

# THE OPTIMIZATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

**Dana TOMȘA**

4 Ioan Slavici Elementary School, Arad, Romania

E-mail: danatomsa2005@yahoo.com

## **Abstract**

*The main aim of this study is to emphasize the impact a lengthy intervention has on the optimization of emotional intelligence. The sample of participants to the study is represented by two 8th grade classes. The results obtained underline a component which covers discrimination and the monitoring of one's own emotions with a role in adapting in school and with influences in school prediction. Furthermore, through the manners of intervention the study suggests making the curriculum of emotional health whole.*

**Key words: pupil, emotional intelligence, acclimation, intervention**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Emotional intelligence targets the capacity to recognize one's own emotions and feelings, as well as the ones of others, the ability to motivate ourselves and to adequately manage both our spontaneous impulses, but also those that appear in relation to others. It describes complementary qualities, but which are different than academic intelligence, than those cognitive qualities that are quantifiable through general intelligence. The term emotional intelligence is seen for the first time at Payne, but is coined down by Goleman, who through his studies ties this notion to the prediction of adaptive performances of individuals.

Emotional intelligence determines the potential that an individual has to learn practical abilities based on the five elements of emotional intelligence: self-knowledge, self-motivation, self-adjustment, social conscience and social abilities. Each element has a unique contribution to the performance thus obtained, but, at the same time, has its origins, one way or another in the others.

Goleman considers that emotion refers to a feeling and the thoughts that it generates, to psychological and biological conditions and to the measure that people are inclined to take action. There are hundreds of emotions of all types, with different variations, changes and nuances; there are emotions far subtler than words could define. All these emotions govern our thoughts and behaviors, which is why it is extremely important to have the knowledge and the management to deal with them. Our emotions starts with a process of cognitive evaluation through which we understand if the event that we are just partaking to is relevant for our survival, or for our well being, or the goals followed and is in accord with our personal values. It thus becomes important to understand the way in which, along our life, different

qualities can be optimized. A period full of transformations, from this point of view is also the school one.

“A close look towards the mechanisms of issues specific to the school age suggests the fact that the existent deficiencies on the emotional and social competence levels constitute the basis for serious problems, and this thing will reappear as a perturbing factor in adult life. The preparation in school that is insufficient, the inadequate relationing along time, deficiencies in the natural evolution will lead to a failed future, to an adult that is irresponsible and to failures in choosing one’s career and then after in their job.

Because family can’t always offer an absolute and qualified support, school can become a way through which the community can find a solution to the deficiencies of emotional and social competencies of children. It is evident the fact that school can not hold the place for all social institutions, but, as each child goes to school, this can be a place where the pupils can learn the basic lessons relates to the emotional alphabetization.” (Maier and Tomşa, 2016, 16).

One of the definitions of emotional intelligence that Caruso, along with his predecessors suggest is “the ability to process emotional information, especially the ones that presume perception, assimilation, understanding and emotional control” (Stein and Book, 2003, p. 31).

He claims that emotional intelligence included the following four branches:

- Emotional identification, perception and expression (includes abilities such as: the identification of facial emotions, in music or in stories).
- Emotional facilitation of thoughts (includes abilities such as: the connection of emotions with other mental sensations such as taste or color, connections which can start artwork and the usage of emotions in the argumentation and the solutioning of issues).
- Emotional understanding (includes the solving of emotional problems, such as the ones which have similar emotions, which ones are completely separate and what relations exist between them).
- Emotional management includes the understanding of the implications of social actions towards emotions and the control of one’s own emotions, as well as the ones of those around him or her. Throughout adolescence, the individuals reach a qualitative level of one’s own development. The inner self becomes more cohesive, more uniform and more integrated than before, they can be capable of making the liaison between their past behaviors and their future roles, are capable to examine the content of the Inner Self and to meditate towards what other people think of them. This is a time for syntheses, for integrations. Erikson considered that the adolescent is faced with the task of forming a concept of self that is stable and functional. Those who succeed to do this establish a sense of identity which “is experimented as a sense of psychosocial well being. The most evident indicators of this condition are the satisfaction to be home in one’s own body. A feeling of

knowing where you are heading, a self-assurance of the anticipated recognition of those who matter.” (Bonchiş and Bora, 2004, 320). The self-understanding and the understanding of others go hand in hand, this it is not surprising that the ameliorations of one’s self conscience are accompanied by a grown sense of what others are. They know they have internal reasons, thus consider that the others have too, knowing they have a coherent inner self, thus the others have it too. These new meanings can be seen as the efforts of adolescents to explain the reactions and the behaviours of others. (Bonchiş and Bora, 2004)

## **OBJECTIVES**

Objective 1. The investigation of the dimensions of intelligence in two classes of students as a prerequisite for the build-up of an intervention of optimization of these dimensions.

Objective 2. The evidencing of the results of the intervention, throughout two years, on two temporal dimensions- one short-term (reported to results in class) and a second long-term (reported to the results of schooling acclimation in a new class – between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade respectively)

## **HYPOTHESES**

Hypothesis 1. The dimensions of emotional intelligence can be optimized through a long term intervention.

Hypothesis 2. The dimensions of emotional intelligence contribute to a better schooling acclimation when changing the grade from a study cycle to another (going from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade)

## **THE SAMPLE TAKEN IN THE STUDY**

The sample taken in the study is represented by two 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes. In order to not disturb their learning system, centered in 8<sup>th</sup> grade on the exam subjects, the intervention happened in the first week of the first semester.

## **RESULTS OBTAINED**

### **Hypothesis 1**

The identification of the characteristics of the class from the point of view of emotional intelligence was realized with the help of two types of questionnaires – one applied to the students and one applied to their main tutors. The questionnaire applied to the students targeted the following dimensions – empathy, relational dimension (on a class level), emotional management. In this questionnaire we solicited answers (on a scale of 1 to 5) of self-appreciation of the targeted dimensions. This questionnaire was applied before and after the intervention. The second questionnaire was applied to the head tutors and targeted the dimensions of group integration and pro-social behavior. The data thus obtained emphasized the main dysfunctionalities on a class level, upon the emotional dimensions – personal competencies that ask for an optimization.

Starting from this data we have realized the intervention in the dimensions – personal competencies (motivation, self-evaluation, self-confidence, self-control, acclimation), social competencies (empathy, assertiveness, active listening, tolerance, communication, conflict management). At the end of the meetings, the results have led to the conclusion that the level of both classes has changed the group dynamics, students have manifested a bigger opening towards varied activities, the schooling performances have ameliorated, the conflicts have diminished. From the same perspective of the results obtained, emotional intelligence plays an important role through her influence upon school conduct, with a resonance in the performance sector, these being influenced by the efficient management of the individual's emotions, interpersonal relationing, adaptability, stress management, general disposition and the wish to positively impress that an individual has.

### **Hypothesis 2**

For the second hypothesis, one followed the results on a short term basis – good results obtained following the intervention, but also making them permanent throughout the school year, and on long term the relation between this intervention and the insertion in the new class of the participants. In order to follow the short term temporal dimension we have given the head tutors the questionnaire that targeted group understanding and the prosocial behavior – before the intervention, after the intervention and at the end of the school year. In order to emphasize the long term results the same questionnaire was applied to the new head tutors of the students who took part in the intervention, after a school year (thus after finishing 9<sup>th</sup> grade). To this questionnaire we have added the adaptability dimension, in which the head tutor had to evaluate on a scale from 1 to 5 how adapted they considered the student is to the new class. For both classes of students, the results registered were positive on both temporal dimensions. To these results we have added the ones obtained by the students who participated in the study, thus inviting them, at the end of the two years to appreciate the utility of the intervention. All students have appreciated the intervention.

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