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## Development of students' emotional competence

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### Article info

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*The article considers essential characteristics of the notion «emotional competence» as a component of psychologists' professional competence. The detailed analysis of professional competence is given in the context of psychological and pedagogical research. Based on the analysis of the constrained concepts "emotional abilities", "emotional intellect" definition of emotional competence has been given. Essential raise of average and high indexes of psychologists' emotional competence has been achieved in ASPT groups during our research. It is determined that emotional competence, as a constituent of professional competence, is a set of emotional and social abilities such as capacities for understanding one's own emotions and emotions of other people, control of the emotional sphere. The authors distinguished four basic components with their functions in the composition of emotional competence. Double combination of these components builds up four functional blocks of emotional competence: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. The article reveals meaningfulness in the structure of psychologists' personality emotional capabilities (empathy, reflection, self-regulation and control of feelings and emotions of other people). Basic components of emotional competence and its significance in the process of intrapersonal and interpersonal communication have been characterized.*

**Keywords:** future psychologists; professional competence; emotional competence; self-regulation; emotional abilities; empathy; reflection.

### Introduction

In modern conditions in the system of education there are global changes in informational, communicational, professional, and other areas. Valued orientations, target attitudes, pedagogical means change, there is an adjustment of content, methodical, technological aspects of education. At present the requirements for specialists in psychological specialties are increasing. Modern psychologist must be ready to solve professional problems theoretically and practically, be able to create, apply and adjust the system of professional activity.

**The purpose** of our research work is to reveal theoretical approaches of the essence of emotional competence; concretize the scientific idea of training strategies and the development of students - future

psychologists' emotional competence; identify the means of diagnostic and corrective work; consider factors that contribute to the development of emotional competence; develop and substantiate the program of the formation of students' emotional competence and conduct empirical research.

### Theoretical foundations

T.V. Zamors'ka defines professional competence of a psychologist as a complex psychological education which is the basis of successful professional activity and includes a system of role-playing (knowledge, skills, and abilities) and personal (professionally important qualities) characteristics [2].

V.I. Stenkova, considering psychologist's professional competence, distinguishes special (mastery of methodology and techniques), personal (ability to self-realization,

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continuous professional growth), communicative (ability to establish relationships with the subject of the educational process) and reflexive (ability to regulate their professional activities, adequate ideas about their professional characteristics) competencies [6].

Studying the set of knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to solve professional goals and objectives, T.V. Zamors'ka affirmed that a psychologist must have a socio-normative (awareness of the importance of their work, acceptance of professional mission; knowledge of basic documents governing the institutions of the system of education, content and directions of the work of the service of practical psychology of education, features of the activity of subjects of educational sphere; ability of planning and organization of psychological and pedagogical work concerning optimum algorithm); psychological and pedagogical (possession of skills and abilities to organize diagnostic examination, means of corrective action; peculiarities of the educational process in educational institutions; knowledge of basic regularities and factors influencing the development of children and adults; mastering of effective methods, means, forms aimed at achieving psychological and pedagogical results of their work, the focus of the personality of the psychologist on the interests of children, teachers and parents), conceptual and psychological competencies (socio-perceptual component - knowledge of the behavior and attitudes of people included in different groups; peculiarities of human perception and understanding of people, communicative component - knowledge and mastery of various forms of interpersonal communication, methods and techniques of establishing effective interaction); auto-psychological component ability to develop and use one's own psychological resources for increasing the efficiency of psychologist's professional activity; knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of their own activities and personality's ones, possession of observation, insight, sociability, reflexivity, emotionality and empathy which constitute the structure of professional psychologist's competence [2].

The specificity of a psychologists' work is that the specialist must resist professional difficulties, manage their emotional state, determine the peculiarities of their influence, show perceptual abilities, be able to understand the position of others, understand the individuality and uniqueness of another person, empathize with him, reflect. In addition, the profession of psychologist is accompanied by constant psycho-emotional overload, emotional tension, emotional burnout, etc. Thus, the greatest importance in the psychologist's personality structure are emotional abilities (empathy, reflection, self-regulation and management of feelings and emotions of other people).

E.V. Libina, studying individual differences in response to stress, introduces the concept of emotional competence which she defines as the ability of an individual to exercise optimal coordination between emotions and purposeful behavior. The author considers the concept of emotional competence from the point of view of the psychotherapist contrasting it the protective behavior and leaving in the shadows the composition, structure, and properties of this integral education [3].

According to G.V. Yusupova, mental abilities and competence are related to the same psychological

mechanisms. G.V. Yusupova considers emotional competence as a group of abilities to self-regulation and regulation of interpersonal relationships by understanding their own emotions and the emotions of others [8]. She distinguishes two components of emotional competence: cognitive (understanding) and behavioral (management). Each component has two vectors: internal - self-focus and external - focus on others. The cognitive vector is aimed, on the one hand, at self-understanding which is referred to as a phenomenon of reflection, on the other hand, with a focus on others, at the emotional-cognitive decentration of his "I" known as the phenomenon of empathy. Adaptive behavioral reactions are realized through self-regulation of the behavior (behavioral vector directed at oneself) and regulation of relations with others (behavioral vector aimed at interaction with the surrounding people) [8].

### **Presenting the main content**

As part of emotional competence there are four basic components with their functions: self-regulation (control of impulses and control of emotions, expression of emotions, blocking negative emotional states); regulation of relationships (social skills, ability to have relationships with the surrounding people); reflection (self-awareness, rational understanding of emotions, identification of one's own motives); empathy (emotional-cognitive decentration). The pairwise combination of these components forms four functional blocks of emotional competence: behavioral block (self-regulation + regulation of relations with others); cognitive block (reflection + empathy); intrapersonal block (self-regulation + reflection); interpersonal block (regulation of relations with others + empathy).

Thus, the construct of emotional competence consists of four basic components - self-regulation, relationship regulation, reflection and empathy which form four functional blocks - behavioral, cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. We'll describe the basic components of emotional competence and their importance in the process of interpersonal interaction briefly.

1. Reflection. In general, reflection includes person's ability to determine what emotion he is feeling now by physical condition and internal dialogue; to correlate this emotion with its name; to determine what basic emotions the experienced complex consists of, to be aware of the change in the intensity of the emotion and the transitions from one emotion to another. Reflection (self-understanding), in general, is emotional, sensual, empathic, not rational.

Thus, the higher the level of the development of emotional abilities, the deeper the self-understanding, awareness of emotions is. Awareness of emotions implies their registration in the mind. It should be noted that one or another emotional process is not always registered in the mind. In connection with this thesis, one should distinguish between two phenomena. The first phenomenon is a separate organized process which subjectively affects the course of activities and experiences (in this case, a person knows that he is experiencing something, and this experience is different from the previous one). The second phenomenon is one's own awareness which consists in knowing one's condition. It is expressed in verbal (symbolic)

categories. The second type of awareness is the basis of the processes of control over emotions, the ability to predict their development, knowledge of the factors on which their strength, duration and consequences depend. It should be noted that understanding of emotions is closely connected with the possibilities of their expression. The latter requires knowledge of the language of emotions, mastering generally accepted forms of their expression in this culture as well as understanding the individual's manifestations of emotions in people with whom people live and work.

2. In general, self-regulation means the ability to determine the source and cause of emotions, its purpose and possible consequences of their development, the degree of their usefulness in a particular situation; accordingly, if necessary, find a way to regulate emotions (change the degree of their intensity or replace them with another emotion), controlling breathing, body conditions, using verbal and nonverbal ways of managing emotions and managing the internal dialogue. The same skill includes the ability to evoke emotions needed in a particular situation. It should be noted that adequate emotional expression is an important factor in maintaining physical and mental health. Restraining emotions contributes to various diseases. At the same time, uncontrolled emotional expression complicates interpersonal communication. The degree of emotional expressiveness also affects the quality of interpersonal relationships. The excessive restraint leads to the fact that a person is perceived as cold, indifferent, arrogant which causes surprise or dislike in others. Thus, problems in the field of self-regulation are unfavorable not only for the subject but also for his immediate environment.

3. Relationship of regulation involves the ability to determine the possible cause of emotions rising in another person and predict the consequences of their development; to change the emotional state of another person (intensity of emotions, transition to another emotion) by verbal and nonverbal means; the ability to evoke the necessary emotion in people.

4. Empathy is a basic component of emotional competence. Traditionally, this phenomenon is understood as the comprehension of the emotional state, empathy, feelings in the emotional life of another person; it is a person's emotional response to other people's experiences which is manifested in both empathy and compassion. In empathy the emotional response is identical to what and how a particular person experiences; with compassion the emotional response is expressed in a sympathetic attitude to the person who experiences. Empathy includes understanding of another person based on the analysis of his personality, emotional empathy, response to the feelings of another person and the expression of his feelings, the desire to assist, to help another person. The term empathy defines not only this condition but also a personal trait - the ability to this kind of understanding and co-experience [4].

In modern psychology there are several types of empathy: emotional, based on the mechanisms of projection and imitation of other people's reactions; cognitive, based on intellectual processes (comparison, analogy, etc.), and predicative, which is manifested as the ability of a person to predict the affective reactions of another person in specific situations. Special forms of empathy are co-experience and compassion - identification with the feelings of another

person and the experience of his own emotional states about the feelings of another person [5].

There are three levels of empathy in the psychological literature. The first level (low) is associated with a lack of interest in the feelings and opinions of others. A man does not know how to co-experience and does not want to co-experience with people. The second level involves the episodic ability to co-experience which is manifested in some situations. The third level of empathy (high) means deep and accurate understanding of another person, the ability to mentally reproduce his experiences and feelings as his own; deep tact which allows to realize one's own problems and make the right decisions without imposing his own opinion or his interests. The deepest level is the "way of being" which allows him to understand the nuances and complexities of the inner world of another person.

In our opinion, the most adequate, systematic understanding of the concept "Empathy" is presented in the works of I.M. Yusupova. She believes that empathy is a holistic phenomenon that connects the conscious and subconscious levels of the psyche, the purpose of which is to "penetrate" into the inner world of another person [7].

In the light of the author's research, it should be noted that in a number of modern works empathy is considered as one of the key factors of the psychologist's successful professional activity whose professional activity is associated with direct contact with people. Empathy is one of the most important psychologist's professionally significant personality traits especially when it concerns empathy in communication with clients. Empathy with clients involves the ability to understand the other person, to express his sympathy and feelings, the ability to co-experience, sympathize him, show kindness, a sense of belonging to all his "victories" and "defeats" [4].

Summarizing the above mentioned, it can be noted that individuals with a high level of emotional competence have a strong ability to understand their own emotions and the emotions of other persons, to manage the emotional sphere which leads to higher adaptability and efficiency in communication. Emotional competence, as a component of professional competence, is a set of emotional and social abilities, such as the ability to understand person's own emotions and the emotions of other people, to manage the emotional sphere. All structural components of emotional competence are interconnected, and their close interdependence promotes effective interpersonal interaction.

In our research we taught students to enter into communication professionally correctly and situationally, to predict the emotional reactions of communication partners, psychologically adjust to the emotional tone of interlocutors, emotionally adjust to the situation of communication, psychologically "adapt" to the interlocutor, adequately to the situation choose postures, rhythm of their behavior - these are just some aspects, the solution of which will allow students to learn and work effectively using the skills of emotional intelligence.

Working out the problem of developing students' emotional competence we believe that it can be solved not only by education and improvement of general culture but also by special classes for the development of emotional competence which, above all, are professionally oriented.

We have applied a set of theoretical methods and techniques: theoretical and methodological analysis, understanding, comparison and generalization of the main provisions of scientific sources that correspond to the topic and the purpose of the research.

The following methods were used in the implementation of the program: discussion, interviews, mini-lectures, round tables, thematic discussions, creative activity (projects), business games, role and simulation games, video conferences. We paid attention to important elements of teaching students' emotional competence skills, professional interaction techniques, and difficulties which students encounter in the process of interpersonal contacts. The application of methods of active socio-psychological training (ASPT) in higher educational institutions allows participants to develop skills of communication and interaction in a small group, to form a valued-oriented unity of the group; to teach flexible change of social roles depending on a situation, to accept moral norms and rules of joint activity, to develop skills of the analysis and self-analysis during group reflection. Active socio-psychological training in the system "Lecturer - group" contributes to non-standard relations in the organization of educational process, formation of motivational readiness for interpersonal interaction in educational and professional situations (I.V. Vachkov, 2011).

During our research we worked out the correctional and developmental program "Development of emotional competence of students - future professionals" in groups of active socio-psychological training, which had the following tasks:

1. Identifying the level of emotional intelligence of group members;
2. Enrichment of group members with knowledge about the essence of emotional competence, its characteristics and effectiveness of interpersonal interaction;
3. Learning the elements of emotional intelligence, and the development of skills of self-control and empathic relationships in interaction with others;
4. Assistance in adequate self-assessment, self-analysis and self-reflection;
5. Development of emotional maturity and sensory perception of other persons;
6. Removal of negative attitudes towards other persons;
7. Development of emotional competence, general communicative tolerance, observation, and abilities to emotional intelligence.

In accordance with the task of our worked-out program, we achieved the goal by promising and active means of influencing the students - future professionals, their emotional, communicative abilities and communicative competence. In the research we sought to develop students' skills of self-knowledge, introspection, self-analysis, self-realization, improving the moral principles of interaction and a positive attitude towards other people which allowed to develop emotional intelligence of group members more effectively. An important role in the development of emotional competence is the participation of students in training sessions performing special exercises and psychological games. The students showed the greatest interest in performing the following exercises: "Emotional listening", "Smile", "Associations", "Your style", "Openness", "Stability", "Emotions and anger", "Pleasant memories",

"Sculpture", "Eyes. Look ", "Gestures. Pose", "Mood", "Visualization", "Gifts", "Family Album". According to the program of the development of students' emotional intelligence following training sessions were conducted for them: "Development of emotional intelligence", "Personal growth", "Emotional stability", "Positive self-education and confident behavior". The following psychological games were used during training sessions: "Shipwreck", "Your Face", "Treasure Hunt", "Who Am I?", "Two Kingdoms", "Changing Roles".

According to the correctional and developmental program "Development of students - future professionals' emotional competence" in groups of active socio-psychological training (ASPT), a set of methods for conducting classes that meet our goals was assorted. According to the program group practical work was carried out. The specificity of this program is that it is aimed at changing behavior, the development of emotional competence, emotional intelligence, emotional-volitional, cognitive qualities of the individual.

The basis of productive, high-quality fulfilment of the program is cooperation, purposefulness of the activity and sincerity in expression of thoughts and the activity of students and their creative, research attitude to studies. The applied set of methods was formed according to increasing of the level of complexity of tasks. The effectiveness of the applied program was manifested in increasing of the level of emotional competence of future professionals which was fixed using psycho-diagnostic techniques and objective registration of changes in their personality. The number of the solved tasks to optimize the development of emotional competence of the future specialist, providing emotional support and information about the positive aspects of the program led students to understand their desire to participate in the project. Their expectations from the program and organization of classes were discussed. Methods which we had been selected were focused on practicing verbal and nonverbal communication, perceptual skills, perception, and imagination, establishing mutual understanding, self-understanding, learning the basics of psycho-physiognomy, practicing communication skills and emotional intelligence skills.

The research of the development of emotional competence in students was conducted based on "Uman State Pedagogical University named after Pavlo Tyshyna". The experiment involved 56 students.

The research was conducted during several stages:

- psycho-diagnostics of the level of emotional competence in students using the following methods: "Methods of the research of social intelligence" by J. Guilford and M. Sullivan, questionnaire "Emotional intelligence" by D.V. Lusin (Mikhailova E.S, 2006; Lusin D.V., 2009; Vachkov I.V., 2007);

- introduction of the correctional and developmental program "Development of emotional competence of students - future specialists" in groups of active social and psychological training (ASPT);

- identification of the level of the development of emotional competence in students and the effectiveness of the worked-out program of active socio-psychological training "Development of emotional competence of students - future professionals" in groups (ASPT).

At the first stage of our research, methodology of J. Guilford and M. Sullivan were used to study social intelligence. The main purpose of this methodology is to diagnose the cognitive component of human communicative competence. The chosen methodology determines the level of "social intelligence". Social intelligence is an integral intellectual ability that determines the success of communication and social adaptation which unites and regulates cognitive processes associated with the reflection of social objects (a person as a communication partner or group of people). The processes, that make it up, include social sensitivity, social perception, social memory, and social thinking.

During our research we used the questionnaire "Emotional Intelligence" (Emin) developed by Lusin D.V. which distinguishes 4 scales: interpersonal intelligence (MEI), intrapersonal intelligence (VEI), understanding of emotions (PE), emotion management (UE). At the first stage of the research the following results were obtained: 37.5% of students were diagnosed with an average level of emotional competence, 13.75% - with high and 48.75 - with a low level.

Analyzing approaches to training of higher school students - future professionals it is necessary to admit:

- insufficient working out of scientific and pedagogical bases for the formation of emotional competence and the necessity for its formation in students in the process of professional training;

- the necessity to develop emotional competence in students as personal and professional quality;

- the need of the society in qualified professionals able to develop students' emotional competence during the educational process.

The development of emotional competence in higher school students can be most successfully carried out in training groups. If IQ changes a little in adulthood, then EQ, which is based on the experience of self-management and the environment, can and should grow. According to the authors' opinion (Bar-On R., Goleman D., Mayer D.), the most optimal means of developing emotional competence is participation of students in training sessions. Bar-On offers long-term training sessions. He believes that this will not only develop the necessary components of emotional intelligence but also secures the resulting changes in human behavior (Bar-On R., 2000). Gardner G., asserts that anyone is able to learn and develop the level of emotional competence with the help of continuous practice (Gardner G., 2007).

In connection with these studies, Vachkov I.V. identified the following advantages of psycho-correctional work in groups:

- group experience counteracts alienation, helps to solve interpersonal problems;

- the group reflects the society in miniature, makes obvious such hidden factors as pressure from partners, social influence and conformism;

- the ability to receive feedback and support from people with similar problems;

- in the group a person can learn new skills, experiment with different styles of relationships among equal partners;

- all this takes place in an atmosphere of friendliness, acceptance and support;

- participants can identify themselves with others in the group, "play" the role of another person for better understanding him and himself and to get acquainted with new effective behaviors;

- interaction in the group creates tension which helps to clarify psychological problems of each participant;

- the group facilitates the processes of self-disclosure, self-research, and self-knowledge (Vachkov I.V., 2001).

The development of emotional competence as a complex integrational education that provides awareness, understanding and regulation of their own emotions and the emotions of the surrounding people will be effective in implementing the model of emotional intelligence which takes into account the structure of emotional intelligence and includes: target unit; forms of organization of the educational process; methods of developing emotional intelligence; stages of the development of emotional intelligence; the predicted result and the program of the development of emotional intelligence, the important part of which is a group work using active methods of social and psychological training (ASPT) (Slepkova V.I., 1997).

Active socio-psychological training (ASPT) of students is a psychological and pedagogical forms of the development of emotional competence and improvement of skills and abilities of interaction in the society carried out in the conditions of group educational and training activity. The interaction of students in the study group is influenced by the model of their relations in the society. We used ASPT to form specific emotional, communicative, cognitive, and behavioral skills in students to increase emotional competence, communicative and psychological competence, emotional intelligence. Active learning is aimed at self-mastery of the students' knowledge and skills to use the experience of the development of emotional competence.

Analysis of students' learning activities showed that in order to perform their work successfully the future specialist must have good special professional abilities which include those abilities that affect his successful professional activity. Emotional competence is an important element of a holistic system of successful professional activities of future professionals. After the correctional and developmental program, the following results were obtained: 17.5% of students showed the low level; the medium level - 58.3%; the high level - 24.2%.

There was a significant increase in medium and high rates of the development of students' emotional competence and decrease of low rates. Active socio-psychological training of students in groups (ASPT) using the correctional and developmental program "Development of emotional competence of students - future professionals" has shown its effectiveness but needs its improvement for using in the second stage of the development of emotional intelligence in students enabling students with low and medium levels of emotional intelligence to improve their results.

Thus, influencing by methods of socio-psychological training (ASPT), stimulating the development of emotional competence through the program "Development of emotional competence of students - future professionals", organizing the work in groups one can form attitudes to the management of emotions.

## **Conclusions**

Thus, emotional competence is understood as the ability to be aware of emotions, to achieve and generate them to promote understanding of emotions and manage them contributing to their emotional and intellectual growth. Emotional competence is associated with abilities that mean accuracy of assessment and expression of emotions both the individual himself and the people around him; cognitive assimilation of emotional experience; recognition, understanding and comprehension of emotions.

The efficiency of work in groups of active socio-psychological training (ASPT) with students is high because adolescence implies mobility, plasticity, and sensitivity of the emotional and intellectual spheres of personality. Work in ASPT groups is aimed at positive changes in the development of emotional competence in students. Developed emotional competence of future professionals is an important condition for success in life, satisfaction, and confidence in professional activities. There is a necessity for further study of the phenomenon of emotional competence, its structure, ways of its development which will open a real opportunity to optimize the relationship through a deeper understanding of emotional states that arise in the professional activities of future psychologists.

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