Emotional Intelligence and its role in the classroom

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Introduction

The motivation for this article came from witnessing the difficulties some students have in fully participating in their classes here at Kadai, and a strong feeling that these issues need to be addressed, if we are to help them overcome their difficulties.　Their problems do not appear to emanate from any difficulties associated with poor behaviour, or a lack of English ability.　On the contrary, they rarely, if ever cause any 'disciplinary trouble' in class, and in many cases their English ability is above average for the classes they attend.　My considered impression is that their problems may well be psychological.　I should state from the start, that my expertise, if one can call it that, is in 'Applied Linguistics' and as such, I do not claim to have any background in psychology. However, I do feel that my role as an educator, professor, teacher, parent, concerned human being, all round good-egg, or indeed any other label that can be ascribed to me, affords me not only an insight into this particular problem, but also perhaps the opportunity to make a contribution that may provide answers to help our students.　This paper is merely an exploratory one; one that seeks to find ways to help our troubled students.　Though not exclusively, many of these students come from the "コア再" classes.　This is particularly true of students who have taken these classes several times.　After considerable thought and study, I came to the conclusion that some of the answers may lie in understanding and raising awareness of Emotional Intelligence and its role in our classrooms. Much has been made of Emotional Intelligence（EI）in academic circles in recent years.　It is referred to and measured in the form of Emotional Quotient（EQ）．EQ is regarded as the emotional counterpart to the standard Intelligence Quotient（IQ）when measuring a person's intellect.　A great deal of the focus has centred on an adequate definition and its role in our daily lives.　This paper seeks to examine the current definitions and perceptions of EI/EQ with a view to identifying a practical role of EI/EQ in our classrooms.　It will attempt to suggest ways in which EI/EQ can be utilised in helping ourselves and our students attain our academic and social goals.

As with most papers of this kind, it would prove most useful to begin with a definition.　A task that it not as easy as it may first appear because EI/EQ is not universally accepted as a clearly identifiable, or demonstrable human characteristic.　Notwithstanding the arguments surrounding the definition, acceptance and relevance of EI/EQ, let us examine some of the more readily accessible explanations and definitions to be found in this area.

Alan Chapman（2000-2012）in his evaluation of David Goleman's seminal work *Emotional Intelligence* （1995）argues that using the standard IQ as a determinant of intelligence is far too narrow in its scope when it comes to establishing a person's intellect.　Chapman concludes that there are two aspects to EI;

● *Understanding yourself, your goals, intentions, responses and behaviour.*

● *Understanding others, and their feelings.*

Goleman, along with others in the field, including Thorndike（1920）, Gardener（1975）and Salovey and Mayer（1990）lend weight to the argument that EI/EQ is the ability to recognise, evaluate and control one's own emotions, and those of others.　　Kendra Cherry（2013）in her illuminating

treatise, *What is Emotional Intelligence?* contends that *"the ability to express and control our own emotions is important, but so is our ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others."*　Cherry refers to the four branches of EI set out by Salovey and Mayer (1990) maintaining that they are arranged from the more basic psychological processes to the more psychologically integrated processes;

1．Perceiving Emotions: The first step in understanding emotions is to accurately perceive them. In many cases, this might involve understanding nonverbal signals such as body language and facial expressions.

2．Reasoning With Emotions: The next step involves using emotions to promote thinking and cognitive activity. Emotions help prioritize what we pay attention and react to; we respond emotionally to things that garner our attention.

3．Understanding Emotions: The emotions that we perceive can carry a wide variety of meanings. If someone is expressing angry emotions, the observer must interpret the cause of their anger and what it might mean. For example, if your boss is acting angry, it might mean that he is dissatisfied with your work; or it could be because he got a speeding ticket on his way to work that morning or that he's been fighting with his wife.

4．Managing Emotions: The ability to manage emotions effectively is a key part of emotional intelligence. Regulating emotions, responding appropriately and responding to the emotions of others are all important aspects of emotional management.

Having established a working definition and explanation of EI and EQ for the purposes of this paper at least, our next task is to explore the relevance of understanding EQ and its role in our classrooms.　What makes such a task worthwhile is the simple fact that there are arguments running through many of the studies into EQ that maintain that EQ is equal to, if not more important than IQ. Whilst it is not unreasonable to suggest that this contention is far from substantiated given the extent of scepticism in accepting the concept of EQ; there is however, enough 'food for thought' in the studies to justify an exploration of the role EQ may be able to play in helping our students participate more actively and productively in their studies.

Perhaps it would prove useful to look at some EQ problems identified in the above studies and how they relate to our classrooms.　If we match the examples used in the above processes with equivalent and relevant models we are likely to find in our experiences with students and colleagues; this framework may well provide a basis on which to posit a considered plan of action to raise awareness of, and utilise EQ in our classrooms.

Let us begin by outlining the problems we face by examining two models of behaviour exhibited by some colleagues and students that suggest that they may well lack sufficient EQ to be able to fully function and succeed within the confines of a classroom.　Almost everyone who has studied at the secondary* or tertiary* level can recall a tutor who despite being academically gifted, possessing a high IQ rating appeared to be socially incompetent and uncaring.　Throughout the ages, many a student has been known to lament *"S/He doesn't understand me"* or *"S/He is just not interested in what I have to say."* It is not only students that feel this way, we often hear such refrains from colleagues and friends when they are describing fellow professors/bosses.

In terms of students, I feel sure that we all have witnessed students who do not exhibit any particular problem with the subject under study, but seem very reluctant to fully participate in the class and/or fail to interact with their fellow students.　This can often result in these students receiving much lower grades than their abilities warrant.　In the worst case scenarios, they fail the

courses completely. The resultant damage to their self-esteem tends to make students less willing to engage in their studies. Of course, if it is just down to laziness, or a general lack of effort, the solution is relatively simple; present the student with the reality of the situation, informing them that they have to change their ways or fail. However, what a terrible dereliction of our duty of care to our students we are engaging in, if they are failing simply because they (or we) simply lack a high enough EQ.

＊This is also true of the primary level, but most primary school students are unlikely to be aware of such disparities between a high IQ and low levels of EQ.

Referring back to the four branches of EI laid out by Salovey and Mayer earlier (page 41), we should examine the relationship between each branch of EI and how it relates to our colleagues and students.

Perceiving Emotions; we can say with some confidence that the type of colleagues and students alluded to above may well have problems in perceiving the emotions of others. Taking a lead from Salovey and Mayer, their problems may have arisen through their lack of understanding non-verbal signals. To help reduce these problems, it seems obvious that one course of action to take would be to engage in some form of training that would involve the acquisition of the skills needed to interpret these non-verbal skills. This of course is particularly true in language courses and/or international environments where cultural misunderstandings can and do happen. Including a cultural competence component may prove useful in reducing such incidents.

Reasoning with Emotions; as this involves using emotions to promote thinking and cognitive activity, this is perhaps the most difficult branch of EI to address. Chapman expresses the opinion that we should promote activities in the workplace that facilitate the ability to recognize, understand and manage the emotions of ourselves and others. He suggests this helps motivate not only ourselves, but also others in the way we manage their emotions. He alludes to the link between EI and Transitional Analysis (TA). TA is the concept conceived by Dr. Eric Berne in the 1950s. Chapman (2000-2012) refers to the work of Berne, Davidson and Mountain and their treaties on TA. TA is a social psychology and a method to improve communication. In essence, it illustrates how people relate to each other, and suggests ideas on how people can change and grow. Chapman and others in the field subscribe to the view that TA is supported by the philosophy that *"people can change and that we all have a right to be in the world and be accepted."* Chapman suggests we instil and explain EI by including EQ elements and examples in our teaching.

Understanding Emotions; the example Cherry (2013) refers to is understanding anger. She suggests that an observer must interpret the cause of a person's anger. This is especially true for educators. The misinterpretation of anger in a student can give rise to problems that range from the almost inconsequential 'teenage strop' which can be over in minutes, to the very serious cases where students take themselves out of the arena of education, or even worse, where their anger leads them to harm themselves or others.

Managing Emotions; this aspect of EI refers to the regulation of our emotions. This is problematic because it calls for an appropriate response to the emotion of others. The very term *'appropriate'* is highly subjective. It seems sensible to suggest that one way to address this problem is to engage both colleagues and students in a series of discussions and activities that will help facilitate a consensus on what 'appropriate' means in any given situation.

Discussion and Conclusion

As we alluded to in the introduction, this has been but a brief exploration into what Emotional Intelligence/Emotional Quotient is and what it means to us as educators. We have shown however, that there is enough evidence out there to warrant a closer look at EI/EQ and how it can help our students.

The students we are most concerned about are those who exhibit signs of disengagement in their studies and fellow students. Of course, it goes without saying that not all disengaged students lack an awareness of EI/EQ. Indeed, there are many social and medical reasons why students lose interest in their studies. As hard as it is, sometimes, we just have to concede that some students are not suited to the particular subject they have chosen/been forced to study. For those students, we must do our best to direct them to where their talents and interest lie.

Once we have identified the problem besetting our colleagues/students in the area of EI/EQ, we must then set about helping them. We can begin by creating an environment where we can first, raise awareness of EI/EQ in our institution and then go on to facilitate the adoption and instruction of EI/EQ in our curriculum. It should be noted at this point that we could all benefit from an increase in our EI/EQ. Therefore, it would be better to provide the type of EI/EQ awareness and instruction activities referred to earlier in the paper for all colleagues and students rather than target individuals. Targeting individuals could lead to them being stigmatised and further isolated. In practical terms, we could increase the amount of materials based on EI/EQ that students and colleagues are exposed to. There are many available; one such example can be found in the Reading Textbook list. Islam and Steenburgh (2009) cover the subject in their textbook: *A Good Read 2*. Through a series of exercises, students are made aware of what EI is, their own level of EQ, how they can improve their EQ, and finally, they are asked for their opinions on EI. This is not a recommendation for the activities in this book, it is merely an example of what is available to educators. Chapman (2000-2012) refers to a whole series of books and activities; for example *'50 Activities For Teaching Emotional Intelligence'by Dianne Schilling*. Chapman's copy was published by Innerchoice Publishing - ISBN 1-56499-37-0. Providing it is done with the full consent of participants, EI/EQ workshops could be set up.

This article is not arguing that the only way, or indeed the best way to reach our disengaged students is to adopt the instruction of EI/EQ. One simply has to review the arguments surrounding whether EI/EQ is a clearly identifiable, or demonstrable condition raging on in academic and social circles to understand why this is so. It is however, a paper that strongly recommends that the concept of EI/EQ is an avenue of study/endeavour worth exploring. We should do something to alleviate their suffering. We cannot go on year after year of just passing students from class to class forcing them into what can only be described as simulated learning; they deserve better.

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