

## The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Labour Market Orientation and Career Development

**Eugenia CÂMPEANU-SONEA**

*“Babeş-Bolyai” University  
58-60 Teodor Mihali Street, 400591, Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
eugenia.sonea@econ.ubbcluj.ro*

**Adrian SONEA**

*“Petru Maior” University  
1 Nicolae Iorga Street, 540088, Tîrgu-Mureş, Romania  
adrian.sonea@ea.upm.ro*

**Vasile Paul BREŞFELEAN**

*“Babeş-Bolyai” University  
58-60 Teodor Mihali Street, 400591, Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
paul.bresfelean@econ.ubbcluj.ro*

**Abstract.** *Our study is part of an ample research project on the students of a University of the Central West part of Romania. For this particular paper, our aim was to underline the correlation between the level of school training and a series of skills of the young people who took part in the study (such as labour market orientation, interaction with the managers of the employer company and with the company owner, in order to find an advantageous job, to undergo advanced training and to develop their career), meaning the connection between the global intelligence (useful for the school training) and the emotional intelligence. We took into consideration the research in the specialised literature and our previous studies as well as an analysis based on a sociological survey. The survey was conducted on a sample of 518 students, most of them in their second year of Master Degree studies. The questionnaire that contained 38 questions was conceived by the authors, the data was processed with an SPSS software and the results obtained are presented in tables and explained throughout the paper. The conclusions consist of the authors’ considerations regarding the existent connection (in the presented case) between the general, global intelligence of the subjects, manifested through their school results and their emotional intelligence, as well as a portrait of the representative person for the studied community.*

**Keywords:** general, global intelligence, emotional intelligence, learning and results in the school, orientation in the labour market, professional development, creativity and innovation capacity, career development

## Introduction

The concept of “emotional intelligence” seems to have been used for the first time or created in 1990. The fathers of this concept, psychologists John Mayer, from the University of New Hampshire and Peter Salovey from Yale University provided a first definition, which was taken over and developed by Daniel Goleman (Goleman, 1995 cited in Goleman, 2008) and other authors (Mayer, Solovey & Caruso, 2000).

Unlike the general, global, classic intelligence, which is extremely useful in learning different subjects in school, in passing the exams with high marks and in acquiring important degrees and diplomas, the emotional intelligence (EI) helps us build and organise our life. EI supposes:

- orientation in choosing a school, a profession, orientation on the labour market;
- interaction with the employers, colleagues and teachers, with relatives and acquaintances;
- choosing a life partner, friends, having control over his/her own emotions and actions.

The persons with a very high classic intelligence quotient (IQ), able to get remarkable results in school, do not always know how to find an adequate job, to orientate in organizing their own life and family; moreover, they sometimes become difficult persons who do not easily fit into society. Modern psychologists explain that people who did not necessarily have the maximum marks in school have a high emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) and consequently have a great capacity of control over their personal and social life, over their actions and relationships.

The essence (according to the studies conducted by doctors, psychologists and pedagogues) is that unlike the IQ, that we acquire by birth and does not change all our life, the EQ may be improved through correct information, learning and practicing. In other words, we can develop abilities to orientate in society, to interact with those around us, to control our emotions just as we develop the abilities to write, read, dance, play tennis or basketball, etc., even though some of us are more naturally talented and others are less naturally talented. There is here a classic process of learning (Boonsrta, 2004, pp. 237-240).

## Literature review

Goleman (1995) has defined emotional intelligence as: “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and that of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves as well as others” (cited in Armstrong, 2006, p. 170).

According to Goleman, is not enough to have a high IQ (intelligence quotient); emotional intelligence is also required (EI), meaning: self-management, self-awareness, social-awareness and social skills. In 1998, Goleman defined emotional intelligence in a way that encompasses many of the areas covered by typical competency framework (leadership, effectiveness in leading change, conflict management, influence/communication, expertise in building and leading teams) (re-written by Armstrong, 2006, pp. 170-171).

Dulewicz and Higgs (1999), after a detailed analysis, conclude that there are distinct associations between competency modes and elements of emotional intelligence. Based on an interesting survey, Miller, Rankin and Neathe (2001) found as factors of EI: interpersonal skills, leadership skills, people management skills and team working.

Michael Armstrong treats management development (in the link to the requirements, nature and elements of this) and leadership qualities as applications of EI concept (2006, pp. 602-603). So, competency in management process implies, besides the technical skills and abilities of a specific field, also features of personality, which means aspects and components of EI (Brătianu, 2002).

Goleman (2008) extends the study to the educational, behavioural, psychological and medical aspects of the EI concept as well as to the effects of a lower or higher EQ on the personal, family, social and professional life. Moreover, the effects of the study of the EI concept and the applications of the last years lead to the development of special programs in schools as well as to medical and psychological treatments (Freshman & Rubino, 2002).

We believe that EI has not been sufficiently taught up to now. The researchers who worked on the definition and spreading of this concept managed to introduce in schools a controlled and organised training, meant to replace the education, not always coherent, done by the family or by the community based on traditions, customs, etc.

In the last 20-25 years, the content of the school curricula oriented towards the development of emotional intelligence (SEL- Social and Emotional Learning - USA) but especially the way in which the teaching processes are conducted in schools can replace the lack of coherent and competent family education and can develop the emotional intelligence of the youth. Moreover, the children and youth thus trained may continue to learn on their own, they can practice and they can develop communication, interaction, orientation and self-control in social life skills, as autodidacts.

### **Orientation, advanced training and development ability of young people with higher education**

As authors of this study, being employed in the field of university training of young people, we considered it would be interesting and useful to conduct a research on the chances of the young people with higher education on the labour market, how they adapt to the *employers' requirements* and how their advanced training and creativity can be stimulated.

Thus, we aimed to conduct a survey based on a questionnaire, which was conceived by the authors and applied to the students of Master Degree Programs in Economics and Economics related fields of an important University in the Central West area of Romania. The survey was conducted in the framework of a research project, developed by a group of University professors and PhD students. Its purpose is to *analyse the competence level* of our students, *the difficulties* they meet on the labour market, the degree in which they meet the *training, advanced training and creativity needs* of the employers and company owners. It also aims at drafting *measures of improvement* of the current situation.

In order to continue this endeavour, we intended to improve the school curricula regarding the content of the material taught to students, especially the working methods, with a view to develop skills and abilities of orientation at the current workplace, in the social life as well as for training students in specialising as managers and in developing a career in this field.

### ***Study objectives and methodology***

Our survey questionnaire is based on our conception regarding organizational competence's development (see Câmpeanu-Sonea & Sonea, 2011a, pp. 19-47; Câmpeanu-Sonea et al., 2011b, pp. 301-318).

*We wanted to determine:*

- to what extent our students' competence suited the requirements of companies' performance;
- which were the main difficulties to occupy a full-time workplace;
- how could employers stimulate the professional training and innovation in their companies;
- which were the ways and criteria for employees' career development;
- which were the main gaps in our students' training;
- to what extent our students had an entrepreneurial spirit.

For this part of our study, the main *hypotheses* of research were:

1. The students with the best results in the school get easily good workplaces.
2. The students with the best results in the school get the workplaces corresponding to their specialization.
3. The students with the best results in the school have entrepreneurial spirit.
4. The students with the best results in the school have the desire for continuous professional training and career development.
5. The students with the best results in the school have an important creativity potential and concern in innovation.

*The survey* on 518 master students was a part of a research project that took place during 2010-2011. The sample's size was calculated using Taro Jaman's method (Şerban, 2004, p. 78):

$$n = N / (1 + N \times e^2),$$

n = sample's dimension,

e = maximum of accepted error,

e=5%, in our case,

N=1202, the number of master students of our Faculty,

n=300 (approximately).

Because of our investigation objectives (the problems of labour market and the success' opportunities), the students were very interested in our survey and more than 300 persons were eager to answer our questionnaire. Our investigation's subjects were chosen randomly because, considering our objectives, it didn't matter who were the respondents, so we accepted a larger number of questionnaires. That was very useful, because only 60-63% of respondents (meaning about 300-325 persons) were employed persons or employers, and could answer the all 38 questions.

*The database* of obtained responses was processed using the SPSS program.

The results were:

1. univariate analysis, which was the structure of studied community based on responses, and
2. bivariate analysis, pointing out possible connections between the answers to the questions, taken two by two. The significance of the connection, verified by “chi square” test is given by the “Sig” dimension.

Correlation coefficient takes values between 0 and 1 (highest degree of relation).

### ***Results of the questionnaire - univariate analysis***

A synthesis of univariate analysis is presented in the table 1.

#### *1. Univariate analysis – sample structure and labour market*

Our study sample consisted on 518 subjects who answered at least the firsts 20 questions from 38 of the questionnaire:

- Level of education: 77.8% - university education, 13.9% - Masters Degrees, 4,6% - postgraduate studies, 3,35 - high school education and 0.4% did not answer;
- Fields of education: 73.4% - economical schools, 5,2% - technical schools, 5,2% - natural sciences, 4,2% - social sciences, 3,9% - public administration and 8,1% - other fields;
- Age: 94.4% subjects were aged up to 35 years: 82.4% - up to 25 years and 12% were between 25 and 35 years;
- Gender: 67.6 % women and 32.2% men, 0.2% did not answer.

About 300-325 subjects, representing 60-63% of our study sample, also answered the last 18 questions. They were employees or employers and they worked in companies from Northern and Central Transylvanian counties (our research area). The rest of the group (people who are not employed, and are not owner of a company) has answered only the first 20 questions.

Of the total surveyed subjects, 31.7% had the grades average in the years of study until graduation between 7 and 8; 37.3% had an average between 8 and 9, and 19.1% had an average between 9 and 10 (maximum grade) (see table 1).

Of the total 518 respondents, 73.4% graduated, until the date of applying the questionnaire, an economical school; technical school graduates and those in the natural sciences have a share of 5.2% each; with a significant share are those qualified in social sciences (4.2%) and, respectively, public administration (3.9%). Those included in “other fields” are qualified in: letters, military, police, arts, music, theology, etc.

The companies where surveyed subjects work are mainly located in the Northern and Central counties of Transylvania. Most of them work in Cluj County (40.9%); 8.9% are in Mureş county; 4.2% are in Maramureş; 4.1% - in Sălaj; 3.3% - in Bistriţa-Năsăud. A large proportion (30.5%) of respondents did not answer the question, i.e. those who are not currently employed.

**Table 1. Univariate analysis – structures and issues in the labour market**

Questions subject	Structure (number) of answers					
Grades average	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	
			31.7%	37.3%	19.1%	
Work program	Full time	Part time	Own business	Not engaged		
	50.6%	3.9%	6.9%	38.6%		
Time till employment	< 1 month	1-3 months	3-6 months	6-12 months	Did not answer	
	23.7%	14.1%	10.2%	9.5%	35.5%	
Field of work	Same field as qualification	Other fields	Do not work			
	45.2%	26.1%	28.7%			
Satisfaction with the job*	Very satisfied	Satisfied	neither nor	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Did not answer
	12%	31.1%	12%	4.2%	1.2%	29.5%
*Employed subjects	Very satisfied	Satisfied	neither nor	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	
	17%	49.9%	25.5%	6%	1.6%	

Acquiring a job does not directly depend on the average mark obtained in school. Those with higher marks during their studies do not have priority, as we might have expected.

Out of the 518 questioned subjects, the highest ratio in *acquiring a full-time job* was among those with *average marks between 8 and 9 (19,9% of the total)*. Moreover, among those who proved to have *entrepreneurial spirit* and who were successful in developing their own business, the first position is occupied by those with *average marks between 8 and 9 (2,5%)*, as a percentage of the total questioned population.

Hence, success on the labour market does not entirely depend on the marks obtained in school but it also depends on other qualities such as: the orientation capacity, the tenacity in the fight against the competition, emotional intelligence (which is considered by many authors as essential for the managerial process) etc. (Armstrong, 2006, p. 170).

On the other hand, the distribution on categories of marks in the total of those interviewed clearly follows (as expected) the Gaussian distribution law. Those with marks between 9 and 10 occupy a lower share on the labour market because they are fewer, but if we monitor the share of those with a job in the number represented by each category of the total 518 respondents, the classification changes (see table 2): *the first place is occupied by those with the higher marks* (49,73% full-time and 6,28% part-time). Only 35% of these were not employed at the moment of the interview and the part-time jobs allowed them to simultaneously continue their studies. Moreover, they also represent the biggest percentage of those who started their own business (8,9%).

**Table 2. Proportion of respondents, assigned by finding a job, from the total of each category of grades (%)**

Grades average	Work program				Same field of work as qualification
	Full time	Part time	Own business	Not engaged	
9-10	49,73	6,28	8,9	35,0	44,5
8-9	53,35	1,6	6,7	37,26	48,26
7-8	48,58	3,15	5,94	41,35	43,85
6-7	50,0	3,4	6,89	39,65	20,83
5-6	-	-	-	-	-

Table 2 also underlines a significant fact: a very low percentage of those with mediocre school results, with marks between 6 and 7 find a job *in the specialty field* they were trained (20,83% compared to over 43% for all the other categories).

Furthermore, if we analyse table 3, which presents the shares of each level of training, we observe a clearer advantage for those with a higher level of training in integrating as an employee (73,4% per total, 53,4% for full-time integration) and in developing their own business (15,11%), all other categories being represented by considerably lower percentages.

**Table 3. Proportion of respondents, assigned to areas of employment, from the total of each category of education levels (%)**

Degree of qualification	Work program		
	Engaged	Part time	Own business
Master	73,4	55,4	15,11
Postuniversity	67,4	41,31	17,35
University	58,62	49,87	5,27
High school	69,7		



2. *Employee creativity and career development*

Service quality, which is considered worthy of appreciation by most respondents, implies, however, increasing the level of competence in all areas: specialization, continuous improvement of professional training, (theoretical and practical knowledge and practical skills for work), and also creativity, willingness and innovation ability.

When asked if they consider that the company where they work stimulates innovation at work, 43.6% of those surveyed responded affirmatively; 31.1% responded negatively and 25.3% were non-responses (see table 4).

If we omit the third response and we make a calculus for the remaining respondents, we find that innovation is stimulated in 58.4 of cases and in 41.6 of cases it is not (table 4).

Respondents accepted as motivational levers for stimulating innovation: awards for improvements to installations or methods of work – 91; shares of profit, during the period of use of the installation or method improved – 30; salary increases for the time after applying the innovation - 90; promotion to a higher hierarchical level - 89; other means - 10 (table 4 - multiple response question).

**Table 4. Univariate analysis – creativity and career development**

Questions subject	Structure (number) of answers					
Stimulating innovation*	Yes	No	Did not answer			
	43.6%	31.1%	25.3%			
*Employed subjects	Yes	No				
	58.4%	41.6%				
Levers for stimulating innovation	Awards	Shares of profit	Salary increase	Career development	Other levers	
	91 answ.	30 answ.	90 answ.	89 answ.	10 answ.	
Innovation attempts*	Yes	No	Did not answer			
	48.1%	26.6%	25.3%			
*Employed subjects	Yes	No				
	64.3%	35.7%				
Innovation results	Technical improvements	Better working conditions	Service quality	Cost diminish	Better organization	Other results
	49 answ.	58 answ.	139 answ.	49 answ.	144 answ.	6 answ.

Innovation attempts have existed if the case of 48.1% of respondents; 26.6% have not tried to make innovation in their workplace, and 25.3% did not respond. After eliminating the third response option, supposing that the non-respondents are the unemployed, we have: 64.3% of employed persons have tried to bring innovations in their workplace and 35.7% were not concerned with this (table 4).

The results obtained from innovation trials have been listed by respondents as follows (multiple response question): technical and technological improvements – 49; improved working conditions – 58; improvement of the service quality towards the customer- 139; reduction of costs for the services offered to customers - 49; increase of business efficiency through better organization of work - 144; other results – 6 (table 4).

### Correlations between answers to questions - bivariate analysis

There is not a link between the results obtained in the school and the time till finding a job, as we thought. But, between the level of education acquired and finding a job there is an acceptable intensity connection (the correlation coefficient is 0.232; significance – when applying the “chi square” test and Sig is 0.021) (see table 5).

Those who found employment in less than a month, in a position of full time work are those with an average between 8 and 9 (12.6%), followed by the ones with marks between 7 and 8 (11.0 %) and 7.2% of the total are those with the highest marks (between 9 and 10). A period of one month to three months, was necessary for graduates with marks between 8 and 9 (8.2% of the entire group studied), with marks between 7 and 8 (6.3% of the total), with marks between 9 and 10 (3.5% of 518 respondents).

However, there is an acceptable intensity connection between the average of marks obtained and the number of job contests in which the investigated subjects participated (the correlation coefficient is 0.279 and the significance given by the “chi square” test, Sig is 0.012) (table 5).

*Table 5. Bivariate analysis – correlations between answers*

Correlated answers	Correlation coefficient	Sig (“chi square” significance)
Level of education acquired and finding a job	0.232	0.021
Average of marks obtained and the number of job contests	0.279	0.012
Desire for professional development and success in finding a job	0.497	0.000

Desire for professional development and receiving employment in the appropriate field of qualification	0.304	0.000
Satisfaction regarding the job occupied and desire for professional development	0.299	0.001
Satisfaction regarding the job occupied and availability for innovation	0.270	0.006
Employers' stimulation of professional training and stimulation of innovation	0.629	0.000
Desire for professional development and knowing the promotion criteria	0.534	0.000
Time necessary until promotion and desire for professional development	0.501	0.000

The distribution of the group according to the Gaussian Curve can be tracked both regarding marks and regarding the number of contests they participated in. More than half of the group of respondents (51.3%) represents individuals with marks between 7 and 10, who attended a reasonable number of contests (one to five). So, the students with good results get easily enough an acceptable workplace (see table 5).

Moreover, there is an acceptable intensity connection between the *number of competitions* in which the candidates took part and the correlation of their level of certification with the *technical suitability* of the job they applied for. The correlation coefficient is 0,280, and the significance – Sig. is 0,028, which means that students who quickly found a job meet the requirements of the employers (table 5).

There is a higher intensity connection between the *number of competitions* in which the candidates took part and the correlation of the respondents' training level with the *requirements of the works they performed*. The correlation coefficient is 0,312, and the significance – Sig. is 0,003 (table 5). Thus, those who found a job after the first job interviews are also those with a higher or at least an adequate level of technical suitability and requirements of the works they perform.

The desire for *further training* of respondents does not correlate with the average of marks obtained by them. So those who want to learn more and to specialize are not necessarily those who had the highest marks during school.

Instead, the desire for professional development correlates well with *success in finding a job* (the correlation coefficient is 0.497 and the significance - Sig. is 0.000) and with receiving employment in the *appropriate field of qualification* (correlation coefficient is 0.304 and the significance - Sig. is 0.000) (table 5).

In our opinion, *satisfaction regarding the job occupied* and the work performed has an important role in increasing the individual competence and creativity level. In our case, the satisfaction declared by the respondents regarding their workplace correlates with the desire for professional development, at a level of acceptable intensity (correlation coefficient is 0.299 and the significance - Sig. Is 0.001), respectively with the *availability for innovation* (correlation coefficient is 0.270 and the significance - Sig. is 0.006) (table 5).

A high intensity correlation exists between the employers' stimulation of professional training and stimulation of innovation (correlation coefficient is 0.629 and the significance - Sig. is 0.000) (table 5). As expected, business owners who understand the importance of competition and creativity create conditions to ensure both, in order to achieve adaptability, flexibility and organizational development.

Both professional development and creativity and interest for innovation are stimulated by promotion on the corporate ladder and career development of employees.

The conditions that employers create for stimulating an increase in the competence level depend, to a great extent, on the motivating factors. Thus, the desire for *professional development* correlates very well with knowing the *promotion criteria* by the investigated subjects (correlation coefficient is 0.534 and the significance - Sig. is 0.000) (table 5).

For the same reason, the *time necessary until promotion*, according to respondents, correlates to an appreciable level of intensity, with *their desire for professional development* (correlation coefficient is 0.501 and the significance - Sig. is 0.000) (table 5).

## Conclusions

Persons with a high IQ do not necessarily have a high EQ, but the general, global intelligence, which is necessary to study anything in any field (together with logical, verbal, numerical and technical intelligence) is also connected to EI development, which can be significantly improved through information, education, will, practice (we approached some aspects of this issue previously – Câmpeanu-Sonea & Osoian, 2004).

Choosing a field and a specialisation for the training is a matter of school and professional orientation but also of labour market orientation, the purpose being to obtain a job in the future and to achieve personal and professional satisfactions.

Labour market orientation implies choosing an employer, but it also is the consequence of a certain specialisation chosen by the young person, for which there is demand on the labour market.

The hypotheses we established, according to which classic intelligence is not absolutely distinct and separate from EI were only partially validated. There is no clear and consequent connection, for our sample, between the advantages on the labour market, the orientation at the workplace and the capacity to interact in society and the school results of the young people.

However, it is clear that students with the highest marks find employment by means of the lowest number of competitions attended, that these young persons have to a large extent jobs in the specialty they have prepared for, and that they have the highest percentage of employment in full-time and part-time jobs put together, which means validating our hypotheses. Also, the fact that some of them choose part-time jobs means that they provide themselves financial resources while studying, but in a way that allows them to learn.

Though we found studies that conclude that students with higher marks are not willing to take on risks and to invest (Nicolescu & Verboncu, 1997), in our sample, among high mark students, there were also successful entrepreneurs and even the largest proportion compared to the rest of categories. Moreover, according to the Gaussian distribution law, a fair share of the young people with very good school results found adequate jobs, with promotion and career development possibilities.

On the other hand, the situation of students with very low marks is also obvious, in the sense that they face great difficulties in the labor market, and success is more pronounced for young people with the highest levels of qualification, those who have learned the most.

Besides, the training and development in the managerial specialisation imply obtaining information and getting abilities and skills in the field of EI, by the content and methods of courses as: general management, human resources

management, organisational competence's development, organizational behaviour, conflict management and social dialogue, change management and many others, which are in the learning program of these students.

Finally, we do not have to connect a high IQ only to the maximum mark. There is a series of influential factors:

- the available time dedicated to studying, considering that almost two thirds of the researched group comprises full time or part time employees and company owners (some of them being important companies);
- the quality of the study material and the way in which it is taught;
- the assessment system and the student – teacher communication;
- the interest that the student shows to the scores and the relationship with teachers, etc. including qualities that are in the area of the EQ, such as the evaluation of the importance and utility of marks and degrees as compared to the real competence level and creativity of the employee or of the company owner (for example).

We have conceived an “*Identikit*” of the employee from our study sample i.e. a *depiction, a portrait* with the main characteristics of the study's employee, based on information from questionnaires' answers. This person can be described such as:

- Woman, up to 25 years old;
- University degree, economic profile;
- Marks average between 8 and 9;
- Full-time workplace in the area of northern and central Transylvania;
- Competence: adequate level of qualification comparing to the workplace technical level and performance requirements;
- Desire of professional training and innovation, with results in work organization improvement and service quality development for a more efficient activity;
- Interested in career development based on competency, professional performance and creativity;
- Stimulated by promotion criteria established by the employer.

The research we conducted covered a larger spectrum of objectives. Besides the connection between the school results obtained by the young people and their capacity of orientation in life and society, we consider that our study provides interesting data for an analysis of the primary labour market and of the quality of the university training of young people.

The problems that young people face on the labour market and the obstacles to them finding adequate jobs is beyond the coverage area of the concepts of global intelligence - emotional intelligence.

That is why, in order to continue this research, we aim at establishing some ways to improve the content of the training programs, but especially of the way in which the university training that we studied is done.

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