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An Exploration of Emotional Intelligence in Teaching: Comparison between Practitioners from the United Kingdom & India

Abstract

Evidence demonstrates that an increase of emotional intelligence levels leads to work productivity and effectiveness. Within this study, emotional intelligence levels were examined for United Kingdom and Indian teacher practitioners. Teacher practitioners were instructed to complete a self-report measure of emotional intelligence following email contact. Results demonstrate that cross-cultural emotional intelligence scores were moderately high for teacher practitioners of the United Kingdom and India. Further, overall scores demonstrated that female practitioners scored higher in emotional intelligence than male practitioners. In relation to gender differences it was also evidenced that male and female Indian practitioners scored higher in emotional intelligence than those from the United Kingdom. In addition, emotional intelligence data for age identified that maturity and experience led to higher scores. The sub-domain of self-awareness was integral to the relationship between increased emotional intelligence and other associated sub-domains. One limitation of the research resonates to the use of a predominant quantitative design. Future research should focus on adopting a qualitative methodology that would enable greater depth and regression analysis.

Keywords: Practitioners; Self-awareness; Gender; Age; Education; Regression analysis; Evidence demonstrates

Research Article

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Introduction

The education system provides youngsters with opportunities to achieve qualifications through an established and structured framework. To facilitate this framework teacher practitioners are employed to deliver and support learners with curriculum and assessments. In addition to curriculum and assessment design one should also be considerate of personal and wellbeing issues that impact learners. Arguably, rising insecurities of modern lifestyle can impact on emotions for learners. Within the education system, learners look for guidance and support both on academia and emotional and social issues. Therefore, it should be acceptable that practitioners play an instrumental role to engineer the required delivery in the development of learners. To this extent, teacher practitioners are required to employ an array of strategies to support teaching and self-development of learners. Dealing with these emotional and social issues could equate to the contention that teacher practitioners have to deal with an array of emotion regulatory practices. For example, teacher practitioners are tasked with assessing the emotions of learners they teach and monitor how they cope. Emotive regulatory practices are connected to the construct of emotional intelligence.

The concept of emotional intelligence, according to Salovey & Mayer [1] alludes to the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotion that guide one's thinking and actions. Further, in confirming the utility of emotional intelligence a number of meta-analysis have demonstrated effectiveness [2-4]. Given the popularity of emotional intelligence, researchers have explored a number of research avenues to examine its utility (e.g, [5-7]).

Research has identified that the emotional competence of practitioners must be suitably built through developed skills. It is proposed that enhanced emotional competence should enable teacher practitioners to develop personal well-being and effectiveness of learning processes to supplement socio-emotional development of their learners. Generally, it is observed that students who are nurtured by teacher's demonstrating high level of emotional intelligence tend to, directly or indirectly absorb emotional skills. Based on this nurture from within the school environment learners can learn to manage their own issues, which eventually help them to perform better in further education and university. Further, Brackett & Katulak [8] have suggested that emotional intelligence training allows school children to improve their interpersonal relations with peers and teachers. These interpersonal relations can be aligned to delivering education and is surmountable to building student emotional and social wellbeing. In consideration of the research presented within education circles it would be pertinent to consider the applied practice relative to emotional intelligence as it engineers the process of life skills.

Comparative research within emotional intelligence and education is important as it can evidence some useful indicators of effectiveness. To this degree, evidence exists that highlights the impact of including emotional intelligence within primary and secondary school curriculum. For example, evidence suggests that the curriculum needs to be efficacious enough to reduce emotional and behavioural problems from an early age, which can interfere with the learning process (Caplan et al. 1992; Cohen, 1999) (Vandervoot 2006). In legislative terms, the *Every Child Matters* legislation in England (DfES 2004) places pupil emotional wellbeing as a central concern and studies reveal the benefits to pupils when emotional intelligence is integrated into the school curriculum (e.g. Qualter et al. 2007).

To substantiate this further, Schutte et al. (2013) advocated the use of emotional intelligence training to support improved performance and success amongst learners. Whilst the authors are cautious with their findings they believe that there is good predictive evidence to support the efficacy of emotional intelligence in education. The evidence above was a follow up study to Schutte & Malouff (2002) that demonstrated a relationship between emotional intelligence and success existed between a control and non-control group of learners. Results highlighted that learners who received emotional intelligence training were more likely to continue with their course of study. Also, learners in a control group were provided with emotional intelligence training and results highlighted better retention rates. High retention levels are important as they correlate with increased success and it also provides funding for courses (Davis 1999 & King 2012).

In acknowledging the role of emotional intelligence in education it would be prudent to examine avenues that support teaching practices. A model that is cognizant to educational practices is the Goleman [9] model of emotional intelligence. There are five sub-domains of the Goleman [9] model that relate to self-awareness, management of emotions, motivation, empathy and relationship management. In postulation, the teacher practitioner who is self-aware is likely to manage their emotions, employ effective motivation strategies, is empathic with learners and can manage relationships amongst peers. Therefore, it would be prudent to consider the Goleman [9] model, and explain the use of each sub-domain of emotional intelligence to education.

Self-awareness is a core sub-domain of the Goleman [9] model. Characteristics of self-awareness emanate to recognizing own moods and emotions and the effects these have on others. A body of research has quantified the importance of increasing opportunities for self-awareness through regulatory practices (Barling et al. 2000; Eagle & Nehrt 2011; Palmer et al. 2001). An example of increasing self-awareness is formed through the strategy of reflective practice to develop own strengths and work on limitations (Gill 2014). Arguably, education practices require teacher practitioners to maintain high levels of self-awareness in order to harness students they educate.

The management of emotions is the second aspect of the emotional intelligence model and relates to the ability to control emotions. Hill (2004) outlines three key steps of success for practitioners: (a) learn about themselves (b) cope with stress and job demands (c) deal with emotions. Practitioners are required to manage their emotions during different situations that include, marking work, preparing assessments and lesson planning. Therefore, having the ability to manage and self-regulate emotions could provide practitioners with opportunities to complete set tasks. Practitioners could also employ reflective practice to facilitate emotional regulation [10] as self-regulating emotions allude to higher levels of emotional intelligence. A body of evidence has suggested that those who report higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to self-regulate and mange their emotions [1]. Therefore, if emotionally intelligent teachers are able to perceive and regulate their own emotions, which may self-reinforce their own teaching practices, it can increase workplace engagement and reduce burnout.

A third aspect of the Goleman [9] model and one that is integral to educational practices is motivation. Motivation relates to the inner drive that provides stimulus for teaching from which teacher practitioners are faced with the task of motivating their learners and oneself. Therefore, through a systematic approach one could develop strategies to increase or maintain motivation levels. The employment of specific goal setting could arguably supplement the systematic approach in order to improve motivation and performance levels (Durlak et al. 2011). Arguably, setting targets and goals is associated to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Locke & Latham 2012). Teacher practitioners can associate the value of motivation both to their own teaching and to learner requirements.

A fourth aspect of the Goleman [9] model of emotional intelligence is the use of empathy. Empathy is related to having the ability to understand other people and its considerable use in education would be supportive to teaching practices. Key characteristics of empathy that are trained as a result of these exercises include recognition, listening, imagining and experiencing others emotions. There is arguably an association between increased empathy and its link to increased levels of emotional intelligence. For example, Gentry et al. [11] suggest that through building empathy, opportunities for increased productivity emerge. Strategies to build empathy levels can surmount to developing teamwork exercises that engage listening and problem solving tasks. Based on these activities one would presume that teacher practitioners are affording students opportunities to examine views and reasoning.

The final area of the Goleman [9] model is relationship management, which is the ability to develop skills and strategies in managing others. Research (Arefi 2010; Aslasky & Cartwright 2002) has advocated that the efficacy of emotional intelligence relates to building relationship management, leadership skills, alluding to self-awareness and control of emotions. Given this contention one could identify that these skills align closely to education and to the role of teacher practitioners. For example, one should assume that teacher practitioners are required to build effective relationships amongst colleagues and students.

Further, leadership qualities need to be evident when dealing with the management of learners and teaching. Arguably, teacher practitioners need to manage their relationships with those they teach, as it fosters greater engagement and support to increase performance levels. In examining leadership relationships it was suggested by Gardner and Stough (2001) that effective leadership would relate to commitment, greater success, and positivity to improve working relationships. Arguably, roles within education would surmount to similar outcomes and teacher practitioners are most likely to succeed if they aid relationship management.

In consideration of the literature it has become important to assess the potential impact of emotional intelligence on education practices in the United Kingdom and India. It was therefore decided to examine cross-cultural & comparative differences between teacher practitioners to overall emotional intelligence scores, gender and age. The purpose of the study is to form how emotional intelligence can inform teaching practices and what strategies can be employed to increase utility in the workplace.

Methodology

Participants

214 participants (Age: M = 39.43 years, SD = 2.92) volunteered their consent. Age ranges were (23-27 n=15) (28-32 n=28) (33-37 n=34) (38-42 n=57) (43-47 n=39) (48-52 n=24) (53-57 n=18). Participants were main grade teachers or lecturers who were contacted in person and through email and instructed on how to complete the questionnaire.

Measure

To measure various dimensions of Emotional Intelligence, the Practical EQ Emotional Intelligence (Appendix A) was used in this study. The Practical EQ is a self-report measure that offers opportunities for assessing participants' emotional intelligence. The Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment Questionnaire is a five-competency model [9] based on self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy, and relationship management. Each section has 5 questions with score ranges from 0 (Almost never) - 5 (Almost always). There are in total 25 questions of which 9 are reversed scores. Examples of questions include, 'I understand the feedback that others give,' (self-awareness), 'I can stay calm, even in difficult circumstances,' (self-management), 'My career is moving in the right direction,' (motivation), 'It is unpredictable how my colleagues will feel in any given situation,' (empathy) and 'I feel uncomfortable when other people get emotional,' (relationship management). Utilising the Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment Questionnaire [9] allowed participants to assess their own emotional intelligence from which researchers could interpret data and provide useful strategies to support practitioners.

Procedures

Ethical and legal considerations were taken into account and all participants completed informed consent forms. In addition, participants were made aware of confidentiality and were informed of their right to withdraw. Following contact all participants were instructed to complete the emotional intelligence questionnaire.

Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis would take place following the submission of questionnaires to form association with identified aims and objectives. The form of data analysis was carried out using quantitative data practices. Using Excel and SPSS software, charts and tables were created in order to outline the results.

Results

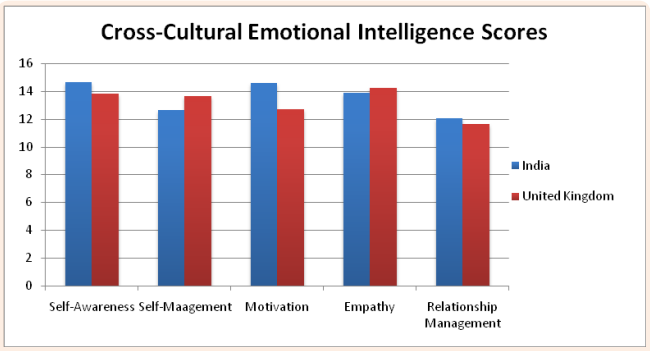

Chart 1: Overall average scores of Emotional Intelligence dimensions obtained of practitioners from United Kingdom and India.

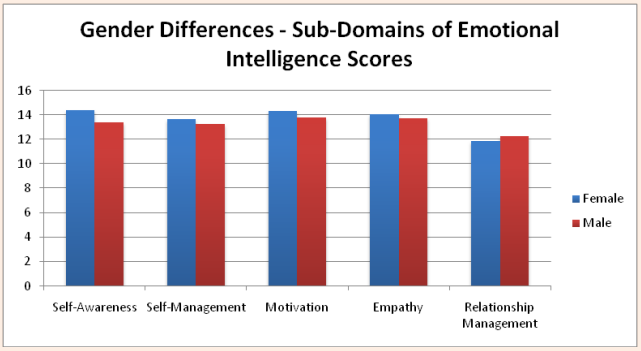

Chart 2: Emotional Intelligence Gender score differences between United Kingdom and Indian teacher practitioners.

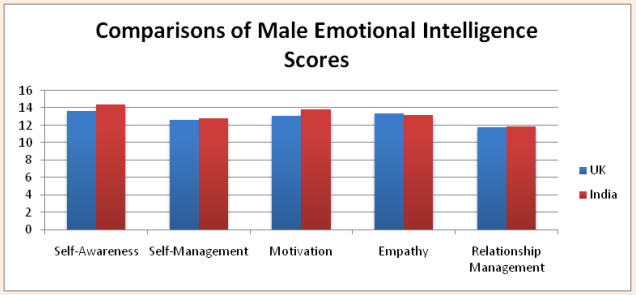

Chart 3: Emotional Intelligence score differences between Male United Kingdom and Indian teacher practitioners.

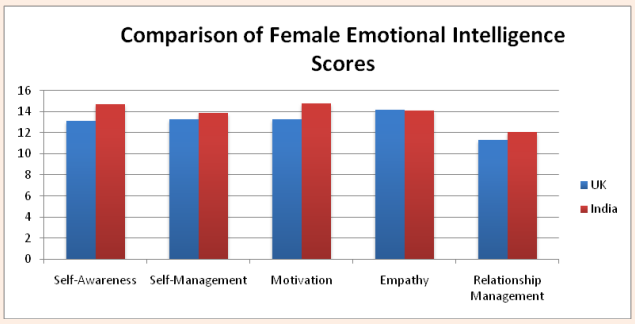

Chart 4: Emotional Intelligence score differences between Female United Kingdom and Indian teacher practitioners.

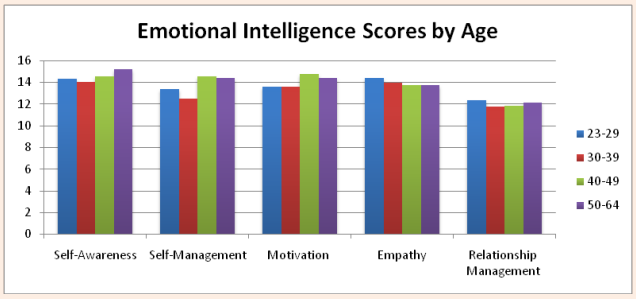

Chart 5: Sub-Domain Emotional Intelligence Age score differences for United Kingdom and Indian teacher practitioners.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to explore the nature of emotional intelligence amongst practitioners in the United Kingdom and India. An exploration of emotional intelligence in education is important because practitioners have to deal with challenges that associate to emotional output. Therefore, the purpose of this discussion will examine differences of emotional intelligence scores between teacher practitioners from United Kingdom and India. The utility of emotional intelligence and its proposed practical association to education will be applied through research evidence. The researchers will aim to propose potential applied practices that could enhance collaboration between colleagues and outline limitations of this study.

Emotional intelligence scores reported for practitioners from the United Kingdom and India were moderately high. The sub-domain overall scores for self-awareness and empathy recorded highest amongst practitioners. Scores for self-management and motivation align with evidence, which states that the management of emotions lead to greater direction and focus (Locke & Latham 2012; Schuttem et al. 2013). Conversely, scores for the sub-domain of relationship management recorded lowest on the Goleman [9] model. It could be argued that the first four sub-domains of emotional intelligence relate to one-self and that relationship management relates to dealing with others. However, one should be cautious with this interpretation as a number of variables may construe this argument as unsupportive and speculative. Therefore, a clearer examination of how these results relate to the intended aims and objectives require explanation.

Emotional intelligence scores for gender reported that females outscored males on four of the five sub-domains equating to 90% of the data. Previous research (e.g., Brackett & Mayer 2003; Ciarrochi et al. 2000) has supported the notion that females report higher levels of emotional intelligence than males. Although there is considerable debate on which on which specific emotional intelligence dimensions females perform better (e.g. Livingstone & Day 2005; Farrelly & Austin 2007; McIntyre 2010; Day & Carroll 2004). Therefore, implementing a meta-analysis would be useful in context when assessing relationships between gender scores and emotional intelligence scores. A meta-analysis performed by Joseph & Newman [2] highlighted that females obtained higher scores than males on emotional intelligence dimensions. Assessing data from the current study identifies that both female and male teacher practitioners from India scored higher in emotional intelligence than those from the United Kingdom. Although caution should be taken with the interpretation of gender scores there is useful information in attempting to understand the relationship between emotional intelligence differences and gender.

The emotional intelligence scores by age highlighted that for three of the sub-domains (self-awareness, self-management and motivation) experienced teacher practitioners scored highest. Interestingly, sub-domains of empathy and relationship management highlighted that younger teacher practitioners scored highest, although this was marginal. Fariselli et al. (2008) identified a correlation between emotional intelligence and age as it was suggested that older participants were more likely to be self-aware and reflective of emotions than younger participants. The study lends support to the growth in literature that suggests emotional intelligence can change with life experiences and is learnable (Goleman & Cherniss 2001; Schutte et al. 2013).

Whilst it was identified that increases in age lead to higher emotional intelligence scores, it would be unfair to discount that younger age and less experience doesn't correlate with enhanced emotional intelligence. This would not be a true reflection and discounts many younger participants who exhibit higher levels of emotional intelligence than some experienced participants. In assessing the extant literature it is suggestive that emotional intelligence can be learnt through trainability (Schutte et al. 2013). As a result, it is worthy of consideration that both educators and students should engage with emotional intelligence because it is vital to learn and manage emotive skills (Goleman & Cherniss 2001). The importance of including emotional intelligence in education because especially important as Barchard (2003) suggests that modern educational systems do not promote emotional intelligence. Developing emotional intelligence would provide students with opportunities to recognize and handle emotions, leading to effective emotional output.

The data within the present study identifies self-awareness as a core component of emotional intelligence within the Goleman [9] model. The evidence presented in the results suggests that self-awareness levels between teacher practitioners of the United Kingdom and India were similar. One proposal forwarded related to an increase in staff development practices within teams to facilitate productivity and effectiveness. Research has indicated that self-awareness aligns to emotions and moods that are self-

driven [1]. The data presented in this research highlights that increased self-awareness allowed practitioners to become aware of their own emotions and actions in the workplace. Mousavi et al. (2012) contend that through processes of thought and emotion individuals can re-model behavior to enhance motivation levels through specific goal setting (Locke & Latham 2012). Therefore, given the contention that self-awareness is core to the emotional intelligence rubric it is suggested by the researchers that increases in this area could enhance other sub-domains.

As researchers we propose that practitioners self-manage themselves and support others through directed use of strategies. These strategies could be evidenced through various methods of goal setting, participation in physical activity to maintain psychological balance, regulating mood and emotion through listening to music and completing short concise activities. In advocating the increase and maintenance of self-awareness it could be proposed to employ learning journals that are completed as an on-going process to support practitioners. In addition, to the outlined strategies proposed, two key mechanisms to support self-awareness include, reflective practice (Gill, 2014) and profiling [12,13]. Through employing these strategies teacher practitioners can identify strengths and areas to improve to facilitate teaching practices. As researchers, we argue that reflective practice and profiling will enable teacher practitioners to identify greater opportunities to increase levels of self-awareness aligned to setting specific goals (Locke & Latham 2012).

Although useful information within this study exists it would be prudent to offer limitations. The study allowed the researchers to carryout simple data techniques but these were not robust enough to examine relationships in greater depth and clarity to allow causality to be discussed. Thus, although the information gathered and resulting data interpretation was invaluable, future research should explore more complex data techniques. One suggestion to overcome these limitations would be to re-assess the methodology incorporated and utilise more qualitative semi-structured methodology.

In summary, research has advocated the effectiveness of emotional intelligence in relation to work productivity and effectiveness [1,4]. The current study advocated the use of the Goleman [8] model to assess emotional intelligence educational practices of practitioners. It is proposed that education establishments and awarding bodies engage with emotional intelligence practices and implement these into curriculum designs and teacher training packages. Arguably, emotional intelligence is an important life skill that can support performance levels and so this opportunity should not be ignored. One of these opportunities can be designed through the exploration of holistic staff development amongst teacher practitioners to share best practices. Further, it is proposed that curriculum designs are adapted to consider enhancing emotional intelligence amongst teacher practitioners and students. This study has identified that emotional intelligence is crucial and integral in educational practices to facilitate both teacher practitioners and students practices. Increasing future collaborations would be a useful implication in subject areas (e.g. sciences with sciences; business with business) or across different subject areas (e.g. business with sport; science with sport; economics with psychology). One way to support collaborative practices would be through the facilitation of multi-media (e.g. Skype, YouTube; Twitter, Facebook groups and online blogs) opportunities between United Kingdom and Indian teacher practitioners. Indeed evidence exists of how online technology provides opportunities to engage with best practices (Lemke, 2009). This engagement would foster many opportunities that would enable practitioners to work alongside each other without the need to actually travel abroad. For example, the 'Cloud Nanny' projects introduced in the United Kingdom and Bhutan's national educational policy encourages emotional intelligence training for teachers and students. These projects are practical applications of how emotional intelligence training is gaining roots in the educational system [14-30].

An overall synopsis reveals that the following should be considered at all levels. First, emotional intelligence models should form part of teacher training packages and awareness of its utility should be raised. Second, there should be greater use of resources to develop best practices through collaboration. Third, a process of understanding emotional intelligence more effectively would be formed through a qualitative research methodology. Finally, staff development opportunities should not be missed to facilitate best practices.

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