

Opportunities for developing the emotional intelligence of trainee teachers - experiences of curriculum development

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence plays a very important role in successful everyday life, at school and at work. Some literature also emphasizes that it is essential for effective education to be done by educators with high EQ, so they can control their emotions, are emotionally balanced, contented and capable of happiness, thereby provide their students with an attractive pattern to follow. In our experience more and more young adults entering teacher education need their self-knowledge, emotional intelligence and life-skills to be developed effectively for adult life and future career, which also supports the development of their pedagogical competencies. In our accelerated, busy lives and in the everyday lives of Generation Z on social media sites there is a growing need to improve verbal communication skills and empathy and for collaborative problem solving. Our trainee teachers as future educators will play a central role in supporting their students and parents and affectionately guiding their classes, where their personality will be of greatest importance. The study presents a new curriculum development that focuses on developing students' emotional intelligence within a semester university course. The elaborated curriculum is an initial phase of action research. Based on the experience of the first semester, in the next semester, we will measure some areas of students' emotional intelligence at the beginning and end of the course, examining the effectiveness of the course.

KEYWORDS: emotional intelligence development, digital generation, collaboration, empathy

INTRODUCTION

“There are probably few professions against which the society would make such contradictory demands as those of teachers: lead a travelling team of elite athletes and people with reduced mobility in fog on unpaved roads in a north-south direction so that everyone arrives in the best mood and preferably at the same time at three different goals.”

(Hans Vollener)

The teacher has always played a key role in education. Over the centuries, the expectations related to his / her personality, the qualities necessary for the career and the competence elements have been adjusted to the challenges of the age and to the social expectations. János

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Apáczai Csere formulated his ideas about the teacher in his work entitled Hungarian Encyclopaedia.

“In order to do efficient work teachers are required to live a decent life, to show good and commendable example to their pupils, to be erudite enough, to convey what they know to others in good conscience and fearing God and to love their pupils like their father.” “They have to teach their pupils clearly, briefly and perfectly. They have to speak to God on behalf of their pupils. They should not expect presents and they should strive to improve their pupils’ morals and languages in particular. They should only endeavour to be loved by their pupils and adapt well to their different minds” [1]

At the beginning of the 20th century, with the advent of reform pedagogies, an idea was formulated in which a new image of teacher appeared who can educate the child into an active, independent, acting individual. The teacher of reform pedagogy “Respects the child, helps to develop his / her individuality, promotes the fulfilment of the child's freedom and independence, and strives to develop skills by learning about the child's individual abilities” [2] As the humanistic psychologist, Carl Rogers says, for a person to develop, they need an environment that provides them with genuineness, unconditional acceptance and empathy [3] That is why the teacher should project these characteristics and provide children with a safe environment. According to Falus [4] the most important pedagogical skills include good communication skills, rich and flexible repertoire of behaviour, quick situational awareness, constructive situation formation, effective conflict resolution (non-violence, creativity), the need and ability to cooperate, the ability to analyse pedagogical situations and phenomena and mental health.

It is necessary to develop and “cultivate” the emotional intelligence of the rising generation so that they could grow a harmonious personality and live a satisfactory, cooperative, brave and creative adult life supported by effective communication and problem solving. [5]

The aim of our study is to present the initial steps of an action research. In this paper, in addition to raising the issue and planning and initiating the process, we report on the content elements of curriculum development. The measurement of the emotional intelligence of the students, the follow-up of the semester-long process will take place after the pilot phase of the curriculum in the following semester, when we can restart the course.

The role of emotional intelligence in the teaching profession

It is extremely important “for effective education and teaching to be done by educators, who have a high EQ, so they can control their emotions, are emotionally balanced, satisfied, and able to be happy, and thus provide their students with an attractive model to be followed. So it means that they themselves are satisfied with their chosen field of study, that is pedagogical work” [6]

During her research, Ágota Fehér worked with students majoring in special needs education. After looking at the emotional intelligence of the students from several aspects, she examined the correlations of these results with the reactions and judgments of the same students in different pedagogical situations. Her findings also support that “those with higher levels of emotional skills can develop other people more effectively to reshape their inner experiences, and it determines not only their own abilities to experience but also the depths of their relationship with their mates” [7]

For example, “considering the types of coping, the results show that the group with higher emotional intelligence is more successful in controlling tensions, seeking support, and using a problem-centric response-thinking method as well. Thus, the ability to deal with emotions

helps to control both one's own emotions and one's attitudes towards others, and it leads to more effective understanding and analysis of problems. Looking at the coping skills of the group with a lower emotional intelligence score, resignation and emotions against oneself are more likely to be identified, but there is also a tendency to empty emotions and distract attention, certainly to find inner peace" [7]

The conceptual background of emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence plays a very important role in prosperity in everyday life and in achieving success at school and at work. "The key to this lies in experiencing and raising awareness of our feelings for us and others" [8] Emotional intelligence develops and can be developed throughout our lives. As an initial concept it started as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" [9]. Since the first appearance of EI, however, lots of other interpretations have evolved so the scholars felt the need to clarify it and distinguish it from other approaches. "This valid conception of EI includes the ability to engage in sophisticated information processing about one's own and others' emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to thinking and behavior. That is, individuals high in EI pay attention to, use, understand, and manage emotions, and these skills serve adaptive functions that potentially benefit themselves and others" [10]. A new branch of ideas spread from Goleman's [15] interpretation of EI which also popularised the term. According to him EI includes five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy and social skills.

Family, kindergarten community and school have an extremely important role in the development of emotional intelligence. The relationship and cooperation between kindergarten, school and family is successful if they turn to the child with sufficient empathy, if they develop a relationship of trust, if the emotional intelligence of the parents and teachers develops, too, if they help the child in self-knowledge, encourage self-assertion, and set an example by expressing and understanding emotions.

"The identification of the causes and effects of emotions, emotional understanding and emotional regulation develop and change in parallel with the child's cognitive development. Nowadays, researchers are increasingly recognizing the role of emotions in the processes of cognition of the individual, in the storage and processing of information, in making judgements, and in decision-making. Emotion is an accompanying phenomenon of action and behaviour. The learning activity itself is an emotional activity. Different emotions have different effects on the planning, organization, initiation, process, monitoring and evaluation of learning. The overall overtone of emotions depends on whether the events experienced are moving in the right or wrong direction. So emotions convey a significant amount of information" [6].

From the middle of 1990s it was also recognised that schools are "*an important if not central arena for health promotion [and] primary prevention . . . in addition to the education of students*" [11] and academic achievement and social-emotional competence are strongly interrelated. As Zins and Elias (2006) conclude there are five key components of effective Social and Emotional Learning (EL, see more at <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>) which must be taught, practiced and reinforced by schools:

Self-awareness—Identification and recognition of one's own emotions, recognition of strengths in self and others, sense of self-efficacy, and self-confidence.

Social awareness—Empathy, respect for others, and perspective taking.

Responsible decision making — Evaluation and reflection, and personal and ethical responsibility.

Self-management—Impulse control, stress management, persistence, goal setting, and motivation.

Relationship skills—Cooperation, help seeking and providing, and communication” [12]

Developing the emotional intelligence of trainee teachers

Right at the beginning of training, first-year students entering teacher education take part in an elective course on pedagogical skills development related to their pedagogical portfolio. Recently, however, we have found that this half-year time frame is very small to be able to effectively assist in the process of career socialization. We have started reviewing our current curriculum with my colleagues and are looking for future opportunities to implement the development of emotional intelligence not just as an option.

For the first time in the 2018/19 academic year we had the opportunity to try out the course “Soul needs time” based on the curriculum developed by Kövecsesné Gósi. The elective course visited by students from 2nd, 3rd and 4th year focused on the development of teachers' emotional intelligence and the methodology of happiness lessons [14]. Since then, we have advertised the course every semester, and more and more students have taken an interest and joined the course. During the past semesters the content has been refined, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the content has just started, however, once the process is complete, we can only summarize the results. Now we are facing some complications caused by the introduction of distant learning at Hungarian universities due to the pandemic and we got stuck after the initial measurement as the measurement processes due at the end of the semester are not relevant in this situation.

The aim of the course was primarily to develop students' emotional intelligence, as well as to deepen their knowledge about the particular skills of emotional intelligence and the possibilities of its development in public education. We also aimed to prepare students for planning sessions which develop emotional intelligence by improving their methodological culture.

During the semester we considered it important to get to know the good practices in public education that has been operating for a few years, the Happiness Class program, and the methodological peculiarities of it. Prof. Dr. Emőke Bagdy, the patron of the Hungarian program, emphasizes that during the program, “we strive for serene and experience-rich tasks, games and practices in Happiness Classes which gradually develop serenity and love of life. In this way, our children walk the path to adulthood with courage and faith in the future, and then they can become a person capable of happiness”². Table 1 shows the curriculum of the course.

Title of the course: Soul needs time

Tutor: Viktória Kövecsesné Gósi, Department of Teacher Education

The aim of the course:

To improve the EI of the students, to learn about the subskills of EI and how they can be developed in public education To prepare students to plan sessions for the development of EI by improving their methodological culture.

Major: teaching, full-time

² <https://boldogsagora.hu/tajekoztato>

Number of lessons: 28 lessons/ semester

2018/2019 academic year, 1st semester

Requirements: Active participation in the seminars, creating a portfolio based on the given criteria

Recommended literature:

Bagdy Emőke (2014): *Relaxáció, megnyugvás, belső béke*, Kulcslyuk Kiadó, Bp.

Balázs László (2014): *Érzelmi intelligencia a szervezetben és a képzésben. 29 gyakorlat*, Z Press, Miskolc

Chapman, Gary (2015): *Egyémsra hangolva. Az 5 szeretetnyelv*, Harmat Kiadó, Budapest

Chapman, Gary– Campbell, Ross (2006): *Gyerekekre hangolva. A gyerekek öt szeretetnyelve*, Harmat Kiadó, Bp.

Dennison, Paul E.– Dennison, Gail E. (2009): *Észkapcsoló Agytorna*, Agykontroll Kft, Bp.

Diederichs, Gilles (2016): *Érzelmi intelligencia*, Bookline, Bp.

Gönczi Károly–Varga Irén–Pintér István (2004): *Önismereti játékok gyűjteménye*, Tanári kézikönyv, Pedellus Tankönyvkiadó, Debrecen

Gönczi Károly (2006): *Önismereti játékok gyűjteménye 2.* Pedellus Tankönyvkiadó, Debrecen

Kádár Annamária (2014): *Mesepszichológia 2.* Kulcslyuk Kiadó, Bp.

Kádár Annamária (2012): *Az érzelmi intelligencia fejlődése és fejlesztésének lehetőségei óvodás és kisiskolás korban*, Ábel Kiadó, Kolozsvár

Kádár Annamária (2012): *Mesepszichológia 1.* Kulcslyuk Kiadó, Bp.

Kádár Annamária–Kerekes Valéria (2017): *Mesepszichológia a gyakorlatban*, Kulcslyuk Kiadó, Bp.

Kövecsesné dr. Gósi Viktória (2018): *A digitális korszak oktatásmódszertani kihívásai I., II., III., IV. Katedra, a szlovákiai magyar pedagógusok és szülők lapja*, Katedra Alapítvány, Dunaszerdahely, Szlovákia 2018. XXV/7.8.9.10, ISSN 1335-6445

Kövecsesné Gósi Viktória (2014): *A „többszörös intelligencia területeinek” fejlesztése projektben*, *Katedra, a szlovákiai magyar pedagógusok és szülők lapja*, Katedra Alapítvány, Dunaszerdahely, Szlovákia 2014. március ISSN 1335-6445 20–22.o.

L. Stipkovits Erika (2015): *Szeretettel sebezve*, HVG Kiadó, Bp.

Miskolcziné Borsos Anikó–Kissné Takács Erika (2009): *Játszunk együtt!* Pedellus Tankönyvkiadó, Debrecen

Pinczésné dr. Palásthy Ildikó (2003): *Dráma, pedagógia, pszichológia*, Pedellus Tankönyvkiadó, Debrecen

Rust, Serena (2017): *Erőszakmentes kommunikáció*, Bioenergetic Kiadó, Bp.

Snel, Eline (2015): *Ülj figyelmesen, mint egy béka*, Scolar Kiadó, Bp.

Walker, Jamie (1995): *Feszültségoldás az iskolában*, Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, Bp.

Topics	Methods, cooperative techniques, tasks	Tasks, tools, etc.
1. Self-knowledge, personal goals, ideas, expectations from the course	Individual and cooperative building	LEGO education tools, Lego classroom

Pedagogical Sections

<p>2. Acquaintance, discussion of the requirements of the subject, criteria for the portfolio, evaluation aspects and process. Students are given or can choose a development task for each topic.</p>	<p>Talk Emotional Bingo “Everything about me” Creating group rules Name game Our family heritage</p> <p>Portfolio task: Collecting 2-3 favourite/important, quotes</p>	<p>EQ Bingo wrapping papers, strings, template for ‘Everything about me’, coloured felt-tip pens, OH cards</p>
<p>3-7. Interpretation of emotional intelligence, areas of subskills</p> <p>Personal competencies Self-knowledge - emotional awareness, accurate self-esteem, self-confidence Self-regulation - self-control, conscience, adaptation, ingenuity Self-motivation - ambition, involvement, initiative, optimism</p> <p>Social competencies Social self-awareness - empathy, assertiveness, development of others, tolerance</p> <p>Social skills Influence, communication, leadership, catalyst for change, conflict management, relationship building, collaboration, team spirit</p>	<p>Guessing an Indian name Get involved! Stop in pairs! Talk to me! Expert mosaic technique “Hidden Triangles” exercise Creating a conceptual map Group brainstorming</p> <p>Portfolio task: Flower of self-knowledge</p>	<p>Expert mosaic chart cards wrapping paper literature sources little pieces of paper coloured pencils templates</p>

Pedagogical Sections

<p>8-12. The role and significance of self-knowledge in our lives</p>	<p>Talk Lecture Silent dominoes Motion warm-up games Self-knowledge games Our family heritage</p> <p>Portfolio task: For me, happiness means that... (making mosaic pieces)</p>	<p>Dixit cards Domino cards mosaic pieces of paper images with different themes and moods coloured pencils</p>
<p>13-14. Exercising gratitude</p>	<p>Talk Lecture Thanksgiving tree / making a thanksgiving garden / thanksgiving table Pair work - Talk: What I'm grateful for ... Listening to music (Anna and the Barbies: Márti's song) "The message of music"</p> <p>Portfolio task: writing a personal poem, collecting songs</p>	<p>coloured cardboard, small pieces of paper, wrapping papers, templates, worksheets</p>
<p>15-16. Optimism Commitment to a goal</p>	<p>Talk Lecture Mindfulness exercises Interpreting quotes in pair work Positive glasses, negative glasses Roleplays Change of attitude - Re-framing</p> <p>Portfolio task: My life in 2,5,10,15 years</p>	
<p>17-19. Social relationships, empathy Good deeds</p>	<p>Lecture Brain gym Give me a high-five! Cooperative crossword Group conceptual map Love languages test Interpretation of quotes and thoughts (St. Paul's Hymn to Love)</p> <p>Portfolio task: Work on your home.</p>	<p>literature on love languages</p>
<p>20-21. Relationships</p>		

Pedagogical Sections

Guest lecturer: Erika L. Stipkovits clinical psychologist, writer, head of the Academy of Personality Development	Lecture Talk	
22-24. Coping strategies The message of fairy tales, fairy tale psychology Enjoying small pleasures	Mindfulness exercises Relaxation techniques Lecture Talk Drama pedagogical games Portfolio task: My stress management methods	coping rainbow, coping tree templates postit
25-26. Practicing forgiveness	Lecture Talk Drama pedagogical games	
27-28. Sustainable happiness Exercise, physical and mental health Evaluation and closing of the semester	Love yarn Messages Collage cube technique Portfolio task: Health inventory	strings food for thought wrapping paper Postit

Table 1: Curriculum of the course „Soul needs time“ [13]

SUMMARY

According to our experience, young adults entering teacher training have an increasing need to develop their emotional intelligence for their adult life and future profession, to shape their outlook on life, and thus to support the fulfilment of their pedagogical competencies. In our accelerated life, and in the everyday life of Generation Z on social sites, there is a growing need for verbal communication, the development of empathy, and cooperation-based problem-solving. As a prospective educator, our students will have a central role in supporting their students and parents, in lovingly guiding their classes, in which their personality is paramount. At the end of the study, here are some student comments after completing the course: “Soul needs time”.

“I’m glad I chose this course, it’s useful, it’s worth getting up in the morning. Every afternoon I try to sum up the topic of the day at home, we often discuss it with my partner. I came across many good ideas. I’m starting to get to know myself better. Thank you!”

“This course got me closer to myself. As a result of the lesson, I more often manage to view my environment positively and optimistically.”

"So far, these classes have given me more confidence."

"There is no situation that somehow cannot be treated positively, optimistically."

“We can do more for our spiritual balance than we think. I liked the thanksgiving tree method.”

Pedagogical Sections

“The classes so far have helped me dare to take on my qualities and have shown me how I can help kids get to know themselves and their peers.”

“Ever since I went to these classes, I’ve been much more balanced. I really like the methods of developing EQ and I would like to apply them all in the future. I learned a lot from you.”

“I think the various ideas and tasks we did and discussed in class are very good and I will be able to use them in the future. It’s good to get acquainted with these new methods because I may not be able to meet them elsewhere. Getting to know my own qualities is also interesting for me.”

“I look at things more positively and have become more grateful. My Monday mornings start positively. I love it! ”

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