applied. The calculated coefficient ( $t=2,84$ ;  $df=93$ ;  $t_{\alpha}=2,00$ ,  $\alpha=0,05$ ;  $t_{\alpha}=2,66$ ,  $\alpha=0,01$ ) confirmed the statistic importance of the differences between the average results.

Furthermore, the results in four subscales differentiate: perceiving emotions in oneself and others, using emotions to facilitate decision making and thinking, understanding emotional meanings and managing emotions are abilities that pedagogues declared mostly as high. The highest discrepancy can be noticed between the results in the scale emotional awareness in self and others. Pedagogues perceive, name and use emotional knowledge to a greater extend. They enlighten that they are open and sensitive to emerging emotions and try to follow them in social relations. Only about a third (31%) of non-pedagogues declared that they put themselves in another man’s situation. Neither they often wonder how they can affect the behavior of other people, or ponder over importance for other people when making decisions. Pedagogues more often claimed

(90%) that they take into account others' feelings, also return attention to how they may affect the well-being of other people. These are the skills that can lead to empathy—an approach or ability regulating social relations, inducing a need to help or understand people's problems. Similarly is with "using" emotions in problem solving and decision making—pedagogues seem to be a bit better.

Emotional regulation, another ability of emotional intelligence, enables responding to the situation in the manner chosen by the person. This may involve the inhibition of emotional arousal or its disclosure, depending on what one considers most beneficial for wellbeing, relationships with others or the efficiency of own activities. The flexibility in coping with negative emotions is of particular importance. Somebody who manages emotional experience is able to express feelings and perhaps connected thoughts in socially acceptable way, in accordance with the cultural codes, as well as adequately to the situation. The results of pedagogues in that scale are the lowest (average results prevail and they border with low level) of all scales, but still they are a bit more open and sensible with emotions than non-pedagogues. Generally lack of self-control is observable shortcoming of more and more people. Poor emotional control competences can lead not only to distress, problem with social adaptation and failure in interpersonal relationships, but also can generate communication and reduce work efficiency. Concluding and at the same time simplifying people working in helping professions are more emotionally intelligent, especially when considering interpersonal context. They are more often emphatic and understanding.

Not only our aspirations, predispositions, abilities but also our needs, values and possibilities of personal fulfillment determine a profession that we choose. Emotional intelligence is apparent in all of these aspects so making straightforward it influences vocational preferences. Adopting the critical standpoint it's worth mentioning that the diagnose was made on the basis of questionnaire and the respondents „only" declared emotional capacities. This is factual drawback of such research procedure. Whether they are actually emotionally intelligent or not can be verified in real

circumstances, in work and life context. Furthermore, it is probable that the differentiating factor is professional preparation. In Poland future pedagogues are being accustomed with knowledge about human nature and abilities, they take part in workshops, train their communicational and social skills. Probably they understand better the rhetoric of emotional intelligence: terms, categories and their meaning. That's why the surveyed group had achieved higher results in declared emotional intelligence. On the other hand even highly qualified workers in Poland are trained in narrow, specialized areas: mostly knowledge and skills. Although the profile is changing, due to implementation of key competences, still soft, interpersonal competences are perceived as additional, not core even for working with people.

Abilities potentially increase effectiveness of action in particular scope. Emotional intelligence is a set of capabilities, which improve the processing of emotional information, thus it is of particular importance in situations when a variety of emotions appear. Since emotions «*build the infrastructure of social life - they stimulate plans mostly involving others*» [9, p. 124]. The skills of emotional intelligence affect the quality not only of social contacts but also the quality of our work. Especially significant are such skills as: 1) the use of socially acceptable forms of emotional expression, 2) emotion recognition and reflective control, 3) understanding emotions and taking them into consideration in actions, 4) generating emotions (also in group work) so as to assist the processes of problem solving, decision making,

The question what emotionally intelligent person is like, is still an open one. Because of different reasons we hope that emotionally intelligent persons are "better", more personally and socially competent. We assign socio-emotional competences exceptional importance when talking about professional qualifications or prior vocational predispositions. Although arguments for the importance of emotional intelligence on managerial posts or in team working are raised frequently, not so often we talk about these competences in pedagogical professions. According to my professional observation, previous research and presented pilot research socio-emotional competences appear to be of exceptional

importance in pedagogical professions. Pedagogical work demands not only perfect communicational skills, emotional control, creativity (also enhanced by emotions) but also kind of understanding, urge to help and readiness to act for others. Therefore socio-emotional skills are irreplaceable. Empathy, taking into consideration emotions of others, interests in needs and feelings, bring about educational relation and induce socio-emotional learning.

In reported research the gathered data enable preliminary verification of emotional intelligence as a differentiating factor between pedagogical and non-pedagogical professions. It turned out that people working in pedagogical professions had received higher scores in all 5 scales of emotional intelligence than representatives of other professions. These results encourage further exploration of the correlation between emotional intelligence and pedagogical competences. Proving it yields significant repercussions for professional preparation of teachers, social workers, care-givers etc., all the professions which crucial aim is helping in growing. Anyhow, first and foremost implication is for the recruitment to the professions.

The ability to use and process emotional information are especially important in pedagogical work as they contribute to professional development and educational relationship. In particular when a pedagogue (teacher, care giver, educator etc.) demonstrates emotionally intelligent reasoning and behavior he/she: facilitates the process of communication and cooperation, models and coaches students, clients emotional improvement, contributes to pedagogue's reflective actions, stimulates creativity and finally strengthens pedagogical competences that establish high professionalism. Inevitable stress, difficult social and ethical situations make emotional competences irreplaceable to resist stress and burnout syndrome [8].

J. Elliot, taking into account the complexity of the educational context (social, cultural conditions, needs and students' potential) indicates interaction, communication, empathy, understanding as the core of pedagogues' professionalism [9, p. 127]. I believe that their work would be more satisfactory and effective if we trained emotionally intelligent candidates. I strongly advo-

cate incorporating emotional education as a core of professional preparation. Pitifully, while modern rhetoric of key competences stresses soft competences, Polish educational system at all stages still concentrates on intellectual, technical, methodical ones even in preparing pedagogues.

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