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Methods of developing children's emotional intelligence

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Abstract

Almost a century ago, Thorndike had the foresight to announce to the world that IQ is not the only type of intelligence. And he was right. What he was referring to is emotional intelligence, the product of two main factors – personal and social competency – without which one cannot envisage the human personality of the 21st century. Emotions have taught humanity how to think, Luc de Vauvenargues said. Those emotions that are not dealt with disrupt the mind and body while those emotions that are transformed in abilities ensure a better productivity, more satisfactions derived from everyday activities and positive interpersonal relationships, they drive us to assume accountability as well as bolster up our self-control, among many other things. Our attempt to develop and optimize the involvement of emotions in achieving individual success was aimed at the following objectives:

- *Discovering the four unique areas of EQ: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management*
- *Developing EQ through the use of specific techniques*
- *Using EQ for: cognitive and interrelational advantages, lowering stress level, the increase of individual productivity, comprehending emotions, positively interacting with others, etc.*

This paper deals exactly with the most efficient methods of developing emotional intelligence in children.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, social and personal competency, methods of developing, self – motivation, empathy

1. Emotional intelligence – conceptual delimitations

Almost a century ago, Thorndike had the foresight to announce to the world that IQ is not the sole type of intelligence. And he was right. What he was referring to is emotional intelligence, the product of two main factors – **personal and social competency** – without which one cannot envisage the human personality of the 21st century. Emotions have taught humanity how to think, Luc de Vauvenargues said.

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They function as a delicate and sophisticated interior guidance system, that warns us when we lack natural impulse and helps us **survive and make decisions** based the assimilated information, to **draw the necessary lines** to protect our physical and mental health, to **communicate** as good as possible with the others by being more receptive to other people's emotional problems and make them feel respected, important, understood and loved. Our unity as a species was built step by step based on feelings of cooperation, compassion and forgiveness and not on our religious, political, cultural beliefs that have, unfortunately separated us on too many occasions in a tragic and sometimes fatal way.

1.1. Wayne Leon Payne

The concept of emotional intelligence was formulated for the first time in a PhD thesis, in the U.S.A., in 1985, by Wayne Leon Payne who believes that *emotional intelligence is an ability that involves a creative relationship with fear, pain and desire*. The adaptation of a person to the environment they live in is made both through cognitive elements and through the non/cognitive ones. The non-cognitive elements of intelligence include emotional, personal and social agents, which are all essential for the person's success in life.

Using connected concepts like *social skills, interpersonal competency, psychological maturity and emotional conscience, social development, social and emotional learning and personal intelligence* in investigating **the dimensions of emotional intelligence** to obtain an increase in the level of social and emotional competency, some connections between emotional intelligence and the other phenomena – individual performance, group performance, interpersonal social changes, adaptation to change, leadership – have been highlighted.

1.2. John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey

Defining emotional intelligence as *skills by which a person can discriminate and monitorize his own and other people's emotions, as well as the capacity of using the information which guides his own way of thinking and acting*, Salovey and Mayer do nothing but demonstrate the level of implication of the cognitive processes and all the others that monitorize both his own emotions and other people's emotions.

1.3. Daniel Goleman

Five years later, Daniel Goleman defines emotional intelligence (EI) as *a capacity of self-control and control of stress and negative emotions; a meta-ability which determines and influences the way and the efficiency with which we can use our other capacities and abilities, including educational intelligence*. Integrating in EI the concepts used by **Gardner**, intrapersonal intelligence (the labeling of his own emotions) and interpersonal (the understanding of other people's emotions) also needs to include abilities that can be categorized into five fields: **self consciousness, emotions control, self – motivation, empathy, the capacity of creating relations**.

1.4. David Caruso and Charles J. Wolfe

Caruso and his predecessors believe that emotional intelligence is *the ability of processing emotional information, especially the ones that presuppose perception, assimilation, understanding and control of emotions* (Mayer, Cobb, 2000) which is manifested at the level of *“four levels of mental ability”*:

- The perception, knowledge and expression of emotions
- Emotional facilitation of the way of thinking
- The understanding and analysis of emotions; the usage of emotional knowledge
- Reflexive control of emotions, the way towards emotional and intellectual development.

Generalizing, emotional intelligence represents *the capacity of recognizing, understanding and using emotions for making the best decisions and motivating oneself to apply them* and as a base of verbal and non-verbal communication, it sustains:

- the facilitation of new relations with the people that we feel attracted to or with those on whom we depend for the fulfillment of certain needs
- the making up of tacit and manifested interpersonal conflicts
- the stabilizations and optimization of existent relationships and their transformation into a source of continuous satisfaction
- the right understanding of the motivation of others and their usage for influencing their emotional state and availability

- the efficient use of self emotions in favor of and not against the objectives that we might have
- the significant increase of communication impact

1.5. Steven J. Stein and Howard E. Book

The research on conceptual content in the 21st century have brought about significant news, each year. Steven J. Stein and Howard E. Book brought to attention a new organizational model under the form of **fields: intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress management**. Karl Albrecht made a rearrangement of the model of Howard Gardner's "multiple intelligences", in other six primary categories: **abstract intelligence, social intelligence, practical intelligence, emotional intelligence, aesthetic intelligence, kinaesthetic intelligence**.

By combining thinking and feeling, emotional competency shows how much of that potential we translated in the abilities that we have at the work place (in the classroom, theatre) Daniel Goleman (2004) identified **five dimensions** within the practical model of EI competency: **Self-knowledge, Self-retrenchment, Motivation, Empathy, Relations**.

Although 25 emotional competencies correspond to these five dimensions of emotional intelligence, nobody has them all, but we can reach remarkable performances having approximately six of these, which can be found in all the five fields of emotional intelligence: **self knowledge, of our own emotions, controlling emotion, internal motivation, empathy, establishing and managing inter-human relationships**.

2. Research Objectives

Our attempt to develop and make efficient the involvement of emotion in obtaining individual success has as **objectives**:

- *The discovery of the four unique areas of EQ: self-knowledge, self-control, social-knowledge, interpersonal relationships management*
- *The development of EQ by using some specific techniques*
- *The use of EQ for: having cognitive and interrelationship benefits, lowering the level of stress, increase in individual productivity, understanding of emotions when they appear, positive interaction with others, application in each area of our daily life.*

3. Approach

3.1. General Hypothesis

The use of some adequate methods, techniques and strategies for developing emotional intelligence will have as an effect the achievement of some relevant performances on a cognitive, affective, interrelationship and self acceptance level.

3.2. Working Hypothesis

We can assume that there is a significant positive correlation between the emotional IQ and the level of behavioral adequacy in certain situations.

3.3. Variable Description

The term of emotional intelligence refers to the abilities with which a person can discriminate and monitorize his own emotions and other people's emotions as well as the capacity of using the information that guides his own thoughts and action. Two essential things are highlighted in this definition: involved cognitive processes, as well as the processes by which his own emotions are monitorized apart from the ones involved in monitorizing other people's emotions. That is why it has been decided that it should be operational through emotional IQ measured by "EI Self evaluation scale" which was elaborated starting from the classification made by **Stein and Book** which includes 15 characteristics or **emotional personal competencies: emotional self knowledge, assertive character empathy, independence, interpersonal relations, reality testing, problem solving, stress tolerance, impulses control, optimism, happiness, self respect, self achievement, social responsibility** and the **Test C.P.I.ad.383**.

After the analyses of this self evaluation scale and the **5 dimensions S.P.A.C.E.** of Albrecht, it was decided to highlight the **common elements of I.S.** from the E.I elements from which only five have been selected: **empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relations, assertive character, and flexibility**.

Several practical activities have been suggested which are based upon the principles of **rational-emotional and behavior education**, which represents a psycho-educational program of preventive intervention for children (in this case children with CES) made of modular sequences of psychological education, which aims at the development of the children's cognitive and behavior skills that can make them more productive and at the same time happier and adapted into the hyper – complex environment that we live in. The activities have been grouped into the following categories: **self-acceptance, emotions, beliefs and behaviors, problem solving and decision making, interpersonal relations.**

Each activity contained two main parts: *stimulation activity and discussion*. The duration of the activities was of *15-20 minutes for the stimulation activities and at least 15 minutes for discussions*. The activities encouraged the pupils to look at each other, to share and to learn from their colleagues what emotional adaptation means. The basic rules set from the very beginning ensured the respect that pupils must have for other people's opinions and expressions. They have been forced to take part in the discussions. The simple fact that they can listen to the other participants who chat and discuss has been a learning experience which helped them bring their emotions and beliefs to a normal level.

The basic of this content of these types of activities were included in the theoretical principles of **REBT** (Rational – Emotive Behavioral Therapy). The basic assumption of **REBT** refers to the fact that emotional stress has its rules in four major categories of irrational beliefs:

- *Beliefs of the “to do experience”*
- *Worthlessness: I am a person without value who does not do very well and I do not win the approval of others, as I should;*
- *“Expressing regrets”: it is awful, catastrophic and horrible that I do not manage as I should*
- *Beliefs of the type “I cannot handle it”(frustration, intolerance): I cannot tolerate it, I cannot stand the things that are happening and that shouldn't be happening to me*

That **must** has been translated in the following types of belief, easy to track for anyone who works with children or with CES children:

“I must receive what I want easily; the world must be just; it is awful that other people do not like me; I cannot stand to be criticized; I cannot do anything to overcome the state I am in; it is better to avoid challenges than to risk failure; I must conform to the group; it is my parents' fault that I am unhappy, everything must happen to me the way I want it, and I always must have what I want, I must win, I shouldn't wait to have something; I am a bad person if I make a mistake.” (a child)

The nucleus of the REBT practice was the ABC model in which:

A represents the event that activated it, which can be interior or exterior to the person who groups all the activities that can be observed or who imagined by the person

B represents the personal beliefs under the form of some evaluative cognitions or personal representations on the reality which can be:

- **Flexible beliefs** (called **rational beliefs**) expressed under the form of desires and preferences which lead to **rational conclusions** which are presented under the form of moderate evaluation of the character of an event, of the expression of tolerance, the acceptance of imperfection, flexible thought regarding the possibility of the occurrence of an event
- **Rigid beliefs** (also called **irrational beliefs**) which lead to **irrational conclusions** presented under several forms: catastrophic thinking, intolerance, frustration, global negative evaluation, the thinking of the type “always or never”

C represents emotional and behavioral consequences of the beliefs that the person has on A:

- **Dysfunctional negative consequences**, which result from irrational, rigid beliefs on negative A-s, will be inadequate
- **Functional negative consequences** (Crawford & Ellis, 1989) derive from action, flexible beliefs on negative A-s.

Another category of consequences makes us think of the emotions associated with an activator event: *dysfunctional negative emotions and functional negative emotions.*

3.4. Sample Description

The research was made on a set of 64 subjects, 39 boys and 25 girls. The subjects were between 10 and 14 years old and their selection was made from the number of students in a neighborhood general school. According to age, the number of students represented $\frac{1}{4}$ from the total sample (10-11/16, 11-12/17, 12-13/16, 13-14/18).

3.5. Description of the Investigation Methods

As strategies, methods and exercises for evaluation, self evaluation and the development of emotional intelligence, one has used:

- Self evaluation scale of EI which was elaborated starting from the classification made by Stein and Book and the Test C.P.I.ad.383 adapted
- **SmartEmotions Program for emotional Self control** which created for the participants the right conditions to develop their emotional “reading” capacity of those around them, hereby developing both the correct observation and interpretation capacity of emotional reaction and the empathic resources of deep connection to other people.
- **ESPERE method** whose objective aimed at “*helping to the development of a different way of relating to people, to life, in harmony with our deepest aspirations: wellbeing, peace, enthusiasm, cohabitation and love.*”
- The instruments of ESPERE method helped us built authentic relations, supporting the words used in communication: “external visualizing”, “symbolic acts”, “update” and “confirmation”. The exercise of passing from SAPPE to ESPERE meant for us passing from opposition/from being dominant to confrontation, without alienating the Yellow narcissus principle and using the triangulation for breaking through from duality.
- **Methods with a high degree of interaction:** the aquarium of impressions, role – plays (One-to-one Play), practicing “report” (NLP), tests and questionnaires, case studies, Treasure hunting, Posters with people, I can do, I cannot do, Emotions wheel, Express yourself, What is hidden inside?
- **Relaxing methods:** analytical relaxation method (Jacobson), Schultz autogenous and psychotron training. Exercises of developing the knowledge capacity of self emotions (the list of emotions or “emotional taxonomy”), of developing the capacity of correct emotions management, of developing the empathic capacity.
- **Techniques of increasing self-knowledge and emotional self-control**
- **Self-deception**, a strategy of protection the opinion on himself by denying the weaknesses and avoiding reality.
- **Mind Lab method**, a unique approach of the development of the thinking capacity, emotional intelligence and social skills with the help of thinking games.

3.6 Description of the Data Collection Procedures

The investigation steps took 18 months and the testing of the subjects was made every 6 months. On each occasion, the approached problematic was presented, the trails, the activities and the methods used have been described, the aim of the investigations and they have been ensured of the confidentiality of the results to all the trials and in all three evaluation steps. The subjects have been cooperative and they performed seriously.

4. Survey Results

The Pearson correlation coefficient, average, standard error and t test were used to statistically process the data obtained after applying the tests.

The results obtained after applying and interpreting the “EI Self-evaluation scale” revealed the capacities that obtained maximum values (independence, self-achievement, optimism, social responsibility), the medium present capacities (interpersonal relationships, self respect, happiness, solving problems) the least present capacities (stress tolerance, impulse control, flexibility) and the capacities that were recorded (empathy - 26.38%, flexibility – 8.33%, impulses control – 8.33%, assertive character – 4.16%).

At the first analyses of the results after applying C.P.I.ad.383 we obtained the highest frequency of critical scores in the case of psychological attributes like flexibility, dominance, intellectual efficiency, communicability (62.4) and then it fell to a comfortable level (32.6), proving the efficiency of the steps undertaken for developing emotional intelligence.

Being made after each sequence of evaluation, the analysis of scholar results highlighted the existence of both quantitative and progressive qualitative increase in 87.2% from the cases.

The results obtained in Romanian and foreign language and literature, History, Geography, and Civic education have been taken into account. The difference of at least one point between the evaluations has proven the constancy of quantitative and qualitative accumulations and those six cases where the progress was least noticeable have been included into a special program to facilitate emotions development, self acceptance, the efficiency of interrelationship. The statistic processing of the data has proven that there is a direct, positive and significant correlation between the emotional intelligence coefficient and dimensions of the personality at a significant step of $p=0.01$.

A positive direct correlation has been obtained between:

- the emotional intelligence coefficient and the development level of the communication dimension, where the correlation coefficient $r = 0.32$ at a signification step $p=0.05$
- the emotional intelligence coefficient and the development level of the intellectual efficiency dimension, where the correlation coefficient $r=0.52$, at a significance step $p<0.001$
- the emotional intelligence coefficient and the increase in individual productivity where the correlation coefficient $r=0.54$ at a significance step of $p<0.001$,

all these results obtained demonstrate the validity of the Hypos=thesis 1 which says that “The use of some adequate methods, techniques and strategies of developing emotional intelligence will have as an effect the acquisition of some relevant performances on a cognitive, affective, interrelation and self acceptance level.” All this had to be demonstrated.

An emotionally intelligent person is not the one that has no emotions or the one that does not express them, but the one that succeeds in subordinating their emotions to the objectives they settled. Even though it might sound paradoxical, the most efficient method of emotional self control is not suppressing emotions, but integrating them within the interpretation process of reality and intentionally guiding their potential towards those actions that produce constructive effects.

Compared with analytical intelligence or IQ which changes very little after adolescence, emotional intelligence seems to be mostly learned and it continues to develop as we go through life and we learn from experience. Our competency in this field can continue to increase as we grow old and it can be improved through self-education.

By following the level of interpersonal relation, by comparing reaction times in given situation, the degree of emotional self-control, the capacity of adjusting thoughts, emotions and behavior to change situations and condition, stress tolerance, their adaptability level and progress in time, we obtained: value index which demonstrates a significant positive correlation between the emotional intelligence coefficient and the level of behavioral adequacy in certain situations. This is what had to be demonstrated in Hypothesis number 2.

Test t was used for independent samples to see if there is any difference between girls and boys from the point of view of emotional intelligence. The difference was in favor of the girls who obtained a medium score of 99.47, while the boys obtained 88.14. The difference is not big enough to reach a significant statistic level – $p=0.076$ ($t=1.782$; $d.f.=73$).

The average obtained for the level of the emotional intelligence coefficient of the whole sample is 94.18 (minimum score = 20, maximum score = 160) and it indicates the fact that tested subjects have an emotional intelligence coefficient slightly under average, which suggests continuous training at an emotional intelligence level.

5. Conclusions

The steps undertaken have had as an effect the reaching the following psychological objectives:

- *the development of the capacity of identifying and recognizing own emotions;*
- *the development of the capacity of understanding the real causes of the occurrence of emotions;*
- *the development of the capacity of knowing the significance of emotional states according to the situations in which they are produced.*
- *controlling emotions of anger, rage and the tolerance of own frustration*
- *the expression of rage in a natural, appropriate, unaggressive way;*
- *stress management*
- *correctly recognizing the emotions transmitted by the people around them;*
- *the understanding of the people around*
- *reading nonverbal language which helps understanding communication*
- *acknowledging the causes of stress or other bad moods that one might be in at a certain moment.*

Besides the fact that all these offered a practical vision on the communication and relation process, the specific instruments of applying communication and establishing authentic relationships taught them to communicate, by locating and abandoning the communication deficit around them and to stand up for their personal position, without any guilt feelings or dominant attitudes. They established authentic, open and real relationships and they learnt to meet and solve conflicts by consciously increasing their personal efficiency through the coherent and strong development of their personality.

6. Recommendations

Reality shows that the people who have a good control of their emotions and who efficiently deal with other people's emotions have an advantage in any field of life and have a great chance to be effective and pleased with their life.

Emotional intelligence is the power to act under pressure, the trust of having efficient relationships, the courage to make decisions and the vision to create the future and it is in a very strong relationship with leadership and creativity.

That is why it is necessary to implement a special program at the level of education institutions to develop emotional intelligence as the research in this field demonstrates that emotional intelligence is a more trustworthy predictor of success in life than IQ and we also must keep in mind the fact that these two do not represent opposite competencies, but separate ones, neither can act at its full capacity without the other.

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