

CZU: 378:316.77:159.942

[https://doi.org/10.59295/sum5\(185\)2025_15](https://doi.org/10.59295/sum5(185)2025_15)

COMMUNICATION BASED ON EMOTIONAL CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION – A CONTEMPORARY IMPERATIVE

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This study examines the role of emotional culture in contemporary higher education, framing its development as a central objective for the current era. The analysis identifies current challenges within university communication processes, highlighting difficulties in teacher–student interactions arising from gaps in emotional awareness among academics, as well as students’ struggles to achieve emotional integration within academic communities. The paper advocates for an educational paradigm grounded in empathetic communication, proposing strategies such as enhancing academics’ emotional competencies, integrating affective development into curricula, and promoting emotional self-education. Thus, the investigative approach contributes to the development of a pedagogical vision that acknowledges the emotional dimension of communication, providing theoretical and practical guidelines for improving professional communication with students.

Keywords: *communication, emotional culture, academic communication, communication based on emotional culture, emotional competencies.*

COMUNICAREA BAZATĂ PE CULTURĂ EMOTIIONALĂ ÎN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL SUPERIOR – DEZIDERAT AL CONTEMPORANEITĂȚII

În cadrul învățământului superior contemporan, lucrarea evidențiază importanța culturii emoționale în procesul de comunicare universitară, considerând dezvoltarea acestei dimensiuni un deziderat al contemporaneității. Lucrarea abordează probleme actuale ale comunicării academice, evidențiind dificultăți de interacțiune între cadrele didactice universitare și studenți, generate de carențele emoționale ale cadrelor didactice, precum și provocările integrării emoționale a studenților în mediul universitar. În final, se susține necesitatea unei paradigme educaționale centrate pe comunicare empatică, propunând direcții de intervenție precum formarea competențelor emoționale ale cadrelor didactice universitare, dezvoltarea unui curriculum axat pe dimensiunea afectivă și promovarea autoeducației emoționale. Astfel, demersul investigațional contribuie la consolidarea unei viziuni pedagogice care valorifică dimensiunea emoțională a comunicării, oferind repere teoretico-practice pentru eficientizarea comunicării profesionale cu studenții.

Cuvinte-cheie: *comunicare, cultură emoțională, comunicare academică, comunicare bazată pe cultura emoțională, competențe emoționale.*

Introduction

In today’s rapidly evolving social, economic, and cultural landscape, effective communication emerges as an essential component of both personal and professional development. Higher education, as a privileged setting for shaping future generations of professionals, holds the responsibility to integrate innovative educational paradigms that can respond to the emerging needs of contemporary society.

A foundational aspect of communication in higher education is emotional culture, a concept that extends beyond the simple transmission of information to highlight the importance of developing authentic relationships grounded in empathy, understanding, and mutual respect. This cultural dimension promotes communication that fosters not only cognitive engagement but also the creation of an educational environment in which emotions are acknowledged, thoughtfully addressed, and meaningfully incorporated into both pedagogical practices and learning experiences.

Adopting a communication framework based on emotional culture within higher education involves developing emotional competencies and emotional intelligence among both students and academics, thereby enhancing educational outcomes and supporting inclusive learning environments that respond to individual needs [7].

Recent empirical studies demonstrate that emotionally attuned communication contributes meaningfully to both well-being and academic performance, while also fostering the development of skills essential for social and professional adaptation. This article explores the role of emotionally informed communication in higher education and proposes actionable strategies for its development and promotion within academic institutions.

The combination of diverse communication methods generates complex affective implications that substantially influence the dynamics of educational interactions. In the specialized literature, certain perspectives have historically emphasized the potentially detrimental effects of affective expression on communication quality, portraying emotions as primarily psychophysiological responses associated with disorganization and challenges in social adaptation. These theoretical positions are grounded in the notion that the affective states may manifest spontaneously in behavior, thereby impairing communication quality [14, p. 240].

K. Izard's theoretical framework posits that emotions activate rational thought by serving as catalysts for behavioral motivation [29, p.57]. This perspective is consistent with S. Cosmovici's view that emotions function as fundamental motivational drivers, wherein affective development is intrinsically connected to the formation of motivation itself [14, p.238]. These mechanisms support the affective maturation of individuals, as reflected in the development of essential emotional competencies such as the recognition of affective states, emotional balance and discipline, and the capacity to express higher-order emotions through intentional, socially appropriate behavior.

The role of affectivity in educational communication is further explored by R. Rășcanu (2003), who underscores that the social communication of emotions is fundamental to social development, profoundly influencing interpersonal relationships and even shaping career aspirations [23, p. 10]. Similarly, B. Rime (2007) emphasizes that emotional experiences expressed through educational communication have significant cognitive, formative, and social effects. As such, both educators and students are encouraged to broaden and deepen their emotional range through a competent and professional approach [24, p. 41].

In the context of higher education, effective communication is essential for students' professional and personal development. However, several challenges may affect its quality:

- The predominant use of traditional, teacher-centered teaching methods can limit students' active participation and hinder bidirectional interaction. This approach may reduce students' motivation and engagement in the educational process [2, p. 473].
- The failure to adapt communication and teaching strategies to the diverse needs and learning styles of students can lead to misunderstandings and inefficient knowledge assimilation [ibid.].
- The transition to online environments has revealed difficulties in maintaining effective communication, such as reduced direct interaction, challenges in establishing eye contact, and decreased student engagement [25].
- Challenges in articulating ideas with clarity and coherence among students may undermine academic outcomes and hinder their transition to professional environments [4].
- An inefficient institutional communication strategy may negatively affect students' perception and trust in the institution, thus reducing their involvement and satisfaction with the academic environment [4].

The challenge of communication based on emotional culture becomes increasingly complex when its purpose extends beyond the mere transmission of information to include the shaping of attitudes and the modification of entrenched beliefs. The affective dimensions of language become increasingly apparent, as noted by A. Cosmovici (1996), who asserts that language serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a medium for emotional expression. The fulfillment of communication functions – including the communicative, affective or expressive, conative, and phatic functions (R. Jakobson, 1981) – within higher education requires a nuanced understanding of the psychopedagogical implications of emotionally attuned communication. In this context, the ability to convey not just information but also emotions and sentiments emerges as a core component of oratory, essential for developing emotional culture in students [apud 9].

Outcomes and Analytical Discussion

The study of communication based on emotional culture in higher education is of particular relevance when considering two central dimensions of education: the quality of educational processes and the psychosocial adaptation of educational actors (academics and students). First, communication characterized by positive emotional resonance between academics and students fosters an emotional climate that is conducive to learning. Research shows that reciprocal teacher-student relationships create *an affective context shaping all facets of the instructional process*, which can either amplify or alleviate students' psychological stress, while setting a constructive or detrimental tone for the entire educational experience. A balanced and supportive emotional climate enhances students' creative engagement, critical thinking, memory retention, and motivation to learn [18].

Secondly, the emphasis on emotional culture addresses individuals' adaptation needs in a rapidly changing world. Modern education, aligned with the Bologna Process principles, prioritizes flexibility and preparing students for a knowledge-driven society. However, these objectives remain unattainable without cultivating the affective dimension of personality [11]. As M. Cojocaru-Borozan notes, “the ultimate aim of teachers' professional development in a rapidly evolving world extends beyond disciplinary expertise to affective acculturation and universalization”, implying that high-quality higher education requires fostering emotional culture among both academics and students [ibid.]. Such an approach enhances graduates' social integration and equips them to navigate unpredictability while sustaining emotional balance.

The importance of examining communication based on emotional culture is further emphasized by established correlations between emotional competencies and professional efficacy. Research indicates a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and teaching effectiveness [11]. In the case of students, higher levels of emotional intelligence are closely linked to both personal and professional success, supporting goal achievement and the development of a strong, positive self-image [21].

These findings highlight the imperative of exploring and promoting communication based on emotional intelligence as an integral component of modern pedagogical practices.

Academic communication at the university level often unfolds within a complex context marked by multiple challenges. Despite the acknowledged importance of teacher-learner rapport, current practices reveal communicative and affective dysfunctions that may undermine the educational process. Empirical analyses indicate that contemporary academic environments frequently exhibit limited emotional literacy among academics, evident in communicative behaviors and interpersonal dynamics [11]. This shortfall manifests in issues such as academics' emotional instability, underdeveloped affective maturity and empathy, difficulty recognizing and managing student emotions, emotionally disengaged teaching practices, and a tendency to marginalize the role of affect in communication [7]. Additionally, *interpersonal conflicts*, elevated stress levels, low resilience, and *limited collaboration* in teacher-student interactions are frequently observed [11]. These challenges reflect systemic barriers to fostering open, empathetic dialogue within instructional settings.

For students, communication challenges may manifest as difficulties integrating into academic environments and maintaining meaningful peer relationships. The inability to perceive or accurately interpret the emotions of peers or academic staff often contributes to frustration and interpersonal conflicts within study groups [21].

Errors in conveying emotional messages may provoke confusion and needless tension. Consequently, even students with high intellectual potential risk failing to establish constructive interpersonal relationships and may face isolation within academic communities if they lack effective emotional communication skills [2]. Research indicates that some young adults struggle with *emotional self-regulation*, becoming easily overwhelmed by anxiety or anger, failing to manage impulses, and frequently experiencing stress, which negatively impacts both their academic performance and overall well-being [22].

These contemporary communicative challenges highlight a discrepancy between modern educational demands and classroom realities. While advocates emphasize the need for authentic teacher-learner partnerships grounded in openness and mutual respect, “the described state of affairs perpetuates, at all edu-

cational levels, rigidity in structuring pedagogical partnerships,” thereby undermining efforts to build a flexible, student-centered learning environment [11].

To effectively address the topic of communication based on emotional culture, it is necessary to clearly define the main concepts involved. Emotional culture generally refers to the level of development and refinement of an individual’s emotional life, as reflected in their values, attitudes, and affective behaviors. It is manifested in the “intellectual and practical acquisitions, reflected in emotional competencies that promote the individual’s social happiness,” and can be associated with *emotional education*, assuming *emotional receptivity* (sensitivity to one’s own emotions and those of others) and *social responsibility* [8].

Building on this perspective, emotional culture in the educational context is further conceptualized as a distinct component of academics’ broader cultural competence. Researchers define it as a “dynamic formation of personality, reflected in the unity of intrapersonal and communicative-relational dimensions, represented in a system of affective variables developed by teachers to maximize professional and social efficiency” [11]. In other words, academics with a solid emotional culture possess a set of emotional competencies including self-knowledge, self-control, empathy, appropriate emotional expression, and pedagogical optimism, integrated into a charismatic and authentic communication style that becomes a catalyst for a positive atmosphere in the classroom [8].

Other essential concepts in the field of emotional culture include *affectivity*, *emotion*, *sentiment*, and *emotional intelligence*. Affectivity represents the emotional aspect of the human psyche and encompasses the totality of an individual’s affective experiences (emotions, feelings, moods). In education, affectivity manifests itself both at the level of the pedagogical relationship (the teacher’s empathy toward students, the emotional atmosphere within the group) and at the individual level (the student’s intrinsic motivation, attitude toward learning etc.) [1]. Introduced by P. Salovey and J. Mayer (1990) and later popularized by D. Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to perceive, understand, and manage one’s own emotions as well as the emotions of others, using these insights to guide thought and actions [19, p. 45]. Specialized literature in Romanian emphasizes that „the true values of contemporary society, resulting from emotional development, are humanism, intuition, gentleness, sympathy, cooperation.” Scholars such as Goleman D. (2007), Albu G. (2009), Cojocaru V. (2003), and Cosnier J. (2003) endorse this view, and they regard the development of emotional intelligence as „the new formula for success” in education [8].

Didactic communication oriented toward emotional culture represents the concrete application, in the context of teaching and learning, of the previously discussed principles. In essence, it involves consciously integrating affective objectives into the educational process and utilizing emotional resources in the interaction between teacher and student. M. Cojocaru-Borozan introduced the phrase „didactic communication based on emotional culture,” which she defines as “communication inherent to the educational process, designed to establish teaching objectives and nurture the emotional capacity of faculty and learners, embodied through emotional values manifested in a charismatic style of communication” [apud, 17].

This definition highlights that didactic communication grounded in emotional culture extends beyond conveying subject-specific knowledge to actively shaping and embodying emotional values within education. Put simply, the teacher deliberately cultivates empathy, trust, intellectual enthusiasm, and other positive emotional dispositions in students while delivering academic content.

Implementing communication based on emotional culture in higher education requires changes to both faculty training and daily teaching practices. First, university teachers should undergo specialized training aimed at developing their emotional competencies and enhancing their capacity for empathetic communication. Research highlights that fostering emotional intelligence in students „demands specialized preparation for university teachers,” who need to lay the groundwork for initiatives prioritizing emotional development [11, p. 200]. This requires integrating modules on the *psychopedagogy of communication* and *emotional management* into both initial teacher training and ongoing professional development programs. Scholars in the Republic of Moldova have further proposed establishing the *Pedagogy of Emotional Culture* as a distinct academic discipline, equipping educators with the theoretical and practical frameworks necessary to examine emotional dynamics in educational contexts [8].

From a practical standpoint, didactic communication informed by emotional culture may be effectively developed through interactive pedagogical methods and strategies that prioritize emotional engagement. For instance, within a given instructional module, academics may implement assertive and empathetic communicative practices, including the use of a warm and encouraging tone, sustained eye contact, active listening to student contributions, and the provision of constructive feedback. The establishment of a supportive learning environment is essential; students must perceive that their emotional expressions and viewpoints are acknowledged and respected. The literature in educational research underscores the importance of cultivating a relaxed, open, motivating, and emotionally supportive classroom climate, while concurrently mitigating communicative impediments and affective tensions that may emerge within the group context [5]. In this context, the academics' leadership style plays a significant role; a democratic and supportive approach, as opposed to rigid authoritarianism, cultivates an environment that encourages open dialogue. The ideal teacher-student dynamic is built on collaboration, respect, and mutual trust, sustained through assertive communication and particularly through the teacher's active and empathetic listening within a positive emotional climate [6].

These elements help ensure that each student feels respected and safe, fostering greater engagement and emotional openness.

Fostering communication based on emotional culture necessitates the integration of *socio-emotional objectives into curricular frameworks*. Beyond the emphasis on cognitive skill acquisition, academics may incorporate goals such as enhancing empathy through collaborative tasks, supporting students in managing affective responses during high-stress situations (e.g., public speaking, assessments), promoting intrinsic motivation, and cultivating *pedagogical optimism*. In practice, these objectives may be addressed through *structured workshops or psychoeducational counseling* sessions designed to develop strategies for emotional regulation and for articulating thoughts with clarity and respect. Empirical research conducted in secondary education contexts indicates that interventions targeting emotional competence and guided communication practices are associated with measurable improvements in students' emotional literacy and collaborative abilities [26, p. 26].

Communication based on emotional culture is guided by a set of core principles that orient educational interactions toward a constructive affective dimension. The first of these is empathy and mutual respect. Effective emotional communication necessitates that the teacher makes a deliberate effort to “see the world through the student's eyes” - to grasp their experiences, expectations, and potential emotional difficulties. Correspondingly, students are encouraged to recognize and respect the emotional expressions of both the teacher and their peers. This principle of empathetic reciprocity serves as a basis for trust, which is essential to the development of any meaningful educational relationship [6, p. 83].

A second foundational principle centers on cultivating a positive and emotionally safe classroom environment. All learning activities should take place within a context characterized by trust and psychological safety, where students feel free to express ideas and perspectives without fear of judgment. Scholarly literature emphasizes that „the relational dynamics between academics and students play a foundational role in establishing the affective tone that influences all subsequent interactions and outcomes within the classroom” [18, p. 58]. To maintain this climate, academics should consistently demonstrate patience, approachability, and confidence in students' potential, while intentionally avoiding dismissive or sarcastic remarks that may compromise mutual respect.

A third key principle is *assertive and authentic communication*. Assertiveness entails expressing one's opinions and emotions in a firm yet respectful manner, without compromising the dignity of others. In educational contexts, this includes articulating messages with clarity, setting appropriate boundaries, and engaging in *active listening*. An assertive style is grounded in sincerity and moderate emotional transparency; academics may acknowledge their own emotions (e.g., enthusiasm for a topic or concern about a student's lack of progress) while encouraging students to express their perspectives without fear of judgment. Research indicates that a democratic pedagogical approach, marked by balanced assertiveness and empathy, contributes to improved student outcomes [6, p. 73].

Beyond the foundational principles, it is essential to highlight the significance and impact of emotional

communication within the instructional framework. The affective dimension of communication assumes a formative, rather than merely supplementary, function in the educational process. Through emotional communication, academics impart not only informational content but also implicit attitudes and values. For example, an academic's management of a conflict in the classroom - whether approached with calm and empathy, or with frustration and irritation - implicitly communicates models for either constructive or destructive conflict resolution. In this way, emotional communication serves as a key mechanism for values education and the shaping of student attitudes. L. Ezechil (2002) asserts that in the didactic process, „not only informational content but also affective-attitudinal content is transmitted,” encoded through the educator's reactions of acceptance, approval, rejection, appreciation, and other emotional responses directed toward student behaviors and contributions [14, p. 50].

Another significant dimension of emotional communication is its ability to foster an inclusive and cohesive academic community. Empathetic and open dialogue encourages cooperation, the free exchange of ideas, and solidarity among students. When students feel genuinely heard and understood, they are more likely to develop a sense of belonging, both within their seminar group and in the broader university environment. This sense of inclusion is particularly important during the first year of study, when the transition to higher education often presents considerable emotional challenges. A supportive communicative climate can facilitate this transition, reducing the risk of academic disengagement or dropout. Research on academic integration emphasizes that „it is very important for each student to integrate easily and quickly, as serious integration difficulties can influence their subsequent adjustment” [3].

In this context, emotional communication serves a preventative function: the early identification of isolated or stressed students and their integration into positive interactions can help prevent marginalization.

The concepts of affectivity in education and emotional intelligence are grounded in a well-established theoretical framework that has evolved over several decades, shaped by interdisciplinary contributions from psychology, pedagogy, and neuroscience. One of the earliest theoretical foundations can be traced to classical pedagogy: as early as the 17th century, Jan Amos Comenius, in *Didactica Magna*, emphasized the significance of eliciting positive emotions in students to enhance their engagement with learning. Subsequently, educational psychologists such as Édouard Claparède posited that “effective education is impossible without affective participation.” These foundational perspectives have been validated and further refined by contemporary theoretical models.

The theory of emotional intelligence (EI) was scientifically articulated by P. Salovey and J. Mayer in 1990. They defined EI as „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”. Their model delineates four dimensions of emotional intelligence: the perception of emotion, the use of emotion to facilitate thinking, the understanding of emotion, and the management of emotion [19].

Subsequently, D. Goleman (1995) advanced and popularized the concept of emotional intelligence, conceptualizing it as a model composed of five core components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These elements are generally grouped into two overarching categories: personal competencies and social competencies. Drawing on extensive empirical research conducted in organizational settings, Goleman contended that the emotional quotient (EQ) may, in many instances, represent a more reliable predictor of professional achievement and personal fulfillment than cognitive intelligence (IQ) [apud 10].

Empirical studies in the fields of education and school psychology have provided support for these theoretical perspectives. For example, research conducted in the Republic of Moldova among university students found a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and students' adaptation to the academic environment [21, p. 113].

Students with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to manage exam-related stress more effectively, communicate efficiently with peers and instructors, and integrate more seamlessly into campus life. In contrast, limited emotional competencies, such as difficulty identifying and regulating negative emotions, are linked to challenges in adaptation, interpersonal conflicts, and academic performance below potential [21].

Another relevant theoretical framework is the *theory of affective development* and educational climate, as developed by Romanian pedagogues and psychologists. S. Cristea, for instance, outlines the psychosocial paradigm of pedagogical communication, emphasizing that educational communication is intrinsically linked to the affective development of an individual's personality [13]. Building on this foundation, P. Iluț, A. Cucuș and Șt. Boncu, have examined the role of *affective climate* and positive interpersonal interactions in enhancing the effectiveness of the teaching process. They argue that the teacher–student relationship is not merely a channel for the transmission of information but also a social and emotional process that shapes the personality of the learner. As a result, contemporary interactionist theories in pedagogy place affectivity at the core of the educational process [apud, p. 147].

Additionally, *attachment theory* and research on teacher-student relationships offer further theoretical support. According to attachment theory (Bowlby, Ainsworth), individuals naturally seek secure attachment figures who provide emotional support. In the educational context, this theory suggests that students who view their teacher as supportive and empathetic develop a secure academic attachment, which in turn fosters active engagement and a positive attitude toward learning. Recent studies have demonstrated that a positive teacher-student relationship, characterized by warmth, trust, and open communication, is a predictor of students' intrinsic motivation and academic engagement [6, p. 43].

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, while not directly focused on affectivity, paved the way for the recognition of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, dimensions that significantly overlap with the concept of emotional intelligence. As early as the 1980s, Gardner argued that the ability to understand one's own emotions and to relate effectively to others constitutes a distinct form of intelligence, equally important as logical or linguistic abilities. This theoretical recognition helped bring affectivity to the forefront of educational discourse [17].

A commonly emphasized point in pedagogical literature is that the development of emotional communication skills relies not only on the actions of academics but also on each student's deliberate effort toward self-formation. Self-education refers to the conscious, intentional process by which an individual undertakes the transformation and refinement of their personality, independent of formal educational structures such as school or university. For students, the university years are particularly conducive to self-education, often described as *a period of self-analysis and self-appreciation* in the life of the emerging adult.

Self-education is essential because not all formal learning experiences foster the development of emotional culture. Each student possesses a unique affective profile and enters university with emotional patterns shaped by prior family and social contexts. Adapting to student life, specifically, integrating into a new socio-academic environment, inevitably involves an emotional adjustment component [21].

Students with a satisfactory level of emotional intelligence adapt more easily to university life, effectively managing emotional challenges such as homesickness, performance anxiety, or peer competition. In contrast, those who are less prepared in this regard must recognize the need for *emotional self-education* to address potential deficiencies. One study observed that “one of the problems faced by students is self-education, the activity aimed at changing one's own personality,” highlighting that many young people are initially reluctant to alter their behaviors and attitudes, even when these contribute to difficulties in interpersonal relationships [ibidem].

Numerous arguments support the importance of students' self-education in the domain of emotional communication. First, *personal responsibility* - students who assume accountability for their emotions and reactions are significantly more likely to succeed. As one psycho-educational study observes, “students who do not take responsibility for what happens to them rarely experience success,” indicating that passivity and a victim mentality, marked by deficient emotional regulation, are major barriers to self-actualization [5]. Second, self-education fosters *emotional autonomy* defined as the ability of students to regulate their emotional state without relying on external factors. This is an important trait, as real-life contexts often lack supportive environments; students must occasionally confront harsh criticism, failure, or interpersonal conflict without the guidance of a mentor. A student who has cultivated emotional self-regulation during university studies is more likely, as a future adult, to cope effectively with stress and engage in mature

communication during complex situations. Third, self-education reinforces a *positive self-image*. Through sustained efforts toward self-improvement, students demonstrate their capacity for personal growth, which in turn enhances their self-confidence. A positive self-image is closely associated with an open, adaptable, and assertive approach to interpersonal interactions [21].

Universities can promote students' emotional self-education by providing targeted opportunities and resources, ranging from personal development workshops and counseling centers to elective courses on emotional intelligence and mentoring programs. Nevertheless, the process of self-improvement ultimately rests on each student's individual commitment. As emphasized in the specialized literature, „in the absence of a mentor, you become your own coach” in developing emotional intelligence [2]. Through supplementary readings, reflective practices (such as journaling and mindfulness), actively seeking feedback from peers and faculty, and engaging in volunteer initiatives that cultivate empathy and collaboration, students can progressively build a resilient emotional culture.

Conclusions

Communication based on emotional culture is not merely a theoretical ideal but an essential and attainable objective of contemporary higher education. It responds to urgent imperatives: to humanize university interactions, to prepare emotionally intelligent graduates for an unpredictable, globalized world, and to enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of education. Like all paradigm shifts, this transition requires time and sustained effort. Yet, initiatives in this direction, whether through emotional intelligence courses, mentoring schemes, or simply academics who blend cognitive and emotional dimensions in their communication, generate ripple effects throughout society. The education of tomorrow is being shaped today, and communication based on emotional culture stands as one of its foundational pillars, essential for nurturing generations of balanced, empathetic individuals capable of fostering meaningful human connections.

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Presented: 28.02.2025