

Should Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace be taught in CTCs?

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## Abstract

Many studies and much research have been done verifying the significance and importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace in dealing with individuals or teams. This article looks at the importance of emotional and social intelligence in the workplace and how important it is to include emotional intelligence as part of the comprehensive overall training and education of our secondary students in career and technical education. It also addresses the importance of group intelligence in the workplace and in secondary career and technical centers. Since many tasks at both of these levels are project based, it is imperative that the teams going into these activities develop an understanding of group dynamics and what characteristics can make or break progress towards the successful completion of their mission.

## Should Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace be taught in CTCs?

“The psychometric view of social intelligence divides intelligence into three facets, pertaining to the ability to understand and manage ideas (abstract intelligence), concrete objects (mechanical intelligence), and people (social intelligence)” E.L. Thorndike (1920) taken from (John F. Kihlstrom, n.d., para. 2).

It's as almost Thorndike had career and technical education (CTE) in mind when he was working through his research. Inherent abstract or cognitive intelligence is important in the workforce as today's employers rely on the creative and critical thinking skills of their employees. Knowledge of concrete objects or mechanical intelligence as Thorndike calls it is equally as important and is directly aligned with cognitive intelligence. What may be different about social or emotional intelligence is that this attribute may be improved upon.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence (EI) 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 action” (p. 189). This definition of emotional intelligence implies that one needs to empathize when dealing with others' feelings and not just focus on their own. This is key in the workplace and it is better that this skill is learned in a high school or post high school career and technical center (CTC) so that upon entering the workforce, one is prepared to co-exist with fellow employees and supervisors. All students should have emotional and social intelligence training in preparing them for higher education and work but it is significant in CTE in that many of the tasks required to do involve group projects, sharing of equipment and tools, peer teaching, and the fact that the students are in the same lab and class often for three hours or more at a time in it of itself requires more social skills

and patience than that of a 45 or 90 minute class in a traditional academic classroom setting. Also, group critical thinking, creative thinking, brainstorming, and collaborative partnerships require a cohesive emotional bond that allow for maximum benefit in the group effort.

One of the most profound, insightful, and comprehensive studies on emotional intelligence and correlation with job performance was recently completed and showed a significant relationship between the two (O'Boyle, E.H., Humphrey, R.H., Pollack, J.M., Hawver, T.H., and Story, P.A., 2011). They classified the research and data into three streams: First, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Test (MSCEIT) designed to measure four characteristics skills of EI: (1) perceiving emotions, (2) using emotions to facilitate thought, (3) understanding emotions, and (4) managing emotions. Second, self-report instruments based on the Mayer-Salovey Model, and third, using commercially available tests that go beyond the Mayer-Salovey Model (Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, 2012, p. 1). They found that all three streams of EI assessment correlated with job performance. They also found that "dominance analysis showed when predicting job performance, all three streams of EI assessment exhibited substantial relative importance in the presence of the Five Factor Model (FFM) incorporating openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism and in the presence of cognitive intelligence" (O'Boyle et al., 2011, p. 31). They found that EI was especially important in jobs that required customer service and that are in the service sector. Also, O'Boyle et al., (2011) quote Humphrey 2008, as stating that "although emotional labor has been conceptualized primarily in terms of service work, leaders high on EI may perform emotional labor in order to influence the moods, motivations, and performance of their team members" (p. 67).

So why begin exposing CTE students early on in their technical and professional education settings? If the responsibility of career and technical education is to teach the cognitive and mechanical skills required by business and industry, and current trends in business and industry reflect a need to have a highly trained emotional intelligent staff, then why not. It fits into the scheme of employability skills such as showing up to work every day and on time, being considerate of others' needs and interests, self- respect and respect for others, and working in a socially acceptable manner for and with others. The University of Kent identified the top ten skills that employers want in their employees and among them are verbal communication skills and teamwork (University of Kent, Careers and Employability Service, n.d., p. 1).

Where should career and technical centers begin to teach emotional IQ skills? The student organization SkillsUSA has developed a series of student workbooks that contain invaluable activities that help guide instructors and students through some of these necessary skill sets. Most schools already use these and emphasis on certain components can prove very beneficial. These student workbooks are called Professional Development Programs (PDPs).

Level 1.5 addresses an awareness of cultural differences and equity issues which can be of major concern in the workplace. Being sensitive to racial, gender, religious, physical disabilities, or weight differences are extremely important in the workplace and social settings and it's critical that awareness in these areas is taught (*Professional Development Program*, 2004, p. 30).

Level 1.6 *Professional Development Program* (2004) defines internal and external customers and correlates how important emotional intelligence skills are to getting and keeping satisfied customers (p. 36). Customers are more likely to return and re-use your service if they

feel they have been valued and validated, and how they are treated sometimes becomes more important than the service or product that's actually provided.

Level 1.8 *Professional Development Program* (2004) has the students participating in exercises that demonstrate effective communication with others (p. 40). This component defines the importance of effective listening, writing, collaboration, problem solving, and decision making. Communication skills can make the difference between being successful and accepted by others, or failure.

Activity 2.2 helps students to identify stress sources. Studies have shown that people with a low emotional IQ tend to suffer more stress on the job than those that have a higher emotional intelligence level. This module helps students to cope with various stress situations and helps them identify their sources of stress. In many instances it can be a time-management issue or can be related to lack of sleep.

The Level 2.5 activity teaches students how to apply team skills to a group project. This is an invaluable trait for the workforce.

Study after study has shown that teams are more creative and productive when they can achieve high levels of participation, cooperation, and collaboration among members. But interactive behaviors like these aren't easy to legislate. Our work shows that three basic conditions need to be present before such behaviors can occur: mutual trust among members, a sense of group identity, and a sense of group efficacy. (Urch Druskat & Wolff, 2008, p. 83)

Group efficacy infers the belief that the team can perform well and that the group members are more effective working together than apart.

In level 2.7 of *Professional Development Program*, (2004) students practice demonstrating business meeting skills ( p. 22). Knowledge of appropriate meeting protocol is crucial in making emotionally intelligent decisions. For instance, if it is protocol by Robert's Rules that each person is only allowed seven minutes to speak, you may be called on this and how you react to this is dependent upon your knowledge of the rules. It's your professional responsibility to make sure everyone gets equal time to speak and by knowing this, you're less apt to become offended. In this case one's cognitive ability is complimented by one's emotional intelligence skills and vice versa.

Even though these modules cover a great deal of information to help students to professionally develop, there is much more to know about emotional intelligence than can be provided in these PDPs. It is recommended that principals or teachers purchase and read Daniel Goleman books such as *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter More Than IQ* (Goleman, 2006), *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships* (Goleman, 2006), and *Working With Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, 2006). These books may be difficult for high school students to read and comprehend so it is recommended that teachers read and interpret these for their students. It may be beneficial to create lesson plans based on these books and use differentiated instruction so that all students can benefit from its contents. In the *Emotional Intelligence* book the whole first chapter encompasses neurological and chemical constructs of how the brain works regarding emotional intelligence and teachers may want to skip the details provided in this chapter (Goleman, 2006, Chapter 1).

There is also much attention lately given to group emotional intelligence. If five people are in a meeting, there are six personalities in the room; one for each of the five people and one for the group. Emotional intelligence is being aware of your own emotions and social

intelligence is being aware of others' emotions. "A group however must attend to yet another awareness and regulation. It must be mindful of the emotions of its members, its own group emotions or moods, and the emotions of other groups and individuals outside its boundaries" (Urch Druskat & Wolff, 2008, p. 82). One must use caution in their interpretation of group emotional intelligence. It is often inherent to be polite and suppress a feeling about others' behavior in a group in order to make sure that everyone is getting along and to ensure peace at all cost. This however may prevent the team from moving forward and may create the elephant in the room climate.

Group emotional intelligence isn't a question of dealing with necessary evil-catching emotions as they bubble up and promptly suppressing them. Far from it. It's about bringing emotions deliberately to the surface and understanding how they affect the team's work. Emotional intelligence means exploring, embracing, and ultimately relying on emotion in work that is, in the end, deeply human. (Urch Druskat & Wolff, 2008, p. 83)

It is imperative that before a team begins to work together, that ground rules be established to guard against circumstances that may serve to undermine the progress of the team. For instance a group may want to itemize scenarios and how to thwart certain situations before they fester. These ground rules can include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Try your best to remain on task
- Don't invite members that you believe are immune to criticism
- Encourage open, frank, and honest discussion. All should feel free to discuss the proverbial elephant in the room

- Be present, here, and now. Everyone has war stories but these should be avoided as they do not move the team ahead
- Embrace diverse opinions and respect for all people and ideas
- Encourage others by having them elaborate on their ideas and feed into the idea to spark further interest and bring out the best in the author and the idea

A great CTE project can be even greater when the group has chemistry between its members and each member values the knowledge and expertise each of the other members brings to the task. The knowledge of the group that has chemistry between its members is not additive but multiplicative in that one brings out the best in others (Goleman, 2006, Chapter 9). This is why the intelligence of a group is not equal to the sum of all the individual members, but greater or less than the sum of its individual members. Indeed a group's intelligence can be less than any individual's IQ if the group is dysfunctional. A great example of a team working on a group project at a CTC is a robotics project. This requires the expert knowledge of engineering students, electronics/electrical students, computer programming students, and welding students. Each not only brings their skill-specific expertise with them, but also their instinctive and cognitive engineering abilities along with their ability to envision what the final project should look like. "In today's workplace, this is a fundamental fact: Each of us has only a part of the information or expertise we need to get our jobs done" (Goleman, 2006, p. 202). Because of the explosion growth of information, this is true today more than ever.

If schools fail to help students master these human fundamentals through literacy programs, then companies will have to do it remedially when those students become employees. Such a concerted focus on helping schools teach these capabilities can help improve both the civility of life in our communities and

their economic prosperity. Emotional intelligence is now as crucial to our children's future as the standard academic fare. (Goleman, 2006, p. 307)

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