Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a topic of interest that has been thoroughly debated in recent years through much research and by behaviorists, sociologists, theorists, scientists, and professionals. The definition of what emotional intelligence is and how it can be measured is under great scrutiny and the argument over these issues perpetuates various ideas and new camps of thought about emotional intelligence. This dispute hinders any group from finding a common definition and alluding an accurate reliable way of measuring for EI.

The research on EI validates the necessity to understand emotions and how our human experiences revolve around them or how separating our cognitive abilities from our affective ones is difficult to accomplish. There is an interest to learn how emotions affect our relationships, help us to assess our own thoughts, our behaviors, and responses to others, and to understand or empathize with people.

Teachers are adults who children learn from, identify with, and emulate. These authority figures spend a considerable portion of the day with each individual child, more so than the parents in many instances. Knowing how to control emotions and empathize with others could prove to be very beneficial when dealing with young and older people alike.

The purpose for writing this paper was to assess what research has found with regard to the origins of the study of emotional intelligence, to uncover what research has concluded thus far about emotional intelligence, gender, and its place in organizations and schools.
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Introduction

Research on the topic of emotional intelligence is a relatively new area of study in the past century and a half even though the Western culture has contemplated the relationship between thought and emotions for centuries (Ciarrochi, et al., 2001; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). There is a growing body of research on the topic of emotional intelligence regarding who has it and if it is attainable to those who do not possess it.

According to Connor, Lake, and Stackman (2003), people who possess emotional intelligence use feelings to obtain cooperation in order to achieve organizational outcomes. By studying emotional intelligence, we could discern whether emotional intelligence develops over time with study or if it is a skill that some people just naturally possess. Another question of whether or not gender plays a role in a person’s emotional intelligence is also of interest. Since people with higher emotional intelligence are seen as capable of handling difficult situations and building commitment in others, it is suggested that this type of person will be able aid organizations in advancing ahead.

Teaching students to become emotionally intelligent people may aid in providing those students with what Goleman calls EI competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills all of which are necessary to be able to become more aware of one’s feelings and the feelings of others, differentiate among them, and use the information to make quality decisions (Rahim & Minors, 2003, p.150).

This paper aims to research the origins of emotional intelligence research and to investigate what research has claimed about emotional intelligence, gender, and its place in organizations and schools.
Method

History of Emotional Intelligence

So what is emotional intelligence? In the early 1900’s, psychological researchers began to question why people do the things that they do. The emergence of emotional intelligence (EI) in the 20th century first began to take shape as emotional research in the 1900’s where emotions had been considered to be culturally driven and not necessarily universal in meaning (Ciarrochi, et al., 2001). As cognitive intelligence tests began to emerge, the thought of emotion as being a part of social intelligence was considered, but there was not much effort in uncovering the facts about it. Thorndike’s work on social intelligence in the 1920’s questioned the idea of what constituted intelligence and caused researchers to look at possibilities of other forms of it. He understood that a model of intelligence reliant on intellectual capacity alone failed to completely encompass human capabilities and behaviors demonstrated in real life (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005, p. 448).

The means in which emotions and thoughts relate during the 1970-1989 era in research called Cognition and Affect influenced the study of EI (Ciarrochi, et al., 2001). During this time, Howard Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences divulged the idea of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence that helped researchers to begin researching social intelligence further (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Ciarrochi, et al., 2001). It was also during this time that the term emotional intelligence slowly began to find its identity and supporting research was helping to give it an actual definition.

As the term emotional intelligence began to emerge, so did more research on this area of study. During the early 1990’s, many tools for measuring EI and more empirical research on cognitive development ensued in the brain sciences through the work of Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso and later with the popularization and broadening of this field of study by Daniel Goleman.
Goleman claimed that EI was possibly the best indicator of success (Ciarrochi, et al., 2001). Because of the popularity of EI in the cultural sense, the definition remained a little ambiguous. There is still little or no evidence to Goleman’s claim that EI is the best predictor of success in life or that it is more important than IQ (Ciarrochi, et al., 2001; Mayer, et al., 1999).

Recent research stemming from 1998 to the present has sparked serious research with the development of new measures of EI. Mayer, Salovey, and their colleagues defined EI as the “ability to recognize the meaning of emotions and their relationship” and to have the “capacity to perceive emotion, assimilate emotional-related feelings, understand… emotions and manage them” (Mayer, et al, 2000, p. 401). Rosete & Ciarrochi (2005) investigated emotional intelligence and its possible relationships with personality, cognitive intelligence, and leadership effectiveness. Overall, their research concluded that executives with higher emotional intelligence were more likely to achieve leadership effectiveness. Emotional Intelligence may be able to identify who is likely to work well and deal with others on the job.

Rahim and Minors (2003) claimed that if an organization wanted results in concern for quality of products and services as well as potential for problem-solving among employees, EI training and education would benefit those who would take the training (p. 154). Ashkanasy and Daus (2005) stated that based from their research, “EI is a tool that psychologists and scholars of organizational behavior can use in their efforts to understand and predict behavior” (p. 449).

Definitions of Emotional Intelligence

Mayer and Salovey’s (2000) definition of Emotional Intelligence took a cognitive approach to EI by explaining that it is the innate potential to feel, use, communicate, recognize, remember, learn from, manage and understand emotions. Their EI test required the respondents to solve various emotion-related problems (Parker, Saklofske,
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Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000) state that there are two general models that have emerged from the research. The earliest is a mental ability model which divides abilities and skills of EI into four areas: perceived emotion, use emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotion, and manage emotion. The second is a mixed model which mixes together the core idea of emotional intelligence with a variety of other personality traits such as teamwork and collaboration, service orientation, initiative, and achievement motivation (Mayer, et al., 2004; Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). Because there is no formal or common definition for the term Emotional Intelligence, there will undoubtedly be debates over a true definition of EI and a way to measure it accurately.

Gender and Emotional Intelligence

With regard to emotional intelligence and gender differences, little is known as to whether being a certain sex actually has an affect on EI. The research neither completely validates nor disputes this claim. In one study, the results reported that women were better able to perceive emotion than men, and that “women may be socialized to pay more attention to emotions” (Mayer, et al., 1999, p. 293).

Being human makes us susceptible to our emotions. Past research suggested that women are more emotionally expressive. One study on EI and gender differences revealed that men in leadership roles stated that they were more expressive and better able to encode emotion than their female counterparts and females in high positions of authority believed that they had a higher self-perception of their expressiveness (Callahan, et al., 2005). Women are believed to feel and express sadness more frequently than men, and men feel and express anger more frequently (Callahan, et al.,
According to the same study, “women were more likely to express the feelings…seeking social support” (p.1141).

**Schools and Emotional Intelligence**

The ultimate goal of providing training and implementation of EI in schools would be for students to learn to manage their own emotions and to learn to become sensitive to others’ emotions, forming satisfying personal relationships, work on improving communication skills, developing empathy, employing active listening skills, and success at work (Sherlock, 2002; Salovey & Grewal, 2005). The necessity for training students and teachers to become more emotionally aware can be defended when “determining that the values of open-mindedness, inclusion, respect, and tolerance are more likely to be achieved within a curriculum that fosters the development of EI” (Sherlock, 2002, p.139).

It is important to understand what causes our emotions. The emotion center of the brain is found lower in the sub cortex. ‘Amygdala Hijack’ is a condition in the human brain where a person will feel before he or she thinks. By using EI, understanding how our emotions affect our behavior, and behave in a more rational way (Sherlock, 2002, p.143). Research on the adolescent brain concludes that the front lobe of the brain which helps control impulses and decisions is not fully developed during this time and uncontrollable temper, outbursts, and violence may be due to mini-seizures in the temporal lobes as well as a flow of hormones that help intensify moods and behavior (Amen, 1998).

Children learn from, identify with, and emulate their teachers. These authority figures spend a considerable portion of the day with each individual child, more so than the parents in many instances. “Classroom teachers must possess self-awareness and self-management if they are going to succeed with students” (Mendes, 2003, p.57). It was also noted that by providing students with empathy and caring, the students
demonstrated dramatic changes in behavior, effort, and performance. Caring teachers respond to the needs of their students, have structure and discipline in their classrooms, have expectations with consequences and rewards, model and set examples, provide problem-solving, and are supportive, warm, and ethical (Mendes, 2003, p. 57).

Sherlock’s (2002), EI model for international education that is also viable when considering its use in the public school setting has three components: the first area is the understanding of oneself which includes self-management, self-understanding, and self-awareness. Next area is the understanding others which begins with active listening and empathy, team building, and conflict resolution. Finally, the technical area which includes all technical skills and subject knowledge and is based off of Goleman’s personal and social competencies and aligned with a subject-based curriculum (Sherlock, 2002, p. 141).

Jones & Hutchins (2004) focused on the use of a mind mapping technique which was used to help children sort out their ideas and to develop their emotional intelligence. They notice in their own school that children who are happy and feel safe are higher achievers due to an emotionally intelligent environment, schools that value children are better liked by parents and prospective parents, poor behavior and exclusion diminish, stress is reduced, and the work atmosphere is more accepting to individuals which allows for more effective learning to be achieved (p. 21). One curricular challenge regarding the inclusion of EI is that some people believe that the school is not responsible for the affective dimensions of student development, but rather for the cognitive domain, but “John Dewey argued that education was responsible for both components of learning” (Sherlock, 2002, p. 156).

If teachers applied Howard Gardner’s ‘Multiple Intelligences’ approach to their lessons and teaching, they could help students unlock their potential through various methods and techniques and by exploring various values, beliefs, and ideas that would
allow students to understand themselves and others by recognizing and labeling and interpreting one's and others' emotions and to cope effectively (Sherlock, 2002; Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2003; VanDerZee, Thijs, & Schakel, 2002). Schools teaching traditional school curriculum need to consider that research is finding that EI helps students both academically and socially, and that “plain academic excellence is insufficient for a successful life… because social and emotional intelligence is also of equal importance” (Sherlock, 2002, p.142).

Summary

There are conflicting arguments surrounding emotional intelligence and whether it is actually an indicator of success in life. It can be assessed from this research that EI has two broad categories. Ability models foster the idea that like IQ, EI can be developed over time and be tested for. The second research category used to measure EI is called mixed models that uses personality and self-report measures.

Emotional intelligence has become a topic of true interest to me and one I would like to know more about. The research has made some valid points regarding the findings on EI and how it could be utilized and developed in organizations. The findings adequately support the position that EI might very well be a large indicator of whether a person will be successful in both the tasks and goals at work and with the building of relationships that build solidarity among others and their jobs. It is uncertain as to what role gender plays in differences among a person’s effectiveness at work and his/her emotional intelligence. The research does not reject or verify whether gender actually affects a person’s emotional intelligence. It might also be interesting to have separate studies for both genders before comparing them to each other.

With regard to the use of EI in the school setting, it seems that research has validated the necessity to explore what, if any difference, it may have on relationships, attitudes, environment, and overall well being of students in schools. It is possible that EI
may have a large impact on how teachers approach teaching, their effectiveness, the
type of classroom atmosphere created through the use of EI, and in the development of
a supportive environment for students to feel comfortable and to successfully learn.

Until more research uncovers the potential in EI training that is empirically-based,
hidden curriculum will play an important role in reinforcing emotional intelligence
(Salovey & Grewal, 2005). Schools will need to start taking a more proactive approach to
educating children in a more mainstream manner by including EI across the curriculum
rather than neglecting the affective side of education in favor of the intellectual
dimension of the student’s experience (Sherlock, p. 147).

**Conclusion**

It is useful to try to make distinction between a person's innate EI potential versus
what actually happens to that potential over his/her lifetime. I believe each person is
born with a certain potential for emotional sensitivity, emotional memory, emotional
processing, and emotional learning ability. It is these four inborn components which
form the core of one's emotional intelligence.

This innate emotional intelligence can be either developed or damaged with life
experiences, particularly by the emotional lessons taught by the parents, teachers,
caregivers and family during childhood and adolescence. It may be possible to measure
a person's healthy or unhealthy development of his/her innate emotional intelligence.
When dealing with people, it is very important to pay attention to the delivery of words
spoken and to how the members of organization will react to what another person is
saying. Work places will never be void of emotion because people by nature are both
rational and emotional beings (Callahan, et al., 2005). People in powerful positions who
"respect another’s ideas, efforts, beliefs, and values" have much more success in the
work place than those who do not. Their employees have a tendency to trust them more

By becoming more aware of the emotions and being sympathetic to others, people have been able to gain their trust and help them become better at their jobs. The importance of having or being able to obtain emotional intelligence and its effect on successful leadership in school as well as work situations is definitely worth looking into and deserves to be considered for further study.
References


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Research in International Education, 1(2), 139-158.
