Advancing Emotional Intelligence (EI) in Higher Education Curriculum: The Advantage for Students, Their Future Careers and Employers

Michelle Black
Bond University

Follow this and additional works at: http://epublications.bond.edu.au/learn_teach_posters2015
Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Personality and Social Contexts Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

Recommended Citation
Advancing Emotional Intelligence (EI) in Higher Education Curriculum: The advantage for students, their future careers and employers

A compelling body of research confirms that EI is related to high achievement, knowledge retention, life success and positive behaviour. EI competence is recognised as an advantage for students and correlates with higher academic performance as well as career and life success.

Preparing Graduates for Success in the Workplace
Graduate schools and education organisations are including EI in curriculum to heighten academic performance and ensure that graduates are prepared emotionally as well as academically for their careers and life. The inclusion of EI in education curriculums has been confirmed to support adjustment, advance personal and social relationships and facilitate learning that improves individual growth, improved teamwork, development of intrapersonal and interpersonal communication and advances an appreciation for the role of emotions in the workplace.

Business Curriculum
The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) reported in 2002 the need for greater leadership development, communication and interpersonal skills to ensure that curricula were more relevant to the global workplace. As a result, graduate schools are including EI skill development in their curricula to include:

- EI theory
- Outside of class learning
- Individual EI assessment
- Establishment of a personal development plan
- Regular journaling to develop awareness and management of EI competence
- Role plays, in class discussion, and
- An industry project that contextualise EI concepts learned into the workplace.

The inclusion of EI theory and practice in curriculum allows for individuals, improvement, teamwork, development of interpersonal and intercultural communication and advances an appreciation for the role of emotions in the workplace. Other models introducing EI development into business curriculums include the use of assessment instruments, experiential learning opportunities and evaluations of improvement.

International Travel Program
Educators facilitating Business studies and MBA programs with an international travel course component are implementing EI development in the program to bolster the psychological aspects of preparing for and embarking upon an international study course. This development facilitates a reduction in stress, worry and conflict and positively heightens the education experience. Students learn to understand and manage their emotions, learn to develop a more positive emotion response, accept feedback, problem solve and attain greater learning from their travel experience. EI development occurs prior to and during the international travel program which incorporates theory and concepts of EI as well as awareness and management of emotion discussion, reflections of learning and sharing experiences implementing emotionally intelligent behaviour. Post the travel program, learners participate in a debrief and are provided opportunity to reflect further on their learning.

Medicine Curriculum
Increasing demands on health care professionals in the American healthcare sector has led to a focus on developing EI competence in healthcare professionals and including EI development in curriculum for medical students. The integration of EI training for medical students is delivered over time to ensure continued development and application of EI competence to build EI in medical students preparing them for residency. It has been recommended by the American healthcare sector to extend EI training beyond graduation.

International Curriculum
Integrating EI into international curriculum fosters greater open-mindedness, respect and acceptance, improving global perspective. Students experiencing EI development within international curriculum attained increased understanding of themselves and others, are able to better resolve conflict, act sensitively to others and facilitate positive behaviour. Learning strategies used include peer sharing, group activities, simulations, reflection opportunities, creating personal connections, including choice in activity, and giving learners the responsibility and opportunity to share feelings. EI competencies are practiced and developed throughout the curriculum, strengthening and underpinning the goals of international education and enhancing inclusiveness and appreciation of diversity.

EI development in graduate curriculum increases EI capability and readies students for the workplace. The contemporary workplace seeks employees with highly developed interpersonal skills. There is mounting evidence attesting to the advantages of EI in both education and the workplace. Furthermore, there is a strong understanding that EI can be developed as a result, there are an escalating number of graduate schools and education organisations taking advantage of the research and developing the EI of learners.

Gauging Interest
An EI workshop hosted with a purposive sample of academic and career professionals revealed through pre and post surveys:

- Participant knowledge of EI increased as a result of the workshop
- There is a high need for EI in the workplace
- Respondents acknowledged there is a place for EI in curriculum
- Respondents indicated a willingness to integrate EI into curriculum

It is recognised the data from the pre/post surveys is limited due to a small sample size in a single university population. Greater understanding of the need for and interest in EI within higher education may be attained through wider university engagement.

Key Concepts of EI

- Theory of EI developed by Goleman in 1995
- Linked EI to performance, popularising EI with organisations globally
- EI development in graduate curriculum increases EI
- EI is recognised as a unique system and drawing on social skills and emotional management

Conclusion
The cumulative evidence confirming the advantages of EI in education, graduate outcomes, careers, health and life underpins the compelling need to include EI in curriculum.

Academics hold the vital role of imparting knowledge, influencing experience and facilitating learning within the higher education system thus valuing EI in academia may have a tremendous impact on university culture, facilitate higher student achievement and better ready students for the workplace and their career.

Michelle Black