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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE ERA OF COVID: LESSONS TO CONSIDER

Contemporary higher education is expected to assist students to achieve a set of competencies. Paradoxically expectations sometimes are contradictory. On the one hand, it is expected to provide students with opportunities to succeed individually, and on the other hand – also to help them to work in teams and to join the democracies as responsible citizens¹ (Zuzeviciute, Nauduzienė, 2020). These high, at times - contradicting - expectations pose immediate pressures on higher

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¹ The Abstract is based on abridged materials published elsewhere: Zuzevičiūtė, Vaiva; Naudužienė, Gitana. Emotional intelligence and on-line studies: students' perspective // ALTA'20: Advance learning technologies and applications: short learning programmes: annual international conference for education: conference proceedings, 2nd of December, 2020 = Pažangios mokymosi technologijos ir aplikacijos: trumpos mokymosi programos: tarptautinė

education. The Covid-19 pandemic, which overwhelmed global economies and public systems, including education in 2020 added a new dimension to the pressure, because almost universally universities switched to on-line studies.

The profound crisis of Covid-19 has caused huge pressure on all of us, also on communities in higher education. Clearly, the unknown dynamics of the disease had the profound changes to a life style and professional activities, because of its sheer novelty, had an impact on everyone globally. Fake news, lack of news, lack of research and evidence-based information, politicised news, anxiety about the immediate future – all these factors influence psychological state of individuals.

Due to the pandemic, universities globally, including Lithuania, overarchingly introduced practices, which allowed performance even under the extreme conditions: a shift to on-line studies. The shift was implemented almost immediately. Due to this sudden shift to on-line study mode, both the students who had planned to study on-line, e.g., at universities or at least at the departments, which had offered this form of studies before Spring 2020, and the students, whose choice was on-site, campus-based studies, were all suddenly forced into on-line study mode. Surely, this shift had an impact on various aspects of experience in higher education, which is worth examining further. Studies focused on the link between studying on-line and emotional experiences. Many studies have found emotional intelligence to constitute a strong coping mechanism, when the Covid-19 stress was analysed (Sun et al., 2021). Drigas and Papouts (2020) both add that the components of emotional intelligence are critical while coping with stress, and advocate for incorporating attention to EI in educational settings. Moreno-Fernandez et al. (2020) note that additional attention to EI and its components was even effective for combating academic burnout and other negative effects (such as cynicism) of the quarantine (Moreno-Fernandez et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence help students cope with negative effects arising from the current pandemic situation (Chandra, 2020). D. Golemen (1995) seems to be one of the first to emphasise the role of emotional intelligence. However, these findings were based on numerous previous discussions and studies. Though the first discussions on intelligence focused on cognitive intelligence, however, discussions on social and other aspects of intelligence, such as ability to relate to other people started as early as in the beginning of 20th century.

Goleman (1995) enlisted more than 25 characteristics of emotional intelligence, including perseverance, optimism, ability to communicate and to initiate action. The differences on approaches on the main principles and composition of the construct of emotional intelligence explains the variety and differences of instruments for measuring emotional intelligence.

The traits of emotional intelligence, such and ability to control impulses, to sustain positive attitude, to sustain motivation have a positive impact on academic achievements (Magnano et al., 2016). A learner who is more effective at relating to other people will receive a more reliable feedback, and will be able to analyse it more adequately.

While exploring the link between emotional intelligence, academic achievements and the satisfaction with studies in Lithuania more than a year prior to Covid-19

pandemic found relations to be of a varied degree of strength. Relation between general satisfaction with studies and general emotional intelligence was moderate: Spearman r = .253, p < 0.01. Relation between general satisfaction with studies and Emotionality was weak: r = .227, p < 0.01. Relation between satisfaction with studies and additional aspects of emotional intelligence was moderate r = .309, p < 0.01. Hence a statistically significant relation between satisfaction with studies and emotional intelligence was not established (Nauduziene, 2020). However, enough verifiable research evidences to formulate an educationally valid claim that emotional intelligence (its comprising features, competencies) increases the likelihood for students' higher academic achievements, for better study results were found. The students were generally more satisfied with studies, students felt to be equipped for better success in careers, to withstand the stress and endure difficult life circumstances. Moreover, attention to educating emotional intelligence, therefore, may have a substantial impact on student's life as a student: decrease the risk for drop-out, and on a further professional and social life, these are of extreme importance in a context of ever-increasing expectations at university and beyond, especially in the context of Covid-19 pandemic. It stands to reason to surmise that the psychological readiness and the competencies were adequate for on-line studies. However, as researchers should not take anything at a face value, the lessons of the pandemic have to be further explored. Thus a pilot study was completed to explore the aspects of students' perspective on sudden shift to on-line studies. In this study students were asked to assess their participation in virtual learning platforms is Spring semester, 2020 and in Autumn semester 2020. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used; in a qualitative approach student were asked to formulate 3 explanatory statements explaining their perspective on on-line studies experiences. An on-line survey platform apklausa.lt was used to collect data in late Autumn, 2020 (the author of the instrument: assoc. prof. dr. Edita Butrime; the fuller picture of results and their interpretations were presented Butrime, Zuzeviciute, 2021). Though totally 72 students participated, however, the responses of 37 students are analyzed in this tex. More information was provided elsewhere (Zuzeviciute, Nauduziene, 2020, courtesy: assoc.prof.dr. E. Butrime). These students had a totality of experiences as students at least in Autumn 2019 and then - in Spring and Autumn, 2020. Thus, these particular students could compare their on-site and on-line study experiences (other participants were still in high school in Spring 2020).

As it was noted already, students were invited to provide explanations to the grade they gave for their experiences in studies in Spring 2020, when the first wave of Covid-19 struck, the quarantine was announced, and higher education in Lithuania (and globally) was swiftly re-organized to a fully on-line mode. Later, in Autumn semester after a brief on-site mode in September (in some university-also early October), again a fully on-line mode was started. Therefore, in second part of November, 2020, students already had extensive experience on on-line studies. It is important to note that N is fluid, because it does not represent the number of students (37), but the number of total statements. Some of the students provided none, some of them provided more than three explanatory statements. Therefore, the analyses finally resulted in 85 explanatory statements: 54 while evaluating

experiences in studies in Spring semester and 31 while evaluating experiences in Autumn semester.

It is worth noting that the positive explanatory in Spring and in Autumn exceeded negative explanatory statements. 29 versus 21 (4 undetermined/other) (38.8%) and 22 versus 9 (29 %) respectively. Obviously, due to limitations of the study, generalizations should be avoided, however, certain positive perspective tendency towards on-line studies is still evident.

None of the students noted that the difficulties posed by on-line studies should have been overcome due to the circumstances of quarantine, or that this was a safer mode for studies, or a necessary choice. Interestingly, the only two statements, related to health were grouped into the group of 'negative' statements. The statements were provided by the same participant (out of 37): "Due to on-line studies my back and eyes ache" and "On-line studies lead to inactivity and that is detrimental to health". Also, surprisingly so, the reactions seemed quite positive: 'flexibility and comfort' (5 statements) were mentioned. Students also shared that on-line studies caused less stress, which, surprisingly, was related to testing in many cases. 10 statements were grouped into this group, when students described their experiences in Spring and 3 statements regarding experiences in Autumn. Interestingly, and we think, very importantly, 6 of the positive statements of less stress were on testing (in Spring: 'clear test – less stress'; 'tests for self-assessment reduce stress, very useful'; 'feedback on assignments - very useful'). In Autumn - 1 statement ('tests for assessment and for self-assessment- very useful', 'easy, I like tests, good for me').

These findings are generated by a small sample. Thus they merely add to the building body of knowledge about the impact of a sudden shift to on-line studies, however, the relative focus on studies, the process, tools, dynamics of reactions by our respondents seem to suggest, that this shift, at least from students perspective, should not necessarily be related immediately to negative impact. Therefore, the conclusion that the situation is much more complex, and has more nuances than that is valid, therefore deserves to be further explored. The findings from this study comprise just the first lesson to consider.

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ЕКЗИСТЕНЦІЙНИЙ ІНТЕЛЕКТ У СТРАТЕГІЇ РОЗВИТКУ ОСОБИСТОСТІ

Первинно термін «інтелект» відносився винятково до раціональних мислительних функцій людської психіки й найчастіше з ним пов'язували ефективність навчання. Сьогодні він охоплює пізнавальні й емоційні процеси вцілому й отримує нові значення при включенні людини у складноорганізовані середовища. Ототожнюється інтелект з «системою розумових операцій, з способом і стратегією розв'язання проблем, з ефективністю індивідуального підходу до ситуації, що потребує пізнавальної активності» [1, с. 142].

Усе більшу популярність серед психологів, педагогів завойовує підхід Г. Гарднера, викладений у книзі «Структура розуму: теорія множинного інтелекту». Він зазначає, що людина використовує одну або ж декілька основних операцій чи механізмів обробки інформації, які працюють із різними її видами. Автор подає перелік видів інтелекту: лінгвістичний, логіко-математичний, музичний, просторовий, тілесно-кінестетичний, особистісний. Враховуючи культурну динаміку, згодом веде мову про дослідження таких видів інтелекту, як: