

# Developing Emotional Competence for Teaching

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## Abstract

*This paper evaluates a pilot programme designed to support the development of teacher emotional competence and reveals teachers' experiences with emotional education over the course of their career. The design of the programme is based on the 'ELAVET – Teachers First: Using Emotional Literacy to Improve Vet Teaching in the 21st Century' project. The evaluation of the pilot programme used a survey and analysis of the obtained data to explore the participants' perceptions of the connections between the programme content and their work in schools. The findings suggest that the programme provides a useful framework for teacher analysis, reflection and emotional competence building to enhance their ongoing teaching practice at the classroom level. The issue of developing teacher emotional competence contributes to a wider discussion on the challenges and recent trends in the development of initial teacher education, induction and continuous professional development of teachers. It raises the question of emotional education for teachers throughout their careers and the recognition of the importance of creating and sustaining integrated professional learning cultures to support teacher education at the initial and induction phases of the continuum.*

**Key words:** *emotions and teacher development; induction and continuing teacher professional development; initial teacher education; integrated professional learning cultures; learning to teach.*

## Introduction

In recent years a growing body of research has supported the value of emotions in teacher work. It has shown that emotions are inherent to teaching (Hargreaves, 1998, Nias, 1996; 2001, 2004; Day & Leitch, 2001; Van Veen & Lasky, 2005; Zembylas & Barker, 2007; Day & Gu, 2009, 2010; Cooper, 2011; Corcoran & Tormey, 2012; Madalinska-Michalak & Goralska, 2012; Mortiboys, 2012; Goroshit & Hen, 2014).

Some have argued that emotions are at the epicentre of teachers' work and that good teaching requires the emotional capacity to manage various personal, work-related and external policy challenges (Day et al., 2007; Day & Qu, 2010).

An exploration of the theme of emotion in teaching began following the empirical work on the importance of having a caring, moral teacher in the classroom (Noddings, 1992). Research suggests that teachers need to understand the emotional practice of their job in order to create a suitable environment for students' learning, interact positively with students, and build authentic teacher-student relationships (Hargreaves, 1998; Madalinska-Michalak & Goralska, 2012).

Research findings indicate the influence of healthy teacher-students relationships on student achievement (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). According to Lisa S. Goldstein's research (1999) "a region of intellectual development – a construction zone – the zone of proximal development is also a region of affective development – a relational zone" (Goldstein, 1999, p. 664). It means that any attempt to create a child's zone of proximal development should involve not only the understanding of students' learning strengths (the intellectual focus) but also attending to the affective caring interactions (the relational focus) that support student learning (Goldstein, 2002). Goldstein's research supports the following two arguments: (i) teaching is an emotional practice (Hargreaves, 1998), and (ii) emotions influence daily school interactions, focusing primarily on the teacher-student relationship (Denzin, 2009). These arguments stand in opposition to the traditional views of teaching, which emphasize the instructional focus of the profession.

Concentrating on teaching as a purely instructional practice assumes that the student is one-dimensional, which can raise obvious objections. Martin Packer (1993, p. 264), who acknowledges the interpersonal effort involved in teacher-student interactions, rightly stresses: "Do we treat the people we study as lollipops: as all brain and no body? Or do they have their feet on the ground, a ground that is both epistemological and ontological, the ground that our culture and tradition provide for each of us? We tend to forget this ground because it is always with us, but then we misunderstand what happens in educational settings".

While teaching began incorporating the importance of emotion and teacher-student relationships, the concepts of emotion and teaching as an emotional practice remained unassociated. Andy Hargreaves (2001, p. 1057) described this lack of connection, stating that "a tactful, caring, or passionate teacher is treated largely as a matter of personal disposition, moral commitment, or private virtue, rather than of how particular ways of organizing teaching shape teachers' emotional experiences". Teaching encompasses more than an instructional focus, and an understanding of the emotional component of teaching, especially in connection with teacher-student relationships, seems vital. In this context it is worth stressing that currently we can observe considerable focus on the potential of emotional education, especially on the programmes devoted to the development of the emotional intelligence for managers (Caruso & Salovey, 2004;

Goleman, 1998; Latif, 2004; Perks & Bar-On, 2010). Nevertheless, there has been relatively little focus on the role of emotional education in other areas such as in the 'helping' professions, like teaching. Contemporary studies in education suggest that research focused particularly on teacher's emotional intelligence/competence and its development in relation to teacher education and policy, especially in the European context, remains scarce. In many instances, we can find research on some components or attributes of teacher's emotional intelligence or teacher's emotional competence, for example on empathy, which provides a useful foundation (see Cooper, 2011). Whereas teachers "bring their feelings into school or college with them and have to learn to take this into account in their dealings with others" (Nias, 1999, p. 14), teachers are not sufficiently supported or trained in how to handle emotional interactions within the workplace (Nias, 1999; Corcoran & Tormey, 2012). Despite this central role of the emotions in teaching, only very limited attention has been given to the emotional education for teachers and what teachers think about the necessity of such education throughout their teaching careers.

This paper focuses, broadly speaking, on the emotional education for teachers and its challenges in the context of teacher education and teacher education policies in Europe. Firstly, the concepts of emotional intelligence and emotional literacy are discussed, and the reasons for preferring to use the concept of emotional literacy are shown. Following this, the main assumptions underpinning the work on teacher emotional literacy, in which the author was involved are presented. Secondly, the author concentrates on the concept of teacher emotional competence and describes the pilot programme for developing teacher emotional competence that was implemented at the University of Lodz in Poland. Then, the research methods and findings of our study on teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of the programme and the transfer of the knowledge the teachers gain through the programme to the experiences in their workplaces are presented. In the last part of the paper, while formulating the conclusions, the author points out the significance of emotional education for teachers throughout their careers and indicates the importance of creating and sustaining integrated professional learning cultures to support teacher education at the initial and induction phases of the continuum for developing teacher emotional competence.

### ***Emotional Competence***

Emotional competence is a category that has been introduced by Carolyn Saarni (1999). It depends on social constructivism as a theoretical background for its development and implementation. In the book 'The Development of Emotional Competence', Saarni writes about emotional development in mid-childhood and adolescence, examines emotion as a part of culture, and establishes a pattern of studying emotion within the lives of children.

According to Carolyn Saarni (1999, p.2), emotional competence "entails resilience and self-efficacy (and self-efficacy includes acting with one's sense of moral character)".

She claims that when a person is emotionally competent, she or he will demonstrate self-efficacy in emotion-eliciting transactions, which are social in nature. According to Saarni (1999), the feeling of one's own self-efficacy performs the key role in explaining the development of the emotional competence.

In order to describe emotional competence, Saarni uses the term *skills*, which clearly differentiates this category from that of emotional intelligence. Emotional competence is the knowledge and skills that an individual has learnt in order to be able to function in a way suited to different situations. It depends on the skill of functioning in social situations to “switch on” the emotions in such a way that will facilitate meeting specific goals. Emotional competence not only constitutes the efficiency of acting, it is also a potential that is a condition for active and creative participation in a culture. It is an ability of individual reflection and social negotiation. Being emotionally competent, means being an active and creative person, who actively participates in the occurring processes of social changes.

Saarni (1999) distinguishes the following eight components – skills of the emotional competence:

- Awareness of one's own emotions,
- Ability to discern and understand other's emotions,
- Ability to use the vocabulary of emotion and expression,
- Capacity for empathic involvement,
- Ability to differentiate subjective emotional experience from external emotion expression,
- Adaptive coping with aversive emotions and distressing circumstances,
- Awareness of emotional communication within relationships, and
- Capacity for emotional self-efficacy.

A strength of Saarni's proposition is a comprehensive examination of the skills she proposes. Regarding school-age children and young adolescents, Saarni examines the formation of eight key emotional skills in relation to the processes of self-understanding, socialization, and cognitive growth. Pointing out the connections between the emotional competence, interpersonal relationships, and resilience in the face of stress, she also explores why and what happens when development is delayed.

It is worth mentioning that, even though in some contexts the differentiation between the emotional intelligence and emotional competence can be perceived as the unnecessary ‘splitting hairs’, here, for the purpose of this paper and reflections on teacher education, I advocate the legitimacy of the term of emotional competence. While the term emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999) can be used to determine the cognitive ability to process emotional information, the term emotional competence can be understood as the specific coping skills in real life situations, in which the information is to appear. Whereas emotional intelligence is one aspect of the cognitive ability, emotional competence is the level of proficiency of one aspect of emotional intelligence (Seal & Andrews-Brown, 2010). Emotional intelligence envelops a range of cognitive abilities,

whereas emotional competence speaks of the degree of self-regulation and awareness. Emotional competence can be perceived as the deeper subset of emotional intelligence.

One can state that emotional intelligence is the underlying foundation for emotional competence. But emotional competence is an expression of emotional intelligence (for example: emotional intelligence emphasizes controlling one's emotions whereas emotional competence is the ability to express emotions appropriately and effectively).

Emotional competence (different skills) depends on the process of one's development and his or her education, which has an enormous value in the discussions on teacher education and teacher professional development.

### ***Teacher Emotional Competence Programme – Programme Development***

The Teacher Emotional Competence pilot training programme, which will be described below, is based on the project entitled: 'EL4VET - Teachers First: Using Emotional Literacy to Improve Vet Teaching in the 21st Century' (project EL4VET, No. 2010-1-GB2-LEO05-03477). The aims of this joint European-wide two-year project (2010-2012) were to transfer innovative emotional literacy programme for secondary school teachers, involved in vocational education and training (VET), in the following EU countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, England, Malta, Poland and Portugal.

The overall objective of the EL4VET project was to promote emotional literacy mainly among VET teachers and trainers across Europe and help them enhance their relationships with students, trainees, colleagues and other stakeholders. The emphasis in the project was placed on using emotional intelligence as a teacher to attend to the emotional dimension of teaching and learning. The project was based on the assumption that the way to raise students' learning achievements and reduce students' alienation and behavioural problems is to not only focus on students themselves but first of all to improve the emotional literacy of teachers, whose 'soft skills' training has been neglected to date.

While conducting the project, all partners shared the belief that by using emotional literacy skills teachers can enhance classroom behaviour and motivation, learning performance, soft skills competences and the prospects of long-term employability for students and trainees as teacher quality is 'significantly & positively' correlated with pupil attainment (European Commission, 2007). Project partners worked on the development of an emotional literacy methodology and a toolkit for VET teachers and trainers, and organized the national pilot workshops. The main objectives of the workshops were as follows: (i) disseminate emotional literacy methodology in each country; (ii) improve teachers' practice by giving them the possibility to become more emotionally literate; (iii) test the translated emotional literacy tools and collect suggestions for their adaptation to the conditions and culture in each project partner country; (iv) disseminate emotional literacy tools; (v) check the demand and interest in the development of the emotional literacy of teachers. The evaluations of the workshops showed a huge interest of the participating teachers in the continuation of

their involvement in emotional education, which could support, generally speaking, their development of emotional capacity (Madalinska-Michalak, 2014).

A number of different attributes of the emotional literacy of teachers were identified. Among these attributes were the following: Compassion, Enthusiasm, Forgiveness, Optimism, Power, Relational, Self Confidence, Social Justice, Trust, Youth Culture and School Ethos (see Madalinska-Michalak & Goralska, 2012). The project research showed that all these attributes are important for teachers to create a positive, inclusive learning environment in schools. By developing their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and making learning culturally responsive, teachers can acquire the skills to deliver lessons that engage, motivate and improve students' learning outcomes.

The Teacher Emotional Competence pilot training programme has been under development since 2011 (Madalinska-Michalak & Goralska, 2012). Regarding the 'EL4VET - Teachers First: Using Emotional Literacy to Improve Vet Teaching in the 21st Century' project results and the evaluation of the usefulness of the national pilot workshops, the University of Lodz has been working on designing the pilot training programme not only for secondary school teachers, involved in vocational education and training (VET), but also trying to prepare the programme for teachers who work at different levels of schooling and in different school types.

A major goal of the pilot training programme is to help teachers achieve high quality learning outcomes through becoming more emotionally prepared for the demands of the teaching. The programme was designed to help the teachers direct their attention to the relational side of education that has its place in schools in order to create the right learning environment for pupils. Creating the pilot programme for the development of teacher emotional competence, we recognized the specific role and responsibility of the teacher in the educational relationship. The programme is not presented as relatively open to different views about education. One thing that is important for the programme is to create the conditions for teachers to develop their emotional competences through reflection on education and its common sense from the perspective of the ethics of care and the pedagogy of relations.

A starting point in the work on the programme development was (as presented above) Carolyn Saarni's concept of emotional competence and the findings from EL4VET project. On the basis of the analysis the following components of Teacher Emotional Competence were identified (see Madalinska-Michalak & Goralska, 2012):

- 1) Elementary skills of teacher emotional competence:
  - Awareness of one's own emotional states
  - Distinguishing emotions of other people/students
  - Naming the individual emotional states
- 2) Knowledge and skills that build the feeling of emotional efficiency:
  - Suitable level of the depth of emotions
  - Adaptive coping with emotions
  - The feeling of emotional efficiency

### 3. Knowledge and skills used in relations with students:

- Understanding emotional feelings of students
- Using the information held on students
- Knowledge concerning the impact of emotional expression on students
- Awareness of the aspects that determine the nature of interpersonal relations in schools.

The program requires the teacher participants to complete three modules (total 30 hours). These begin with an 'Introduction to Teacher Emotional Competence', both from a theoretical and practical standpoint. Teachers are exposed to the development of the theories of emotions, theories of competence, theories of teachers' learning and development and how these are applied in educational institutions. Teachers are provided with tools for recognizing and naming their own emotions and the ways in which they can cope with other people's, especially students', emotions.

The second module is entitled 'Teachers' Emotional Competence and Education'. During this module teachers have the opportunity to reflect on such issues as the meaning of pupils' emotions for teachers; the impact (both positive and negative) of pupils' emotions on teachers and vice versa; Emotional Competence and improvement of learning/teaching performance of teachers; Emotional Competence and promotion of better relationships with students in the classrooms.

Participants then move to the third module 'Development of Teachers' Emotional Competence Attributes'. They explore the following attributes of teachers' emotional competence: Compassion, Enthusiasm, Forgiveness, Optimism, Power, Relational, Self-Confidence, Social Justice, Trust, Youth Culture, School Ethos. These attributes were identified within the EL4VET project and all of them appeared to be relevant for developing teachers' emotional competence, no matter what level of schooling is taken into account and what types of school teachers work in.

## **Methods**

The research study was designed to learn about the teachers' experiences in emotional education over the course of their career and their educational needs in this field, and to examine the perceptions of the participants in the teacher emotional competence pilot training programme.

One of the main aims was to focus on their perceptions of the usefulness of the programme in enhancing their emotional capacity to the benefit of their schools and their students. Therefore, the participating teachers were asked to evaluate the programme they had completed and its usefulness by considering whether the knowledge and skills they had acquired during the programme affected their practice in their school workplace and how satisfied they felt with the development of their skills and knowledge that helped build their emotional competence. By asking teachers to provide examples of the ways in which they applied new knowledge and skills to practice, an opportunity to explore the process of transference of programme learning to practical experience in the school setting was created.

The survey method was chosen for the purpose of the research. The survey provided the opportunity to capture insight into the teachers' experiences in emotional education over the course of their career and their educational needs and to investigate the participants' perceptions regarding the programme and the usefulness of the programme content they received. They completed three programme modules: (i) Introduction to Teacher Emotional Competence; (ii) Teacher Emotional Competence and Education; and (iii) Development of Teacher Emotional Competence Attributes. Each of the modules addresses the following three components of teacher emotional competence: elementary skills of the emotional competence, knowledge and skills that build the feeling of emotional efficiency, knowledge and skills used in relations with students.

Data were gathered among 24 participants of the programme at the end of the pilot training programme in June 2012. All of the research participants consented to contributing to the research voluntarily and anonymously in the last session of the programme.

### ***Research Instrument***

In order to gather a range of data about teachers' experiences in emotional education over the course of their career and their educational needs in this field and to capture their perception on teacher emotional competence pilot training programme, a survey questionnaire was constructed. The questionnaire was also used to collect the basic data on the research participants, especially on their educational and workplace background, age, gender and teaching experience.

The questionnaire included a series of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were mainly connected with examining the research participants' perception of the pilot programme. The open-ended questions were mainly connected with the teachers' experiences in emotional education and their educational needs in this field.

In addition, teachers were asked to give their comments regarding some themes that were tackled in the closed-ended questions and they were asked to reply to the question 'Can you think of an opportunity you've had in your school that links the topics we have explored together to practical problem-solving hands-on experience?' The written replies to this question helped to collect data on the specific examples of learning transference by the participants. The analysis of the responses to this question was important in identifying the themes and common answers that gave insights into the situations in which participants saw themselves as 'more competent' teachers who could better understand what constituted teaching in different situations in schools.

### ***Participants***

Participants in this research were 24 in-service teachers with a Master's degree in Education. The majority of the research participants – 87.5% of them were female ( $n = 21$ ), with 12.5% of the male participants ( $n = 3$ ). Their age ranged from 24 to 49 with a mean age  $M=33$ .



Among the research participants there were teachers who worked at different education levels. There were 10 primary school teachers working in elementary education and 14 teachers working in secondary education; among them there were nine teachers who worked in lower secondary education (at a grammar school with a 3-year-long programme called in Polish 'gimnazjum' - gymnasium), and five teachers who work in upper secondary education (at a school with a 3-year-long programme called in Polish 'liceum' - lyceum).

The teachers' years of experience ranged from 1 to 23 with a mean  $M = 6.2$ . Thirteen of twenty-four teachers (54.2%) were beginning teachers with up to 3 years of teaching experience and among these there were five teachers who were in their first year of work at school. Eleven of the twenty-four teachers (45.8%) had between 3 and 23 years of teaching experience – in this group 3 teachers had 5 years of teaching experience, 5 teachers had up to 10 years of teaching experience, and 3 teachers had between 10 and 23 years of experience as teachers.

On the basis of the data gathered on the survey, one can state that the participants in the presented research were mainly women who worked at two different levels of schooling – primary education and secondary education. They had a rather short teaching experience (66.7% of the participants had less than 5 years of teaching experience).

### ***Findings***

The findings presented below relate to teachers' emotional education over the course of their careers and their educational needs in this field and their perceptions of the usefulness of the pilot programme: the Teacher Emotional Competence Programme. The pilot programme was designed, as it was mentioned earlier, to support the development of teacher emotional competence and help them be proactive in learning from their experience in developing emotional competence over the course of their career. Regarding the programme evaluation, the main considerations focus on the teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of the programme in enhancing their emotional capacity and on the examples of learning transference of the programme content to the teachers' practical experiences in the school settings.

### ***Teachers' Emotional Education over the Course of the Career and Their Educational Needs***

In the questionnaire there were two open-ended questions about the teachers' emotional education. The teachers were asked to describe how they had developed their emotional competence over the course of their careers and why they paid attention to developing this kind of teacher competence. The answers to this question were very interesting and varied. There were evident differences between teachers according to their teaching experience.

*Teachers who had less than 5 years of teaching experience* (beginning teachers and teachers with 3-5 years of teaching experience, who made up for 66.7% of the

researched group) focused on what they missed and what they wanted to learn in order to know 'how to teach'. They tended to highlight the weak sides of their initial teacher education. A typical response came, for example, from one of the teachers who said that his initial teacher education programme did not provide help for him to be more emotionally competent as a teacher:

*As teacher students we were provided with the theories on socio-emotional learning but we were not provided with any workshops that could help us develop our skills in order for us to become more emotionally competent. (Grammar school teacher, 4 years of teaching experience)*

Teachers stressed the shift from the environment of an initial teacher education programme into initial practice in schools. This is a pivotally important phase, as shown in the literature, possessing the potential to deepen the learning that has already taken place in the initial teacher education, as well as preparing the beginning teachers for continuing professional development (e.g. Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Johnson, 2004; Watzke, 2007; Hobson, 2009; Walker, 2010; Day & Qu, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

These teachers were fully aware, in line with the perspectives of their elder colleagues, that interacting with pupils at classroom level, or with colleagues in school, triggers emotions and that these emotions play an important role in teaching. However, the most important reason for their interest in developing emotional competence was the need to care for their own reputations as teachers and for the nature of their engagement with their colleagues:

*I try to work on the way in which I regulate my emotion at schools and manage the emotional unpredictability of classroom teaching. I have to put a lot of emotional labour not only in my teaching but in creating the portrayal of myself as a teacher as well. (Primary school teacher, 2 years of teaching experience)*

Teachers with short teaching experience were concerned about the ways in which they viewed themselves as teachers, how they viewed others that they professionally engaged with, and how they believed they were perceived by others. These teachers generally referred to their experiences during the induction phase and to the culture of their school. For beginning teachers the work on their emotional competences, especially their emotional efficiency, was important in shaping their teacher identity through making their own sense of belonging to the school culture and being accepted within it.

Some of the teachers from this group mentioned individualistic school culture and that they only obtained limited and sporadic collaborative practice in schools. They complained about the lack of adequate support for their professional development at the schools in which they work. At the same time some of the teachers highlighted supportive, collegial relationships at their schools. They valued significant ways in which these relationships contribute to the emotional well-being of themselves as

young teachers and indicated the necessity for a whole-school approach towards reducing the emotional vulnerability of the beginning teachers.

The teachers who work in schools where 'learning to teach' is seen as a task for all, identified what appeared to be temporary benefits of the pilot programme on developing their emotional competence. For example, the programme helped them appreciate their school culture more fully and become more aware of the aspects that determine the nature of interpersonal relations in schools. They pointed out that cooperation within the teacher teams did help them focus on the issue of 'how to teach', but it primarily helped them achieve a sense of being 'someone who teaches' (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004; cited in Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 317). These teachers identified the benefits of belonging to a supportive, collaborative school culture, where everyone, including the novices and experts within the school, is encouraged to share their practice in order to improve teaching and learning. In the literature a concept that is used to describe such a culture is 'integrated professional learning cultures' (see Conway, Rosaleen, & Madalińska-Michalak, 2012). Within an integrated professional learning culture all teachers are encouraged to improve teaching and learning, to collaborate and share practice, and to continue to grow in their profession. There are links between novices and experts within the school. Support for the newly qualified teachers is generally widespread across the school, and includes peer observation, feedback and a coaching culture centred around sharing professional practice and a deep focus on pedagogy. Here is a significant statement provided by one of the beginning teachers:

*I am happy to teach in this small school where I feel well and safe. Of course, I have lots of daily problems in the classroom. Frequently, I am not sure how to perform as a teacher. I am simply not experienced enough. But, my colleagues are so supportive. I can share my concerns with them and discuss the challenges I have to face. I like the way we learn together... My colleagues make me more sensitive to the sense of being a teacher. (Primary school teacher, 2 years of teaching experience)*

Teachers who had less than 5 years of teaching experience pointed out what they had perceived to be gaps in their knowledge and skills in the context of the development of their emotional competence. One of the teachers mentioned that she had never thought about "how to construct a positive atmosphere in the classroom".

Another teacher stated that she would like to develop her emotional competence because she did not know how to manage her energy during the lessons. She said: "as a teacher I know that I need to have energy, but the issue is, if I need loads of energy, how can I do that?" She described her surprise at the fact that pupils were sometimes not excited about participating in the activities she had organised for them and she said, "I didn't have the knowledge on how to increase students' perception of the task and get them into the mood for doing the activities I had for them".

Teachers who had more than 5 years of teaching experience focused mainly on what they had learned and what they wanted to learn. These teachers highlighted what

they perceived to be important for their professional development and teaching in the context of developing their emotional competence. They stressed what they had learned about the knowledge and skills that build emotional competence of a teacher. They indicated different learning opportunities they had for their professional development, like the courses devoted to such issues as: how to construct an atmosphere that is positive for learning and teaching in the classroom, the role of body language on the teaching practice, the role of the tone of voice and of the tone of the voice of others on the teaching practice. Some of them expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of an adequate educational offer within the teacher emotional education for a long time:

*I had a chance to observe what had happened in our system of education for the last 20 years. Being a teacher for such a long time, I was looking for any courses, workshops or programmes that addressed the issues of emotions in school and in learning to teach. Now, looking back I see that my needs were different at different times but it was hard to find the right course at the specific time. (Primary school teacher, 20 years of teaching experience)*

A portrayal of teacher emotional education and their educational needs in this field seems to be very interesting. The rest of the gathered data helped us take a closer look at these issues. One of the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire was connected with the training focused explicitly on teacher emotional competence. Teachers were asked whether they had ever received any such training. The answers showed that no research participant had ever received any training focused explicitly on teacher emotional competence.

The teachers were asked to comment on their situation as far as the training focused on teacher emotional competence is concerned. All of the teachers – regardless of their age, sex, the place of work/level of schooling or teaching experience – stressed the lack of adequate professional development opportunities within this field. Teachers who had between 10 and 23 years of teaching experience mentioned that they participated in different workshops, seminars that dealt with issues connected with teacher emotional competence, such as ‘communication at school’, ‘interpersonal relations’ or ‘social-emotional learning at school’.

In order to ascertain the reasons underlying the teachers’ participation in the pilot programme Teacher Emotional Competence Programme the open-ended questions were directed to them and they were asked: (i) why they decided to take part in the programme and (ii) whether they saw the necessity to introduce the programme on the emotional competence into the educational offer for teachers and if so, why. Among the given responses to these two questions we found some general responses as well as some very specific ones.

In Table 1 the main data connected with the question on the reasons for participation in the evaluated pilot programme are summarized. We can see from the table that all the respondents said that the programme seemed to be very interesting for them and

they wanted to develop their emotional competence. A vast majority of the examined teachers indicated that they decided to take part in the pilot programme because they believe that nowadays teachers need to develop a new kind of competence (96%), because emotional competence is an attribute of an effective teacher (92%) and because they see the value of teacher emotional competence for the development of good relationships at school (75%). Every second examined teacher indicated that emotional competence can help teachers become much more aware of student needs (50%). Every third examined teacher indicated that he or she decided to participate in the pilot programme because of the necessity to be better prepared for feeling comfortable to work with his or her own emotions (33.3%).

Table 1  
*Main reasons for participation in the pilot programme*

Reasons	N	%
The programme seemed to be very interesting	24	100
The need to develop their own emotional competence	24	100
The contemporary requirement for a new kind of teacher competences	23	96
Emotional competence is the attribute of an effective teacher	22	92
The value of teacher emotional competence for the development of good relationships at school	18	75
Emotional competence can help the teacher to be aware of students' needs	12	50
To be better prepared for feeling comfortable to work with their own emotions	8	33

Regarding the teachers' views on the necessity to introduce the programme on the emotional competence into the educational offer for teachers, one can state that the teachers argued that emotional issues, such as learning to understand, express and manage emotions in school, should not be the private concern of each teacher – even if a teacher begins his or her study at university. A vast majority of the teachers (83.3%) pointed out the necessity of a well-developed emotional education for teachers. Such education should be adjusted to teachers' learning needs in accordance with their teaching experiences and phase of professional development.

Teachers rejected any tempting nostalgia for traditional tasks and traditional functioning of schools. For them the traditional approach towards school education is based on the confidence that school is just a workplace where learning and teaching has to be done and the teacher's task is to teach and not to build interpersonal relationships. One of the examined teachers wrote:

*I see that I am naturally adjusted to my own emotions and feelings of others. But, I noticed that the natural dispositions are not enough. As a teacher in grammar school I have to solve many daily problems in the classroom and use my different*

*skills. Sometimes, I encounter difficulties in creating a really good relationships with my students. Something is missing in my teaching ... I wanted to learn more about myself as a teacher. When I read the information about this programme, I decided to participate in it. (Grammar school teacher, 14 years of teaching experience)*

On the basis of the obtained data we can state that the respondents support the call for a new paradigm in teacher education and in schooling. New kinds of competences are needed for them to become highly effective teachers who are able to face the contemporary challenges at different schooling levels.

### **Perception of the Pilot Programme**

One of the questions that was directed to the teachers was about the level of the quality of the programme. The majority of teachers (75%,  $n = 18$ ) indicated that the programme was very good (54.2%,  $n = 13$ ) or excellent (20.8%,  $n = 5$ ). And one fourth of the teachers ( $n = 6$ ) stated that the programme was good – there were also teachers with more than 3 years of teaching experience. No one stated that the programme was poor or fair.

Table 2

*Teaching experience and the level of the quality of the programme*

Level of quality/teaching experience	Poor or Fair		Good		Very good		Excellent		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
less than 3 years	0	0	0	0	8	33.4	5	20.8	13	54.2
more than 3 years	0	0	6	25.0	5	20.8	0	0	11	45.8
Total	0	0	6	25.0	13	54.2	5	20.8	24	100

Table 3 shows the collected data on the level of the quality of the pilot programme in the respondents’ opinions, according to their teaching experiences. We can see that the beginning teachers have a tendency to evaluate the quality of the pilot programme higher than the teachers who have had more than 3 years of teaching experience.

When the survey participants were asked whether the acquired knowledge and skills during the programme had affected their practice in their school workplace, all of them stated that they agreed (75%,  $n = 18$ ) or strongly agreed (25%,  $n = 6$ ) that the pilot programme had affected their practice in both cases (knowledge and skills).

Similar responses were given when the participants were asked about the relevance of the programme content to their experience as teachers, seventy-five percent ( $n=18$ ) answered that the programme content was ‘very relevant’, and twenty-five percent indicated that the programme was ‘relevant’ ( $n = 6$ ). No one stated that the programme content was ‘neutral’, ‘irrelevant’ or ‘very irrelevant’ to the teaching practice (see Table 3).

As far as teaching experience is concerned, the analysis of the data showed that the beginning teachers evaluate the relevance of the pilot programme content as extremely high. All of them stated that the programme content was very relevant to their practice, whereas more experienced teachers had rather differentiated opinions

on the relevance of the programme content to their practice. But still their assessment of the programme content was very high (see Table 3).

Table 3  
*Teaching experience and the relevance of the programme content*

Relevance of the programme content / teaching experience	Very irrelevant		Irrelevant		Neutral		Relevant		Very relevant		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
less than 3 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	54.2	13	54.2
more than 3 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	25	5	20.8	11	45.8
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	25	18	75	24	100

Besides asking teachers to give their general opinion on the relevance of the programme content to their experience, we asked them to indicate, on a five point Likert scale, how satisfied they were with the content of each of the programme modules. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4  
*The level of satisfaction with the content of the pilot programme modules*

Programme module	Very dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Unsure		Satisfied		Very satisfied		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Introduction to Teacher Emotional Competence	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	83.3	4	16.7	24	100
Teacher Emotional Competence and Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	75.0	6	25.0	24	100
Development of Teacher Emotional Competence Attributes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	100	24	100

As can be seen, the third module “Development of Teacher Emotional Competence Attributes” was identified as the most satisfying component of the programme followed by Teacher Emotional Competence and Education and Introduction to Teacher Emotional Competence.

Teachers were asked about the components of teacher emotional competence and how satisfied they were with the development of their skills and knowledge that build their emotional competence. As we can see from the data in Table 5, all teachers are satisfied with the development of their elementary skills of teacher emotional competence and with the knowledge and skills used in relations with the students. As far as knowledge and skills that build the feeling of emotional efficiency are concerned, 75% are satisfied and 25% of the teachers are very satisfied.

When asked about the changes the teachers had made in their work as a result of the part of the programme that was focusing on developing the elementary skills of teacher emotional competence (open-ended questions in the questionnaire), all teachers stated that, to a very high level, the programme content provided a framework that allowed

Table 5

The level of satisfaction with the development of skills and knowledge of the component of teacher emotional competence

Components of teacher emotional competence	Very dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Unsure		Satisfied		Very satisfied		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Elementary skills of teacher emotional competence	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	100	0	0	24	100
Knowledge and skills that build the feeling of emotional efficiency	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	75	6	25	24	100
Knowledge and skills used in relations with students	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	100	0	0	24	100

them to more fully appreciate the role that emotions play in their workplace, to better understand themselves as teachers and to be more aware of their own as well as others' emotional states. The programme, according to the teachers' opinions, was also very helpful in learning how to better distinguish emotions and name individual emotional states. Teachers indicated concrete changes in their knowledge and skills. For example one of them mentioned that:

*For me the programme definitely was relevant. I learned a lot from it, and it really had an effect on my teaching. Now I know myself better and I'm more aware of myself. For sure, recognizing and reading emotions was a big thing for me. It helped me to work on my emotions and emotions in the classroom. Pity that I had to wait for 15 years for such a programme. (Secondary school teacher – lyceum, 15 years of teaching experience).*

As far as the changes teachers had made in their work as a result of the programme focus on building knowledge and skills for emotional efficiency, all of the teachers felt that the programme had provided new knowledge and developed their skills in relation to emotions. They noted that they are now better prepared to cope with emotions in different situations at school. Seventeen out of twenty-four teachers (70.8%) stated that their feelings of emotional efficiency were definitely higher. Among them were all the teachers who had between 3 and 23 years of teaching experience (11 teachers) and 6 beginning teachers. Five of thirteen beginning teachers stated that their feeling of emotional efficiency was higher. For two of the beginning teachers it was hard to say how the level of their emotional efficiency had changed.

All of the teachers gave very positive comments on the part of the programme connected with building the knowledge and skills used, especially in relations with students. This part of the programme was connected with two programme modules: (i) Teacher Emotional Competence and Education, and (ii) Teachers' Emotional Competence Attributes. The programme prompted the teachers to reflect on their teaching styles and their methods of interacting with others in their workplace and evaluate them. It proved to be especially useful in increasing the teachers' awareness of



the aspects that determine the nature of their relations with students and colleagues. The programme participants commented on the change in their way of thinking about the specific role and responsibility of the teacher in educational relationships. The teachers identified what appeared to be especially beneficial for gaining an appreciation of the reflections on education and its common sense:

*The programme helped me to reflect critically on my own practice. I again understand that teaching involves values concerning education. The acquisition of the technical skills for communication with students is important. But, the basis for the students' achievements is not only teacher communication but the way we as teachers perceive students, how we value our relationships with them and what we care for in education.* (Primary school teacher, 12 years of teaching experience)

It is worth mentioning that most of the teachers (87.5%) evaluated very highly the variety of teaching modalities, including small group discussions, individual exercises, role playing and case studies. They especially appreciated the case studies connected with different attributes of teachers' emotional competence. Some of the teachers (41.7%) suggested improvements of the programme for its further development. Among the proposed changes were: (i) increasing the programme duration (8 respondents); (ii) better adapting the activities during the workshops to the teachers' needs according to the level of their schooling and type of the school (5 respondents); (iii) enriching the programme with the teachers' support groups, especially after programme completion (3 respondents); (iv) expanding the programme to better meet the needs of teacher students (6 respondents) and the needs of head teachers (2 respondents).

### ***Transference – from the Programme to Practical Experience***

One of the goals of our research was to gain understanding of the process of transference from learning within the pilot programme to practical experience in the school setting. A prompt question was asked 'Can you think of an opportunity you have had in your school that links the topics we have explored together to a practical problem-solving hands-on experience?' This question provided useful insight into teachers' experiences. It revealed – through identification of themes and commonalities – the situations where the programme participants saw themselves as 'more competent' teachers with higher understanding of what constituted teaching. The teachers demonstrated a change in their personal approach to a problem and showed appreciation of their professional growth.

I will present below some of the identified and most frequently occurring themes within the analysis. They are connected with the development of the teachers' emotional competence as the awareness of the teacher's own emotional state, the skill to distinguish between the emotions of students, the skill to name the teachers' and students' emotional states, and the skill of adaptive coping with emotions and

skills used in relations with colleagues and students. One theme was connected with the teachers' emotional competence attributes, especially with compassion and enthusiasm.

One of the themes emerging in the response to the prompt question set out above included the development of elementary skills of teacher emotional competence and the way the teachers used these skills in school settings. The teachers described the situations in which they successfully used their skills:

*During the programme I especially liked the activities on distinguishing emotions and naming the individual emotional states. I knew that I had difficulties with recognising my students' emotions. Therefore, I paid a lot of attention to these activities. I frequently referred to these activities in my daily teaching practice. And I see that reading students' emotions is not such a big thing for me now. (Secondary school teacher – lyceum, 15 years of teaching experience)*

The teachers suggested that the pilot programme work on their self-awareness helped them become more aware of their own and their students' emotional states within the classroom.

*As a student teacher I was introduced to teaching in a very highly controlled school environment. Sometimes, I felt powerless. My classroom mentor and university supervisor sympathized with me and understood my conflicting emotions. They asked me to take more control, to manage my emotions and conform to professional expectations. It was really difficult for me. Now, I see that any effort put into improving emotional and social competences can be very helpful in being more responsive to students' needs and can have effects on students' performance. I use what I learnt at the programme in my classroom. A few days ago I had a difficult situation with unacceptable student behaviour and I noticed how able I was to manage my emotions and create classroom atmosphere. (Grammar school teacher, 2 years of teaching experience)*

*The programme helped me to learn about my emotional self. I remember the day when we had the workshops and had to work on our own emotion. A trainer told me that she knew what I thought about one of my school situations, and then asked me 'How did it feel?' I was smiling as long as I was providing a description of the situation. As soon as I looked for the feelings inside of me I began to be very sad. I did not feel very well. Memories of the situation were hurting me again. The trainer helped me to go to my feelings rather than to intellectually work on them. Today in my work I very often ask myself 'How do I really feel? It helps me a lot to recognize my emotional state. (Primary school teacher, 7 years of teaching experience)*

The teachers frequently described changes in coping with their emotions in schools:

*I am very often not happy with our staff meetings. This produces a lot of negative emotions. I had problems with not transferring these emotions to my classroom. The programme showed me that teachers can manage emotions at school. I understood*

*that I am not able to change or fully control my emotions. I had to learn how to be with emotions and how to live peacefully with them. It was a difficult journey for me when I began, but I noticed that learning how to release buried emotions helped me to manage my emotions. (Primary school teacher, 15 years of teaching experience)*

Teachers most frequently mentioned changes in the interactions that took place with their colleagues. Some comments noted the development of tolerance and understanding of other's points of view which led to more fruitful interactions. Typical of these were:

*Most of my changes have been in the way I view and interact with my colleagues at school. I am much more willing to accept their ideas, and I am much more able to perceive the strengths and skills that other people have. (Primary school teacher, 6 years of teaching experience)*

*I was trying to shy away from the staff room. I was avoiding team work, mainly because I was afraid of the experienced teachers' opinions of me. But now I understand that it was a huge mistake. If I would like to learn from the others and establish good relationships with them, which is essential for me as a teacher in this school, I have to be part of the group. The programme helped me to overcome my shyness. (Grammar school teacher, 2 years of teaching experience)*

*I used to be close only to teachers who seemed to share my interests and who openly recognized my work. I see how much I understand the importance of building good relationships with all teachers and other staff, not just those who are 'like me'. (Primary school teacher, 3 years of teaching experience)*

*Most of my changes have been in the way that I view and interact with my colleagues at school. I see that I am much more willing to accept their ideas and I'm much more able to perceive strengths and skills that they have (Secondary school teacher – lyceum, 15 years of teaching experience)*

It was interesting that one of the strongest themes that emerged from the teachers' responses was about compassion and enthusiasm.

The teachers pointed out that the programme helped them become more compassionate teachers. At the heart of the teachers' responses is the centrality of the relationships that they developed with their students. The responses revealed the teachers' concerns for working with students and experiencing positive relationships with them:

*Many of my students face stressful times. They have difficulties in focusing on learning. I try to be prepared to listen to them and support them. I learnt how I can show to the young people that they are important. I know that I am empathic and it is easier for me to connect with my students but still I see that I have to learn*

*how to develop positive relationships with these young people.* (Grammar school teacher, 12 years of teaching experience)

The programme helped teachers to more fully appreciate the need to be enthusiastic about learning. The teachers suggested that the programme enabled them to be role models of learning for their students:

*I came back to my beliefs. From the beginning of my teaching career I was convinced that enthusiasm can help me and make my work more enjoyable. As time passed I realised that my enthusiasm decreased a bit. The programme inspired me to resume work on my enthusiasm to teaching. I know how important it is in classroom. My students can learn more when I am more enthusiastic in my teaching. Some techniques which I learnt at the programme help me engage the students in various tasks and hold their attention.* Grammar school teacher, 17 years of teaching experience)

## Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to contribute to the emerging literature on teacher emotional education and its challenges. The main objective was to examine the teachers' experiences in emotional education and their educational needs in this field and to evaluate a pilot programme designed to support the development of teacher emotional competence. The presented research has some limitations. First of all, the research sample is rather small and the collected data were mainly based on the research participants' self-reporting observations. Further research on teachers' competences with the attempt to measure pre- and post-course level of the competence is needed.

Although the presented research has some weakness, the findings of the research suggest that the teachers found this rather short programme (thirty-hour pilot programme on emotional education for teachers) to be of real value to them in their continuous learning to teach. The participants of the pilot programme perceived the programme as relevant to their practice and their professional development. The development of emotional competence of the teachers affected the teachers' practice in their school workplace. These findings are consistent – to some extent – with Roisin P. Corcoran's and Roland Tormey's research (2012). These authors showed that even very short input (six two-hour classes over twelve weeks) on emotional intelligence brought a more sophisticated set of emotional intelligence understandings and skills to the practice of teachers when compared to those who did not receive such training. The research findings have revealed the importance of providing teachers with an educational offer on developing emotional competence in different 'professional life phases' (see Day & Qu, 2010). The complex influences that affect the teachers' sense of commitment, wellbeing and resilience call for a well-designed educational provision to meet the teachers' learning needs within the area of emotional competence. The

programmes should be differentiated according to the different levels of schooling and types of schools the teachers work at, and the phases of their professional lives.

The experiences of beginning teachers proved to be especially interesting. The consideration of their experiences directed our attention to the design and content of initial teacher education and of the induction phase. These experiences clearly show that there is a need for the integration of the programme for the development of teacher emotional competence into initial teacher education programmes and that they also have a place in creating the conditions in school for effective teacher induction. Research has shown the anxiety encountered by beginning teachers due to the complexities and uncertainties of learning to teach. It would appear that little has changed since Dan C. Lortie's (1975) work on teachers' lives. He wrote (1975, p. 237) "the way most beginners are inducted into teaching leaves them doubly alone; they confront a 'sink-or-swim' situation in physical isolation and get only occasional cultural support in the process." This raises questions regarding how well pre-service teacher education programmes deal with the dimension of emotion in teaching and with building teacher emotional capacity. The gaps in teacher education programmes in addressing some of the current work on teachers' emotions and the need to develop teachers' (beginning and student teachers) strategies to manage the emotional challenges associated with their work have been highlighted in the literature (see Meyer, 2009; Zembylas & Schutz, 2009).

The findings from the current research have the potential to inform the design of future programmes for those committed to improving teaching and learning by putting increased attention within teacher education (initial teacher education, induction and continuous professional development) onto the role of emotions in teaching and teachers' lives. Programmes focusing on emotional competence for teachers can be very important in bridging the gap between the theoretical basis of the educational sciences and school-based teacher practice. The concept of teacher emotional competence provides a framework for making clear what emotional knowledge and skills might be of particular value to teachers. Given the emotional workload involved in learning to teach and becoming a teacher, the role of emotional competence in a teacher's career is of particular interest. However, the concept of emotional competence, especially teacher emotional competence, is still in its early stages. The literature review reveals not only a lack of adequate scientific interest in teachers' emotional competence, but also a lack of research on the effectiveness of the existing programmes devoted to the development of teachers' emotional competence. There has also been insufficient research carried out on the impact of teachers' emotional competence on students' learning.

The findings of this research suggest that there is a need for greater coherence of the different elements of teacher professional development – as it was rightly stressed during the TEPE 2014 conference – and has long been emphasized in Europe. Overcoming fragmentation by bridging the gap between initial teacher education,

induction and continuous professional development seems to be vital through creating and sustaining integrated professional learning cultures to support teacher education at the initial and induction phases of the continuum. It directs our attention to the role of schools in initial teacher education and the induction phases of learning to teach. One can state that development of partnership agreements between school and university or college of education can set out the parameters for this, but the experience of individual teacher students and beginning teachers will still depend on the learning culture that prevails within the school and the attitudes and values of principals and experienced teachers in those schools (Conway, Rosaleen, & Madalińska-Michalak, 2012). The move toward creating and sustaining integrated professional learning cultures, where learning to teach is seen as a task for all in the school, seems to be vital in the debate on teacher education in the context of teacher learning and development.

The findings of the current research direct our attention towards broader issues including teacher competences, teacher quality, and teacher professionalism. All these issues need to be considered in the context of teacher education practice and teacher education policies in Europe. Discussions about teachers' competences and teacher quality direct our attention to the issue of good teaching and the future of teacher education, which always needs to deal with the questions of purpose, content and relationships (Biesta, 2012). In recent years we have observed an increasing attention paid towards teachers and the competences of teachers in both Europe and in the wider global educational community. According to new policies on Teacher Education in Europe, enabling "all teachers to develop their competences means stimulating teachers' engagement in career-long learning, assessing the development of teachers' competences, and providing appropriate and relevant learning opportunities for all teachers" (European Commission, 2014, p. 43). Acquiring and developing an appropriate set of competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) can help a teacher ensure that they undertake tasks as effectively (so that they achieve the desired outcome) and as efficiently (making the optimum use of resources and effort) as possible (see European Commission, 2014). Teaching is, of course, much more than a 'task'. The teaching profession is, increasingly, viewed as not simply a technical or cognitive practice but first of all as social, relational and emotional practice. The current research has shown that teachers find explicit training on the development of emotional competence to be of benefit to them at the initial and later stages of their career. This sets out a challenge to the providers of teacher education and the development programmes to ensure that they address emotional competence. Such provision seems likely to enhance the quality of teaching and support teacher resilience.

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# Razvoj emocionalne kompetencije učitelja

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## Sažetak

*U ovome se radu evaluiira pilot-program izrađen sa svrhom pružanja podrške razvoju emocionalne kompetencije učitelja te prikazuju iskustva učitelja s obrazovanjem emocija tijekom njihove karijere. Program je izrađen na temelju projekta 'ELAVET – Učitelji prvi: uporaba emocionalne pismenosti za unaprjeđenje obrazovanja i podučavanja u strukovnim školama u 21. stoljeću'. Procjena pilot-programa utemeljena je na istraživanju i analizi prikupljenih podataka sa svrhom istraživanja percepcija sudionika o povezanosti između sadržaja programa i njihova rada u školi. Rezultati pokazuju da program predstavlja koristan okvir za analizu učitelja, promišljanje i emocionalnu kompetenciju u cilju unaprjeđenja nastave koju izvode. Pitanje razvoja emocionalne kompetencije učitelja doprinosi široj raspravi o izazovima i modernim trendovima u razvoju početnog obrazovanja učitelja, uvođenju u profesiju i kontinuiranom profesionalnom razvoju učitelja. Također se postavlja pitanje obrazovanja emocija za učitelje tijekom njihove karijere, kao i pitanje prepoznavanja važnosti stvaranja i održavanja integriranih profesionalnih kultura učenja sa svrhom pružanja podrške obrazovanju učitelja u početnoj fazi kontinuuma i fazi njihova uvođenja u praksu.*

**Ključne riječi:** *emocije i razvoj učitelja; integrirana profesionalna kultura učenja; početno obrazovanje učitelja; učiti poučavati; uvođenje u profesiju i trajni profesionalni razvoj učitelja.*