PYGMALION TEACHING STYLE, IS THERE A NEED FOR IT?

Abstract. *Herein follows a research and analysis concerning the possible occurrence of the Pygmalion effect, a type of self-fulfilling prophecy, in the classrooms of the Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest. The purpose of the paper lies in outlining the possible impact the Pygmalion effect can have on students' experience in class, as well as ways of harnessing the positive aspects of this effect in the context of teaching as an act of negotiation between professor and student. While it may be said that the term "self-fulfilling prophecy" is not an accurate way to describe the phenomena in question (Eden, 1992), due to the fact that it is not the prophecy which fulfills itself, but the prophet who, unwittingly, takes a course of action that brings about the initially expected result, the facts described in theory and proven through studies remain accurate. Whatever the approach chosen for the future, the matter certainly proves itself to be a significant one, with a possibly great impact on the quality of education and student engagement, and it certainly deserves a closer look.*

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1. Self-fulfilling prophecies, an introduction

Herein follows a research and analysis concerning the possible occurrence of the Pygmalion effect, a type of self-fulfilling prophecy, in the classrooms of the Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest. The purpose of the paper lies in outlining the possible impact the Pygmalion effect can have on students' experience in class, as well as ways of harnessing the positive aspects of this effect in the context of teaching as an act of negotiation between professor and student.

The present paper is structured in six chapters: an introduction to the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy, literature review on the aforementioned term and Pygmalion effect, implications on the classroom efficiency, teaching as a continuous negotiation, the practical approach to the concept and finally conclusions.

The term *self-fulfilling prophecy* is used in sociology and psychology in reference to a prediction which, owing to the positive feedback between belief and behavior, causes itself to come true, either directly or indirectly. In literature, examples of such prophecies can be found dating all the way back to ancient Greece and India. The concept itself is rooted in Thomas' (1928, p. 572) theorem, which states that "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences". According to Thomas (1928), people react more strongly to the way they perceive the circumstances they are in, and to the meaning they assign to these perceptions, rather than to the situations themselves. It follows that their behavior is determined in the same way, more by perceptions and their interpretation, instead of actual conditions. The consequence of this process lies in the fact that once people become convinced that the meaning of a situation is the one they perceive to be true, it no longer matters whether or not it is, in fact, true, because the actions people take on the basis of their perceptions are real and thus produce real results.

Sociologist Robert K. Merton (1968) is the author credited with introducing the expression "self-fulfilling prophecy", and defining its structure and consequences formally in his "Social Theory and Social Structure". According to him, this type of phenomenon happens when behavior is altered as a result of a falsely defined situation, and ultimately causes this originally false conception to "come true". In other words, expecting an event to occur will increase its likelihood of occurrence. Another significant note of Merton's is that this type of event is not one that appears as standalone in nature, but that is particular to humanity and its affairs. Only people may become so influenced by their beliefs (and in some cases, their delusions) that their reactions end up skewing the course of events and fulfilling an initially false prophecy.

While it may be said that the term "self-fulfilling prophecy" is not an accurate way to describe the phenomena in question (Eden, 1992), due to the fact that it is not the prophecy which fulfills itself, but the prophet who, unwittingly, takes a course of action that brings about the initially expected result, the facts described in theory and proven through studies remain accurate. As forms of self-fulfilling prophecies, the

Pygmalion effect and the *Golem effect* represent theoretical counterparts with similar underlying principles. While the Pygmalion effect explores the positive influence of expectations on performance, the Golem effect illustrates the polar opposite, or how negative expectations can lead to poor results. Thus, in the words of Eden (1992, p. 286), self-fulfilling prophecies represent "*a double-edged sword that can either boost or depress performance, depending on the expectations fueling it.*"

2. An incursion into the Pygmalion effect

Even before the characterization of the Pygmalion effect in Rosenthal and Jacobson's "Pygmalion in the classroom" (1968), revised in Rosenthal (2002), some aspects of expectations theory had been interlaced with management theories, as can be exemplified by McGregor's (1960) definition of Theory X and Theory Y. McGregor used the circular aspect of self-fulfilling prophecies in order to explain his theories, according to which the assumptions held by managers with regards to their subordinates determine how they treat the employees, which in turn has an impact on the employees' response.

Also several years ahead of the landmark experiment performed by Rosenthal, Likert (1961) wrote about leader expectations and their effects on subordinates, by mentioning that communicating high expectations constituted a central part of leadership behavior. As Eden (1992) summarizes, the most notable of management researchers were already incorporating aspects of self-fulfilling prophecies and expectation effects into their articles quite early on,and before any papers had been published regarding the Pygmalion effect. That being said, performance expectations did not play a central role in management theory construction at the time, but constituted more of a supporting character, a means by which to explain the other aspects emphasized in the research.

According to Eden (1992), Rosenthal's chance discovery of the experimenter effect in the early 1960s, through the confirmation of his hypothesis according to which experimenters can influence test subjects in such a way as to conform to their expectations, led him to wonder about other similar effects that might affect interpersonal relations with physicians, employers and teachers. A concrete result of Rosenthal's musings was his revolutionary 1968 experiment at Oak School, conducted alongside Lenore Jacobson and published under the title "Pygmalion in the classroom," revealing the influence of self-fulfilling prophecies in a school setting.

In this experiment, conducted in a public elementary school, pupils were given an aptitude test, and then, supposedly on the basis of the test results, their teachers were misled into thinking that a part of their students were going to improve significantly over the course of the academic year. In reality, those high-expectancy children had been chosen based on a random table of numbers, ensuring that the test sample was heterogeneous and included students of different levels of ability. This meant that the difference in possible level of achievement between those children

labeled as "academic spurters" and the rest of the class did not really exist, except in their teachers' minds. Subsequent testing revealed that when teachers had higher expectations from their pupils, these were more likely to develop under their instruction. The effects were particularly visible in the first and second grade, with the youngest children. Additionally, when teachers were asked how they felt about their pupils, most were inclined to think more highly of those they had been misled into believing would develop more quickly, and they used a number of positive adjectives in describing them. The undesignated children, those in the control group, were consistently rated less favorably, even when it so happened that some had developed on their own to the same level as those who had been labeled as high-expectation (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968).

As a result of the findings of Rosenthal's experiment, the following year, Livingston made a compelling argument for the importance of the Pygmalion effect in management. Touching on both expectation effects and the relationship between expectations and performance (Livingston, 1969), a number of the leadership issues presented in this early Pygmalion article would go on to be studied in subsequent experiments (Eden, 1992).

In a 1973 article, Rosenthal defined four factors that influence the dynamics of Pygmalion effects: *climate, feedback, input* and *output*. He went on to explain that these factors are not unidirectional and, the subordinates, or pupils, or children can also have an influence on their managers, teachers or parents. This reciprocal effect Rosenthal spoke of is known as the *Galatea effect*, named after the ideal woman constructed by the character of Pygmalion in the Greek myth (see also Daido and Itoh, 2005).

King (1971) used the revolutionary approach from the 1968 Oak School experiment to test the occurrence of the Pygmalion effect in industry. He randomly chose a few workers and labeled them as possessing high aptitudes, and his results confirmed previous findings regarding the Pygmalion effect as well as his hypothesis: the test scores of the designated personnel were consistently higher, they were given better ratings by their superiors as well as their peers, and the experienced shorter learning times. Walder (1978) studied the characteristics found in leaders who are capable of inspiring their subordinates through the use of Pygmalion effects and painted the portrait of the ideal leader as a "positive Pygmalion."

Summarizing a number of previous Pygmalion studies before going on to present the conditions and findings of his own, Eden (1992) aptly pinpointed that while Likert (1961) had experimented with leadership, he had not attempted to raise expectations, and, conversely, while King (1971) had worked with raising expectations, he had not measured leadership in order to study the correlation between the two. For this purpose, Eden (1992) set out to study the mediation effect of leadership behavior on the Pygmalion effect, alongside designing such experiments that would enable a better generalizability of the Pygmalion phenomenon, by way of studying it in a completely different age group and culture than it had been done before: the Israel Defense Force. The results of the experiment verified previous Pygmalion research, featuring a marked

positive variance in test performance between those trainees that were expected to perform better, and those who were not designated as such. Additional findings revealed an increased likelihood for the high-expectancy group to remain with a positive impression both regarding the course itself as well as instructors. These facts were evidenced by a more positive attitude toward the proceedings of the course, and higher ratings of their instructors' leadership capabilities.

Another of Eden's (1990) experiments with the Israeli Defense Forces set out to determine whether experimentally raising expectations for one group of people would imply indirectly subjecting their control group peers to lower expectations, and thus, putting them at a disadvantage. The tests revealed a significant positive effect for the experimental groups in both subjects taught by the platoon leaders, and no substantial differences between Pygmalion and control groups in the control subjects, thus proving the hypothesis that the Pygmalion effect does not depend upon contrasting high-expectancy individuals with control peers.

A more recent experimental study of the Pygmalion and Golem effects in a large University in the Northwestern United States (Reynolds, 2007) found a positive link between the verbal expression of a supervisor's expectations (either positive or negative) and the subsequent performance results. The testing involved a high and a low expectation group, as well as a control one, all formed of students of management theory. A particularly interesting finding of this study went beyond confirming previous experimental results with regard to the direct connection between expectations and outcomes, by testing the effect of the expressed expectations on a simple and unrelated task. The students were asked to fold origami cups, an arguably menial task, given the participants in the experiment. Rather remarkably, the results of this part of the study were reversed, compared to the cognitive part, meaning that the students labeled with low-expectancy of results outperformed their supposedly superior counterparts. The author speculated that this may be due to the fact that the low-performance group felt the need to compensate for their poorer results on the cognitive tests, whereas those in the high-performance group felt that the task was beneath them, and did not overexert themselves (Reynolds, 2007). A study on the reversed Pygmalion effect can be found in Collins et al. (2009), regarding the principles of learning from reporting to managers younger than their subordinates.

3. Implications on classroom efficiency

While management theory, with its concepts of charismatic and transformational leadership shares common ground with the literature on self-fulfilling prophecies (Bass, 1985; Conger and Kanugo, 1987; House, 1977), for the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on the dynamic between professor and student and how it is affected by expectations.

To continue, it may be of use to have a look at the distinction between the concepts of expectations and standards, which may, incorrectly, be used interchan-

geably, and which in this context hold significantly different meanings. Whereas *standards* may be seen as the goals a teacher or professor may want their students to achieve, the word *expectations* is used to refer to how well the professor thinks the students will progress towards achieving those goals (Saphier and Gower, 1997). In this light, we may say that in cases where the Pygmalion effect occurs, the professor will set higher standards for students that he expects will be able to achieve more.

Bamburg (1994, p. 2) summarizes the work of Douglas (1964) and Mackler (1969), offering an explanation of the mechanism of the Pygmalion effect from an educational standpoint: "*Teachers' expectations about a student's achievement can be affected by factors having little or nothing to do with his or her ability, and yet these expectations can determine the level of achievement by confining learning opportunities to those available in one's track.*" With relation to this aspect, the same author states that research has clearly established the link between teacher expectations and how much students learn. Depending on beliefs and assumptions held with regard to their students, teachers may behave differently towards them, even without realizing it. Studies have indicated that teachers may be communicating their expectations through nonverbal means (Bamburg, 1994). When they feel that students are capable, teachers are more likely to positively reinforce them nonverbally through smiling, eye contact, nodding, and leaning toward them during discussions. Those students perceived as less able by their teachers will not be the recipients of encouraging nonverbal behavior.

The direct result of these beliefs may be that students perceived as high-achieving may receive more challenges and opportunities for learning and improvement than the colleagues whom the teacher views as less able. It follows that the educator could be depriving "low-achievement" students of opportunities and offering them a diluted curriculum (Saphier and Gower, 1997).

Another hypothesis regarding how the influence of teacher expectations manages to manifest itself in the pupils' level of progress was that teachers may have been spending more time on the children considered to be high-expectancy. This seemed unlikely, according to the statistical data available from Rosenthal and Jacobson's 1968 classroom experiment. The correlation in gains of high-expectancy and non-labeled children was positive and rather large, meaning that both groups had experienced an increase in IQ at the same time, rather than the high-expectancy group having had to benefit from the loss of the others. This finding is also supported by the fact that the largest gains were made in reasoning IQ, as opposed to verbal IQ, which suggests that the teachers did not spend more time talking with the high-expectancy students. For these reasons, the idea is put forth that the most significant element in the exchange between teachers and students might have been represented by the type of interaction (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). Among possible means of communicating expectancies that may have influenced the students, the researchers mention facial expressions, posture, touch, tone of voice, in other words, different kinds of non-verbal communication.

Rosenthal's 1973 article speaks of *four influences* which explain the forces at work in a relationship where the Pygmalion effect is experienced. When acting on high expectations, people will have a tendency to use encouraging non-verbal communication to provide emotional support. In other words, they set a positive *climate* for those people they expect good results from. Verbal cues and reactions are also more likely to be given in the case of raised expectations, meaning *feedback*. This usually refers to positive feedback and reinforcement, but sometimes, even negative feedback is a sign of interest on the part of the party offering it, as long as the criticism or suggestion is constructive. The *input* factor refers to the amount of material taught to those who are considered to have greater aptitudes, as well as its level of difficulty: the people that are considered high-expectation are likely to be taught more material, and/or of a greater difficulty, because it is expected that they will be capable of handling the additional load. *Output* is the last of the four factors that Rosenthal discusses in this article, and it refers to the results of the high-expectancy individuals. More specifically, that they are more likely to be called upon for answers in class, their opinions are considered of interest, they are afforded more time to properly complete their tasks and are often more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt.

In 1978, Walder described a number of criteria which contoured the portrait of a Pygmalion leader and that can be adapted to fit a classroom setting. Firstly, *patience* is great virtue for professors, since it often happens that things must be explained more than once before they are fully understood, for example, and in such a case, an impatient person would make for a poor educator. The *communication style* of professors should be open, they should be easy to talk to and try to make themselves available as much as possible for consultations when students are in need of guidance. As is the case between leaders and subordinates, a good communication between professor and student is likely to have a positive impact on the latter, since this makes it easier for them to get the knowledge needed and ensures an accurate transmission of information. Again quite similarly to the case of managers and subordinates, teachers should not only expect much from students, but also *be consistent* in this expectation as well as general behavior, which will help to set an example and provide students with a stable frame of reference. It is also important to make sure to *reward* student achievements with praise and appropriate grading, according to the situation, in order to reinforce the behavior that led to the high level of accomplishment. Fostering the students' *self-confidence* involves treating their responses and ideas considerately, and always encouraging them to participate in lessons, which will also develop the relationship they have with the professor. In addition, making sure that mistakes are not seen as negative turning points, but rather as *opportunities for learning* and improvement, professors should try to be positive about mistakes and encourage the student to learn something from the event rather than simply become dispirited. Being accepting of mistakes as well as working to correct and prevent them from re-occurring should inspire students to become problem solvers in their turn. Reynolds' (2007) findings with regard to student performance on unrelated non-cognitive tasks

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also poses an interesting problem for the world of education: the value which a student ascribes his or herself, either as a result of outside influences, by way of expectation effects, or simply given their past experience, can influence their reaction to the tasks they are given.

On this basis, it may be speculated that if students of high value perceive that the tasks assigned to them are not significant enough to merit their full implication, their results may not be indicative of their full potential. To take the matter a bit further, the lack of interest of the students could lead to negative expectations on the part of the professors, which would then produce further negative expectation effects, according to research. It follows that student's ability must be accurately gauged in order to ensure that there is sufficient challenge that will maintain the students' interest and, consequently, the professors' as well.

Table 1

Personality and technique checklists

	Pygmalion leader	Golem leader
Personality traits	Enthusiastic	Uninspiring
	Patient	Lack of patience
	Open communication style	Closed communication style
	Easy to talk to	Difficult to approach
	Emotional stability	Emotional instability
	High expectations	Low expectations
	High consideration for others' ideas, opinions	Not interested in others' ideas, opinions
	Mistakes seen as opportunities	Negative view of mistakes
	Encouraging	Discouraging
	Accepting	Intolerant
	Empathic	Lack of empathy
	Confident	Lacking confidence
	Trusts others	Lack of trust in others
Techniques	Collaborative negotiation	Competitive negotiation
	Reward achievement	Disregard achievement
	Setting warm climate	Does not offer support
	Offering feedback	Not interested in giving feedback
	Large amount of / difficult material	Diluted curriculum
	Call on students for answers	No interest in hearing students' answers
	Modeling	Does not set an example

Sources: Adapted from Budjac Corvette (2007), Eden (1992), Reynolds (2007), Rosenthal (1973), Walder (1978), Yair (2009).

The above Table 1 summarizes the relevant personality traits and a number of key techniques exhibited by Pygmalion and Golem types of leaders, according to the literature reviewed.

4. Teaching as a continuous negotiation

Looking at life as an arena of human interaction, it is clear that every day we are faced with innumerable instances in which people try to influence each other, with a view to affecting attitudes and behaviors already held. Whether people are looking to obtain what may be considered sentimental gains, such as the approval or affection of others, or something of more tangible value, such as objects or money, they regularly use information and knowledge when interacting with others, in order to reach their goals (Budjac Corvette, 2007).

In the same way, the educational process could not take place without human actors, and these are always interacting among themselves: teachers impart their knowledge with students, students learn from teachers, and students also interact among themselves. The teacher's goal in interacting with his/her students is to determine them to learn about the subject being discussed, and obtain the best results that they can with regard to this process, whereas the students interact with the professor from the desire to gain and clarify knowledge. Thus, given the pervasive nature of negotiation and that, in teaching and learning, each of the parties involved interacts with the other for the purpose of obtaining a certain result, we may say that the relationship between student and teacher, and, consequently, the process of education can be viewed as a negotiation situation (Hadad, 2012).

Out of all the possible negotiation situations, *collaborative negotiation* is about reaching an agreement which is beneficial to both parties, and focused on creating as much value as possible. One of the keys to a successful collaboration is realizing that the other party has needs as well, and cooperating with them, with the purpose of obtaining a result that can be considered a "win" from both points of view (Budjac Corvette, 2007; Coburn, 2013). As a negotiation style, collaboration can be more time-consuming than other styles, however the end result is that both parties are satisfied with their gains, and their relationship is a positive one. Apart from the extra time needed to reach a mutually beneficial agreement, an additional investment in effort and creativity is required when the focus is on producing the best solutions, by way of which each party can reach their goals and declare a win/win situation. According to Budjac Corvette (2007), this negotiation style is closely associated with a number of positive behaviors, including a high capacity for listening, as well as expressing feelings and desires.

The *Jungian preference for feeling* is likely to be helpful in utilizing this approach, given that it entails a high level of consideration for the views of other people. This preference makes it easier to see the conflict from the other party's point of view and, consequently, to imagine what their needs and goals may be. With these possibilities in mind, working towards common satisfaction becomes a much easier task. In the classroom, a professor with a feeling preference will be more likely to have a higher consideration for his/her students' opinions and feelings, as he/she will be able to see problems from their point of view more easily. The better the professor

is able to adopt the persona of the *homo empathicus*, the greater are his/her chances to be able to understand the students and increase the efficiency of the teaching activities (Cantaragiu, 2012). Empathy and closeness to the students, manifested in this way, should have a positive impact on their relationship with the professor as well as their performance, as evidenced by the results of numerous Pygmalion classroom experiments performed over time.

A type B personality is expected to be more comfortable using this style of negotiation because time pressure and deadlines are less of an issue for this personality type, and so they are more likely to have the patience needed to uncover the most creative and beneficial solution for both parties when addressing the problem. A professor who is patient with his/her students and displays a marked willingness to listen to them as well as a propensity for finding creative solutions exhibits traits that are consistent with those of a Pygmalion.

A high level of emotional stability is the key to the collaborative approach, where one must maintain control of their emotions for a possibly lengthy period of time, until the most favorable solution is found, and given the possibility that the other party may be less pleasant to deal with. It is important for a professor to have a high level of emotional stability as well, because it is often stressful and difficult to deal with a large number of people, each with their different personalities and who may be creating innumerable problems for their educator. Having control over their emotions can enable professors to deal with problems more patiently and be more accepting of their students, characteristics which are central to creating a positive Pygmalion effect.

In what concerns the *need for achievement*, this personality trait may be conducive to a collaborative negotiation style if it is strong in an individual, since the positive outlook associated with it can motivate a negotiator to want to get the most out of a negotiation situation, and, in consequence, to want to reach the best, mutually satisfying goal. If a professor aligns and considers his/her students' achievements as his/her own, then demonstrating a high need for achievement will result in him/her desiring that his/her students become high achievers as well, so he/she will seek to motivate and enable them to reach great results.

A *high need for social power* is consistent with the collaborative approach because it entails the aspiration to use power for the benefit of others and in order to help them achieve their goals. When this trait is associated with the personality of the professor, it means that he/she will always have his/her students' best interests in mind and will constantly work to help them get the most out of their educational experience and have a high level of achievement; specifically, for them to have the highest possible gain in knowledge and the best results, which is consistent with the Pygmalion personality.

According to the numerous experiments conducted with regard to *expectation effects* in management as well as the classroom, it is clear that verbal messages are not the only ones that can carry a powerful message, but that non-verbal communication together with as well as given by some personality features can also have a significant

impact. The trouble lies in the fact that people are not permanently aware of the messages they are sending out, or of the way their biases may affect their behavior. It is just as natural as the point above: one cannot be expected to always be completely aware of oneself and in complete control. This is a very difficult task, which few people may be capable of, and perhaps not even to a full extent. A significant level of interdependency can be seen between verbal and nonverbal cues and intentions. The positive message required to set up a Pygmalion effect is at its most effective when both the right words and the accompanying unspoken signals are used. In short, there must be a correlation between the verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication, and, additionally, it is important to try and send out as complete a message as possible, and not presume that the other person will simply understand what was meant either way.

Because a professor's expectations will often foreshadow his students' results, it is important to practice teaching in such a way as to demand a high level of performance, sufficient to motivate students to achieve their best results. In the process of communicating expectations, Saphier and Gower (1997) mention three messages of particular importance for setting the right climate for achievement. Firstly, the *importance of the task* must be accurately conveyed. This will motivate the student to give his/her best performance. Secondly, it is paramount to *express confidence* that the student can achieve this important task that has been set before him/her, which will set a tone of support and should instill a feeling of confidence in his/her own abilities. Thirdly, it is important to reassure the student of *continued support*, which will reinforce the climate of trust created within the relationship and sustain the note created at the previous point.

In his 1992 article, Eden mentions that another fact that is central to creating positive results is often managing to clear past records. This refers to the fact that often times people are haunted by past mistakes or bad results, and because their potential leaders judge them based on these past events, they usually harbor low expectations and create negative expectation effects as a result. In the classroom context, the recommendation would be to never judge a student based on his past performance, either in other professors' classes or in previous years. The reasons behind these poor results might not have anything to do with the potential of the student in question, but be due to external circumstances or other factors. It is a general rule that people should refrain from judging others, but in this case it is even more important, because continuing a cycle of low expectations and poor results could cause the student never to reach an otherwise positive potential. A professor should be able to look past the appearances and past records and encourage his students to be at their best and improve, where it is the case, and to have a high performance level in general. If one simply thinks that the students are not worth his/her time, then it will not be of any service to anyone.

As evidenced in Yair (2009), there are several key attitudes of a teacher or professor that can even go so far as to turn students' educational paths from disaster to success. One of these is trust: professors must not only disregard any negative past

issues of a student, but also *trust* and accept their students as they are. Going further, professors must then trust the student to be able to accomplish more than they had before. Establishing this type of relationship with their students can enable professors to have a profound impact on educational paths, provided they can find the ways and techniques to inspire their students.

A professor should be *enthusiastic* about their class subjects and project an aura of engagement with the topics. An educator who does not believe in what he/she is teaching and is not inspired by it himself/herself will have a hard time catching anyone's attention. Such a positive attitude towards their subject is likely to have a great impact on students, since they will have before them a model of enthusiasm to kindle their desire to learn.

The combination between trust, high expectations and setting an example is key to getting the students to respond well to the class. Given the professor's support, well-established goals, and a model to look up to, the students will feel an obligation to reciprocate and they are likely to deliver superior results.
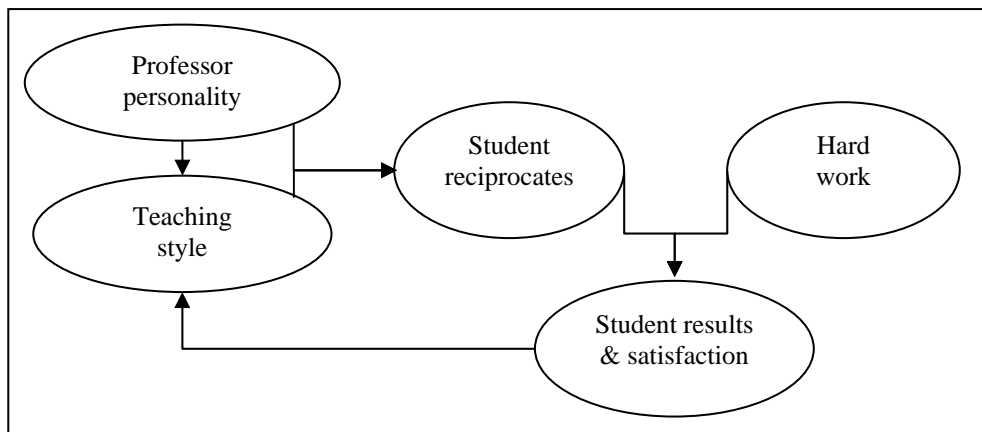
Sources: Adapted from Eden (1992), Loftus (1995), Reynolds (2007), Rosenthal (1973), Walder (1978), Yair (2009).

Figure 1. **Virtuous cycle of Pygmalion in education**

Figure 1 above illustrates a summary of the literature presented and analyzed throughout the paper, depicting what Murphy et al. (1999) called a virtuous cycle in education. As described earlier in the paper, different aspects of the professor's personality will influence their choice of teaching methods, and these two elements together will have an impact on the student, motivating and influencing him to show the professor what he is capable of, nevertheless, according to Ghinea et al. (2012) we should also take into account the influence of the teachers' brain dominance over the satisfaction of the students. Through this element of reciprocation described in Yair

(2009), and adding a good dose of hard work, as mentioned by Loftus (1995), the student will obtain good results, and thus be satisfied with his/her work, and implicitly, the course and the professor's performance. The students' levels of satisfaction can also have an impact on the professor's teaching methods, as he may choose to adjust them according to experience gained.

Murphy et al. end their 1999 article regarding the impact of the Pygmalion effect in education, training and workplace learning on a humorous note, mentioning a very illustrative anecdote about the aerodynamic qualities of a bumblebee, as viewed by two aeronautical engineers. While the first engineer is eager to point out that the bumblebee's wings are too flimsy, while its body is too big to even take off, the second solves the conundrum by simply concluding that no one must have told the bumblebee it couldn't fly.

5. Practical approach

5.1. Research methodology

The purpose of the paper consists of an investigation of a series of classes at the Academy of Economic Studies Bucharest in order to determine whether or not a Pygmalion effect was at work, and if is there a need for it. Thus, the primary research method chosen was an *interview* with one of the professors at the institution in question, followed by a survey of class students by means of a *focus-group interview*. The sample was chosen from among master program students at the Faculty of Business Administration, the English section, where a number of classes have been taught by a certain professor whose methods we were interested in investigating.

Boasting a curriculum similar to that of prestigious foreign universities and a dedicated, active and internationally visible staff and student body, the Faculty of Business Administration, teaching in foreign languages, seems to be the most likely candidate for receiving an overhaul from, but not limited to, a teaching point of view. This means that, given the type of environment created in this particular faculty, it should be easier to put modern teaching and management techniques into effect. With its orientation towards languages, activities and characteristics more specific to occidental universities, this represents the faculty of choice for a study regarding a subject such as the Pygmalion effect.

And while each professor has a personal way of attracting students to their courses, whether they choose to "bribe" students with points for attendance, coerce them by conditioning exam entry according to attendance, entice them with interesting guest presentations, employ other, more creative methods, or combine the above, or whether they choose to rely on charisma and presentation skills alone to keep the audience coming back, it is normal for some approaches to appeal to some people more than others. The professor chosen to examine stood out to us, because of their very positive manner, above all. We were intrigued by the genuine interest that went into the lecture

and seminar presentations and discussions, and by the very open style of communication, engaging even those students who were regularly more shy or reserved.

The students surveyed frequented the classes of the 2011-2013 Master's degree program at the Faculty of Business Administration, teaching in English. In order to assure a higher degree of relevancy, we decided to question only those students which had proven to be regular attendees in said classes. So, out of the 104 students enrolled in classes, the number of respondents proved to be relatively small (35 students), but representative for the purposes of the study, in view of the fact that they had been consistent in their attendance of classes and thus they would have had the chance to experience the occurrence of the studied expectation effect in the educational transaction. We must notice that, over the course of a series of personality presentations during the semester, around 80% of the students involved into the analysis had revealed themselves to be *type A personalities*, which are characterized by *individualism*.

Given the fact that the entire idea of self-fulfilling prophecies stems from the inability of humans to view reality as it is, but only through the lens of perception and interpretation of such, as evidenced by the Thomas theorem (Thomas, 1928, p. 572), the methods chosen for the purpose of researching this phenomenon were qualitative in nature. Both the *one-on-one interview* with the professor in question and *the focus-group* with the students would enable an understanding of the full story and give insight into the heart of the matter, the people's perceptions and how they interpreted them, and how the events affected them personally, rather than just giving certain specific details about the events. This fact would lead to a better understanding of the actual process that took place as opposed to a simple account of what took place and how people reacted.

The interview held with the professor was *behavioral and partially structured*, in order to bring the focus to actual past occurrences and ensure that the relevant topics were covered, while also allowing the possibility to offer personal views and opinions regarding the unfolding of classes and their approach towards the educational process.

In order to avoid making the students feel uncomfortable or feel pressured to answer in a certain way because the professor might learn about their thoughts and opinions from me, the decision was made to hold a certain kind of "undercover" *focus-group*, whereby the students would not be aware of the research being conducted, and would thus feel free to express their opinions. The moment to approach the respondents was established to be during a longer break, awaiting the commencement of a class. This would facilitate the discussion, since a number of students would be in one place, and perhaps a conversation would already be underway, which would represent an advantage in light of the fact that the study was not conducted openly and there was a risk of rousing the respondents' suspicions if the events did not progress as naturally as possible. Also in support of this particular methodology, the focus was not so much on asking a great number of questions, but on steering the conversation in the right

direction and observing the participants' reactions and responses to the matters discussed.

For this reason, only the main areas to approach were established beforehand, a general guide, in other words, largely touching on the same subjects that had been broached in the one-on-one interview with the professor, so as to gain an insight into what the students thought about the unfolding of the classes, and so that their opinions and impressions could be contrasted against what the professor had declared their intentions to be.

In this way, a *case study* was constituted for the research, wherein the main actor was the professor chosen to be investigated. By looking at the theoretical traits and techniques described in Pygmalion effect literature and contrasting them with the findings of the interviews, the subsequent analysis would serve to deepen the understanding of the relevant concepts.

As an aid in this research, a *checklist* was established with the individual traits and techniques appropriate for producing Pygmalion and Golem effects, in order to compare them with those found to be used in the classroom.

5.2. Interpretation of the results

Since there are many studies in the field centered on teacher expectation effects on younger children, at first it seemed less than likely that the findings of this research would be groundbreaking, or even particularly conclusive.

While young learners often only bear the present influence of parental and teacher guidance, it is only natural that the impact be much more significant with regard to their development. By young adulthood, it may be said that students are already carrying a significant amount of "baggage" which may lead to less than predictable results in a study, owing to the fact that each person has his own life experience which, by this time, is likely to have left a notable mark on their behavior and learning style.

However, the findings of the study indicated that not only had there been an intention, personality type and teaching method at work that would have facilitated the appearance of a Pygmalion effect, but that the students who had had the most consistent presence at courses had become aware of this positive approach and benefited from its influence.

During the course of the interview with the professor, one of the first things to catch attention upon discussing attitude towards students was the mention of McGregor's (1960) Theories X and Y, and using them to influence follower outcomes. This and similar theories can be closely associated with self-fulfilling prophecies, in the sense that they use this type of phenomena to explain the outcome of using particular management and leadership techniques.

The professor confessed to being a proponent of Theory Y, according to which people should be treated with *trust* and *consideration* and *expected to perform*

well, and they will respond to this treatment with a high level of accomplishment. All three of these are characteristic to the Pygmalion type of leader, and have been proven in scientific studies to have an impact on student performance.

During the student focus group, the subject of *consideration* had also been brought up, as the interviewees had been aware of this professor's inclination to listen to others, alongside a marked interest for student opinions and ideas during the courses. The ability to listen and manifesting an interest in what others have to say are key elements for a Pygmalion leadership style, as evidenced in Table 1, which are mirrored in this professor's teaching style.

Empathy was another powerful theme to come up during the interview with the professor, and it was mentioned as an important element in building a relationship with the students. According to our interview, this professor places a great emphasis on trying to see things from the students' perspective, and trying to help them achieve the best results possible.

These inclinations can be closely associated with the *Jungian preference for feeling*, as well as a *high need for social power*, both of which predispose a person to use a *collaborative negotiation style*. In its turn, this negotiation style is likely to be used by Pygmalion type leaders.

The preference for *collaboration* was also something that the students had noticed, as this professor had often tried to discuss most important decisions pertaining to the organization of the courses instead of simply imposing them upon students. The examples given were the discussions regarding point distribution for seminars or required attendance, both subjects on which the students were consulted, and on whose opinions were taken into consideration.

It follows that there was a collaboration between the two parties in order to reach an agreement, and in addition, the theme of consideration appeared again, both indicative of a Pygmalion style.

According to our interview, the professor's approach to communication is to maintain an open style, which means trying to be accessible and encouraging students to discuss any problems. Additionally, this style invites opinions and debating, and can be closely associated with the high level of consideration for others' opinions discussed above. Openness in communication can also be associated with soliciting answers from students during presentations and class discussions, all adding up to evidence for a possible Pygmalion effect.

The *open style of communication* was also apparent to students, who agreed that they preferred this type of relationship to a closed one, where the professor might come in, say his piece and not take or ask any questions.

In addition to openness, *patience* is another significant element in building a relationship with students, which was mentioned in both the professor's interview as well as the one with the students. Without this trait, a professor would still be difficult to approach, even if they try to be open, since they would probably rush students, making communication difficult.

Patience also has an influence on student output, since it makes the professor more likely to allow students more time to complete their assignments, manifested concretely in deadline extensions.

Emotional stability was another trait noticed by the students in the focus-group, as the professor was noted to always maintain composure, even in situations where there was pressure, which represents an important characteristic for the Pygmalion personality. This trait enables the professor to maintain the appropriate climate in the classroom, and offer fair feedback and grades. The characteristic is also linked with the use of the collaborative style of negotiation, establishing yet another link with the Pygmalion style.

Additional elements associated with a Pygmalion teaching style that came up in the student focus-group were *enthusiasm* and *confidence* in relation to the subject matter presented during the lectures and seminars.

These two elements are also the key to the *modeling* technique, which entails the professor setting an example for his students in terms of interest for the subjects presented. The students can then follow this example, becoming more excited about the topic themselves.

The professor also mentioned the importance of *feedback* during the interview. Whether it is positive or negative, feedback is used not only to guide the development of the students, but also to show that the professor is interested in this development and aiding it per se. The trick is to always make sure to offer constructive feedback, and this represents another technique specific to the Pygmalion teaching style.

Another important element discussed about was *nonverbal language*, which central to setting the right *climate*. The professor talked about using nonverbal cues to help establish a rapport with students, and encourage them during discussions. Providing emotional support in this way is a technique used in Pygmalion leadership, as evidenced in Table 1.
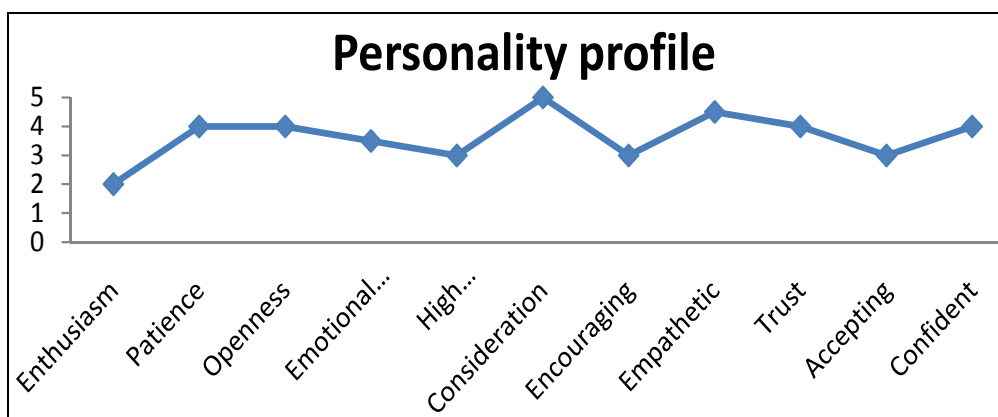

Figure 2. **Professor's Pygmalion personality profile**

Taking a look at Figure 2, on the horizontal axis there are represented the main characteristics of the Pygmalion personality type, while the vertical axis shows scores of zero through five for each of these characteristics as exhibited by the professor under scrutiny in the eyes of the students who took part in the focus-group interview. The tool was a short questionnaire based on the check-list parts turned into Likert scale questions, from 1 to 5.

The resulting personality, as described above, places a great emphasis on consideration and empathy, and is patient, trusting, and open. This person has a high level of emotional stability, as well as confidence, and is also accepting and encouraging, in addition to harboring a fairly high level of expectation from followers. All of these signs, as described in the above section, and summarized in Figure 2 represent evidence of Pygmalion characteristics and inclinations.

In light of the numerous elements supporting the existence of a Pygmalion type of personality and the use of techniques specific to this style of teaching, the study reveals a strong possibility that a Pygmalion effect may have been at work in the classroom.

5.3. Limitations

With regard to the research methods chosen, it may be said that the method of interpretation, by observer impression, is not a very objective one, and the results of the study could have been skewed by the observer's own preconceived notions. After all, *the influence of expectations* is the heart of the matter under scrutiny in this paper.

However, had only a quantitative method been used, such as the short questionnaire used in the end, and the means analyzed, the research may have fallen into the mistake described by Eden (1992), regarding the obstruction of truth in the difference between peoples' responses by *plateauing them using an average score.*

Another possible criticism relates to the danger of *group-think in the case of the focus-group interview.* This means that some people may let themselves be influenced by other's responses, even though they do not necessarily express their personal opinion.

In our case, the group-think was less than likely because of the type A personalities of almost all the questioned students. Even during the course of the focus-group, each person had an opinion to share on different subjects or, alternatively, when people agreed, they did not always have the same reasoning.

Finally, it may be said that the study does not account for other external factors which may be acting as influences on the students' progress in learning and the development of the professor-student relationship. Chief among these is becoming employed around this age, which manages to rapidly supersede the educational track in terms of priorities in a person's life, regardless of previous studying patterns and general life experience. A job simply demands more responsibility and attention, and so school may fall into second place even for the most well-meaning of students.

This aspect was accounted for in choosing the students whose responses would be recorded from among those who had participated most often to the courses, which would ensure that they had had the chance to directly experience the teaching methods and personality being discussed and could offer pertinent opinions with regard to the subject.

It follows that, in spite of the limitations mentioned, the research methods were chosen as the most appropriate for this particular instance and special care was taken to limit the possible negative influences of said limitations on the results of the study.

5.4. Possible problems and suggestions

Although in theory the Pygmalion type of leadership sounds like the best possible method of conducting affairs in general, reality is less than a utopia, and some people may see this type of behavior as something to take advantage of.

It is evident from Figure 1, in the section above, that the most poignant character traits of this particular personality are consideration and empathy couple with high levels of trust, patience and openness. While these are all positive character traits and in line with the features of the Pygmalion personality, it is easy to note that they may leave a person open to people who will seek to use these traits to gain an advantage.

For instance, out of the desire to do well by their students, *the* professor try to empathize with them and listen to their point of view when establishing rules. This may refer to consulting them about finding the best options for the grading system, or required attendance. Although the intentions are entirely positive, some people may see this as an opportunity to press for advantages, or try to get what they want.

Another particular case in which students may try to use the professor's positivity towards them against him is at the end of the study period, when receiving their grades. Noticing during the year that this person tends to be more flexible and understanding and tries to empathize with them, some may try to find excuses for bad results in an attempt to sway the professor to give them a higher mark. Therefore, it may sometimes become difficult to discern between someone who genuinely had problems, and another who is simply trying to trick the professor into obtaining an unfair advantage.

The most important thing to remember in these cases should be to hold everyone to a certain standard, and that students are supposed to maintain a level of accountability for their results. While being flexible and trying to understand people can be useful up to a point, there is no use in letting it turn against you. The key should be to keep a healthy balance between empathy and consistency.

Exhibiting a great level of flexibility can also often lead the professor into impossible situations, because students may inadvertently take advantage of this particular trait, leaving off projects until the very last moment, for example, when there is no more time left for everyone to present.

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Then, out of a desire to help everyone get the best results, the professor will try to accommodate students so they can somehow give their presentations, and in the end they will be left with the idea that anything is possible. Setting stronger boundaries may be required in order to solve this issue.

Additionally, in having a high level of expectations from students, and at the same time being a good-nature empathetic person who expresses a willingness to be helpful, it may be easy for the professor to send the wrong message with regard to those expectations. More to the point, students could interpret the professor's willingness to help and overall positive demeanor as a kind of sign of weakness and thus consider that they will not have to work hard to receive a high mark. For this reason, it is important to pay attention to *setting boundaries* with students, and communicating to them that while there is a desire to understand them and maintain a positive relationship, this does not mean that they will pass the subject without doing their work. Otherwise, at the end of the day the students may be left with the impression that they were misled with regard to what was expected of them, and although they thought they were performing according to expectations, this was actually insufficient.

An additional thing to keep in mind is that the positive results of an instance of Pygmalion effect do not simply happen on their own, by way of belief. Although that would probably make life much easier, it is important to realize that any achievement requires an input of effort.

What the Pygmalion effect refers to is not the creation of success from thin air and power of believing, but rather a maximization of what results would have come about through a certain set of actions, owing to an increase in levels of confidence, dedication and motivation. A professor looking to become a positive Pygmalion in the eyes of his students should be aware that it is going to take some work on his part as well as that of the students themselves.

6. Conclusions

The fact that one's unwitting behavior can have such an impact on another more impressionable person is a responsibility that should weigh even more heavily on a professor's shoulders than that of imparting knowledge itself; however it is not always given the level of attention it might deserve from this point of view.

It is true that we cannot, in all honesty, be so unfair to the professors' guild as to omit mentioning that, in Romania, students themselves do not always offer such a response in class (and at times not even such a presence in numbers) as to elicit the professor's good will and interest. It is, perhaps, another aspect owing to a self-fulfilling prophecy: if the students come to class assuming it will not be of interest to them, then their lack of attention will impact the professor's behavior; he will lose interest himself, or even lose consideration for his students, leading to a downward spiral.

It is a difficult problem to diagnose to the very core, especially given the difficult and unstable educational context we have braved over the years growing up, never knowing what policy changes would take effect from one year to the next, as the country's educational system had numerous attempts at modernization inflicted upon it by more or less apt or well-meaning individuals.

Nevertheless, we believe each of us has met a teacher or professor (or for those lucky enough, maybe a few) somewhere along their educational path, that left more of an impression on them than others managed to, and that will be remembered more fondly. Perhaps someone who seemed, at times, to believe in their students more than they themselves could understand at the time.

And yet, somehow, it seems that the art of education, if it was ever present in a more widespread fashion in the past, may have become lost along the way, or perhaps it was simply lost on the majority of us. Alternatively, it was only ever present in random sparks, flitting into existence here and there, easily missed in the blink of an eye, or a class skipped in favor of a cold drink with friends.

An educator who is truly passionate about the profession, the act of imparting knowledge and forming younger minds, is a thing of rarity in a world which seems to revolve so quickly that it sucks the joy out of everyday life. This is probably true of any profession, when the majority of people work to get by. Add to this what may be euphemistically dubbed a poor regard for education on the part of state authorities, and it becomes difficult to ask too much of an educator, when he may be receiving quite little in return. Again, the problem with our education system is complicated to say the least, and it goes beyond the scope of this research paper in numerous directions.

But whatever their reasons for being a part of this profession, using certain techniques or being the people that they are, if there was ever any doubt to begin with, we find it clear now that the impact of teaching staff upon their students can sometimes be greater than any of us afford to take the time to realize, and we feel that there should be a greater emphasis in training educators to manage their expectations with regard to those under their tutelage.

Ideally, they should become more aware of the effects these self-fulfilling prophecies can have one way or another, because, as Merton concluded in 1968, the cycle of self-fulfilling prophecy can only be broken upon redefinition of the propositions upon which the false expectations are developed.

Perhaps it would be advisable to study the subject and create a form of course with the purpose of better familiarizing teaching staff in educational institutions with the concepts of expectation effects and self-fulfilling prophecies and how they can be used to the advantage of all those involved.

As Eden (1992) mentions in his article, this type of course would have to entail more than simply giving professors a lecture on the subject, putting on a demonstrative film or encouraging them to expect more from their students. The addition of behavioral skill building would be necessary in order to provide a solid

base for the raising of expectations and give educators the appropriate tools required to support these high expectations.

Whatever the approach chosen for the future, the matter certainly proves itself to be a significant one, with a possibly great impact on the quality of education and student engagement, and it certainly deserves a closer look

As the party with the greater level of knowledge and experience in the exchange, it seems to fall to the educational staff to try and break the mold of lack of engagement in education.

Perhaps the young children of today, in the context of a higher level of attention being afforded to their psychological development, will end up having a significantly different experience in the educational track than some of us have had.

And in the end, it may be wise to try and remember the words of Eliza Doolittle, the central character in George Bernard Shaw's most appreciated play:

"You see, really and truly,[…] the difference between a lady and a
flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. […] I know I can be
a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady and always will."

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