

Title

Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement: What relevance and implications does this psychological construct called 'emotional intelligence' have for education in New Zealand?

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Executive Summary

This sabbatical provided me with the opportunity to undertake research on Emotional Intelligence (EI) and the relevance this has to providing a quality education for the students in today's schools. EI is a term that describes the ability of one to use emotions effectively and productively.

In the late 1980's Dr John Mayer and Dr Peter Salovey studied the links between intellect and emotions and how they interacted within a person. 'They described emotional intelligence as a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and action' (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Daniel Goleman popularised the concept of EI in his book 'Emotional Intelligence – Why it can matter more than IQ' published in 1996. Goleman described five domains that set down the parameters of emotional intelligence.

- self awareness
- self control
- self motivation
- empathy
- relationship skills

Research into how people learn indicates a need to incorporate EI awareness into the learner. It is evident that having high cognitive functioning does not necessarily translate into a successful future. The resultant need for people to understand and manage their emotions has led to education authorities adopting programmes under the umbrella of 'emotional literacy.' This means that the classroom teacher is now faced with research that emphasises the importance of incorporating EI into teaching and learning. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the need for teachers to understand that EI is necessary in bringing about successful learners, in an education setting and also to bring about a successful member of society.

Purpose

The purpose of the sabbatical was to investigate the current thinking around the development of EI that promotes both social competence and intellectual growth within students. The following questions were posed

- What is the link between EI and IQ?
- How is EI linked to Multiple Intelligences (MI), Social intelligence and the new construct, reflective intelligence?
- Why have education authorities in USA, Australia and Great Britain run curriculum programmes that reflect EI?
- How is EI linked to effective leadership and teaching practices?

William Butler Yeats summed up teaching and learning when he said 'Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire'. This paper will form the basis for future discussion on how Royal Oak Primary School can continue to deliver quality educational programmes that bring about lifelong learners.

Background

The New Zealand Curriculum recognises the challenges facing our education system brought about by social change, new technologies and an increasingly diverse population. The New Zealand curriculum identifies five key competencies that people use to live, learn, work and contribute in society. These are thinking, using language, symbols and texts, managing self, relating to others and participating and contributing. EI is closely linked to thinking, managing self and relating to others.

In 2007, Michael Fullan in conjunction with the Ministry of Education conducted a seminar for Principals' titled 'Turnaround Schools/Turnaround Systems'. In the seminar he concluded that successful leaders need to be emotionally intelligent i.e. self aware, self managing, socially aware and in possession of relationship management skills. An article in the New Zealand Herald (February 07 / 2009) titled 'Minding your E's and Q's at work' explores the premise that success in life hinges on our emotional intelligence. Added to this are the implications of the research on how the brain learns and functions. Today's schools are challenged to develop a curriculum programme that provides an education with a holistic approach to the learner.

Methodology

Professional Reading concurrent with emotional intelligence.

Interviews with Principals' and leaders in this field.

Collate information and write up findings.

Share the information.

Findings

Emotional Intelligence is not a new concept. 'What is new, however, is the recognition that the cognitive, emotional and social parts of our brain are

deeply interconnected and interdependent – that our feelings dramatically influence our thinking, and our behaviours are inseparable from our emotions’ (Panju 2008). Early studies on intelligence have focused primarily on cognitive learning. More recently researchers like Robert Thorndike (social intelligence) and David Wechsler (intelligence scales) recognised that non-cognitive aspects of intelligence played important roles in the behaviour of people. The debate into intelligence was further opened up through the publication of theories by Howard Gardner (multiple intelligences) and Robert Sternberg (Triarchic Theory of Intelligence).

Gardner (1983) suggested that ‘intrapersonal’ (the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people) and ‘interpersonal’ (the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations) intelligences were just as important as intelligences measured by IQ and other tests. These intelligences affect how one emotionally responds and how this then affects cognitive understanding.

In 1990 after studying the links between intellect and emotions and how they interacted within a person, Peter Salovey and John Mayer coined the term emotional intelligence. Their findings challenged earlier thinking regarding cognitive learning and intelligence and led to a wide range of further studies. A group of researches including David McClelland, J.E Hunter and R.F. Hunter started questioning the validity of the results of cognitive intelligence in informing educators about what it takes to be successful in life. The research showed that IQ was not a very good predictor of work performance and estimated that at best it accounted for between only 4 to 25% of actual success. Later studies undertaken by Goleman and others into the effects of emotional intelligence on one’s success in life explained that two people of the same I.Q. could attain vastly different levels of success, depending on their levels of EI.

The publication of Daniel Goleman’s book ‘Emotional Intelligence’ in 1996 brought public debate on how to encourage successful learners. In education student behaviour, classroom environments and the health and welfare of

students were already being considered. What was not evident was the link between emotional intelligence and subsequent intellectual success. Subsequent studies undertaken on how the brain learns identified pedagogical practices that would enhance lifelong learning. These studies have subsequently impacted on educational philosophy, specifically on students and how they learn, teachers and how they teach and on leaders and how they lead.

Goleman drew a parallel between Gardner's interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences and EI. He realised that although these intelligences could not be measured through cognitive tests, they played a large part in whether one would be successful in what they undertook. Goleman states that individuals are born with a general emotional intelligence that determines their potential for learning emotional competencies. In a world that is growing smaller by the year, the need for people to understand, relate, respect and interact with others is imperative. This requires the emotional intelligence skills of empathy and relationship skills. The need to take personal responsibility through the emotional intelligence skills of self awareness, self control and self motivation is becoming regarded as a major priority in a world that is finding many of its established societal expectations and social mores challenged. In this changing environment, education and schools are being challenged to adopt programmes that enhance the development of emotional intelligence.

The New Haven, Connecticut School Board along with Hudson District Schools in Massachusetts addressed these challenges by adopting a social emotional skills programme for children. This was developed by The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning organisation.

The Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programme gives students the opportunity to "acquire skills, to recognise and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, and handle challenging situations effectively" (CASEL). The New Haven schools attempted to address the social problems that were pervading the schools and were preventing quality learning taking place. Hudson, Massachusetts adopted the programme in order to lift their standard

of education from 'one of mediocrity to being innovative'. Their results have shown positive short term and long term academic and personal benefits for their students.

The United Kingdom Department for Education Skills (2003 -2005) piloted a 'behaviour and attendance strategy' in primary schools. A component of this strategy focussed on the social and emotional aspects of learning for children (SEAL). Results of the pilot scheme found that the SEAL strategy had a dramatic effect on improving behaviour in primary schools, including on attendance records and marks. There was also beneficial impact on staff well-being. The success of SEAL in primary schools led to its introduction in secondary schools in 2007.

The Department of Education in Queensland, Australia, used the research of CASEL as a basis for their 'Guide to social and emotional learning in Queensland state schools.' Research undertaken since the introduction of the guide has found an improvement in academic performance and student behaviour. Students also gained strategies to enable them to work through challenges, including those of a social nature. The Singapore Ministry of Education recognises that workers need to develop social and emotional skills to work effectively in today's global markets. They have introduced Social and Emotional Learning competencies into their education system. Their aim is to develop character (he / she contributes positively to civic life and is personally and socially responsible) and 'citizenship' (doing as well as he can in his/her studies) in their students.

It is evident that to develop a social and emotional programme for Royal Oak Primary there is a vast array of programmes already available to choose, from, Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power (BLP), to Paul Mc Gee's Shut Up and Move On. (SUMO). The key to success is to clearly define the schools goals and then to construct a programme that will bring about desired results.

Implications

Research shows us that EI can be taught and has positive effects on student learning and well being and also has positive effects on staff morale. 'It is precisely because Emotional Intelligence is so important that it should not be allowed to be reduced to a bolt-on, sound bite, and commercially driven business opportunity' (Claxton, 2005).

There is a vast amount of literature on EI ranging from the philosophy underpinning the construct, to providing strategies that promote EI classrooms and students. From my discussions with professional leaders the key to developing EI in students is to develop EI in the school. The need for everyone in the school, including staff to understand their emotional self is the cornerstone of EI. This results in successful students, staff and leaders. Karol De Falco, a New Haven, Connecticut, middle school facilitator for the Social Development Department in New Haven Public Schools, sums it up:

'For school districts that are thinking of implementing a program like this, my words of caution would be it's not easy. It's not a quick fix. There has to be a vision. There has to be a plan. It's long range. It's not one activityIt's a big commitment. It takes a lot of time. It took a lot of years for us just to develop the curriculum part of it. However, seeing the changes in students' attitudes and students' behaviors is rewarding. Realizing that we are educating not only the academic portion of the child, but also the affective (emotional) portion of the child is what it's all about. That's the whole child' (De Falco, 2009)

Conclusion

What has the sabbatical shown me?

- Academic achievement without EI does not indicate future success
- EI is important in the world of education and also in society in general. The corporate world is recruiting leaders who display EI.
- Research shows strong links between EI and social well being.
- Children who have an understanding of the role that emotions play in their life will have a better foundation on which to build successful futures.

- The practice of reflective thinking is a powerful tool in bringing about understanding, competency and mastery into one's life.
- Studies undertaken show that those who have emotional literacy are better able to handle personal relationships.

'Emotional Intelligence is not, in itself, sufficient to create optimal outcomes for youth. However, the way emotional intelligence is used, both by youth and those who support them has a powerful effect on the children's lives. Emotional intelligence appears to be a core ingredient that, when developed and well employed, has wide –ranging benefits for learning, relationships, and wellness.' (Six Seconds, Emotional Intelligence Network, 2007)

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