


Teaching Emotional Intelligence In The Business School Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The ability to manage one's emotions and to manage one's interactions with others is tantamount to effective managerial leadership. Students in business schools will need to be prepared to integrate their emotional intelligence with their everyday behavior if they are to achieve success in whatever field of endeavor they have chosen. In this article I will outline a curriculum design that will enable students to understand, appreciate and apply the principles embedded in the emotional intelligence model. The following topics will be discussed in this article as part of this self management curriculum: assessing one's level of emotional intelligence; the distinction between emotional and intellectual competency; what research shows in terms of the relationship between emotional intelligence and success in life; and a description of the self management course which I currently teach within the emotional intelligence framework.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, self management, self awareness, EQ/IQ, interpersonal dynamics, self understanding, self control, and self disclosure.

 Emotional intelligence has emerged today as a critical ingredient in the business environment. Since the seminal work of Daniel Goleman in the nineties, much has been written concerning both the importance and application of this concept in the workplace. The ability to manage one's emotions and to manage one's interactions with others is tantamount to effective managerial leadership. In fact, it is an absolute necessity that we become aware of and act on our emotions in appropriate ways. Our culture, unfortunately has taught us otherwise. The intellect 'rules' and emotions must be submerged if we are to be successful. The data strongly suggests that the opposite is true. Emotions do matter in everyday living, and when recognized and used appropriate-ly can enrich our lives, our relationships and our performance at work. In the 60's, Douglas McGregor 's book "The Human Side of Enterprise" began to call attention to the human values and characteristics that needed to be addressed by a workplace that was pretty much devoid of human meaning. Also in the 60's, a strong west-to-east movement that captured the importance of feelings and emotions began to be seen in the development of such structures as group dynamics, sensitivity training, and personal and interpersonal growth training. However, as is the case with large cultural changes, the time wasn't 'right' for the acceptance and integration of these new ideas and as a result the impact on the culture was minimal. However, as the term emotional intelligence gained recognition and acknowledgement in the 90's, more research began to support the relevance and and integration of this concept into areas such as the workplace, relationships, child rearing, and personal development and fulfillment.

Peter Drucker once said that he no longer teaches the management of people at work because he believes that self management is the primary skill for success at work. Bennis and O'Toole in the May 2005 Harvard Business Review article state that "business schools are graduating students who are ill-equipped to wrangle with complex, unquantifiable issues- in other words, the stuff of management". So, once again the stage is set for educators to begin to create learning experiences for students that address these "unquantifiable issues" personal and interpersonal competence, leadership and supervisory skills, conflict resolution, diversity, and communication skills.

At Quinnipiac University, over the past several years I have been teaching a Self- Management course which incorporates many of the elements that Goleman writes about in the Emotional Intelligence area. The rest of this article will describe the framework for this course and how it can be implemented.

I owe much of what I have learned from the pioneering efforts of John and Joyce Weir and their model for self differentiation and self management; and from the work of Gerry Weinstein and Al Alschuler at the University of Massachusetts. Their models for self management are intricately woven into my course.

This course gives students the opportunity to explore their own self-awareness; their interpersonal awareness; and the steps that can help them translate this awareness into behavior changes as well as changes in their belief system and feeling states. Keeping consistent with the emotional intelligence model, this course covers the following: a. self-awareness and acknowledgement of thoughts, feelings, sensations, intentions and behaviors; b. other awareness including the development of empathy, understanding, acceptance and validation; and c. the development of specific personal and interpersonal skills such as creativity, risk taking, imagery, meditation, deal-with conflict, diversity, power and communication and listening. This design is also based on a strong developmental approach whereby students are given the opportunity to examine them-selves from early childhood in order to see the influences these experiences have had on their individual development.

The mainly experiential nature of this course allows students the opportunity to ‘learn’ about themselves in a way which increases the likelihood that the ‘learning’ has an impact beyond simply ‘knowing’ about the experience. The course engages students on many dimensions: verbal, non-verbal, and physical, and includes the learning modalities of art, music, imagery, meditation and role play. In addition, the course utilizes many physical activities designed to allow students to fully embrace an experience on many different levels.

At the beginning of the course, students form support groups which they participate in periodically throughout each session. These groups are designed to give students the opportunity to talk about issues which they have chosen not to discuss in the larger group. Also, these support groups are an important part of the experience, and since the sessions are all-day events (the class meets for 5 Sundays from 9am to 5pm), retreating into these smaller groups allows for the potential for more intimate disclosure.

The students in this course are invited to take a journey exploring who they are and their relationships to others. The course is described to them as a potentially exciting, sometimes personally confronting experience from which they can learn about themselves. Risk-taking is encouraged as a way to learn new aspects of themselves. The concept of viewing this ex-perience as a laboratory experiment is discussed wherein they are afforded the opportunity to experiment with new ways of thinking,, feeling, and acting. In order for students to feel safe to do this experimenting, a classroom group dynamic is created which fosters support, validation, acceptance and community building. Besides experiencing themselves on many different levels, students record their experience in a personal journal detailing what they became aware of in themselves and in their interactions with others. This cognitive activity allows the student to view his/her experiences from a reflective angle, and also, to examine them from the point of view of the various theories and models discussed in the course.

Teaching emotional intelligence in the business school has an important and necessary place in the curriculum, probably more necessary than the undue emphasis we place upon so-called academic rigor, research and technical competency. Corporations and businesses are not run like a scientific experiment, but rather as a giant problem solving endeavor which attempts to sift through the complex maze of social and human factors in order to arrive at decisions, often made with insufficient data, which hopefully can result in the desired outcomes. In all of this, the human factor is a key ingredient in its formula for success.

Students graduating from business schools will need to be prepared to integrate their technical competency with their emotional intelligence if they are to achieve success in the corporate world. Teaching Emotional Intelligence in the business school must be a priority and be considered as a core learning experience for all students in all business disciplines.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Dr. Frank Bellizzi is professor of Management at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. He is also Director of the Associates for Consulting and Training, providing management development for business, industry, education, health care and government clients. His academic and professional interests encompass the areas of emotional intelligence, leadership development, entrepreneurial thinking, self management, and the development of human potential within the energy psychology model. At Quinnipiac University he also directed the BIC Leadership Project for eight years. His doctorate (Ed.D.) was obtained from the University of Massachusetts in organizational behavior.

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