About „the emotional alphabetization”
of the future teachers from the engineering education

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Abstract – Living with and among their students, the teacher has to be prepared to form, to point out and to develop their emotional competences. For teaching their students „the alphabet of emotion”, it is necessary that the teachers themselves run through the route of „emotional development”, acquiring real emotional competences and demonstrating that they can intelligently manage their own emotions, but also the emotions of their students.

Key-words – emotional intelligence, emotional competences, teacher’s emotional work, self-control, empathy, emotions management

1 Introduction
In a society crumbled by conflicts, by unrests, marked by contradictions, by profound crisis, characterized by the disintegration of the values, the man acknowledges more and more the feeling of loneliness, of alienation to his own self. To understand such a world, to understand such a world, to understand oneself and the relations with others is for the contemporary man the only way to help himself surpass problems like: the defective communication with the self and the fellows, the maladjustment, the difficulties in establishing the social relations, the failure, the unfulfilling feeling etc..This „understanding” must pass through the emotion filter, because “Homo is sapiens but he is also sentiens and communicans” (Cosnier, 2007, 9).

Is man ready for such an approach? Can he use emotions in an intelligent way?

A careful observation of the social environment, of our fellows behavior, but also (sometimes) of our own behaviors prove that aggressiveness, violence, conflicts, egoism became manifestations preferred by many and developed since childhood.

A society in sufferance, like a man in sufferance, can find salvation in education. But only in that education which, beyond teaching you to know and to do, teaches you to live next to others, to properly manage emotions and to use them with intelligence. Promoting such an education, the teacher can no longer remain only a pertinent source of information, but must became a facilitator, mediator of learning, organizer of a positive educational climate, based on mutual confidence, positive motivation, scientific curiosity, empathy. In this context, the affective side of the teacher activity, his emotional abilities are fundamental bench-marks.

Today it is obvious that to consider „a good educator” only the one who possesses solid specialty knowledge is tantamount to a turning to stone in patterns that have long ago proved their inefficiency. If we desire a quality education we must assume, as a prior objective, the training of competent educators, prepared to exercise inside the class multiple roles and representing, in an
authentic way, absolute models for their pupils.

Unfortunately, most of the times we neglect the emotional formation of the future teachers, centering ourselves on the theoretic dimension of their training. As professor Emil Păun appreciated, „the didactic profession has a very powerful dimension, a fact that implies not only knowledge and competences (describable in terms of professional standards), but also attitudes, values, ethos, in a word a professional conscience (difficult and useless to standardize). The teacher is not only an agent, who submits to a system of norms, but also an actor, who invests in what he does, confers significations, lives the activity with the pupils with an important parameter of personal intervention.” (2002, 22).

Investing himself in what he does, living together and among his students, the teacher must be prepared to form, valorize and develop the emotional competences. In this context, we consider opportune their inclusion in the category of key competences of which depends the efficiency of the educational activity.

The definition of the concept of „professional competence” confirms this point of view. I. Jinga and E. Istrate consider the teachers professional competence as being „an ensemble of cognitive, affective, motivational and managerial capacities, which interact with the personality traits of the educator, conferring him the necessary qualities for performing a didactic catering which can ensure the fulfillment of the objectives projected by the majority of the pupils, and the obtained performances to situate near the maximum level of the intellectual potential of each of them.” (2007, 78).

If the formation of the cognitive and managerial competences necessary for the exercise of the didactic profession is an objective assumed by the universities Departments for Teacher Training, we cannot say the same thing about the formation/development of the affective and motivational capacities. Emotions represent a dimension that is intrinsic to the educational process, and their relation with motivation is obvious, together ensuring, if correct managed, the efficiency of this process.

Beginning with the 9th decade of the last century, we observe an ever growing interest for the development of the emotional competences and of the emotional intelligence, an interest which had as starting point the premise according to which the problems with which the society, in ensemble, and each and every one of us confronts, are generated by a weak control of the emotions.

The concept of “emotional intelligence” (EQ) was used for the first time by Wayne Leon Payne, in 1985, who conferred the meaning of “ability that implies a creative relationship with the states of fear, pain and desire” (apud. Roco, 2004, 139).

The founders of this new field are John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey, who describe emotional intelligence as being “the
capacity to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so that they can support thinking, to understand emotions and their significance and to efficiently regulate emotiveness, in order to determine the improvement of the emotional and intellectual evolution.” (apud Stein, Book, 2007, 14).

An important contribution in defining emotional intelligence also had the studies made by Reuven Bar-On. He affirmed that emotional intelligence represents “a gamma of aptitudes, competences and ne-cognitive qualities which can influence one person capacity to manage to face the environment pressures and demands.” (apud Stein, Book, 2007, 14). Moreover, Bar-On proposes an organizational model of EQ structured on 5 fields, afferent to those, 15 subsections or stages (apud Stein, Book, 2007, 22-23):
- **Intrapersonal field** which includes: self emotional conscience, assertive character, independence, self respect, self fulfillment;
- **Interpersonal field**, composed of three stages - empathy, social responsibility and interpersonal relations;
- **Adaptability field** which includes as subsections the testing of reality, flexibility and the problems solving;
- **Stress administration field** which resides in tolerance to stress and the impulses control;
- **General state field** with the subcomponents optimism and happiness.

The studies realized by Daniel Goleman complete the optics on this new field. The foundations of emotional intelligence – self conscience, self control, social conscience and the capacity to administrate relations - , appreciated Goleman, condition the career success. EQ, considered “essential element of the connection between feelings, character and moral instincts” (Goleman, 2007, 23), determines our potential to accustom the mentioned foundations. Considering that emotional intelligence is necessary, but not enough to successfully end our activities, Goleman introduces a new concept: emotional competence. This shows how much of the potential EQ was converted in abilities practically applied.

Because in our study we propose to demonstrate the necessity of the formation/development of the teachers emotional competences, we cannot omit in our analysis another concept used in the specialty literature, that is “teachers emotional labor”. The clarification of this notion represents a difficult step, hardened, on one side, by the lack of standardized instruments with which this type of work can be measured, and on the other side, by the inexistence of a complete and precise inventory of the behavioral bench marks which are specific for this side of the teachers activity.

The teacher’s emotional work consist, first of all, in his capacity to properly manage his own emotions. Lyndall Strazdins (2000) defines emotional work as the totality of the behaviors developed in order to improve the emotional state of others and to harmonize the social relations. The author makes distinction between the terms emotional work – for which she opts -- and emotional labor or emotion management. Unlike emotion management (the managing of one’s own feelings) and emotional labor (the revealing of one’s own feelings), emotional work consists in the actions that men do to influence their fellows emotions.

To demonstrate all of these, we have made a pedagogical micro research that aims the following objectives:
1. Identifying the impact of teacher emotional competences on student motivation for learning.
2. Analysis of students' perceptions of the concepts: "teacher’s emotional work", "emotional intelligence", "emotional competences".
3. Observation and recording of the behaviors that demonstrate student’s emotional skills in teaching practice activities.

The searching hypotheses of our research are the following:
1. If the teacher revaluates, in the educational process, its emotional skills,
then students motivation for learning increases.

2. If the teacher uses strategies to develop students' emotional intelligence, then, in the context of teaching practice activities, they demonstrate real emotional skills (empathy, self-control, the management of their own emotions and effective administration of their relations with students.

The study was done using a sample of 120 students from the third year of Electrical Engineering Faculty (60 students) and of the Faculty of Materials Engineering, Machatronics and Robot Equipments (60 students), “Valahia” University of Targoviste, in the period March - April 2010.

The research methods used were participating observation and a questionnaire administered to students. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first section has to identify the emotional impact of teacher competence on student learning motivation, and the second has to analyze students perception on the concepts: "teacher’s emotional work", "emotional intelligence", "emotional competences". Each section includes eight items. Observing and recording of the didactic behaviors that demonstrate the revaluation of the students emotional skills in teaching practice activities were designed on a scale of observation.

3 Problem solution

After processing and interpreting data obtained by administering research instruments resulted the following conclusions:

- among the qualities of a "good teacher" must be found the skills related to the psycho - emotional side of the personality;
- the emotional work is very important for the successful implementation of educational activities, although not all the teachers adequate value their emotional competence. The emotional work expresses in behaviors and capabilities such as: empathy, self control, positive feedback, appropriate management of their emotional experiences, harmonious relations with the pupils/students etc.;
- emotional involvement of the teacher influences students in educational activities, strengthening the motivational learning when it is positive, and inducing effects of demotivation when it is negative;
- it appears that there are slight differences between subjects in decryption of the concept "emotional work", which can be explained by the fact that it recently entered the romanian specialized literature. Also, ambiguities in using this concept is generated by the fact that teachers have no special training towards emotional work nor in initial training, nor in the continuous training.

In the context of teaching practice activities, students who have benefited, in some optional training modules, by support for developing emotional intelligence and related skills, demonstrated effective transfer skills and revaluation in their teaching approaches.

Connecting the concepts used in the present paper, we consider that the teachers emotional work implies the valorizing of their emotional intelligence and of the afferent competences. In this context, we will try to motivate the necessity of the formation/development of the emotional intelligence and of the emotional competences for the future teachers, invoking arguments imposed by the social reality, in general, and especially by the educational one.

A first argument, of evidence order, takes the form of a finding that any parent or educator can make: our children grow in front of a monitor, communicate in the virtual space, they learn on line and become, day by day, more and more lonely and deprived of sociability, more aggressive and depressed... This is why their training for life demands, in an imperative form, the approach of a new educational dimension – the emotional education. For such a step we must first prepare the teachers who can address not only to the children’s mind, but also to the soul, emotions, and affectivity. To teach to
children “the alphabet of emotions”, it is necessary, first of all, that the teachers themselves to cross the path of „emotional alphabetizing”, obtaining in this way real emotional competences and demonstrating that they can manage with intelligence their own emotions and those of their pupils.

What implies such a demonstration? An expressing and aptness of one’s own emotional repertoire to the affective particularities of the educable, a positive attitude towards the self and others, communicativeness, spontaneity, tolerance to stress, harmonious relationship. These are only some of the competences, abilities and features that confirm both the „presence”, and the capacity to use effectively the emotional intelligence.

Another argument: emotional intelligence is “a major aptitude, the capacity that affects in a profound way all the other capacities, either facilitating, either combining with them.” (Goleman, 2007, 119). The control of one’s own impulses, the regulation of the dispositions so that they can facilitate a certain thinking pattern, the assurance of a personal motivation of an optimum intensity, the perseverance in crossing the different obstacles etc., demonstrate that emotions can be channeled towards productive purposes, orienting efficiently the teachers efforts. Furthermore, empathy, an important quality of the teacher, is no more that a feature of the emotional intelligence.

“It is impossible to communicate with a man, affirmed Adler, if we do not transpose ourselves in his situation.” (Adler, 1996, 86). Continuing in the same note, we would like to add: it is impossible to know your students, to have an optimum relation with them, to build an efficient didactic demarche, to identify the most adequate forms of psycho-pedagogic assistance, to differentiate/individualize instruction if you are, as a teacher, blind from the emotional point of view, if you do not constantly form and develop the capacity to be empathic.

Professor Ioan Neacșu (2002) appreciates that empathy is one of the essential substructures of the didactic competences, one of the mechanisms generator of values, as we can also see in the analysis of the teachers formation model - Competency Based Teacher Education -, a model based on competences and applied in USA since 1985. In this model, essential are five basic sub-competences, among which three vises the teacher’s psychological potential, and two are explicit behavioral: „cognitive (intellectual abilities plus knowledge expected from a teacher), affective (psycho-affective-emotional aptitudes expected from a teacher), exploratory (the valorization of the pedagogical practice and of the learning situations in order to optimize the various learning types), performance (the capacity to use what we know and the prevalence of the behaviors placed in a product), transformational (the effects of modification/change type observable on pupils personality).” (apud. Neacșu, 2002, 101).

Continuing our argumentation, we consider that the teacher’s psycho-affective-emotional aptitudes or emotional competences influence, in a direct way, his interaction with the pupil, the emotional tone of the educational relations. „The synchronization between teachers and pupils - observed Goleman – indicates how big is the emotional report between them; the studies made at classroom level showed that according as the movement coordination between teacher and pupil is closer, they feel more friendly, enthusiastic, more interested and available for an inter-human relation.” (2007, 160).

To set off these positive affective-motivational states, the teacher must monitor constantly his own emotions, to adapt and regulate them, anticipating their pupils reactions and feelings and orienting them efficiently in the direction of obtaining the wanted effects. The teacher’s deficit of emotional intelligence and emotional competences sometimes make impossible such a demarche, generating an effect that tends to take proportion and to strongly imprint the educational reality, namely the pupils aggressiveness.
Today pupils are more aggressive, more impulsive, more irascible and tempted to resolve their own problems using physical or verbal violence. The causes that generate these noxious, antisocial behaviors are multiple, but at least two of them are mend to worry us: the lack of a familial environment secured from the affective point of view and the lack of teachers emotional support, who either are exclusively preoccupied by the pupil’s theoretical training, either have not developed the emotional competences necessary to an efficient intervention in situations of educational crisis.

4 Conclusions
In conclusion, we become aware, once more, of the raison why the teachers emotional work is as important, if not more important, than his instruction demarche. Referring to the pupil’s/student’s emotional education, Goleman appreciated in an objective way that the existence in the scholar schedule of some hours destined exclusively to emotional alphabetization matters less than the way in which these lessons are taught. “Perhaps in no other case is more important the teacher’s quality, considering that the way in which he manages his class is a model in itself, a lesson de facto in the field of the emotional competence – or of its absence. Each time the teacher reacts to a pupil, other 20 or 30 learn a lesson.” (Goleman, 2007, 351).

Realized with dedication, basing on real emotional competences, the teachers emotional work can have positive effects for each pupil, but also for the classroom, ensuring a plus of cohesion and harmony.

Self confidence, hope, optimism, the increased adapting capacity, the control of the feelings, the increased adaptation capacity, the mastering of the feelings, of the stress, the empathic capacity, tolerance are only a part of the results of the emotional work, results that can be condensed in the individual state of happiness and in the harmony state of the society.

Even if the attention of the university professors, whose mission is to ensure the psycho-pedagogical training of the future teachers is visibly oriented towards the obtaining of academic performance, it is absolutely obvious that the formation / development of emotional competences can no longer be postponed or neglected. In order to train efficient teachers we must propose to actively develop their emotional intelligence, considering this demarche as being naturally integrated in the educational process.

References: