

THE CONNECTION: HOW CAN WE EFFECTIVELY CONNECT SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND PERSONALITY TYPES IN OUR CLASSROOMS FOR MAXIMUM LEARNING IMPACT?

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ABSTRACT

Learning is the act of acquiring new, or modifying and reinforcing existing, knowledge, behaviors, skills, values or preferences which may lead to a potential change in synthesizing information, attitude or behavior relative to the type and range of experience [1]. Social and emotional learning is on the other hand is the process through which we acquire and apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions in setting and achieving positive goals and make responsible decisions. Given that learning is an organic process, the variables and implications are many in facilitating learning, thus necessitating the classroom environment to be highly pliant and diverse.

INTRODUCTION

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioral competencies that impact learning. They are Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, Relationship skills and Responsible decision making. These elements are referred to as the core competencies of SEL [3].

Emotional intelligence (**EQ**) is the ability to identify, use, understand, and manage emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict. The parallel set of elements with the SEL paradigm is Goleman's emotional intelligence competencies, which are self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy and motivation [2].

Personality is made up of the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that make a person unique. Elements of "personality" includes:

- Consistency - there is generally a recognizable order and regularity to behaviors. Essentially, people act in the same ways or similar ways in a variety of situations.
- Psychological and physiological - personality is a psychological construct, but research suggests that it is also influenced by biological processes and needs.
- It impacts behaviors and actions - personality does not just influence how we move and respond in our environment; it also *causes* us to act in certain ways.
- Multiple expressions - personality is displayed in more than just behavior. It can also be seen in our thoughts, feelings, close relationships and other social interactions.

We also know that the basic personality types need different learning environments to maximize their learning potentials [6]. It has also been well researched that extroverts learn better and understand the materials better when learning occurs in a classroom environment that is very stimulating (perhaps more than an introvert facilitator can stand). Contrarily, introverts may learn best in an environment that is quiet and free from intense stimulation. Research also attests to the fact that extrovert students learn better with examples first and told the rules later (inductive approach) vis-à-vis, introverts, who tend to learn better and faster when given the rules first and then shown examples (deductive approach).

By the very fact that teachers are generally older than their students, and since we teachers tend to become more introverted as we age, we may become less tolerant of extroverts and fail to provide the extroverts with the proper learning environment. Research also shows that introverts fare well in our educational system. Introverts and extroverts not only have different learning styles but also prefer different thinking styles. Extroverts like to bounce their ideas off of other people where as, introverts often do much of their best thinking by themselves, work out problems in their heads prior to seeking feedback and sometimes find meetings distracting [5]. Neither style is necessarily better or worse than the other. As a matter of fact, a healthy classroom environment needs some of both. However, it is also very important for us to realize the the introvert-extrovert classification is a continuum rather than a dichotomy.

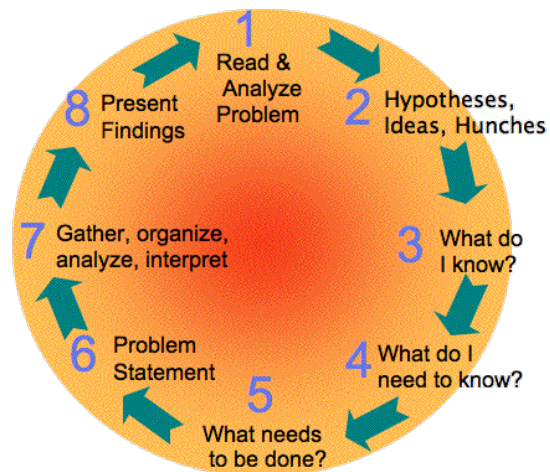
Our challenge therefore, becomes one of creating a conducive level of stimulation in the learning environment providing extroverts the right indulgence in stimulation without overbearing levels of stimulation on the teachers and the introvert students in the classroom. This challenge sets up a high level of concern and care, especially with a third to half of our population being classified as introverts.

How can we, as facilitators of classroom learning provide support for both personality types? By understanding the fundamental personality differences may be the first step in establishing conducive learning environments in our classrooms. Understanding that introverts will devote their social energies to smaller groups of people they care about most, think before they speak, are deliberate risk takers, and enjoy solitude where as, extroverts enjoy social life, are stoked by interactions with friends and strangers alike, typically assertive, good at thinking on their feet, and relatively comfortable with conflict situations. In quieter environments, extroverts tend to become bored and restless. Thus, it behooves us to create a collective learning environment in our classroom that engages both these personality types to the best of our abilities.

The Connection

A suggested methodology for learning effectiveness in our classrooms that can connect SEL, EI and Personality types ...Problem Based Learning....

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a [student-centered pedagogy](#) in which students learn about a subject through the experience of solving an open-ended problem. Students learn both thinking strategies and domain knowledge.



The fundamental difference in this methodology is the role a student plays in the classroom. When implementing the PBL concept, the students are divided into groups, students define the problem, students identify the action steps, students create a solution to the problem and are given opportunities for metacognition (metacognition is one's ability to use prior knowledge to plan a strategy for approaching a learning task, take necessary steps to problem solve, reflect on and evaluate results and modify one's approach as needed [4].

It helps learners choose the right cognitive tool for the task and plays a critical role in successful learning). Ultimately, in PBL, the students have more control over their own learning and the processes involved. The Challenges with the implementation of PBL, are primarily in the areas of measurement and assessment of the impact as well as setting up the infrastructure for the process. Bringing together individuals with varying personalities, EI levels, SEL abilities and compatible knowledge levels while addressing the problem situation is absolutely essential for the success of PBL.

The nature of problem based learning allows different personality types to come together in order to find unique solutions. Diverse teams are much better than homogenous teams at solving complex problems. In problem based learning, students can harness the power of diversity to generate unique solutions. Individuals take on specific roles when they come together as a team. As they analyze the problem, introverts will have more time to reflect on possible solutions. The extroverts will find their roles within the team as well. They may be more prone to take on leadership roles and help organize the work. In this format, students with different levels of emotional intelligence and unique personalities learn to work together and develop the soft skills necessary to lead a team in the work environment.

We propose that emotional intelligence will facilitate more productive interactions as they team navigates group dynamics in problem based learning atmospheres. High EQ groups will be able to interact in a way that brings out the best from both introverts and extraverts as they navigate the emotional tone of the group. They may also be less likely to allow negative emotions to reign over the group, hampering the group process. Therefore, we predict that emotional intelligence will play a significant role in facilitating learning outcomes using a problem based teaching approach. Specifically, that there will be a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and learning outcomes pertaining to problem based learning. In addition, it is predicted that groups with a balance of introverts and extraverts will have better learning outcomes than groups with more introverts or extraverts. The interactions of introverts and extraverts may create a healthier group dynamic as their personality types contrast each other. Introverts tend to be more talkative when they are around extraverts, allowing them to provide additional inputs to help solve the problem. Also, a team that has too many extraverts may have more group conflict than a more balanced team. Thus we propose that more balanced teams with introverts and extraverts may perform better than

teams that have more introverts or extraverts. Following the proceeding logic, we identify two hypotheses related to problem based learning outcomes.

H1: Group with high emotional intelligence will have better problem based learning outcomes than groups with low emotional intelligence.

H2: Groups that have a balance of personality traits (introvert and extravert) among members will have better problem based learning outcomes than groups with more introverts or extraverts.

Methodology

Emotional intelligence will be measured at the group level using the Schutte et al. (1998) emotional intelligence inventory. Students will also be asked to take the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory questionnaire. Students will then be randomly assigned to teams and take on a specific problem as part of their class project. Observations will be made along the way to better understand how the groups are interacting. These observations will be recorded along with the group's overall performance on the problem, including problem identification and solution generation. Results of the study may inform researchers and practitioners on how to incorporate personality traits and emotional intelligence into a problem based learning approach in the classroom, hoping for better student learning outcomes and engagement.

REFERENCES

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