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Emotional Intelligence of University Professors: A Comparative Study Between Brazilian Public and Private Sector Education*

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ABSTRACT

The current context of Brazilian higher education favors the workload of professors, due, among other factors, to the increase in the proportion of students per professor. In addition, the current instability in public policies in education tends to add other factors that may impact both classroom performance and professors' quality of life differently in public and private education. Emotional intelligence has attracted growing interest from academia, and it is well known that it can enable better performance at work, better shielding from possible harmful effects of the professional environment and better quality of life. Given its importance, this study aimed to verify whether there are significant differences in levels of emotional intelligence among public and private higher education professors in Brazil. For this, the Wong and Law (2002) scale was used to measure the level of emotional intelligence in four distinct dimensions with a sample of 415 individuals. Research has identified that professors working in private universities have a higher level of emotional intelligence and suggests professional training in emotional intelligence to mitigate some harmful effects of the environment on their well-being and teaching process.

KEYWORDS

Emotional development. University professors. University

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Inteligência Emocional de Professores Universitários: Um Estudo Comparativo Entre Ensino Público e Privado no Brasil

RESUMO

O contexto atual da educação superior brasileira favorece sobrecarga de trabalho aos docentes, devido, entre outros fatores, ao aumento na proporção do número de alunos por professor. Além disso, a atual instabilidade nas políticas públicas na educação tende a adicionar outros fatores que podem impactar tanto o desempenho em sala de aula como a qualidade de vida dos docentes de forma diferenciada no ensino público e privado. A inteligência emocional tem atraído crescente interesse da academia e já é sabido que pode possibilitar melhor desempenho no trabalho, maior blindagem a possíveis efeitos nocivos do ambiente profissional e melhor qualidade de vida. Dada sua importância, este estudo teve por objetivo verificar se há diferenças significativas nos níveis de inteligência emocional entre professores de ensino superior público e privado no Brasil. Para isso utilizou-se a escala de Wong e Law (2002) para medir o nível de inteligência emocional em quatro dimensões distintas com uma amostra de 415 indivíduos. A pesquisa identificou que professores atuantes nas universidades privadas possuem maior nível de inteligência emocional e sugere a capacitação profissional em inteligência emocional para mitigar alguns efeitos danosos do meio sobre o seu bem-estar e processo didático.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Inteligência emocional. Professor universitário. Universidade.

Inteligencia Emocional de Profesores Universitarios: Estudio Comparativo Entre Redes Brasileñas de Enseñanza Pública y Privada

RESUMEN

El contexto actual de la educación superior brasileña favorece la sobrecarga de trabajo para los maestros, debido, entre otros factores, al aumento en la proporción de estudiantes por maestro. Además, la inestabilidad actual en las políticas públicas en educación tiende a agregar otros factores que pueden afectar tanto el desempeño en el aula como la calidad de vida de los docentes de manera diferente en la educación pública y privada. La inteligencia emocional ha atraído un creciente interés de la academia y es bien sabido que puede permitir un mejor rendimiento en el trabajo, una mejor protección contra los posibles efectos nocivos del entorno profesional y una mejor calidad de vida. Dada su importancia, este estudio tuvo como objetivo verificar si existen diferencias significativas en niveles de inteligencia emocional entre docentes de educación superior públicos y privados en Brasil. Para esto, se usó la escala de Wong y Law (2002) para medir el nivel de inteligencia emocional en cuatro dimensiones distintas con una muestra de 415 individuos. La investigación ha identificado que los maestros que trabajan en universidades privadas tienen un mayor nivel de inteligencia emocional y sugiere capacitación profesional en inteligencia emocional para mitigar algunos efectos nocivos del medio ambiente en su bienestar y proceso de enseñanza.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Desarrollo emocional. Profesor de universidad. Universidad.

Introduction

As in other Latin American countries, there has been a significant increase in access to higher education in Brazil in the recent period, implying greater diversity in the student profiles and new challenges and complexities in the teaching process, thus creating opportunities for the development of a “teaching for diversity” (AGUAYO-MUELA and AGUILAR-LUZON, 2017). In 2018 there were 8.5 million students enrolled in about 38 thousand Brazilian higher education courses, representing a growth of 44.6% in relation to the number of students in 2008. In the same period, however, the number of professors grew 19.6% (INEP, 2019), resulting in an increase of 20.9% in the ratio of the number of students per professors.

In addition, since 2016, there have been Brazilian political and economic events punctuated with systemic cuts in funding at universities and, therefore, it is possible to observe that professors are not only pressured by traditional pedagogical issues, aggravated by the intrinsic precariousness of their careers in Brazil, but also by factors related to the current political-economic situation that according to Mancebo (2017; 2018) would aim at the “fantastic reduction in the cost of living labor”.

Moreover, these pressures may differ in public and private universities, since there seems to be distinctions between these two environments in terms of requirements, professor profile and ways of acting. Ferreira do Carmo, Fleck and Luz dos Santos (2015) found differences in the professional profile regarding the degree, the workload regime and the time dedicated to the university, directly influencing what the authors called the teaching-research-extension triad leading the professional with greater bias in research looking for public institutions. Da Silva Dias Oliveira, de Souza Pereira and Mundim de Lima (2017) highlight environmental, bureaucratic, or subjective conditions as sources of illness due, above all, to the workload and lack of autonomy.

In the context of private education, Siqueira (2006) states that professors do not find identification with the profession, since the contractual and hourly work forms insecurity and devaluation in relation to permanence at work, thus weakening the bond with the environment and bringing competition for workload among peers. Mancebo (2018) relates coping of the loss of pace in the number of matriculations between 2014 and 2017 with the organizational restructuring that resulted in the increase of students per class, the suppression of more costly subjects and other curricular changes with a direct impact on students and professors in the sector.

Aguayo-Muela and Aguilar-Luzon (2017) propose that due to the changes in the educational system, professors could and should also qualify as “emotional educators”, with new qualifications being demanded, and the need to offer them better quality of work and life, which would be reflected in the better students’ training. It is also known that emotional intelligence is a construct widely researched in academia, including in the educational sector,

and has already shown a strong and positive correlation with satisfaction with life (GANNON and RANZIIN, 2005), social competence, pro-social behavior, optimism and quality of relationships (MAYER, SALOVEY and CARUSO, 2008), in addition to being related to better career performance, health, well-being and adaptability (HUMPHREY, *et al.*, 2007).

Therefore, this research had as its theme the emotional intelligence of professors and its objective was to verify if there are significant differences in the levels of emotional intelligence between Brazilian higher education professors who work in public and private institutions. Given the context exposed above, it is believed that this research can constitute an academic contribution to a better understanding of the educational environment. In this sense, the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) was applied through a questionnaire applied to a sample of 415 professors from public and private universities, in 24 Brazilian states and in the federal district (SILVA and CARVALHO, 2016).

Literature Review

The effort to define intelligence is not new, and Aristotle already understood intelligence in three perspectives: the theoretical or scientific, which referred to the knowledge of what was eternal; practice, which is related to doing the right thing for the purpose; and the productive, related to the ability to create something tangible (PESSANHA, 1983). In the 18th century, Kant approached intelligence on three levels: pure reason, practical reason and judgment (KANT, 1983), but it was in the last century that the concept of emotional intelligence (IE), proposed by Thorndike (1920), emerged in the sense of social intelligence. And the theme was taken up by Salovey and Mayer (1990) who defined it as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor both one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions”. Goleman (1995) spread the concept and stressed the idea that in many important aspects of life, emotional intelligence can matter more than the intelligence quotient (IQ). Since its emergence, the theme has aroused growing interest in the scientific community that has already produced numerous definitions, presented in Frame 1. It is possible to note that the definitions sought to define the concept as “a subset of social intelligence”, as a metric of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, as an ability to perceive, access and manage emotions, or as a relationship with ethical issues as proposed by Agarwal and Chaudhar (2013).

Frame 1. Chronological evolution of the concept of emotional intelligence

Author	Year	Definition
Salovey and Mayer	(1990)	The subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.
Goleman	(1995)	Refers to how well we handle ourselves in our relationships in five domains i.e. self-awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, empathy, handling relationship.
Mayer and Salovey	(1997)	The ability to perceive emotions, to access, and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.
George	(2000)	Ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in the self and others that contributes to effective leadership in organizations.
Macaleer and Shannon	(2002)	Emotional intelligence is generally accepted to be a combination of emotional and interpersonal competencies that influence our behavior, thinking, and interaction with others.
Petrides, Pita and Kokkinaki	(2007)	Emotional Intelligence refers to an individual's self-perceptions of their emotional abilities
Coleman	(2008)	The ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior.
Mayer, Roberts and Barsade	(2008)	Emotional intelligence concerns the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought.
Agarwal and Chaudhar	(2013)	Essential factor responsible for determining success in life and psychological wellbeing, seems to play an important role in taking the ethical decision-making.
Mayer, Caruso and Salovey	(2016)	The ability to reason validly with emotions and with emotion-related information and to use emotions to enhance thought

Source: the authors

However, even with these innumerable initiatives to conceptualize emotional intelligence, there is still no consensus on the validity, or even on the usefulness of emotional intelligence, due to the conflicting results of empirical studies. There is a certain skepticism that positions the construct as just a garment with psychological terminology of the popular self-help movement (MATTHEWS, ZEIDNER and ROBERTS, 2003). There are findings that relate emotional intelligence with variables such as personal relationship and leadership, but also other studies that were unable to find such relationships, or found themselves, were

under restrictions (MINERS, CÔTÉ and LIEVENS, 2017). Meta-analyzes were proposed that aimed to relate metrics of personality, cognitive skills, and emotional intelligence and that were explained by a variance of 1 to 7%. These results suggest that the theories that seek to relate emotional intelligence and other variables still need to be developed (YBARRA, KROSS and SANCHEZ-BURKS, 2014). Mayer, Caruso and Savoley (2016) attribute these controversies to the rapid popularity of emotional intelligence that led different teams of scientists to work concurrently, using very different measures and theories and, therefore, occurring in different constructs, but with the same name, as skills of perception, facilitation, understanding and management of emotions or as personality traits, relevant variables for social and emotional issues.

Demographic variables have already been extensively tested, records in the literature show a significant relationship between gender and emotional intelligence, but still without concluding about the differences between genders, that is, in some cases it was identified that men have a higher intelligence index emotional than women (KONG, ZHAO and YOU, 2012; KONG and ZHAO, 2013; MIKOLAJCZAK, MENIL and LUMINET, 2007) in others, women were more emotionally intelligent than men (SAKLOFSKE, AUSTIN and MINSKI, 2003; ROOY, ALONSO and VISWESVARAN, 2005) and there is also the study by Whitman, *et al.* (2009) who found no significant differences between genders and emotional intelligence. With respect to age, higher levels of emotional intelligence were found depending on the age group (MAYER, CARUSO and SALOVEY, 1999; BAR-ON and PARKER, 1999; LUEBBERS, DOWNEY and STOUGH, 2007; SLITER, *et al.*, 2013; KONG, 2017).

The literature presents at least two measurable dimensions for emotional intelligence: (a) emotional intelligence trait that refers to a constellation of self-perceptions related to emotions located at the lowest levels of personality hierarchies, that is, strong trait relationships were found emotional intelligence with the personality trait and, therefore, this dimension is more suitable for use in this context; (b) ability in emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions in oneself and others. These constructs have a low correlation with each other, and present conceptual, methodological, and empirical differences (KONG, ZHAO and YOU, 2012).

Willemse, Lunenberg and Korthagen (2005) and Estrela, *et al.* (2008) criticized the absence of scientific research on emotional intelligence of professors, but there are in the most recent literature several research initiatives of the construct also in the educational scope, with professors as subjects not only from the pedagogical and didactic perspectives, but also related to physical health and emotional (VAN HORN, *et al.*, 2004; HAKANEN, BAKKER and SCHAUFELI, 2006; POCINHO and PERESTRELO, 2011).

Cacciari, *et al.* (2017) investigated the perception of 214 Brazilian university professors about the most valued characteristics in the exercise of higher education and found that knowledge, temperance, justice, and humanity are necessary skills for the exercise of the

profession. The interviewees valued the interpersonal relationship and the establishment of affective bonds, and the authors concluded that, in the view of the professors, the good professor is one who is dedicated and available, showing care, encouragement and compassion to the students. These points reinforce the argument of Snyder and Lopez (2009) who consider that active and constructive relationships originate from emotional intelligence.

Pope, Roper and Qualter (2012) examined emotional intelligence in 135 undergraduate psychology students, showing that there were no differences between total emotional intelligence and their specific competencies and also suggesting that the implementation of emotional intelligence training in higher education should be considered. Supardi (2014) compared the emotional intelligence of Indonesian professors in relation to sex, educational level and workload and found that there are several ways to increase levels of emotional intelligence through building rapport, developing emotional skills and practicing emotional and spiritual exercises. Parrish (2013), on the other hand, investigated the relevance of emotional intelligence for academic leadership in higher education and concluded that the construct is highly relevant and important for the context of the research, in addition, he found that emotional intelligence traits are related to empathy, the ability to guidance and management of oneself and others.

Aguayo-Muela and Aguilar-Luzon (2017) who conducted a review of 16 studies that measured the emotional intelligence of professors working in Spain and correlated these measures with other educational parameters, identifying that training to increase emotional intelligence levels is effective and therefore in turn, higher levels of emotional intelligence positively impact issues related to emotional affect, burnout and optimism, further suggesting that training can provide an increase in the quality of life and a consequent increase in the quality of education. It is also noteworthy Crispim, Dornelles and Del Lama (2018) who conducted a study that related emotional intelligence with the ethical judgment of 212 university professors in Brazil and demonstrated that there is a correlation of idealistic ethical judgment with several aspects of emotional intelligence and that professors seem to have greater emotional control than professors.

It is also interesting to highlight the various alternatives for obtaining increases in the levels of emotional intelligence of members of an organization. Jacobs (2001) discusses numerous applications in human resources to increase emotional intelligence within organizations, showing the selection, training, and development of people as a possible path. Additionally, organizations can create an environment that stimulates and reinforces the process of self-development, given that adults can develop themselves through long-term ideas and aspirations Kram and Cherniss (2001) reinforce Jacobs (2001) and go further by suggesting that the potential for social and emotional learning depends on the emotional competence that individuals bring from relationships, with basal emotional intelligence as a prerequisite, in addition to other factors such as leadership, human resource systems, relational processes and group affiliation.

Methodology

With the objective of verifying if there are significant differences in the levels of emotional intelligence between Brazilian higher education professors who work in public and private institutions and given the exploratory nature of the research supported in a quantitative approach, the study chose the Wong Emotional Intelligence Scale and Law (WLEIS), which is one of the most used for measuring emotional intelligence (KONG, 2017). Descriptive statistics analysis, reliability with Cronbach's alpha, correlations, and verification of differences between two samples were performed. Normalities were tested with Kolmogorov-Smirnov to determine the types of methods to obtain correlations and differences in levels of emotional intelligence depending on the workplace of participating university professors (HAIR, *et al.*, 2006; MAROCO, 2007).

Questionnaires

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) developed by Wong and Law (WONG and LAW, 2002) consists of 16 assertives separated in 4 dimensions: (a) self-emotion appraisal (SEA); (b) others-emotions appraisal (OEA); (c) use of emotions (UOE); (d) regulation of emotions (ROE). To analyze the effects of the workplace on emotional intelligence.

Self-emotion appraisal (SEA): 1^a) I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time; 2^a) I have good understanding of my own emotions; 3^a) I really understand what I feel; 4^a) I always know whether or not I am happy.

Others-emotions appraisal (OEA): 5^a) I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior; 6^a) I am a good observer of others' emotions; 7^a) I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others; 8^a) I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me.

Use of emotions (UOE): 9^a) I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them; 10^a) I always tell myself I am a competent person; 11^a) I am a self-motivating person; 12^a) I would always encourage myself to try my best.

Regulation of emotions (ROE): 13^a) I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally; 14^a) I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions; 15^a) I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry; 16^a) I have good control of my own emotions.

Using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), mean responses were obtained for calculations of the constructs and reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was obtained.

Sample

The sample was composed of professors voluntarily invited through a link published in specific social media groups for university professors. It was also sent by e-mail to public and private higher education institutions requesting the adhesion of their professors, characterizing the sample as non-probabilistic. We obtained 415 respondents who identified themselves as university professors who teach in undergraduate and graduate courses in Brazil. The free and informed consent term was presented to the knowledge of respondents about the exclusively academic purpose of the study and guarantee of anonymity.

In order to minimize possible position biases, data were collected using a research instrument in a randomized order of questions and to guarantee anonymity, the questionnaire was based on electronic self-completion available on the Internet where the name of the respondents was optional. Table 1 shows the sample profile with the absolute frequencies and percentages of the sample distributed by geographic region, gender, age group, current maximum academic degree, years of experience in the role of professor and workplace.

Table 1. Sample profile by geographic region, gender, age group, current maximum academic degree, years of experience in the role of professor and workplace.

	Absolute frequency	%
Geographic region		
North	34	8.19
Northeast	72	17.35
Midwest	19	4.58
Southeast	226	54.46
South	64	15.42
Genre		
Male	186	44.82
Feminine	229	55.18
Age range		
less than 30	99	23.86
31 - 40	145	34.94
41 - 50	100	24.10
51 - 60	54	13.01
more than 61	17	4.10
Current maximum academic degree		
Bachelor	15	3.61
Professional Master's	72	17.35
Academic Master's	192	46.27
Doctorate	136	32.77
years of experience in the role of professor		
less than 5	202	48.67
6 – 10	90	21.69
11 – 15	46	11.08
16 – 20	34	8.19
more than 21	43	10.36
Workplace		
Public	202	48.67
Private	213	51.33
Both		
Total	415	100.00

Source: the authors

The most frequent groups were those formed by professionals working in the southeastern region of Brazil (54.46%), female (55.18%), age range 31 to 40 years (34.94%), with an academic master's degree (46.26%) as the current maximum academic degree that he has taught for 5 years or less (48.67%) exclusively at a private university (51.33%).

Results

Normalities were tested with Kolmogorov-Smirnov and were rejected, so non-parametric tests were applied to obtain correlations and differences. Table 2 shows Spearman's reliability and correlations for the variables: self-emotion appraisal (SEA), others-emotions appraisal (OEA), use of emotions (UOE), regulation of emotions (ROE) and total

emotional intelligence (EI Total), with Cronbach’s alphas in parentheses. The variable workplace (Local) is dichotomous, thus, a biserial correlation was conducted by point (0 was adopted for public university and 1 for private university).

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, reliability, Spearman and Biserial correlations per point

Variables	Means	SD	SEA	ROE	UOE	OEA	EI Total
Local	-	-	0.11*	0.10*	0.10*	0.14**	0.13**
SEA	3.90	0.86	(0.86)				
ROE	3.84	0.83	0.52**	(0.78)			
UOE	4.06	0.88	0.61**	0.37**	(0.82)		
OEA	3.62	0.90	0.61**	0.42**	0.57**	(0.84)	
EI total	3.86	0.74	0.85**	0.69**	0.78**	0.82**	(0.92)

Abbreviations: SD = Standard deviation; Local = workplace; SEA = self-emotion appraisal; ROE = regulation of emotions; UOE = use of emotions; OEA = others-emotions appraisal; EI Total = total emotional intelligence.

Note: **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral); *correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral); data in parentheses refer to Cronbach's alphas; n=415

Source: the authors

Reliabilities were tested with Cronbach's alpha and was considered satisfactory (Field, 2009). Among the dimensions of emotional intelligence, the use of emotions (UOE) had an average of 4.06 (SD .88) being the highest found and the others-emotions appraisal (OEA) the lowest average 3.62 (SD .90) suggesting that respondents can use their emotions better than they can assess the emotions of others. Strong positive Spearman correlations were found between SEA, ROE, UOE, OEA and EI Total variables, indicating that all dimensions of emotional intelligence are associated and grow together. Strong biserial correlations per positive point were also found between the workplace and OEA ($r_{pb} = .14$, $n = 415$, $p = .00$) and EI Total ($r_{pb} = .13$, $n = 415$, $p = .01$), in addition to positive point biserial correlations between the workplace and SEA ($r_{pb} = .11$, $n = 415$, $p = .02$), ROE ($r_{pb} = .10$, $n = 415$, $p = .04$) and UOE ($r_{pb} = .10$, $n = 415$, $p = .04$) indicating that there is a relationship between the workplace, emotional intelligence and all its dimensions.

It was also verified if there are differences in the level of emotional intelligence between professors who work at public and private universities. For this, the Mann-Whitney test was conducted for each dimension of the emotional intelligence construct. The results indicate that there were no differences between the workplace and SEA ($U = 23452.50$; $W = 46243.50$; $p = .11$), ROE ($U = 23543.50$; $W = 46334.50$; $p = .09$), UOE ($U = 23671.50$; $W = 46462.50$; $p = .06$), but for OEA ($U = 24873.50$; $W = 47664.00$; $p = .01$) and EI Total ($U = 24541.50$; $W = 47332.50$; $p = .01$) differences were found, showing that individuals working at the private university seem to have a higher assessment of the emotions of others and greater total emotional intelligence in relation to their colleagues at public the university. From a practical point of view, it seems that professionals from the private universities are more emotionally able, not only to the issues pertinent to aspects of the teacher-student relationship in the classroom, but also to the conditions that involve the external environment.

Emotional intelligence training initiatives appear as an opportunity, especially for public school professors, with the aim of mitigating some harmful effects of the environment on their well-being and didactic process.

Conclusions

The different public policies for higher education in Brazil resulted in a significant increase both in the number of students per classroom and in the diversity of the composition of these rooms, requiring professors to be more emotionally prepared for this new professional reality. The demands and demands of the current generation of students tied to the new technologies available, imply the need for professors who are better prepared and adapted to new forms of relationship with their students. Aguayo-Muela and Aguilar-Luzon (2017) even propose that due to changes in the educational system, professors could and should also become “emotional educators”, being demanded for the same new qualifications. In addition, the current political-economic moment has also brought other types of pressure, transcending traditional pedagogical issues, which also deserve adequate attention, especially in what Mancebo (2017; 2018) calls the “fantastic reduction in the cost of living labor”, impacting professionals working in the public and private sectors in different ways.

Emotional intelligence has an important place in the literature and has been shown to be effective in protecting against these different types of professional pressure. In this way, it is relevant to understand the emotional intelligence levels of university professors and to verify if there are significant differences in relation to the workplace. In this sense, statistical analyzes were carried out appropriate to the exploratory nature of the research and which allowed us to conclude that professors in general manage to use their emotions better than to assess the emotions of others, that is, they are professionals who know how to establish and pursue the achievement of personal goals more than recognizing, observing and understanding the emotions of others. Positive correlations were found between the four different dimensions of emotional intelligence and these dimensions with the professors' workplace, showing that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and the workplace of these professionals.

In addition, it was found that professors working in the private sector seem to be able to better assess the emotions of others. In other words, private school professors seem to better recognize the emotions of others due to their behavior, are able to observe the emotions of others, are sensitive to feelings and have a good compression of the emotions of those around them. Differences were also found in total emotional intelligence, identifying that professors from the private sector are more emotionally intelligent than professors from the public sector and, therefore, seem to be better prepared to deal with issues related to the environment of private higher education institutions, such as the lack of identification with the academic activity, the insecurities regarding the maintenance of employment, and consequently the competition among colleagues for the semester workload. In addition to the increase in the number and diversity of students per class that can cause burnout and other pathologies.

High emotional intelligence score can be a factor that relates to professional performance (JACOBS, 2001) and that presents itself as a predictor of personal satisfaction and mental health (KONG, ZHAO and YOU, 2012), and these relationships may be better explored in future studies. Nevertheless, the results of this research already allow us to conclude that empowering professors, mainly in the public sector, through processes that develop emotional intelligence is essential to better prepare them to face the new pedagogical challenges in the current Brazilian political and economic reality.

Finally, in addition to public policies committed to the quality of higher education in the short and long term and organizational initiatives to improve interpersonal relationships in the university environment, the development and emotional preparation of professors is fundamental to the quality of the teaching and learning process, and consequently for the training of students and society in general.

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