

The Concept of Emotional Intelligence

by

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Intelligence is a general descriptive term referring to a hierarchy of mental abilities, from simple perceptual processes and information processing to higher and more general forms of problem solving (Carroll, 1993).

Until now the term "intelligence" has been limited largely to certain kinds of problem-solving involving language and logic. However, human beings are able to deal with numerous kinds of content besides words, numbers, and logical relations -- for example, space, music, the psyches of other human beings. Thus, in the present decade, researchers have explored the possibility that intelligences are a more diverse and looser confederation of abilities than once was thought.

One evident factor in the rethinking of intelligence is the perspective introduced by scholars who are not psychologists. Anthropologists have commented that some cultures do not even have a concept called intelligence, and others define intelligence in terms of traits such as obedience, good listening skills, or moral fiber (Gardner, 1999). Neuroscientists are skeptical that the highly differentiated and modular structure of the brain is consistent with a unitary form of intelligence.

By the end of the twentieth century, it was amply evident that mental functions are highly interconnected. Most of one's mental processes, from colour perception to self-insight, potentially involve and activate both emotion and intelligence (LeDoux 2000).

Yet, the tension between exclusively cognitive views of what it means to be intelligent and broader views that include a positive role for emotions in intelligence can be traced back many centuries. The Stoic philosophers of Ancient Greece focused on virtue, and viewed emotion as too individualistic and self-absorbed to be a reliable guide for insight and wisdom. Later, the Romantic movement of eighteenth-century Europe stressed how intuition and empathy, rooted in emotion, could provide insights that were unavailable through logic alone (Reddy, 2001).

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) offers a new way of looking at the debate - that people can reason about emotions and use emotions to assist reasoning.

1. The Definition and Scope of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is historically defined as the ability to carry out accurate reasoning focused on emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Its primary focus has to do with reasoning about emotions and the use of emotions to enhance thought. Thus, EI represents abilities that join intelligence and emotion to enhance thought.

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Many commentators suppose that EI derives from the broader construct of social intelligence (e.g. Baron, 2000). Contemporary perspectives on social intelligence have their origins in Thorndike's influential, tripartite division of intelligence into the following broad classes: (a) abstract-scholastic intelligence: the ability to understand and manage ideas, (b) mechanical-visuo-spatial intelligence: the ability to understand and manipulate concrete objects; and (c) social (practical) intelligence: the ability to understand and manage people and act wisely in social contexts. However, despite considerable interest and numerous attempts to define and measure social intelligence over the past eight decades, these attempts have proved problematic (Kihlstrom & Cantor, 2000). The inability to discriminate between general and social intelligence, coupled with difficulties in selecting external criteria against which to validate experimental scales, led to a decline in research focusing on social intelligence as a distinct intellectual entity, until the recent upsurge of interest in EI.

1.1 Approaches to Emotional Intelligence

Theoretical approaches to EI broadly divide into two categories. Specific-Ability approaches examine relatively discrete mental abilities that process emotional information, while Integrative-Model approaches describe overarching frameworks of mental abilities that combine skills from multiple EI areas. A third approach to EI is often referred to as a Mixed Model approach because of the mixed qualities that such models target.

Specific-ability approaches focus on a particular skill or skills that can be considered fundamental to EI. Some specific-ability models address the ways in which emotions facilitate thinking. For example, emotions may prioritize thinking (Mandler 1975) or allow people to be better decision makers (Lyubomirsky et al. 2005). A person who responds emotionally to important issues will attend to more crucial aspects of his or her life. By contrast, if the person is constantly frustrated, say, by her subordinate's minor clerical errors, then broader concerns that are more important may not be addressed (Parrott 2002). In addition, certain specific emotions can foster given types of thinking. For example, positive emotions promote greater creativity in some contexts (Amabile et al. 2005, Averill & Nunley 1992, Isen 2001, Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Part of emotional facilitation is to know how to include emotions in, and exclude emotions from, thought.

Another set of specific-ability models concerns emotional reasoning and understanding. For example, emotion-appraisal researchers have developed decision rules for matching a given emotion to the class of situations that has elicited it. For example, if a person experiences fear, it is likely that he or she is facing a situation that is threatening, raising thoughts of bad things happening, and elicits a need to escape (Scherer et al., 2001). Related to such appraisals are the accurate labeling and categorization of feelings (Innes-Ker & Niedenthal, 2002). Theorists have argued that accurate appraisal may be a hallmark of emotionally intelligent responses (MacCann et al., 2004). If a person's appraisal process is awry, then he or she may misunderstand an event or its consequences and react inappropriately.

Yet another relevant ability area concerns emotional self-management. This area grew out of clinical findings that one's emotionality could become more positive by reframing perceptions of situations (Beck et al., 1979), as well as from the idea that individuals often exert considerable emotional self-control when at work (Hochschild, 1983).

On the other hand, the key element in integrative models of EI is the joining of several specific abilities to obtain an overall sense of EI. The Four-Branch Model views Emotional Intelligence as joining abilities from four areas: (a) accurately perceiving emotion, (b) using emotions to facilitate thought, (c) understanding emotion, and (d) managing emotion (Mayer et al. 2003). Each of these areas is viewed as developing from early childhood onward. For example, in perceiving emotion, a person's ability to recognize basic emotions in faces is likely to precede the ability to detect the faking of emotional expressions (Mayer & Salovey 1997). As skills grow in one area (e.g., perceiving emotions), so will they grow in other areas (such as understanding and regulating emotions). Further, the idea that EI requires attunement to social norms is central to the four-branch model.

Another integrative approach to EI is represented by Izard's Emotional Knowledge Test (EKT; Izard, 2001). EKT focuses, in particular, on emotional perception and understanding. In fact, Izard (2001) sometimes prefers to speak of emotional knowledge as opposed to emotional intelligence.

Aside from the central Specific Ability and Integrative Model approaches to EI, some psychologists have suggested Mixed Model approaches to the field. Such models mix diverse attributes - such as assertiveness, flexibility, and the need for achievement - that are not primarily focused on emotional reasoning or emotional knowledge. These approaches to Emotional Intelligence use very broad definitions of EI that include "non-cognitive capability, competency, or skill" (Bar-On 1997) and/or "emotionally and socially intelligent behavior" (Bar-On, 2004), and "dispositions from the personality domain" (Petrides & Furnham 2003). More concretely, most measures in this category assess one or more EI attributes, such as accurate emotional perception, but then mix in, to varying degrees, other scales of happiness, stress tolerance, and self-regard (Bar-On 1997); adaptability, (low) impulsiveness and social competence (Boyatzis & Sala, 2004); and creative thinking, flexibility, and intuition versus reason (Tett et al. 2005).

Finally, a popular EI model is the one introduced by Daniel Goleman (1998), who posits that individuals are born with a general emotional intelligence that determines their potential for learning emotional competencies. These emotional competencies are not innate talents, but rather learned capabilities that must be worked on and developed to achieve outstanding performance (Bradberry and Greaves, 2005). The model focuses on EI as a wide array of competencies and skills that drive managerial performance. It outlines four main EI constructs:

1. Self-awareness - the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact while using gut feelings to guide decisions.
2. Self-management - involves controlling one's emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances.
3. Social awareness - the ability to sense, understand, and react to other's emotions while comprehending social networks
4. Managing Relationships - the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict

1.2 Emotional intelligence (EQ) vs. Intellectual intelligence (IQ)

Many Research studies have shown that Emotional Intelligence significantly contributes to job performance and leadership. Competency research in over 200 companies and organizations worldwide suggests that about one-third of this difference is due to technical skill and cognitive ability while two-thirds is due to emotional competence. (Goleman, 1998). Research by the Center for Creative Leadership has found that the primary causes for derailment in executives involves deficits in emotional competence. The three primary ones are: difficulty in handling change, not being able to work well in a team, and poor interpersonal relations. A study of 130 executives found that how well people handled their own emotions determined how much people around them preferred to deal with them (Walter V. Clarke Associates, 1997). John Kotter of Harvard Business School aptly quotes - "Because of the furious pace of change in business today, difficult to manage relationships sabotage more business than anything else—it is not a question of strategy that gets us into trouble, it is a question of emotions." Goleman (1998) relates the story of Melburn McBroom, who was a domineering leader, with a bad temper. The problem with this combination of emotional deficiencies was that he also happened to be an airline pilot. In 1978 as McBroom's plane was approaching Portland, Oregon to land, he noticed a problem with the landing gear. He decided to maintain a holding pattern as he obsessed about the landing gear. His co-pilots watched as the fuel gauges approached empty, but they were so fearful of their leader's wrath that they said nothing. The plane crashed, killing ten people. This story is told in training courses to enforce the need for teamwork, open communication, cooperation, listening, which leaders with high emotional intelligence foster. (Goleman, 1998) IQ measurements on most children with autism are typically very high, yet it is well known that these children are burdened by their inability to communicate in other forums. We all know people who are academically brilliant and yet are socially inept and unsuccessful. What they are missing is emotional intelligence (Geeta Sundranai, 2010)

1.3 Critique of Emotional Intelligence

Three key criticisms that have been leveled at emotional intelligence are as follows:

a) *EI is poorly defined and poorly measured*

Although various authors have proposed that EI is a type of intelligence in the traditional sense, contemporary research and theory lacks any clear conceptual model of intelligence within which to place the construct. For example, Spearman's (1927) model of g (general ability) affords no special role for EI. Neither is emotional (or social, for that matter) intelligence included in Thurstone's (1938) list of primary mental abilities or Guttman's radex model of intelligence (1965).

Eysenck (2000) opines that Goleman's description of EI contains unsubstantiated assumptions about intelligence in general, and that it even runs contrary to what researchers have come to expect when studying types of intelligence. Locke (2005) claims that the concept of EI in itself is a misinterpretation of the intelligence construct. He suggests that EI is not another form or type of intelligence, but intelligence (the ability to grasp abstractions) applied to a particular life domain, namely "emotions". Some researchers have defined EI as ability to reason about emotion; others have equated the concept with a list of traits such as achievement motivation, flexibility, happiness, and self-regard. Still others have found the addition of such ad hoc traits to be troubling, and wondered whether a theoretically sound conceptualization of EI could be identified (Locke, 2005).

According to Conte (2005), serious concerns remain for all of the EI measures, ranging from scoring concerns for ability-based EI measures to discriminant validity concerns for self-report EI measures. Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey (1999) state "EI measures have failed to converge on a common construct. Further, self-report EI measures appear to assess existing personality characteristics or perhaps emotional competencies, but they do not appear to assess intelligence". Although Mayer et al. (2003) have developed the most promising of the EI measures, they state that 'the applied use of EI tests must proceed with great caution'.

b) *EI is a new name for familiar constructs*

EI is said to involve the processing of both information that refers directly to emotion (e.g., one's own mood) and information on behaviors that have emotional connotations (e.g., violent behaviors). Intelligence in understanding behaviors and their significance already appears in Guilford's (1959) "structure of intellect" model of intelligence. In particular, EI overlaps with the cognition of behavioral content (e.g., ability to identify internal status of individuals, interpretation of consequences of social behavior, etc). In fact, the test items designed to gauge behavioral cognition, constructed by Guilford's team (e.g., O'Sullivan, Guilford, & de Mille, 1965), is reminiscent of current behavioral measures of EI. Furthermore, references to empathic ability (whose definition parallels that of major facets of EI remarkably closely) can be found in some of Guilford's (1959) earliest writings on the structure of intellect model.

The theory of fluid (Gf) and crystallized (Gc) intelligence proposed by Cattell (1971) and Horn (1988) is

arguably the most efficacious empirically based psychometric model of intelligence (Stankov, Boyle, & Cattell, 1995). Researchers have speculated that, within this theory, EI will constitute an additional aspect of (possibly one or more primary underlying mental abilities) Gc. This assertion is based on the assumption that the appraisal, expression, regulation, and utilization of emotion develops through experience and social interaction in much the same way as other psychological processes comprising Gc (Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998).

Current conceptualization of EI (e.g., Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000) focuses on one's ability to accurately identify, appraise, and discriminate among emotions in oneself and others, understand emotions, assimilate emotions in thought, and regulate both positive and negative emotions in self and others. This conceptualization encompasses the following subtypes of personal intelligence described by Gardner (1983) within his theory of multiple intelligence: (a) intrapersonal intelligence - the ability to access one's own feeling life; to identify, label, and discriminate among one's feelings; and to represent them symbolically; and (b) interpersonal intelligence - the ability to discern the moods, intentions, and desires of others.

c) Claims about EI are overblown.

EI has been commonly claimed to be useful in occupational assessment, prediction, selection, and on the job performance, with a half a dozen books of papers and workshops devoted to describing the usefulness of EI.

However, a review of the empirical evidence provides little justification for such unfettered enthusiasm surrounding the construct in career selection and assessment. The ratio of hyperbole to hard evidence is rather high, with over-reliance on anecdote and unpublished surveys.

In fact, there is not one single study published in a peer-reviewed journal, which shows that EI predicts occupational success/performance above (and beyond) that predicted by IQ (Roberts, Zeidner & Matthews, 2001)

1.4 Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is directly linked to self-esteem, self-awareness, and compassion, empathy, and adaptability— important predictors of success in life. Emotional intelligence is what helps us communicate clearly, lead others, and build powerful relationships at work and in your personal life

In studying people with strokes, brain tumors, and other types of brain damage, scientists have made some fascinating discoveries about intelligence. When the parts of our brains that enables us to feel emotions are damaged, our intellects remain intact. We can still talk, analyze, perform excellently on IQ tests, and even predict how we should act in social situations. But under these tragic circumstances, we are unable to make decisions in the real world—to interact successfully and appropriately with other people, to plan for the immediate or long-term future, to creatively solve problems, and ultimately, to

succeed (Jeanne Segal, 1997). Emotions are the building blocks of every relationship in our life, and the power of those emotions cannot be overlooked. Emotions influence the way we relate and react to others—often without our awareness. The ability to be aware of our own emotions and the feelings of others is the key to relationships that are engaging, exciting, fulfilling, creative, and productive. Emotional intelligence keeps our relationships strong and healthy. Emotional intelligence isn't a safety net that protects us from life's tragedies, frustrations, or disappointments. Emotionally intelligent individuals go through bad times and experience sadness, anger, and fear—just like everyone else. But they respond differently than less healthy people to these experiences. Emotional intelligence gives us the ability to cope and bounce back from stress, adversity, trauma, and loss and makes us *resilient*.

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