



# Emotional Intelligence Versus Intelligence Quotient in Higher Education as a Possible Predictor of Academic and Professional Successful Performance

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## Abstract

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as reacting accordingly to the emotions of others. Though there is some disagreement among psychologists as to what constitutes true emotional intelligence, it is generally said to include at least three skills: emotional awareness, or the ability to identify and name one's own emotions; the ability to harness those emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problem solving; and the ability to manage emotions, which includes both regulating own emotions and those of the ones we are interacting with. More and more people accept that emotional intelligence is just as important to professional success as technical ability.

The concept of "Emotional Intelligence" has become a popular term to establish the potential ability of students or individuals in general to determine certain markers of success in academic and professional life. However understanding the determinants of academic performance has never been easy. Most studies focus on the impact of one or the other, but very rarely has a comparative study on the impact of both of them combined been carried out. Traditionally, Higher Education has focused on IQ (Intelligence Quotient) overshadowing the development of IE (Emotional Intelligence), as a result university undergraduates, and professionals have underdeveloped adaptable skills (transversal skills) when working in teams. The limitations to the instruments to measure Emotional Intelligence and the still loose definition of the concept is seen by some as a deterrent to identify IE as a predictor of success. The article argues whether Cognitive Intelligence anticipates sufficiently an individual's success on its own, or the individual would need to develop adaptation skills to become a truly "Intelligent Individual", and therefore the need of higher education to introduce a curriculum for emotional intelligence.

**Keywords:** *Emotional intelligence, intelligence quotient, higher education, internationalisation, academic performance, professional performance, curriculum development.*

## 1. Introduction

It is not a secret that Emotional intelligence plays an important role in our relationships in our daily life. IQ is what determines the competences and individual capacities, on the other hand EQ determines how an individual manages own emotions and those of others to cope with pressures or face crisis. The difference between the two of them is that IQ cannot be altered, whereas EQ could be acquired and improved [Segal, 2008]

Traditionally the type of skills that were promoted in higher education based on intellectual capacities may no longer be sufficient to ensure academic and professional success. Although, the acquisition of theoretical and technical knowledge is essential in higher education, in recent years the approach on the idea to train social and emotional capacities has gained terrain. These trainings will allow students to also develop values and attitudes that guide them to transfer knowledge to challenges and scenarios of personal, social, academic, and professional progress [Griffin and Reason, 2010]

Goleman, D. (1998) states that organisations that encourage people to be open and honest about their emotions perform better at establishing strong ties with colleagues (Collaboration), team accomplishments when given a certain level of resources (Productivity), the number of new and helpful ideas a team generates (Creativity), and the ability to avoid making mistakes or errors, particularly in high-pressure situations (Reliability). It seems that organisations that take into consideration employees' feelings and moods outperform those that ignore emotions and force employees to suppress negative ones. Professional organisations are incorporating increasingly emotional intelligence-based criteria to the recruitment process and training of employees. High EQ seems to lead to high employee engagement in the work environment and therefore an increment in productivity. EQ appears to be the single, best predictor of the success of prospective employees [Okhifun, 2010]



## 2. Framework

The author of this article provided a set training sessions on Emotional intelligence to international students enrolled in the Civil Engineering Master Programme at Glasgow university last year. The programme had been offered in previous years and was purely based on cognitive and theoretical skills related to the matter topic, at the end of the programme students had an intensive week on site to demonstrate their engineering and leadership skills when leading a team compounded by mainly British students at a secondary school and vocational school level as well as engineering undergraduates. Masters students demonstrated during the Intensive week on site that they performed well regarding their cognitive skills. However students fail to perform properly when delivering their end product due to the low transversal skills and EQ levels.

The programme was implemented las year by adding interdisciplinary trainings such as presentation skills, leadership skills, and the concept of Emotional Intelligence in combination with Experiential Learning. Students were exposed to an unforeseen challenge which surprised them all, and demanded from students to put their transversal skills and emotional intelligence into practice [Huisman et al, 2019]

Students were introduced to the five key elements that according to Daniel Goleman (1998) compound Emotional Intelligence. Self-awareness; as the ability to manage your emotions and how your actions affect others. Self-regulation; individuals have the ability to regulate themselves and very seldom make rushed or emotional decisions. Motivation; self-motivated individuals work consistently towards their goals. Empathy; the ability to understand someone else's situation. Social skills; high communication skills, manage change, and resolve conflicts successfully.

Students were monitored on Emotional Intelligence during the Intensive Period of a week at the end of their Masters programme and asked to reflect on their own performance regarding their accomplishments and performance of cognitive and EQ skills in a report.

## 3. Student Experience

Students were monitored on Emotional Intelligence during the Intensive Period of a week at the end of their Masters programme and asked to reflect in a report on their own performance regarding their accomplishments and performance of cognitive and EQ skills.

Students were asked to reflect on a daily basis, not only on their organisational and cognitive skills but also on their leadership skills taking into account EQ five key skills. At the end of the Programme students noticed that they had improved their self-awareness and had a clearer understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Among weaknesses many students mentioned acceptance of own mistakes and consequences.

According to the majority of students at the very beginning of the Intensive Period, they had difficulties in avoiding making mistakes or errors particularly in high pressure situations, and therefore they felt frustrated, such mindset had a negative influence on their leadership skills towards the team they were leading. Furthermore, students felt they lacked the ability to understand other's emotions, as a consequence they could not respond to the team member's emotions properly, which resulted in a lower level of productivity and performance in the team.

Social skills and Empathy seems to be the two key skills students had the most difficulties with; pay attention to body language, facial expressions, and conflict resolution. In many cases, students felt that failing to enhance in an adequate early relationship with their team, resulted in a poor interactive communication process of mutual recognition and understanding. Even though, all Master students had a proficient level of English, it appears that the use of the language towards the native speakers in the team was also a deterrent to lead the team effectively. To be able to communicate in a foreign language does not mean automatically to be able to communicate effectively and understand the nuances of the language.

In all cases, the reflective report helped them to improve their skills and motivation levels. Being the ones the most improved self-awareness and self-regualtion.

## Conclusion

Emotional Intelligence could be taught in higher education, provided that the university environment facilitates within the curriculum the training on such skills, which could strengthen multiple learning experiences. Emotional Intelligence will enable students to face challenges and solve conflicts in a sustainable manner.

To have effective leadership skills, individuals must have a solid understanding of how their emotions and actions affect the people around them. Many employers identify Emotionally Intelligent individuals as higher performers than the employees with a lower EQ who are less engaged. Therefore, teaching



emotional competences in higher education will greatly contribute to the employability of students. Even though the exposure to trainings on Emotional Intelligence could be brief, individuals acquire basic tools of EQ to enhance their relationships on the workplace and academic environment. EQ tools such as making powerful connections, understand better non-verbal communication, defuse arguments and conflicts among others [Segal, 2008]

As well as reflecting in a report on their Emotional Intelligence skills. It is advisable to have students reflect on a regular basis in the form of a reflective journal. The journal will enable them to improve their self-awareness among other skills.

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