

# Emotional Competencies and Their Meaning for the Professional Development of Teachers

PhD Mirjana Aleksova<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*Emotions have always been subject to analysis by psychologists. The emotional capabilities are the ones that drive our decisions alongside the rational mind, thus enabling our thoughts. Our life and our decisions depend on these two things, and our IQ and emotional intelligence play an equally important part as well.*

*Emotional competencies have a very important place. They include awareness and the ability to assess what you're doing, evaluate what and where you've made a mistake, and the ability to admit and apologize if you ever make a mistake. The improvement of the emotional competencies is of utter importance for the professional development and work of teachers. These emotional competencies are the ones that are really important to students, since the transmission of the material by the teacher and how the teacher accepts the students from their early age, is what is left in their character traits for the rest of their lives. There will be less conflicts and misunderstandings, and problems will be more easily solved if teachers have a more humane approach, are tolerant and accepting.*

**Key words:** emotions, competencies, intelligence, teachers, professional development

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*“When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion.”*

Dale Carnegie

## I. introduction

The main tendency and challenge of every modern organization is to put the right people with the right skills in the right place. The same goes for teachers in schools i.e. to pick good, highly effective teachers that constantly improve their professional and emotional competencies. The competencies of a contemporary teacher are the basis for the personal, professional, and career development.

Teaching is a process that can't be imagined without the teacher. The teacher is a person that gives incentive, direction, stimulation and coordination of the highly educational activities. Without the teacher's personality, the teaching process would have no “breath of fresh air” in class. It is one of the most important factors that is part of the students' growth, especially the emotional growth. The teacher's part is irreplaceable in the lives of the students. They need to identify themselves with the students, to be able to see things from the students' perspective since that is the only way that they can understand the students' needs, possibilities etc. Unfortunately, very few teachers have the ability to identify themselves with the students, hence that is the reason why they don't have enough understanding. The reasons for this are probably in the teacher's ego, or the fear of being mocked which is connected to the mentality and social norms that are set by the environment in which they live in. This form of behavior is directly connected to the teachers' emotional intelligence. According to Goleman, “Emotional intelligence consists of non-cognitive skills, competencies and skills that affect a person's ability to successfully cope with everyday challenges” (Goleman, 1997). According to the model of Salovey and Mayer, emotional intelligence is the ability to track the personal and the feelings and emotions of others, their control, and the use of that information in the process of thinking and behaving (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

## TEACHERS AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The appearance of the term “emotional intelligence” is a revolutionary find, since it represents a merging of two important psychological terms – intelligence and emotions. Salovey and Mayer (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) introduced this concept into psychological literature and developed their theoretical view, looking

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<sup>1</sup> Mirjana Aleksova has a PhD in the area of the gifted and talented

at emotional intelligence as a set of different mental abilities and skills, which are related to the processing of emotional relevant information. Goleman has popularized this concept, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy and social skills in the professional achievements and personal well-being of every person. Why is it so important for teachers to have this?

Students who perceive the teacher as an indifferent and cold person who treats them as beings who are not worthy of attention and respect, will not learn much. Teachers who know about the impact and importance of emotions in the process of acquiring and reproducing knowledge, can create an emotionally favorable climate in their classrooms. The part which refers to the motivation of adaptive behavior, can be defined as the use of emotions for self-motivation in learning and fulfilling school responsibilities. An "emotionally intelligent" teacher, instead of intimidating with failure in life if the subject matter is not learnt and adopted, will motivate the students with pleasant emotions. The teacher who understands his/her own and the feelings of others and accepts them as something completely normal, but also sees them as a crucial part of life, and thus part of the teaching, with this attitude "gives permission" and sends non-verbal messages to the students, that their feelings and they themselves are good, worthy of respect and love.

Studies today suggest that the coefficient of emotional intelligence (EQ) may be more important than IQ, and it better predicts success in work and life, quality of interpersonal relationships, and overall happiness of a person. Emotional intelligence encompasses a list of personal, social and emotional competencies and skills that effect the ability to succeed when coping with the demands and pressure of the environment.

<b>interpersonal components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional self-awareness</li> <li>• persistence</li> <li>• self-respect</li> <li>• self-actualization</li> <li>• independence</li> </ul>
<b>interpersonal components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• empathy</li> <li>• interpersonal relationships</li> <li>• social responsibility</li> </ul>
<b>components of adjustment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• problem-solving</li> <li>• objectivity in the assessment</li> <li>• flexibility</li> </ul>
<b>components of stress management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stress tolerance</li> <li>• instinct control</li> </ul>
<b>components of general mood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• happiness</li> <li>• optimism</li> </ul>

**Table 1.** Components of EQ according to the Bar-On model

In order to develop the students' social and emotional competencies, teachers themselves need to have emotional competencies. With their own practice and modeling of competencies such as **empathy**, fruitful communication, building relationships, teamwork, and management of constructive conflict, teachers are able to build a strong classroom culture by which students are motivated, and stir learning and development of these competencies in students as well.

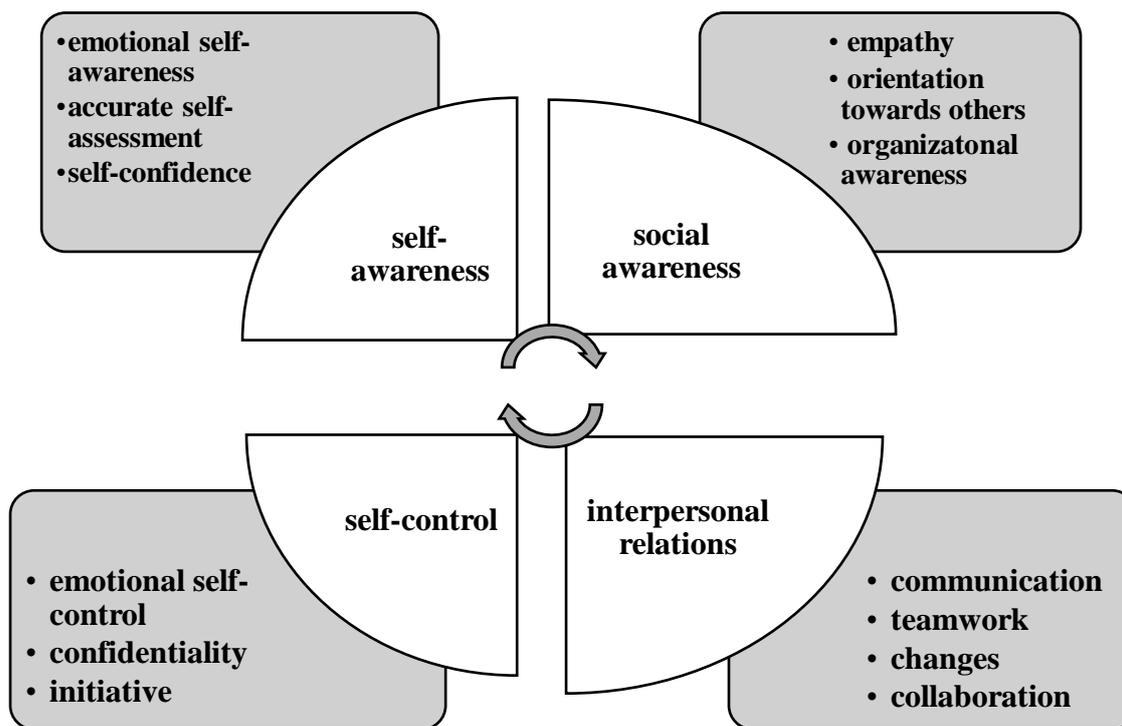
Empathy is a very important skill that every teacher needs to develop. It means understanding others and their feelings, as well as respecting other people's reactions. Goleman claims that empathy is based on awareness of our own personality, and that the more open we are to our own emotions, the more adept we are at reading our own and other people's emotions. Empathic teachers are able to recognize the feelings of others, the feelings of colleagues and of course, the feelings of students. This developed empathy helps them, above all, in educating students. Emotionally intelligent teachers use their thinking and behavior to guide their own emotions, rather than allowing their emotions to dictate their thinking and behavior.

## **EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES AND THEIR MEANING FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS**

Along with the terms **emotion and intelligence**, the term **competence** has an important place and it is especially important to mention and explain. The term **competence** comes from the Latin word "competentia", which means competent, able, capable, qualified for a job. In literature this term is identified with the term qualification, and implies an ability to perform only a specific activity. Teacher **competence**, on the other hand, means "the best combination of value orientations, personality traits, motives, knowledge and skills that are developed during the initial professional development of the educator and teacher profession." Naturally, teachers need to continuously work on developing their emotional competencies during their work years.

Emotional competencies mean that the teacher is aware of what he/she is doing. That means having a good assessment of what is being done, having an assessment of what has been done wrong and where, and if he/she ever makes a mistake, acknowledging it and apologizing to the students. When students, even though they are just children, ask something for which the teacher may not have an answer at the moment, the teacher

can tell them that he/she will consult literature, and they will talk about the question on the following day. It is not shameful to tell them "we will talk about it tomorrow", but it is shameful to teach and educate them in the wrong way.



**Picture 1.** Emotional competencies (according to Goleman)

The emotional competencies are constantly upgraded, but a large part of teachers and educators need to carry them within themselves, i.e. to be part of their character. The most important thing for the development and progress of students are exactly the emotional competencies of teachers, because how the teacher will convey the teaching material and how he/she accepts students from the youngest age, remains in their character traits for the rest of their lives.

For teachers, possessing emotional competencies also means the ability to maintain mutual relations, and is also a skill for understanding other people's emotions. Children learn how to communicate according to the models they are surrounded by: parents, older siblings, friends and teachers. The feeling of mastering oneself is really a great virtue to the teacher. The power to resist emotional storms is a better choice than being a "slave to passion." This kind of virtue is at the same time reason and intelligence in life, moderation, balance and wisdom. Therefore, students should work on developing all these skills during the educational process. But, only a teacher with emotional competencies will be able to influence the development of the emotional competencies in students.

### **EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Taking into consideration the social value of the complexity of the teacher and the nobility of the teaching profession, it is of utmost importance to develop and enhance their emotional competencies. For that purpose, a research was conducted in order to determine the attitude and opinion of teachers, professional associates and school principals, regarding the essential importance of emotional competencies, in the direction of professional development of teachers.

As a result of the research conducted among 464 respondents in the field of education, 372 were teachers and 92 principals and professional associates. For the purposes of this survey, a questionnaire was implemented to check the attitude and opinion of the participants in regards to the emotional competencies of teachers. The instrument was designed in such a way so that the participants assessed the level (degree) of development of the skills and abilities of teachers, all related to emotional competencies. The ranking of the given skills and competencies was with grades 1-4, all in accordance with the necessity, importance and usefulness.

The following table shows the calculated mean values or average for teachers (Average 1), for principals and professional associates (Average 2) and for all participants in total (Average 3).

I. EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES OF TEACHERS		1	2	3
I.1. SCHOOL CLIMATE				
1	The teachers from our school address the students with respect.	2.87	2.92	2.89
2	The teachers from our school show empathy and support for the positive values of the students.	3.11	3.24	3.15
3	The teachers from our school encourage the students to take part in activities, to share their experience, expectations and emotions, and to believe that they can achieve more.	3.15	2.84	3.09
I.2. GETTING TO KNOW THE STUDENTS AND MEETING THEIR NEEDS				
1	The teachers from our school make individualization and differentiation in the teaching, which they base on the knowledge of knowing the students' needs.	3.11	2.53	3.00
2	The teachers from our school use educational activities that encourage the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of the students.	2.92	2.64	2.85
3	The teachers from our school organize and realize additional and extra classes.	3.04	3.04	3.04
I.3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE				
1	The teachers from our school know how to control their own emotions.	2.95	2.54	2.87
2	The teachers from our school are empathic people (they recognize other people's emotions and sympathize with other people).	3.13	2.55	3.01
3	The teachers from our school show the ability to cope in unknown and problematic situations.	3.04	2.46	2.92

**Table 2.** Comparative averages or coefficients of significance

Based on the comparison of the coefficients of significance of the conducted assessment between teachers (1) and principals and professional associates (2), the differences in the answers of the two categories of the research sample are not drastic, and the differences are due to the higher degree of subjectivity in the answers given by the teachers. The coefficients of significance address the importance of the existence and improvement of emotional competencies in teachers, from the teachers' side on one end, as well as by principals and professional associates on the other end.

## II. Conclusion

It is necessary for teachers to understand the essence and significance of emotional competencies, because that is when there will be a change in the students' behavior towards a positive direction. Mutual trust will be built, and the traditional approach regarding the need for professional development of teachers will be changed. Improving their competencies will enable quality in teaching and better results and achievements of the students, but also a much greater satisfaction with students regarding their stay in school.

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