Emotional Intelligence in Classrooms

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	The 21st century learning requires educators and learners to move beyond traditional academic learning. The fundamental aspects of the "Four Cs" (communication, critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and collaboration) are a prerequisite for the 21st century classrooms. Learners' emotions in classrooms are now regarded as essential. The study of emotions in classrooms is central to understand learners' motivation and learning patterns. Nelson and Low (2003) defined emotional intelligence as a confluence of developed skills and abilities to: (1) accurately know oneself in terms of personal strengths and weaknesses; (2) establish and maintain effective and healthy relationships; (3) get along and work productively with others; and (4) deal effectively and healthily with the demands and pressures of daily living. In other words, emotional intelligence is essential to effectively manage behaviours, to navigate social situations and to make decisions. This paper discusses the significant role of emotional intelligence in classrooms as well as the effective ways to enhance learners' emotional intelligence.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dynamic changes in the 21st century classrooms have urged educational leaders and teachers to think of newer and more innovative ways of learning, teaching and acquiring knowledge. Inspiring interest and engagement in classrooms while building learners' 21st century skills (best known as 4Cs - Communication, Critical thinking, Creativity and Collaboration) are the ultimate goals in education. Language and cultural knowledge are now used as a means to communicate and connect to others around the globe (Eaton, 2010). In addition, technology is used to aid learners to reach out to the world around them.

Intellectual intelligence and emotional intelligence both have equal share in education. Intellectual intelligence solves logical problems whereas emotional intelligence guides thoughts and behaviours. Intellectual intelligence represents abilities like visual and spatial processing, knowledge of the world, fluid reasoning, working memory and short-term memory as well as quantitative reasoning. Emotional intelligence, on the contrary, refers to abilities like identifying emotions, evaluating how others feel, controlling one's own emotions, perceiving how others feel, using emotions to facilitate social communication and relating to others. Although both intelligences undeniably play roles in influencing students' overall success, paying attention solely on academic development is insufficient because students' inappropriate behaviours is often due to a lack of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996).

2. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: A SNAPSHOT

The importance of non-cognitive aspects of intelligence (initially known as social intelligence) was first coined by Thorndike in 1920. Since then, these aspects were referred to as "non-intellective" and "intellective elements that primarily referred to the affective, personal and social factors (Wechsler, 1940). In 1983, Howard Gardner introduced "multiple intelligence" where "intrapersonal" and "interpersonal" intelligences were proposed to be equally important as the type of intelligence commonly assessed by IQ tests. Gardner (1983) described emotional intelligence as intrapersonal intelligence - the ability to develop and use effectively an accurate and veridical model of oneself and interpersonal intelligence - the ability to understand other people.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced the term "emotional intelligence" and it was described 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 this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Five domains of emotional intelligence that can assist teachers to understand emotional learning personality are clearly explained in Table 1.

Table 1: Five Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Domain	Description
Self-Awareness	Knowing and recognizing one's emotions
Mood Management	Managing one's feelings to the present situation and reacting accordingly
Self-Motivation	Directing oneself towards a goal, despite of having self-doubt, inertia and impulsiveness
Empathy	Recognizing others' feelings and turning them into their verbal and non-verbal cues
Managing Relationships	Managing interpersonal interaction and successful negotiations

Goleman (1996) further described emotional intelligence as (1) knowing one's feelings and using them to make good decisions in life; (2) being able to manage moods and control impulses; and (3) being motivated and effectively overcoming setbacks in working towards goals. Emotional intelligence includes empathy, knowing what others are feeling, managing emotions in relation to others, and being able to persuade and lead others (O'Neil, 1996). Emotional intelligence can be understood in its four key competencies that enable a person to perform at his/her optimum in any situation (Goleman, Boyzatia & McKene, 2002). Self-awareness or self-knowledge refers to the ability to be aware of one's own emotions and patterns of behaviours while self-management refers to the ability to manage negative or destructive emotions effectively. Social awareness is the ability to be aware of others' emotions and behaviours. Sharing positive relationships and experiences with others in a way that increases learning and life satisfaction describes the relationship management.

Table 2: Four Key Competencies of Emotional Intelligence

Type of competence	What I see	What I do
Personal competence	**Self-Awareness**	**Self-Management**
	Understanding yourself	Managing your behaviour
Social competence	**Social Awareness**	**Relationship Management**
	Understanding other people	Managing intercommunications

Source: Goleman, Boyzatia & McKene (2002)

3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN CLASSROOMS

Since the publication of the initial research in 1990, innovative schools and educational organizations have begun integrating emotional intelligence into their educational programs. It is becoming increasingly clear that these skills are one of the foundations for high-performing students and classrooms. Durlak et al. (2011) clearly states that emotional intelligence has an impact on both teaching and learning. Studies have shown that training emotional intelligence as little as a half-day training and combining it with individual coaching session can greatly improve students' emotional skills (Carrick, 2010). Students in an emotional intelligence-infused class are found to have an increase in their emotional skills when measured before and after the emotional instruction (Chang, 2006). In a study conducted by Martinez et al. (2014), students on probation who participated in emotional intelligence skill development workshops had a retention rate 20% higher than those who did not. Qualter et al. (2009) have revealed that students who have shown an increase in emotional intelligence as a result of an intervention program are more likely to persist with their studies than those who are not participating. Students who are taught in the emotional intelligence-focused sessions are found to have better emotional intelligence skills and retention compared to those who do not undergo the emotional intelligence-focused sessions (Schutte & Malouf, 2002). In Jaeger's (2003) research, a correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance is found among students who are offered emotional intelligence curriculum as compared to their counterparts who do not undergo the curriculum.

Researchers reveal that emotional intelligence encompasses the underlying, foundational characteristics and

abilities that assist teachers' creativity, efficacy, coping skills and classroom management skills (Austin et al. 2004; Ramy, Beydokhty & Jamshidy, 2014). Teachers tend to be more innovative and creative when they are more self-motivated, expressive and sociable (Magulod, 2017).Teachers who can regulate their own emotions as well as their students' are found to be more constructive when dealing with negative situations, and are more capable in finding positive solutions within their classrooms (Perry & Ball, 2007). Teachers who possess good emotional intelligence skills are usually passionate and enthusiastic for the subject matter (Littky et al., 2004). These teachers are caring especially when dealing with at-risk students (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008). They also provide positive reinforcement, manage classrooms efficiently and effectively generate "transformative" learning environment and engender authoritative classroom settings by creating an environment that is high with teacher's expectation and warmth (Martin & Pear, 1996, Low & Nelson, 2005, Good & Brophy, 2007, Walker, 2009). Teachers with emotional intelligence abilities influence students' self-esteem and self-reported ability that directly contribute to a successful school performance (Curci et al, 2014). Teachers who are emotionally intelligent can sufficiently perceive, use, understand and manage emotions in the class, and this ability advances students' school performance by interacting with motivating self-perceptions (Curci, et al, 2014).

Students' classroom behaviours as well as their school and academic performance may also be affected by emotional intelligence. Several studies have documented that students with low emotional intelligence face some difficulties to focus and build relationships with their peers (Castillo et al, 2013; Rodriguez et al, 2014). These students may eventually become aggressive due to their lacked of skills needed to communicate or to manage their emotions appropriately. This aggression would negatively affect the class, presentation of work as well as other students' progress. One possible cause of such behaviour is the physiology of the brain that forces learning and strong emotions to compete for a space in the working memory. Emotions that are aroused by any form of confrontation would inhibit the learning of those directly involved and would also disrupt the environment of other learners (Goleman, 1996), Low emotional intelligence students often argue with adults to justify their behaviour or to avoid fulfilling a request (Jordan & Le Metais, 2000). On the contrary, students who participate in emotional intelligence instructional programmes are found to be less aggressive towards adults and their peers. These students are less likely to involve in a variety of risky behaviours, have greater self-confidence and are more capable to make safer choices (Jordan & Le Metais, 2000).

With regard to school achievement, many studies have examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and successful outcomes. Bar-On (2005) states that "ability to manage one's emotions, to be able to validate one's feelings and to solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature are important for being academically successful; additionally, academic performance appears to be facilitated by being able to set personal goals as well as to be sufficiently optimistic and self-motivated to accomplish them" (p.14 -15). In a study by Schutte et al. (2001), a significant and positive correlation between a self-report measure of emotional intelligence and first-year university grades is discovered. Parker et al. (2004) have also found a correlation between academic success and several dimensions of emotional intelligence measured through the Emotional Quotient Inventory scales.

Petrides et al. (2008) further confirm that emotional intelligence aids to moderate the relationship between cognitive ability and academic performance. Positive affective experiences in the classroom have been linked with more cognitive activity during lessons. Buff, Reusser, and Rakoczy, (2011) posit an indirect effect of positive affective experiences on achievement, which is mediated by cognitive activity and expectancy of success. When examining the relationship between the G-TMMS and the percentage of class students with good grades, Aritzeta et al. (2016) discover that high levels of group EI are related to greater academic performance. These results parallel others showing that positive affective experiences in the classroom are related to academic achievement (Ruthig et al., 2008), and that a positive classroom climate is more conducive to learning, promoting positive developmental outcomes among students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Interpersonal, stress management and adaptability are also significant predictors of students' academic achievement. Jaeger and Eagan (2007) conclude that ability to deal with stressful situations allow students to "manage the anxiety of tests, deadlines, competing priorities, and personal crises" (p. 527). Being "generally flexible, realistic, effective in understanding problematic and emotional situations, and competent at arriving at adequate solutions" (Jaeger & Eagan 2007, p. 528) would greatly assist students especially those in colleges to handle pressures and to achieve academic success. Jaeger, Bresciani and Ward (2003) also postulate that interpersonal skills and students' general mood are significantly correlated to high school GPA.

4. FOSTERING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

Several suggestions are put forward to assist teachers to develop and increase students' emotional

intelligence. Firstly, it is wise for teachers to highlight and share students' and others' strengths and best qualities openly to heighten their confidence. Teacher should teach students to use their strengths to support their challenges. Students should be exposed and taught on how to explore and nurture their weaker talents through their strengths. Plenty of time should be apportioned for active reflection, introspection and conversation. It is during this allocated time that students are free to become reflective and have the chances to share their introspective reflections with their peers. Interesting class activities like "Get-to-know" and "Unique and Shared" games may be carried in the class. These activities would make students realize that they have more common ground with their peers than they might initially realize. Additionally, such activities would highlight students' own individual strengths and would empower students to feel that they have something unique to contribute to their peers.

Besides that, teachers should be creative in offering opportunities to showcase their students' multiple talents and abilities. Activities like drama, story-telling, debate, talent show and "show and tell" are some fun class activities that may serve as a platform for students to show off their talents and abilities. Constant emotional support is also crucial since it can build students' optimism in a realistic way, reduce the chances of giving up and encourage students to feel safe to try and to eliminate the "I can't" attitude. Giving credit to accomplishments and reminding students about their previous success are some practical ways to display teachers' support. Regularly reassuring students to consider the positives of a situation rather than the negatives may help to embolden students' success and suppress students' negative mind-set that may upset their ability to obtain achievement.

Another effective ways to boost emotional intelligence is to highlight the importance of understanding the message of emotions and to model this understanding by validating students' feelings and helping them to explore options in response to those feelings. Being able to understand the message of emotions will guide a student to act in ways that connect with his/her best judgement (Faturn, 2013). Helping students to understand the importance of emotions and to be aware that more than one emotion can be felt at a time would aid students to focus on their own emotions and others' feelings. Pettry (2006) has discussed various engaging class activities for understanding the message of emotions. "Emotions Secret Code Activity," "Emotions Word Search Puzzle," "Emotions Bingo," "Self-Expression" and "Leisure and Life's Blessings" are some of the suggested activities. Some of these activities' learning objectives are (1) to enhance students' awareness of own and others' emotions, (2) to identify need for emotional development (3) to increase familiarization of emotions (4) to verbalize emotions (5) to recognize positives in self and in life (6) to understand how activities influence mood.

Apart from that, teachers should also facilitate the use of emotional messages in decision-making. Teachers should emphasize that every problem has a solution if it is dealt with patience and rationale. Students should be trained to focus on the good thing and think about ways that negative situations might be improved. Class activities should regard failures as part of a learning process and continuous opportunities and support should be anticipated so that students are able to learn from the past and keep moving towards the future. Role play, drama, modelling with video and modelling with puppets are some enjoyable class activities that would allow students to understand and demonstrate the message of emotions.

5. CONCLUSION

In summary, emotional intelligence is indeed an essential aspect in the teaching and learning process. Studies have shown that psychological experience in the classroom strongly influences students' attitudes towards school, contributing constructively or destructively to a range of attitudinal and behavioural outcomes that enhance or impede learning (Osterman, 2010; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Higher level of intrinsic motivation and more positive attitudes towards oneself, school, adults and peers may lead to better grades, good behaviours, higher retention and good leadership skills. On the contrary, the experience of rejection and isolation is consistently linked with behavioural problems in the classroom, lower interest in school, lower achievement, dropout, and various forms of emotional distress (Osterman, 2000).

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