Executive summary

The Missing Link in **Emotional Intelligence**

Theory versus Educational Programs

A. Orra-Prat

UAB
Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

Key stakeholders

Educational stakeholders, specifically educational psychologists, teachers and parents, should be the main recipients of the present document, alongside with emotional intelligence (EI) researchers.

In recent decades, EI has grown in popularity, resulting in the appearance of various EI theoretical models, in parallel to the introduction of multiple EI educational programs. However, they both have been subject to well-founded criticism -revealed within the present document-. Thus, educational stakeholders should be cautious and critical when considering the implementation of EI programs. Firstly, educational psychologists bear the responsibility for designing valid EI programs that could be introduced into the educational curriculum. In order to do so, it is vital to convince teachers of the importance of EI abilities development programs -and its limitations- as well as to train them to deliver the mentioned programs successfully. Finally, what it has been learned at school must be practiced at home, hence the importance of enhancing parent's implication in the emotional learning process. It is expected that all of them can find valuable information and guidelines within this document. Concurrently, EI researchers are encouraged to consider some of the issues raised in the current study, taking this opportunity to refine the concept. Hence, coming full circle, that improvement could lead to the developing of more valid EI programs based on solid research. In such a case, a substantial social improvement could follow the application of robust EI programs at the same time that the gap between EI theory and practice narrows.

"I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them."

Oscar Wilde, the Picture of Dorian Gray

Executive summary

The interest for a superior understanding of emotions is long-standing. That is not surprising, since they play a key role in human life. Historically, the interest has been placed in the interaction between emotion and thought and how they affect each other. In this context, during the last mid-century, scientists developed emotional intelligence (EI) in order to shed light on the issue, being proposed various frameworks. In 1990, Salovey and Mayer coined the term and laid the field foundations, integrating all the previous scattered research and providing a framework for future researchers. Later on, Goleman in 1995 popularized the concept claiming that EI could predict better success in life that other indexes as IQ, although his affirmation has been criticized since it is not supported by empirical basis. Nowadays, research on EI is more alive than ever, although unfortunately so it is lay work about what has become broadly known as EI.

In parallel to the expansion of EI research, multiple EI educational programs have been developed the last two decades. This growing interest could be due to the fact that criticism about the Western educational system is increasing. There is nowadays a feeling of that intelligence as pure cognition has failed in order to achieve person's happiness. Moreover, emotional education is not provided by families to the extent as it was used to be, due to work pressures and other social factors, and youngsters are suffering a variety of psychological and interpersonal problems related with poor emotional abilities. Thus, responding to the increasing need to address emotional education in a structured manner, EI programs emerged strongly.

The present study aims to disclose the relation between EI approaches with EI programs, in order to narrow the detected gap between them. In order to achieve this main goal, it will be necessary to review collectively the latest emotional theories, alongside with the most prominent educational programs applied so far -considering implications for the stakeholders-. Therefore, the connections between theory-research and applications should be disclosed and, thereby, analyzed. Finally, practical guidelines will be presented in order to help educational stakeholders to discriminate between valid and deficient EI programs.

EMOTINAL INTELLIGENCE THEORY-RESEARCH

Intelligence has been historically viewed as a group of verbal and logical abilities. However, Gardner's multiple intelligences theory broke with this idea of intelligence, revealing other abilities that could be considered as intelligences, as for instance musical or intrapersonal intelligences (functions aimed to deal with internal representations or images, closely connected to EI). Within that context, EI appeared.

What is EI?. Although the existence of various EI approaches, they agree on that EI comprehends the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions to enhance thought. However, EI can be conceived as a set of abilities aimed to deal with emotional-laden information, as in the ability model proposed by Salovey and Mayer or, on the other hand, other authors apprehend EI as a group of emotion related dispositions or competences, closer to personality traits, as Bar-On's model and Goleman's approach. Hence, two kinds of EIs can be identified: abilities and mixed models. The latter view broadened the concept of EI, introducing social and moral variables to the construct.

Abilities model	Mixed models (Competences)
Perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions	Self-awareness
Access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought	Social awareness
Ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge	Relationship management
Regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth	Self-management

EI benefits. Research based on EI revealed encouraging outcomes. They have been found correlations between EI and important health issues like life and marital satisfaction. Furthermore, we human beings depend on emotions to accomplish such important tasks as decision-making as well as to develop proper social networks. On the contrary, an inverse correlation has been disclosed between EI and the consumption of illegal drugs. For instance, individuals that scored high on emotion regulation were less prone to develop psychopathologies, as for instance depression.

Comparing the two models, abilities models have generated more research than any other approach. Furthermore, the scales used to measure EI, based on this model, are the ones with better indexes of validity and reliability. On the other hand, mixed models have been widely criticized because their EI notion would not be sufficiently different from personality traits. Thus, a majority of researchers support the idea that abilities model is the more robust one.

Moreover, EI would face additional criticism. Firstly, the concept would be inconsistent with robust intelligence theories. Secondly, theories omitted the difference between primal and secondary emotions. These critiques could help researchers to refine the EI construct.

Implications for researchers. EI models should seek a better alignment with robust intelligence research, in order to properly define EI abilities. In fact, intelligence comprehends the representation of information as well as the construed functions -due to the environmental pressures- that operate with these stored images. According to this theory, emotion inner images and their associated functions -intrapersonal intelligence- are in nature different from the images and functions that deals with emotional external information -that is, information about the emotional state of others or interpersonal intelligence-. Therefore, abilities EI model would comprehend EI as a competence that would include intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities related to the emotion information. In that sense, it might be advisable to specify that EI would actually comprehend these two kinds of intelligence. Hence, EI could reveal itself as an operational construct, easier to assess and to apply to activities aimed to enhance EI abilities on humans. Moreover, EI tests should be designed according to these two different processes dealing with emotional-laden information.

Regarding to the second criticism, theories on EI should address the difference between primal and secondary emotions. Secondary emotions are highly connected to culture –and to the frontal lobe- through child development whereas primal emotions would be harder to control due to brain natural disposition. Hence, secondary emotions might be more affected by intellectual abilities, being easier to deal with to, in contrast to primal emotions. That difference it should also be taken into account when designing EI educational programs.

EI EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The main EI programs are the social and emotional learning (SEL) programs (http://www.casel.org) developed and exported from the United States. Basically, they seek to enhance the competences of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills and social awareness in students through different activities, in line to Goleman's proposal. The mentioned competences comprehend a set of emotional abilities and cognitive skills, as well as they implicitly or explicitly involve values and moral contents, which makes them harder to properly operationalize. In relation to others, SEL programs have been the main inspiration behind most of the EI programs around the world, and many of them drew ideas and activities from them. Moreover, regarding their efficacy, a recent analysis provided strong support to their validity, after studying more than 200 programs in the United States. However, their trans-cultural validity is still to be proven, amongst other criticism about the reliability and validity of the scales used to measure its efficacy.

Iberian Peninsula. Two main poles can be detected through the analysis of the most salient EI programs in the mentioned area. On the one hand, in the South of Spain a group of researchers from the University of Malaga, led by Fernández-Berrocal and Extremera, have conducted an extensive research and developed educational programs (as the Intemo project) following the path of Salovey and Mayer's model. On the other hand, the educational psychology orientation research group (GROP) in Catalonia, directed by Bisquerra, promoted various educational programs in line with mixed models, emphasizing emotional competences learning, in alignment with SEL programs.

Despite the difference on the theoretical background, it is shocking to realize that the activities proposed by both programs closely resemble each other as well as they are similar to the ones comprehended in SEL programs (e.g. emotional thermometer to address self-awareness or group activities to enhance emotional regulation). In fact, it is hard to find EI programs based strictly on the abilities model. Thus, most of the EI programs are based on mixed models that emphasize a cluster of competences, not addressing directly the abilities proposed by Salovey and Mayer.

Why EI programs are not based on the more robust EI abilities model? The answer could be found in relationship between EI theories and EI educational programs.

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT VERSUS EI MODELS

On the one hand, since the late 70s, a competency-based education has been promoted and applied within the educational field. In parallel, the constructivist educational model is the mainstream in the Western schooling system. The approach is characterized by an active implication of the students in the learning process, which is built on the basis of their specific previous existing knowledge and abilities. In addition, Vigotsky stressed the importance of social interactions in the mentioned learning process. Thus, the learning process should take into account not only the previous net of knowledge and abilities of every person, but also the moral and social values underlying the teacher-student interaction. That is, the previously acquired student competences, rather than just her or his abilities, would be the keystone of learning.

Considering the information provided above, the nature of emotional competencies, in contrast to the more restricted meaning of EI abilities, would fit better with the particular educational context aforementioned. This could be one of the main reasons why EI programs have been based on mixed models. Moreover, another reason for the application of EI educational programs based on EI mixed models is that they actually work. Nevertheless, the very nature of EI competences makes difficult to assure what is the cause of the positive changes observed after the application of the programs. It might be due to the assimilation of moral values involved in the activity as well as to the development of the abilities underlying the emotional competence itself. Finally, a third reason would be that an education based on competences would avoid a Machiavellian risk. That is, to enhance emotional abilities without addressing their associated moral and social contents could give students a powerful weapon with no guidelines to use it.

Nonetheless, mixed models and emotional competences continue to be the less robust model on EI research. Thus, there still exists a gap between theory and programs implementation.

> **Intelligence**: a mental ability (or set of mental abilities) that permit the recognition, learning, memory for, and capacity to reason about a particular form of information, such as verbal information.
>
> **Competence**: a set of abilities and cognitive skills, personality traits, and involved values and moral contents.

Implications for educational stakeholders. In order to narrow this gap, two future proposals are made. On the one hand, EI programs strictly based on the abilities model should be developed, isolating EI abilities from moral values and other social-competences. This task is especially problematic in the sense that the emotional world is intimately linked to the social world. Therefore it is required to wait until researchers advance in the refining of EI construct, specially the abilities model.

On the other hand, researchers in conjunction with educators should develop and apply valid and reliable instruments to assess the abilities underlying the activities as well as to evaluate the moral and cultural related issues. That is, to test values improving, ethical knowledge enhancing and EI (abilities and competences), in order to realize which one is a great contributor to the desired outcomes.

Moreover, many EI programs and theoretical models do not take into account emotional development theories. However, emotional milestones should be considered in order to accommodate programs to different children emotional stages.

EI PROGRAMS GUIDELINES

Considering the information mentioned above, the following guidelines should help educational stakeholders to detect and implement valid EI programs.

(a) EI programs should be based on a solid conceptual framework –abilities based programs should address the 4 abilities described in the model, whether mixed models based programs should aim to the development of the socio-emotional competences considered by the approach-. In essence, programs should not be base on intuitive or over-inclusive views of EI.

(b) Specific program goals -and their correspondent operational program objectives- should be determined, targeting the specific components of the EI model underpinning the program.

(c) It would be necessary to identify the educational, socio-cultural and developmental context in order to adapt the program to these characteristics such as age, cultural group, teacher characteristics or to the broader community features. Otherwise programs might be unsuccessful. In that sense, it is absolutely necessary to ensure teachers formation on EI programs and train them on the teaching of affective experiences.

(d) EI programs should be integrated into the school curriculum, thus blending EI enhancing activities with other ones as well as holding the programs enough time to be efficient -that is, more than one year-.

(e) Programs should provide strategies to facilitate generalization in EI abilities and competences to non-school situations, as for instance planning activities across different educational settings.

(f) Finally and very important, the program effectiveness assessing should be conducted using robust psychometric sound designs, although the difficulty on doing so within the educational context. Moreover, very few measures have been developed specially addressed to young people -e.g., MSCEIT Youth version-.

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