



Emotional Intelligence in Socio-Emotional Skills

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Abstract

Researchers and practitioners suggest acquisition of socio-emotional intelligence skills and competencies for the teacher in the age of stresses, individualism, and materialisms; to improve teacher's effectiveness and performance and to raise a socially and emotionally intelligent child.

Keywords: Performance and productivity, Teachers' performance, Socio-emotional intelligence, Training and development

In a world of constant change, children are faced with various challenges, whether social or ecological. With this in mind, Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge¹ present a new approach to education that consists of three focuses; the first focus is an internal focus, therefore on ourselves, on our inner world and on managing our emotions; the second one points to being in tune with others, namely empathy - understanding the reality of others, compassion and the ability to work as a team; finally, the third focus is considered external - understanding the wider world, observing, reflecting and developing decision-making processes.

In the internal focus, neuroplasticity plays a particularly important role, considering that in childhood neuronal networks are more active, which makes it possible to strengthen neuronal circuits or selected networks. As for the circuits aimed at children's empathy and internal self-management, these develop equally throughout childhood and adolescence and can be better directed through stimuli. With regard to concepts such as self-awareness, the ability to direct attention to our inner world, both thoughts and feelings, allows us to develop control over ourselves - the ability

to distance ourselves from and monitor our own feelings and behaviours;² attention is important for learning considering a specific capacity called cognitive control, therefore, attention is directed to the intended stimulus; and self-management translates into knowing what to do when faced with certain feelings.¹

Considering that the second focus is also directed towards empathy, which can be subdivided into three categories: cognitive empathy, which aims to understand the perspectives and mental states of others - how they feel about those around them. Emotional empathy, which is understood as a connection that provides an internal, immediate perception, in which the individual can understand how others feel, at any moment. Finally, empathic concern - when the individual is in tune and has the intention of helping others. It should be noted that physical and interactive environments are more appropriate to enable students to understand themselves, their internal world, and to develop empathy and compassion.¹

The third focus is considered external - understanding the broader world, observing, reflecting and developing decision-making

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ing processes. Contributing to decision-making is an objective that is particularly important for emotional intelligence and social skills. In order for children to be able to make, preferably, good decisions, they must build self-awareness and self-control which not only enables them to think more clearly, but, together with empathy and social skills, they are made aware of respecting their peers in terms of how they feel.

As for emotional intelligence, it is a result from the combination of the interaction between emotion and cognition: due to emotion, thinking is considered intelligent - the individual is able to think about their emotions and those of others through cognitive intelligence and, furthermore, the individual may have difficulties on an emotional and social level in the case of the absence of this relationship.² It can be seen that emotional intelligence is one of the most important aspects of the individual, which not only favours their relationships with themselves and others, but also thrives in learning, facilitates problem solving and helps well-being, both personal and social. It integrates skills such as the ability to interpret and regulate one's own emotions appropriately and, subsequently, those of others.^{2,3} Emotional intelligence is constituted by emotional expression.² Emotional expression refers to the child's ability to moderate negative emotions, encourage positive ones without neglecting the information they transmit. The child's ability to model the intensity and/or duration of emotional states is called emotion regulation, and the understanding of emotions as indicated by the term aims at the ability to identify, recognize and name emotions, discriminating their own from those of others through facial expressions and contextual situations. It plays a key role in managing emotions as well as developing the connection between emotion, cognition and emotional patterns. These constituents of emotional intelligence contribute to the child's self-awareness.^{1,2}

The learning of social skills takes place throughout a student's journey, and is usually a natural process of imitating the archetypes available in the environment in which the individual is inserted.^{4,5} It is particularly important in the individual's development, as well as in their behaviour in school situations, specifically in the relationship between academic success and learning difficulties. In the event that it does not occur naturally, due to a range of situations, children can be taught observation skills (i.e., attending to social cues), basic skills (i.e., eye contact, facial expression, gestures, interpersonal space, posture, touching, speaking and listening), complex skills (i.e., greeting, maintaining a conversation, assertiveness) and cognitive skills (i.e., planning, problem solving and social difficulties) through content and contexts that vary depending on age and level of difficulty.⁵

It is understood that emotional skills are the knowledge, abilities, dexterity and attitudes necessary to understand, express and

control our attitudes appropriately. Emotional skills encompass emotional awareness, and the ability to understand, recognize and name your feelings and emotions, as well as those of others. It is being aware of your own emotions and those of others, and when we interact with others we must adopt a dignified and respectful posture, preventing future conflicts; emotional control, ability to manage emotions appropriately; emotional autonomy, the ability to produce appropriate emotions at a given time, includes: self-esteem, self-confidence, self-motivation, emotional self-sufficiency, ability to critically analyse social norms and responsibility, promoting the ability to generate appropriate emotions at a given time, which generally in more demanding situations it is more challenging.³

Regarding preventive strategies, there are several theories that complement each other, namely, Erikson (1963, cited by Silva 1997)⁵ believes that children need to learn to trust others in order to be able to satisfy their physical and emotional needs, and this confidence includes the growth of a secure base that allows the child to explore the environment that surrounds them, with certainty. While Hartup (1989, cited by Silva 1997) assumes the existence of two types of relationships that are central to the child's development - influential relationships, in which children relate to peers who have more power and social knowledge, usually adults who can be parents, siblings or educators who provide interactions in which they care and check on the child, enabling them to ask for support; and equal-level relationships that comprise of the interaction of children with other children whose social power is the same, thus involving themselves in relationships of equal and reciprocal expectations.⁵

According to Harpin and Faloon (1977, cited by Silva 1997),⁵ social skills promotion programs aim to reduce communication difficulties, generalise good behaviours and enable students to face new situations, which translates into empowering students to develop their personal and relational skills to the maximum, through the acquisition of new social skills. This acquisition may happen through techniques such as instructions, modelling, feedback, games, social reinforcement, among others. The development of these programs must include not only the student but also the modification of school involvement - the school community, teachers, educators, assistants and others.

Silva⁵ and collaborators believe that the social behaviour of parents shapes the behaviour of children with their peers - the patterns of behaviour observed by children who copy them in their daily lives define acceptance by their peers. Social acceptance encompasses factors such as the ability to put oneself in "other people's shoes", the ability to find solutions by focusing on problems, language skills, motor availability, leadership skills, academic

success, all of these factors contribute to the social acceptance of children. On the other hand, if students experience a lack of social acceptance, the form of behaviours such as disinterest, academic failure, school dropout, addictive behaviours, mental illness, and delinquency, are more likely to occur. However, children with less social inhibition and/or popularity have more opportunities for social interactions and to learn and develop their social skills when compared to their less popular peers or those with a tendency to isolate themselves.^{2,5} These social opportunities allow the recognition of emotions based on facial expressions, understanding of the externalised causes of emotions, understanding of emotions based on beliefs, discernment regarding the hypothesis of controlling emotional experiences, among others, as fundamental elements for children's emotional understanding.² It is possible to admit that friendships facilitate cooperation and intimacy in an equal-level relationship. As mentioned previously, children's personal perceptions develop throughout their development and begin with physical and behavioural aspects, evolving into more complex psychological characteristics.⁵ Regarding intervention in the area of social behaviour problems, it functions from the perspective of reducing behaviours considered inappropriate, with the focus being to help individuals develop their personal and relational skills and abilities to the maximum, through the acquisition of new tools.⁵

The development of this Social Skills (Emotional Intelligence) Program aims to equip students with the principles, vision, values and skills to be acquired according to the profile of students upon leaving compulsory education.

With regard to principles, what is most focused on by the developed program are knowledge, which recommends that students, through the educational community, develop a scientific culture that allows the student to understand; making decisions and intervening in natural and social realities - the actions taken must be supported by knowledge; learning, which is central to the educational process and promotes the growth of the ability to learn, which is the basis of lifelong education and training.⁴

According to the profile of students leaving compulsory schooling, "the student's Vision integrates designs that complement, interpenetrate and reinforce each other in a schooling model that aims at individual qualification and democratic citizenship." (p.15) which is in line with the student being free, autonomous, responsible and aware of themselves, as well as the world around them and also, being able to think critically and autonomously, having acquired skills to work collaboratively, and communicative capacity.⁴

According to Martins and collaborators (2017), young people are encouraged to acquire values such as responsibility and integrity that aim to respect not only themselves but those around them;

act ethically, conscientious of responding to their actions, which must always be considered according to the common good; curiosity, reflection and innovation refer to interest and motivation for other learning, namely wanting to know more; reflective and critical thinking without forgetting the exercise of examining new solutions - these are the aspects referring to values.

Ended with the areas of competence that translate into reasoning and problem solving, namely, referring to directing responses to new situations, mobilising intelligence for decision making, use of strategies and, in the future, new questions; interpersonal relationship that refers to interaction with others in their different social and emotional contexts. What makes it possible to recognize, express and manage emotions, build relationships and respond to personal and emotional needs, in this context, students must be able to adapt their behaviours in contexts of cooperation, collaboration, competition and participation, to work as a team and have tools of empathy and responsibility to argue and accept different opinions; as for personal development and autonomy, they encompass processes of developing self-confidence, motivation for learning, self-regulation, informed decision-making, a spirit of initiative integrating thought, emotion and behaviour. Therefore, students must be efficient in identifying areas of interest and/or needs in terms of acquiring new tools and, equally, establishing relationships between emotion, knowledge and behaviour.⁴

In conclusion, the objective of this type of intervention aims to allow children to reflect on the way they relate to others, and find alternative experiences that are more flexible, coherent and appropriate to situations⁵ as a result of development of self-awareness, self-management, empathy and also processes that involve problem-solving in decision-making.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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