

Emotional Intelligence and Creativity in Teacher Education

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) and creativity have emerged to be crucial components of emotional adjustment, personal well-being, life success, and interpersonal relationship in the past decade. This article provides a critical review of the research field of EI and Creativity in the school context and analyzes its present and future value in teacher education in the Nigerian educational system. First, the author examine the debate on educational policies in different countries (UK, USA, Spain and Nigeria) for providing children the best start in life and for development of EI and Creative abilities. Second, theoretical models of EI by Mayer and Salovey (1997), and Creativity by Edward de Bono (2001) were discussed in detail. Third, the author summarizes research concerning the relevance of EI and Creativity to indicators for personal and school success. Some recommendations for developing EI and Creativity at school and implication for future educational policies were given.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence(EI); Creativity; Personal well-being; Educational policies and School success.

Introduction

“I have often observed, with deep regret, that educability of the intelligence is often prevented. The idea of once a dunce, always a dunce seems to go unchallenged by teachers; these teachers lose interest in students who lack intelligence-they show them neither sympathy nor respect, using such unmeasured language in front of the children that they say things like: “This boy will never be good for anything... he has no gifting, no intelligence”. Many times I have heard such careless words. They are repeated daily in primary schools and also in secondary. I remember during my Baccalaureate exam in Letters, Martha the examiner became indignant over one of my answers (I confused the name of a Greek philosophy with one of the character names from La Bruyere). She declared that I would never have the philosophic spirit. “Never!” What a daring word! Some recent philosophers seem to give moral support to such deplorable verdicts, affirming that an individual’s

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intelligence is a fixed quantity, a quantity that cannot increase. We must protest and counteract this brutal pessimism; let us demonstrate that it has no basis whatsoever.” (Alfred Binet, 1909).

A century after these thoughts from Alfred Binet (1909), we continue to be concerned about how to get pupils to improve both their intellectual ability and their academic performance. Thus it is ironic that today Binet is more famous in our university classrooms for his invention of the concept Intelligence Quotient (IQ) than for his almost desperate attempts to design educational programs that, as we would say today, integrate children with intellectual and learning disabilities.

However, if we analyze the Binet quote from a more psychological point of view, we find that the anecdote he recounts-his teacher Martha’s behaviour during his Baccalaureate exam-is a very negative emotional memory. Binet politely refers to the daring word, “Never!” (we prefer to call it reckless), which still rings in his ears when he writes *Modern Ideas about Children* at the end of his life (he died in 1911). Fortunately, young Alfred did not listen to the reckless, discouraging words of his teacher, and years later became a full professor at La Sorbonne, and an original, very influential thinker. Today, Alfred Binet is considered one of the fathers of modern psychology, with more than 115,000 entries in Google.

Unfortunately, not all children who hear such “daring” affirmations, for example, about their intellectual or physical abilities, whether at school or at home, are able to emotionally rise above their effects. The emotional and social competencies for coping adequately with negative, destructive emotions generated in such a competitive context as school have not been explicitly taught in our culture. Why not? Because in our society, and specifically at school, up until the end of the 20th century, intellectual and academic aspects of students have been given priority, under the conviction that their emotional and social aspects belong to the private sphere, where each individual is responsible for his or her own personal development (Evanc, 2002; Fernandez-Berrocal & Ramos, 2002).

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“The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children-their health and safety, their materials security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born.”

This quote is taken from the beginning of the Unicef Innocent report “Childhood Poverty in Perspective: an overview of child well-being in rich countries”, with regard to 21 ultramodern societies. This study evaluates and compares children’s quality of life along six dimensions: material well-being, health and security, education, family and peer relations, behaviours and risks, and the children’s own subjective perception. These dimensions are measured by 40 independent indicators, significant to the lives of children, according to the concept of childhood well-being as drawn up at the UN Convention on the rights of the Child.

In this report, the Netherlands holds first place in the welfare of minor children, followed by Switzerland, Denmark and Finland. However, countries like the U.K. and United States hold the lowest places, after poorer countries like Poland, Nigeria and the Czech Republic. This data point is very significant because it shows us that there is no linear association between children’s welfare in a country, and its GDP: the wealth of societies does not guarantee its citizens’ satisfaction and happiness, at least, not for the youngest ones.

Spain holds a good position in his welfare ranking. Spanish children and adolescents have a very high subjective assessment of their own welfare, in terms of their perception of their own health and degree of satisfaction with their lives. These variables and others place Spain in position number five in the general classification of childhood well-being in 21 countries.

Nonetheless, this positive view of Spain is in contrast to other recent data that show that Spanish young people also have serious problems. First, the total number of unwanted pregnancies in Spain in adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 during 2005 was 25,965 (INE, 2007), of which approximately 49.6% were ended in abortion. Second, there is the consumption of legal drugs in adolescents, for example, 44% had gotten drunk at some time during the last month (Ministry of Health & Consumption, 2007).

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In the U.K., the dreadful Unicef results regarding well-being of their minor children have generated a great debate about the inability of a rich, ultramodern society to make its youth happy. One of the first reactions has been the creation of a State Secretariat for “Children, Schools and Families” (<http://www/dfes.gov.uk/>) in June 2007, for the purpose of assuring satisfaction and happiness in children and youth.

One of the strategies of this new department has taken shape in the active support of a national movement called “Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning” (SEAL; <http://www.bandapilot.org.uk/>) for Primary and Secondary Education.

The SEAL movement is directly inspired from proposal originally labeled in the U.S. as “Social and emotional Learning” (SEL; www.CASEL.org). the principles of SEL are put forward as an integrating framework in order to coordinate all the specific programs which are being applied at school, under the basic assumption that the problems affecting youth are caused by the same emotional and social risk factors. Thus, the best way to prevent these specific problems would be through practical development of children’s social and emotional skills in a positive, stimulating atmosphere (Weissberg & O’Brien, 2004). The SEL programs are based on the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) developed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990 (Salovey & Mayer, 1997) and propagated with great commercial success by Daniel Goleman in 1995 (Goleman, 1995). Under the label of SEL programs, we find those which offer training in basic skills directly related to EI, such as emotional perception, emotional understanding, emotional regulation, as well as broader, higher level aspects linked to personality, such as self-esteem, perseverance, assertiveness and optimism (for a review, see Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

In Spain, in order to introduce education of the emotions at school, an educational movement has risen under names like “Emotional Education” or “Socio-Emotional Education”. This movement reflects educators’ interest in changing a school system which is perceived to be in crisis and unable to face the many challenges of our society. Thus, including emotional and social aspects in students’ curriculum is considered one possible solution to some of the urgent problems of the educational system. The main drawback facing educators is that they do not know how to translate this concept into practice. In this admirable desire for change,

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teachers have addressed the problem from the perspective of Goleman's popular works, and anxious to take action, they have overlooked the academic debates on the real effects and proven effectiveness of EI intervention programs.

Moreso, in Nigeria no conclusion has been made concerning the introduction of Emotional intelligence in the curriculum of Nigeria educational system. Curriculum planner are facing the problem of what name to be given to EI when it is introduced and how to translate the concept into practice. The necessity has arise because children, adolescents and young youths we find in schools today need to understand their emotion and that of others for them for maximally contribute their quota to national development.

Creativity is one of the tools to drive economic viability in the 21st century. This is because the quality of human ideas, concepts and values determine the prosperity of individuals, groups and organizations. It is the most fundamental of all human resources, competencies and skills. Akinboye (2002) submitted that, "without creativity man is not able to make full use of information and resources available locked up in old habits, structures, patterns and concepts and perceptions."

Definition of Creativity

If one asks a hundred people to give the meaning of creativity, they are likely to come up with a hundred definitions. This is because creativity is an amazingly complex behaviour that is multifactorially determined. Sometimes when one claims to be creative, the question that is addressed to him is "what has he produced?" This is probably why a number of theories have emerged to explain the process of creativity. The oldest and most widespread theory considers creativity as the association of concepts in such a way that new combination are formed. No wonder, Torrance considers the creative behaviour as the process of becoming aware of problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, bringing together in new relationships, available information, identifying the missing elements, searching for solutions, making guesses or formulating hypotheses.

In a recent compilation Akinboye (2002) assembled the following definitions of creativity from the literature.

1. Creativity describes the production of new ideas.

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2. Creativity described the reconstruction of new ideas from the old
3. Creativity is insight.
4. Creativity involves the active search for alternatives
5. Creativity describes special ways of handling information.

The purpose of this article is to describe Mayer and Salovey's EI model and Edward de Bono bringing out the concrete benefits of EI and creativity which are found in the scientific literature on schooling, with the intent to promote EI and creativity at school.

Salovey and Mayer's Model of emotional Intelligence

From Salovey and Mayer's theoretical model, EI is conceived as an authentic intelligence, based on the adaptive use of emotions such that the individual can solve problems and effectively adjust to his or her surroundings. Mayer and Salovey's skill model considers that EI is conceptualized through four basic skills:

“the skill of accurate perception, appraisal and expression of emotions, the skill of taking on and/or generating feelings which facilitate thinking; the skill of understanding emotions and emotional knowledge and the skill of regulating emotions, thus promoting emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Benefits of Improving EI

More recent literature has shown that gaps in emotional intelligence skills affect students both inside and outside the school context (Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner & Salovey, 2006; Mestre & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2007; Sanchez-Nunez, Fernandez-Berrocal, Montanes & Latorre, 2008. there are four basic areas where a lack of EI provokes or facilitates the appearance of behaviour problems in students:

- Emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships,
- Emotional intelligence and psychological well-being,
- Emotional intelligence and academic performance, and
- Emotional intelligence and the appearance of disruptive behaviours.

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Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Relationships

One of the most important objectives for any person is to maintain the best possible relations with the people around him or her. Strong EI help us to be able to offer those around us adequate information about our psychological state. In order to manage the emotional state of others, it is first necessary to manage well one's own emotional states. Emotionally intelligent persons are not, only skillful in perceiving, understanding and managing their own emotions, they also are able to extrapolate these skills to the emotions of others. In this sense, EI plays a basic role in establishing, maintaining and having quality interpersonal relationships. Some studies have found empirical data that support the relationship between EI and adequate interpersonal relationship (Bracket et al., 2006; Lopes, Salovey, Cote, Beers, 2005).

Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Well-Being

In the last decade, a group of studies have focused on analyzing the role of EI in students' psychological well-being. The Mayer and Salovey model provides us with a suitable framework for understanding basic emotional processes which underlie the development of adequate psychological balance, and helps us better understand the mediating role of certain emotional variables in students and their influence on psychological adjustment and personal well-being. Studies carried out in the United States show that university students with higher EI report fewer physical symptoms, less social anxiety and depression, greater use of active coping strategies for problem solving, and less rumination. Furthermore, when these students are exposed to stressful laboratory tasks, they perceive stressors as less threatening, and their level of blood pressure is lower (Salovey, Stroud, Woolery & Epel, 2002). Research carried out with Spanish adolescents shows that when they are divided into groups according to their level of depressive symptomatology, students with a normal state differ from those classified as depressive by greater clarity about their feelings and greater ability to regulate their emotions (Fernandez-Berrocal, Alcaide, Extremera & Pizarro, 2006).

Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance

The ability to pay attention to their emotions, experience feelings with clarity and be able to recover from negative states of mind will be a decisive influence on students' mental health, and this psychological balance in turn is related to and ultimately affects academic

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performance. Persons with limited emotional skills are more likely to experience stress and emotional difficulties during their studies, and consequently will benefit more from the use of adaptive emotional skills that allow them to cope with these difficulties. EI may act as a moderator of the effects of cognitive skills on academic performance (Fernandez, Gil-Olarte, Palomera & Brackett, 2006).

Emotional Intelligence and the Appearance of Disruptive Behaviours

EI skills are a key factors in the appearance of disruptive behaviours based on an emotional deficit. It is logical to expect that students with low levels of EI show greater levels of impulsiveness and poorer interpersonal and social skills, all of which encourage the development of various antisocial behaviours (Petrides et al., 2004). Some researchers suggest that people with lower emotional intelligence are more involved in self-destructive behaviour such as tobacco consumption (Brackett, Mayer & Warner, 2004; Chou & Johnson, 2005). Adolescents with a greater ability to manage their emotions are more able to cope with them in their daily life, facilitating better psychological adjustment, and so they present less risk for substance abuse. Specifically, adolescents with a wider repertoire of affective competencies based on the understanding, management and regulation of their own emotions do not require other types of external regulators (e.g. tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs) in order to recover from negative states of mind provoked by the wide range of stressful life events which they are exposed to at this age (Ruiz-Aranda, Fernandez-Berrocal, Cabello & Extremera, 2006).

For Edward de Bono, the process of creativity is explained by Six Thinking Hats and Six Action Shoes. From his extensive studies in neurosciences which he believed is a stepping stone for students restructuring designing, constructing and generating new outcomes

Six Thinking Hats

This creativity framework was developed by Edward de Bono (2001). The underlying principle in the framework is that parallel thinking is more productive than argument and adversarial thinking. A powerful framework for problem-solving and team work. Each hat has a different colour which represent a different dimension of thinking about a topic.

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1. **White Hat** indicates search for pure facts, figures and information (good for science incline students).
2. **Red Hat** indicate feelings and emotions intuition and hunches (emotional intelligence for students).
3. **Yellow Hat** indicates sunshine, brightness and optimism, positive, constructive and opportunity thinking.
4. **Black Hat** indicates negatives, the davits advocate, why things will not work.
5. **Green Hat** indicates fertility, synthesis, movement, idea provocation
6. **Blue Hat** indicates coolness, control, conclusion, decisions.

Six Action Shoes

This framework developed by Edward de Bono help people action their thinking. It is said that, “a man of words and not of deeds is like a garden full of weeds”. Each shoe reminds the thinker of the type of action that is appropriate in a particular situation.

1. Navy formal shoes suggest routines and formal procedures.
2. Orange gumboots suggest explosion, danger, emergencies, fire fighting.
3. Pink slippers suggest warmth and domesticity for help, support and comfort-giving feminine touch to things.
4. Brown Brogues suggest pragmatism being sensible and practical
5. Grey sneakers suggest “grey matter” for doing things-think hard and come up with a brand of product with heavy integrated values.
6. Purple riding boots suggest imperial authority. Issue orders, manifest transformational leadership.

Is it Possible to Teach EI and Creativity?

After a brief view of the benefits of EI in different areas of the school context, the readers is likely to think: “It’s all very nice to have these skills at school. Indeed, the world would be perfect if my students had these emotional and creative skills. But, what if they don’t?” And the next question that inevitably arises is: Can I develop EI and creativity in my students?

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Teaching emotional intelligence has become a necessary task in the educational arena and most parents and teacher consider mastery of these skills a priority in the socioemotional and personal development of their children and pupils. However, there are many ways to pursue this, and from my point of view, it is important to teach children and adolescents using EI and creative programs which explicitly include and highlight emotional skills based on the ability to perceive, understand and regulate emotions, as outlined in the Mayer and Salovey model, (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, Edward de Boro, 2001)

Teaching these skills depends on giving priority to practice, training and improvement, and not so much on verbal instruction. The main thing is to exercise and practice emotional & creative skills, enabling them to become just one more adaptive response within a person's natural repertoire.

Barriers to Creativity in Nigeria

When deliberate creative endeavours are considered, the major enemy in the realization of defined outcomes is a barrier to the realization of the outcome. If such barriers are not removed, they can frustrate the individual trying to get things done. Certain obstacles tend to hinder individuals, groups and organization from being creative. Such obstacles constitute the barriers to creativity. The barriers are seen in four different ways; Personal Barriers; Cultural Barriers, Emotional Barriers and Perception Barriers.

Personal Barriers

- Being too busy
- Having no time to relax so that the mind can pause and focus deeply on issues

Cultural Barriers

- The taboo- "Do it as we have always done it so as to get result we've always got!" – This is seriously anti-creativity
- Desire to conform to societal patterns

Emotional Barriers

- Fear of making mistakes

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- The believe that one is not creative

Perceptual Barrier

- Failure to use all senses
- Narrowing one's point of view too much

Educators needs to take into consideration these barriers, in introducing creativity into the curriculum of school system. Possible ways of dealing with the aforementioned barriers should be given so that students will not be hampered by them.

Conclusion

Young Alfred Binet would have been grateful if his teacher Martha would have had enough EI to point out his error without the load of destructive emotions that she recklessly passed on. The European society where Binet was born and lived has changed radically and is nearly unrecognizable from our 21st century mentality. However, some of the less evolved aspect of the school where Binet was brought up still remain in our present-day educational system.

Notable countries belonging to the G8 (“the richest countries club”), such as the United States and the United Kingdom, have begun to understand that being one of the eight most industrialized, richest and most influential countries on the planet does not guarantee that citizens are satisfied with their lives or are happy. In Spain the situation is not yet as critical as in these countries. In Nigeria, where child's right have not been fully recognized the citizens are not really contributing to national development because of unhappiness.

The United States and the United Kingdom and Spain are reacting appropriately to this challenge, from both public and private institutions. In order to do so, they are contributing heavily to research funds for the study, application and evaluation of different socioemotional education programs at school. Along these lines, Nigeria finds itself at an excellent moment to make educational policies and investments similar to those made in these countries. However, we should not do so in a rushed, uncoordinated fashion as is often imposed by the

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pace of our nation, but rather from a serious, rigorous perspective that allows for extensive development of socioemotional education in the mid and long term.

Perhaps the contradictions and paradoxes of ultramodern societies cannot be resolved through educating the emotions and creativity at school, and other radical changes in our environment and in our lives are necessary, but there is no doubt that the 21st century will be a friendlier, more stimulating era for those future citizens who have greater EI and Creative skills. For it will help them to be self employed in the absence of no job bringing the development of the nation closer to our door steps.

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