

## *Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Educational Practice in Schools*

David W. Chan

*Department of Educational Psychology  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong*

*With the growing interest in the concept of emotional intelligence, an overview was provided through exploring the emergence of the concept in Western thought, the precursors to emotional intelligence in the context of nontraditional views of intelligence, and the recent theorizing by Mayer and Salovey and by Goleman. Educational implications for the development of social and emotional learning programs are discussed to provide insights into the realization of whole-person development in recent education reform in Hong Kong.*

*Key words: emotional intelligence; social and emotional learning; whole-person development*

---

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to David W. Chan, Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, N. T., Hong Kong. E-mail: davidchan@cuhk.edu.hk

In recent years, amid incessant waves of education reform and curriculum changes in Hong Kong, there is a call for a return to endorsing the age-old educational beliefs in promoting students' lifelong learning and all-round development in domains of *de*, *zhi*, *ti*, *qun*, and *mei* (ethics, intellect, physique, social skills, and esthetics) (see Curriculum Development Council, 2001; Education Commission, 2000). While the notion of a balanced or whole-person development is always the guiding principle in education among the Chinese, educators in Hong Kong have for decades been puzzled as to how best to meet students' learning and social-emotional needs and promote their whole-person development in cognitive and noncognitive areas. Interestingly, the notion of whole-person development is also associated with the conceptualization of human abilities.

In the Western world, the study of human abilities has traditionally focused on intelligence or cognitive abilities and their adaptive uses (e.g., Piaget, 1950; Wechsler, 1958). Global intelligence or IQ has all along been emphasized as the major determinant of individuals' success in schools, careers, and other areas of life. In recent years, partly as a result of the dissatisfaction with the traditional emphasis, more encompassing approaches to the study of intelligence have emerged through the works of many theorists, including Gardner (1983, 1993), and Sternberg (1988, 1996). Specifically, a broadened notion of intelligence considers abilities in domains beyond cognition such as competencies and skills in social and emotional domains. In this connection, emotional intelligence or EQ (emotional quotient) has gained popularity among the lay public, highlighting the importance of an individual's development in managing self-relevant and others' emotions. Despite that there is no clear empirical evidence to substantiate the claims that emotional intelligence or EQ could be equally or even more important than traditional IQ in accounting for success in life, emotional intelligence nonetheless competes for attention to be incorporated in education and training programs in schools (e.g., Bocchino, 1999; Bodine & Crawford, 1999; Doty, 2001), and in organizations (e.g., Cherniss & Adler, 2000).

Increasingly, it is now generally acknowledged that emotional intelli-

gence has particular relevance to the notion of whole-person development, as the role of emotions and emotional intelligence has been duly recognized in personal growth and development (e.g., Steiner & Perry, 1997) and in emotional regulation in psychotherapy (e.g., Greenberg, 2002). While educators might be skeptical as to the importance of emotional intelligence as compared with traditional IQ, and raise questions on whether emotional intelligence meets criteria or standards as an intelligence, emotional intelligence should warrant the full attention of educators in school practice. Further, educators need to explore the validity of the construct, and the implications for translating conceptualizations into educational practices (see Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Mayer & Cobb, 2000). Thus, before endorsing the advocacy of implementing programs to promote emotional intelligence in students for their whole-person development, an overview of the development of the construct, its scientific merits, and its implications for educational practices is in order.

### **Emergence of Emotional Intelligence in Western Thought**

The emergence of the notion of emotional intelligence can be traced to areas of tension in the history of Western thought (see Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). First, there is the conflict between cognition and emotion. The term emotional intelligence could be considered an oxymoron, as cognition conveys the idea of reason, and emotion that of irrationality. Throughout Western history, rationalism generally prevailed. Rationalism was represented by the Stoic movement in ancient Greece, which had its influence on lines of Jewish thought and Christianity. Within Stoic philosophy, a wise person regarded moods, impulses, fears, and desires as individualistic, self-centered, and unreliable, and as attributes to be willed away in the process of self-control in order to become unbiased with rationality and logic. However, the battle between denying and respecting emotions is longstanding, and the strong anti-emotional trend was frequently punctuated in history by different movements of Romanticism, such as the civil

rights movement, the women's movement, and humanistic psychology. In this context, emotional intelligence represents a call for societal practices to integrate emotion and thought. Along this line, some psychologists and educators have come to view emotional intelligence as an integrative concept that explains competence in social and emotional skills, addresses the issue of social and emotional learning in the schools, and even offers justifications for teaching emotional skills explicitly (see e.g., Elias, Hunter, & Kress, 2001; Goleman, 1995).

The second area of tension in Western thought is the conflict between excellence and equity (elitism and egalitarianism), or between a commitment to individual differences and an emphasis on human equality. The battle is clearly exemplified in the diverse conceptualizations of intelligence. Specifically, the emphasis on individuals' cognitive abilities, intellectual functioning, or IQ as accounting for success in schools, careers, and other important areas of living has somehow implied an endorsement of the belief that "some men are more equal than others" (see Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). To hold on to the belief that "all men are created equal," emotional intelligence has the appeal that there is a kinder and gentler intelligence that anyone can have, which accounts for individuals' success in life (see Goleman, 1995), and anyone can be intelligent in more than one way (see Armstrong, 1999; Gardner, 1999). Thus, the more recent broadened conceptualizations of intelligence have also contributed to the emergence of the notion of emotional intelligence.

## **Precursors to Emotional Intelligence in Psychology and Education**

In psychology and education, research on intelligence or human abilities in the 20th century was dominated by such issues as whether there was a general factor of intelligence. However, there has often been a concern that conventional tests might be too narrow, and while they have sampled important skills, they might not have sampled adequately all relevant skills

(see e.g., Guilford, 1967).

Bearing greater similarity to the notion of emotional intelligence is the concept of social intelligence proposed in the 1920s and 1930s by Thorndike (1920). As one aspect of a person's IQ, it was defined as the ability to understand others and act appropriately in interpersonal relations. In a similar vein, Dewey (1933), in listing necessary skills for students to learn in classrooms to become citizens in a democracy, included not only analytic skills but also skills for perspective taking, social debate and exchange, and interpersonal communication.

In the 1980s, Sternberg (1985) emphasized the value of social intelligence as distinguished from academic abilities, and found that people listed social skills as characteristics of an "intelligent" person. Gardner (1993, 1999), with a cross-cultural perspective, identified eight intelligences that include interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. Gardner (1993) defined interpersonal intelligence as "the ability to understand people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work cooperatively with them" (p. 9), and intrapersonal intelligence as "the capacity to form an accurate, veridical model of oneself and to be able to use that model to operate effectively in life" (p. 9). These two personal intelligences can be regarded as precursors to the conceptualization of emotional intelligence. Other precursor definitions referring explicitly but unclearly to emotional intelligence or clearly but not explicitly to the term of emotional intelligence can also be located in the literature (see Mayer, 2001).

## **Recent Conceptualizations of Emotional Intelligence**

Perhaps, the first explicit use of emotional intelligence with a well-validated conception is from Salovey and Mayer (1990), who defined emotional intelligence as "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" (p. 189). Subsequently, Mayer and Salovey (1997) have expanded their definition to include the capacity to perceive

emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of these emotions, and manage these emotions. Rather than as a single ability, emotional intelligence is now conceptualized as a set of abilities that ranges from the relatively simple, such as distinguishing emotional facial expressions, to the more complex and integrated, such as understanding the causes and consequences of emotions in everyday interpersonal situations and how they interplay with motivation.

Following the initial conceptualization of emotional intelligence by Salovey and Mayer (1990), Goleman (1995) popularized the notion of emotional intelligence with a somewhat different conception, defining emotional intelligence to include knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships. Goleman (1998) further expanded the conception to include a vast variety of skills and personality traits, such as emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, self-confidence, self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, innovation, achievement drive, commitment, and so forth.

Goleman's (1995, 1998) conception typifies the mixed model as opposed to Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model (see Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). The ability model is more focused and explicit as to the constituent parts of emotional intelligence and its relationship to traditional intelligence. In contrast, the mixed models incorporate a wide range of personality variables such as empathy, optimism and impulsivity as well as potential correlates such as motivation, self-awareness and happiness in addition to the essential ability elements (see also Bar-On, 1997; Cooper, 1996/1997). Thus, the new measures developed to assess this array of noncognitive capabilities and adaptive attributes, competencies, and skills could overlap with existing measures traditionally referred to as omnibus scales of personality. Consequently, one has to take issue with the relabeling of the different parts of personality in the form of new constellations of traits as emotional intelligence, and question the need to expand the notion of emotional intelligence to incorporate extant adaptive constructs and virtues. Further, considering that if such personality traits are listed as a

part of emotional intelligence, it is puzzling to make the claim that emotional intelligence can be learned (Goleman, 1995), given that genetic, biological and early-learning contributions to personality traits might make them difficult, if not impossible, to change. Nonetheless, one needs to be skeptical not only of exaggerated and unsubstantiated claims that emotional intelligence “outpredicts IQ” or is “twice as important as IQ” (Goleman, 1998, p. 34), but also of the plausibility and veridicality of the different constructs bearing the same name of emotional intelligence. Among the different conceptualizations, Mayer and Salovey (1997) have made a persuasive case for their ability model, which focuses on emotional intelligence as an actual intelligence within personality. The ability approach to emotional intelligence is concerned with processing emotions and has implications for educational practices.

### **The Mayer-Salovey Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence**

The Mayer-Salovey model is an information-processing model that operates across the cognitive and the emotional systems. The model delineates four branches of emotional intelligence: emotional perception, emotional integration, emotional understanding, and emotional management. The four branches are briefly introduced and described below (see Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000).

The first branch begins with the capacity to perceive and to express feelings. Emotional perception involves recognizing and inputting information from the emotion system through registering, attending to, and deciphering emotional messages as they are expressed in facial expressions, voice tone, objects of art, and other cultural artifacts. The second branch concerns emotional facilitation of thought, and involves the use of emotion to improve cognitive processes, focusing on how emotion enters the cognitive system and alters cognition to assist thought. Specifically, emotions can direct the cognitive system to attend to what is most important, and can also change cognitions, making them positive (when a person is happy) or

negative (when a person is sad). These changes allow the cognitive system to view things from different perspectives, possibly leading people with mood swings to think about a problem more deeply and more creatively. The third branch involves further cognitive processing for understanding and reasoning with emotion. Understanding emotions involves understanding their meanings, how they blend together, and how they progress over time. Finally, the fourth branch involves the capacity for openness that allows emotions to enter into the intelligence system, focusing on emotional self-management and the management of emotions in others. Because of the importance of emotional regulation, the lay public tends to identify this fourth branch as emotional intelligence. However, it has to be noted that the four branches are linked in that management begins with perception. Only good emotional perception allows one to make use of mood changes and understand emotions, and only good understanding will provide one with the breadth of knowledge necessary to manage and cope with feelings fully. Thus, an emotionally intelligent individual needs to have considerable understanding of moods in order to be able to cope regularly with states of mood instability (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, & Mayer, 2000).

## **Emotional Intelligence and Educational Practice**

Although there are different conceptualizations of emotional intelligence based on the ability and mixed models, both approaches highlight the central role that emotional intelligence plays in human interactions. Since emotional intelligence defined in either approach is likely to be involved in the home, school, work, and other settings, considerable attention has been paid to how it can be effectively enhanced. While the home is often regarded as the place where the learning of emotional skills begins, the school is generally designated as the prime location for the promotion and further teaching of emotional intelligence. Thus, schools need to rise to the challenge by creating school climates that foster the development and application of emotional skills as well as

infusing emotional literacy into the standard curriculum, emotional literacy being the term used by some educators to refer to teachable skills of emotional intelligence (see Bocchino, 1999).

Despite the recognition of the importance of promoting emotional intelligence in schools, schools have been slow to incorporate emotional literacy into their structure. This might have to do with the tightly packed school curricula and a focus on a narrow range of academic outcomes in the context of an examination-driven system. In addition, schools might be viewed as places to learn academic disciplines rather than social and emotional skills, which are to be learned at home and in the community. Thus schoolteachers and education practitioners might raise the question whether schools, if they include the promotion and teaching of social and emotional skills, could be overlooking their role in teaching academic disciplines. In response to such questions, educators who advocate the promotion of emotional intelligence in schools would argue that through addressing the social and emotional needs of students by introducing emotional literacy in schools, students are more likely to be receptive to academic learning to a greater degree.

In designing or developing teaching or training programs, the ability approach to emotional intelligence, with a focus on skill development or knowledge acquisition, as opposed to the enhancement of relevant personality traits, seems to be more clearly connected with education (Salovey & Sluyter, 1997). However, more broad-spectrum programs based on mixed models with an emphasis on promoting emotional intelligence but targeted at reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors for positive youth development are generally advocated (see e.g., Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence, 1994). In view of the diversity of programs, studies on the effectiveness of such programs in schools have to be continuously evaluated in efforts of program evaluation (e.g., Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkin, 1998; Graczyk et al., 2000; Topping, Holmes, & Bremner, 2000). Nonetheless, the movement in promoting social and emotional learning (SEL) programs is illustrative.

## **Social and Emotional Learning and Whole-Person Development**

For emotional intelligence to have relevance for education, students need to be educated to become knowledgeable, responsible, and able to deal effectively with their emotions, and schools must work to meet the challenge by offering more than the basic instruction in the traditional academic areas. In response, some schools in North America have adopted comprehensive school-based programs within the standard educational curriculum to promote students' social and emotional learning (SEL), and through promoting SEL, enhance students' academic success, healthy growth and development, ability to maintain positive relationships, and motivation to contribute to their communities (see Payton et al., 2000).

Because the health-compromising and risk-taking behaviors that these programs target often occur together in clusters, share many of the same risk and protective factors, and can be addressed by similar strategies, there is an increasing need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to risk prevention and positive youth development. To address this need, the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was founded in 1994 to establish SEL as an essential part of education from preschool to high school. CASEL has developed a framework of key SEL competencies, and identified critical program features for the effective enhancement of these competencies.

Specifically, the key SEL competencies are grouped into four major categories: (1) awareness of self and others, which includes awareness and management of one's feelings, constructive sense of self, and perspective taking, (2) positive attitudes and values, which cover personal and social responsibility, and respect for others, (3) responsible decision making, which includes problem identification, social norm analysis, adaptive goal setting, and problem solving, and (4) social interaction skills, which include active listening, expressive communication, cooperation, negotiation, refusal, and help seeking. As to effective program features, it is believed that effective

SEL programs are typically multiyear in duration, target multiple outcomes (for example, health, citizenship, violence prevention, drug education), include a classroom-based component conducted by well-trained teachers, and involve coordinated efforts among schools, families, and communities (Payton et al., 2000).

CASEL's key competencies and quality program features are provided for schools in North America to select school-based SEL programs, thereby helping young people succeed in their academic, personal and social life. The framework however can also be regarded as a resource for the development of integrated and comprehensive school-based programs intended to enhance students' emotional intelligence and their whole-person development in Hong Kong schools. Ultimately, the development, implementation, and evaluation of such programs should hopefully lead to an enhanced understanding of education reform that goes beyond the effective management of schools and the standards used to measure students' academic achievement to include the creation of learning environments that optimize the whole-person development of students.

## References

- Armstrong, T. (1999). *Seven kinds of smart: Identifying and developing your multiple intelligences* (Revised and updated ed.). New York: Plume.
- Bar-On, R. (1997). *EQ-I: Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory*. Toronto: Multi-Health Systems.
- Bocchino, R. (1999). *Emotional literacy: To be a different kind of smart*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Bodine, R. J., & Crawford, D. K. (1999). *Developing emotional intelligence*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. C., & Hawkin, J. D. (1998). *Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Health Development, Department of Health and Human Services.

- Cherniss, C., & Adler, M. (2000). *Promoting emotional intelligence in organizations*. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.
- Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social competence. (1994). The school-based promotion of social competence: Theory, research, practice, and policy. In R. J. Haggerty, L. R. Sherrod, N. Garmezy, & M. Rutter (Eds.), *Stress, risk, and resilience in children and adolescents: Processes, mechanisms, and interventions* (pp. 268–316). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cooper, R. K. (1996/1997). *EQ map interpretation guide*. San Francisco: AIT and Essi Systems.
- Curriculum Development Council. (2001). *Learning to learn: Lifelong learning and whole-person development*. Hong Kong: Author.
- Davies, M., Stankov, L., & Roberts, R. D. (1998). Emotional intelligence: In search of an elusive construct. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 989–1015.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think*. Lexington, MA: Heath.
- Doty, G. (2001). *Fostering emotional intelligence in K-8 students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Education Commission. (2000). *Learning for life – learning through life: Reform proposals for the education system in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Author.
- Elias, M. J., Hunter, L., & Kress, J. S. (2001). Emotional intelligence and education. In J. Ciarrochi, J. P. Forgas, & J. D. Mayer (Eds.), *Emotional intelligence in everyday life* (pp. 133–149). Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.
- Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences: The theory in practice*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Graczyk, P. A., Weissberg, R. P., Payton, J. W., Elias, M. J., Greenberg, M. T., & Zins, J. E. (2000). Criteria for evaluating the quality of school-based social and emotional learning programs. In R. Bar-On & J. D. A. Parkers (Eds.), *The handbook of emotional intelligence* (pp. 391–410). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Greenberg, L. S. (2002). *Emotion-focused therapy*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

- Guilford, J. P. (1967). *The nature of intelligence*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Herrnstein, R. J., & Murray, C. (1994). *The bell curve: Intelligence and class structure in American life*. New York: Free Press.
- Mayer, J. D. (2001). A field guide to emotional intelligence. In J. Ciarrochi, J. P. Forgas, & J. D. Mayer (Eds.), *Emotional intelligence in everyday life* (pp. 3–24). Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.
- Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D., & Salovey, P. (1999). Emotional intelligence meets traditional standards for an intelligence. *Intelligence*, 27, 267–298.
- Mayer, J. D., & Cobb, C. D. (2000). Educational policy on emotional intelligence: Does it make sense? *Educational Psychology Review*, 12, 163–183.
- Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. Sluyter (Eds.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence* (pp. 3–31). New York : Basic Books.
- Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. (2000). Emotional intelligence as zeitgeist, as personality, and as a mental ability. In R. Bar-On & J. D. A. Parkers (Eds.), *The handbook of emotional intelligence* (pp. 92–117). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Payton, J. W., Wardlaw, D. M., Graczyk, P. A., Bloodworth, M. R., Tompsett, C. J., & Weissberg, R. P. (2000). Social and emotional learning : A framework for promoting mental health and reducing risk behaviors in children and youth. *Journal of School Health*, 70, 179–185.
- Piaget, J. (1950). *The psychology of intelligence*. London: Routledge.
- Salovey, P., Bedell, B. T., Detweiler, J. B., & Mayer, J. D. (2000). Current directions in emotional intelligence research. In M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), *Handbook of emotions* (2nd ed., pp. 504–520). New York: Guilford.
- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9, 185–211.
- Salovey, P., & Sluyter, D. (Eds.).(1997). *Emotional development and emotional intelligence*. New York: Basic Books.
- Steiner, C., & Perry, P. (1997). *Achieving emotional literacy: A personal program to increase emotional intelligence*. New York: Avon.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1985). *Beyond IQ: A triarchic theory of human abilities*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1988). *The triarchic mind: A new theory of human intelligence*. New York: Viking.

- Sternberg, R. J. (1996). *Successful intelligence*. New York: Plume.
- Thorndike, E. L. (1920). Intelligence and its use. *Harper's Magazine*, 140, 227–235.
- Topping, K., Holmes, E. A., & Bremner, W. (2000). The effectiveness of school-based programs for the promotion of social competence. In R. Bar-On & J. D. A. Parkers (Eds.), *The handbook of emotional intelligence* (pp. 411–432). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wechsler, D. (1958). *The measurement and appraisal of adult intelligence* (4th ed.). Baltimore, MD: William and Wilkins.