Emotional Intelligence And Career Development

Intelligence doesn't mean that someone is simply "smart." It does not mean that someone is intelligent if they have a high IQ or gets straight A's on their report card. It also does not mean that someone with intelligence can do all things well. There is more to intelligence than what our society has portrayed it to be over the years. Myers and DeWall (2017) define intelligence as having the "ability to learn from experience, solve problems, and use knowledge to adapt to new situations (p. 238)." There are several components to intelligence mentioned in the definition that goes above and beyond what grades someone makes in school. To be intelligent you need the ability to learn from your experiences, use problem-solving skills, and apply your knowledge to adapt to your environment and circumstances. Rather than the regurgitation of facts and figures, true intelligence would reflect that there is deeper comprehension where connections are made and concepts have been applied to other aspects of life. Memorizing the medical terminology in Anatomy and Physiology class is one thing, it is another to be able to see how everything works together to understand functional and dysfunctional movement.

Many might agree with the definition of intelligence but determining which theory of intelligence is more appropriate has become controversial. There are several theories of intelligence that are debated in psychology (and in Compass Honors High School PSYC 101 class). It originated with Charles Spearman's theory of general intelligence (g) and then it developed over time with Howard Gardner's theory about multiple intelligences, Robert Sternberg's incorporation of creativity, and the concept of social or emotional intelligence. Every theory has is its fans as well as its naysayers depending on each's perspectives of intelligence. However, cognitive psychologists are looking for answers to questions regarding one general ability or multiple abilities, how intelligence should be measured (or can it be measured), and which one is more valuable for success.

Types of Intelligence

General Intelligence

Charles Spearman believed that people have a general intelligence (g) that can be measured on an intelligence test. Skills measured on an intelligence test would include the abilities to reason, learn, plan and solve problems (Geddes, 2018). The theory is that someone who has a high score in one area will have a high score in other areas. A familiar assessment for general intelligence is the IQ test. Some consider the SAT and ACT as comparable exams to the IQ. A criticism is that humans are complex and a general intelligence test is too simplistic. It is also argued that the IQ test is formatted without considering ethnicity, culture, and gender.

Multiple Intelligences

In opposition to the theory of general intelligence, Howard Gardner theorized that people have multiple intelligences rather than an overall intelligence. Individuals' aptitudes are measured by eight (now nine) areas that are independent within themselves: naturalist, verbal/linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical/rhythmic, visual/spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and existential (Safranj & Zivlak, 2018). If someone is high or low in one area, it

does not mean that they will be the same in the other areas. It also does not give an indication of the individual's overall intelligence. For example, if an individual has a high level of spatial skills, it does not automatically mean that they will have a high level of logical, kinesthetic, musical, etc. Each individual has their speciality (ie. a professional athlete has a high level of kinesthetic intelligence). Just like general intelligence, multiple intelligence can be measured by taking an assessment. It surveys interests and abilities towards each intelligence area. Criticisms towards multiple intelligence is that it measures abilities which to some is not considered an intelligence. Also, there is a "chicken or the egg" argument. Is someone high in musical intelligence because that is a natural ability or is it because it is something that they have worked on for years? Or one might argue that it does not matter which comes first, the individual is still exhibiting musical intelligence.

Creativity

Creativity is the ability to incorporate aptitude to come up with novel solutions to problems and to originate interesting questions (Nisbett, et al., 2012). In other words, having creativity means that you can think outside the box; to not be limited by specific paradigms or traditional ways of doing things. The intelligence of creativity is not how crafty or artistic an individual might be (though a creative person might be those things). Instead, there are five characteristics that measure creativity: expertise (having a solid knowledge base), imaginative thinking skills, a venturesome personality, intrinsic motivation, and holding a creative environment (Myers & DeWall, 2017). A criticism for considering creativity as an intelligence is that it is difficult to measure unlike general intelligence and multiple intelligences. Also, creativity is considered to be more subjective rather than objective.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI or EQ) is the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotions. It is considered to be more of a social intelligence rather than an achievement or aptitude but yet it is still seen as a necessity for life success especially in the workplace and in relationships. There are specific skills needed to have high emotional intelligence like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Dubrin, 2017). Emotional intelligence measurements can indicate overall EI as well as the following components of EI: Perceive (recognize emotions in faces, music and stories), Understand (predict emotions, how they change and blend), Manage (express emotions in different situations), and Use (utilize emotions to adapt or be creative) (Ahmad, 2009). An individual can be high or low in each of the components. Measurement of each component will inform the individual which area is a strength and which area is a challenge.

It should be noted that some measurements are self-reported so the scores would depend on the individual's own perspective on the EI components. One might think that they are good at reading emotions but in reality they are not. Another aspect to be mindful of in regards to measuring EI is the motivation or intent of an individual's emotional regulation. Before judging whether someone has or is lacking in EI, one must understand that the context of the situation might differ their EI use. For example, if a worker dislikes his/her coworker, they may not be as motivated to use their EI to handle conflict or manage their interactions. However, the worker may be more likely to use EI when interacting with their boss since his/her opinion is more important in keeping their job.

Factors in Emotional Intelligence

Biologically, studies have found that there are specific parts of the brain that are linked to emotional intelligence. Pan, et al. (2014) found that the specific regions of the brain that are involved with this social and emotional information processing include the areas involved with understanding and controlling emotions such as the superior orbitofrontal cortex and cerebellum. Karle, et al. (2018) studied the facial expressions and voice modulations which are an important part of communicating and interpreting emotions. They found that there was cerebral processing in the limbic emotion-processing areas. Therefore, it can be assumed that part of how well someone uses the EI components may be due to neurological development, or lack thereof. Individuals with disorders such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may be ones that are more challenged by emotional intelligence due to their atypical neurological development. For example, individuals with ASD are lower in areas where they express their emotions and can have empathy (Gokcen, Petrides, Hudry, Fredrickson, & Smillie, 2014).

Numerous studies have been done regarding the different environmental factors that contribute to emotional intelligence. For instance, researchers have looked at gender, culture, and socioeconomic status. A study completed by Akbar, Shah, Khan, Akhter, and Riaz (2011) resulted in finding five different factors of EI (birth order, literacy, location, socio-economic status, and gender). The results showed that: first born students scored high on EI, students with literate parents scored high on EI, students from urban areas scored high on EI, students from upper socio-economic status scored high on EI as compared to students from lower socio-economic status, and female students scored high on EI.

The previous study was supported when Naik (2014) found that socio-economic status significantly affects emotional intelligence. More specifically, students who are part of the upper socio-economic status have higher EI than middle and lower socioeconomic status students. The study found though that there were no significant relationships between gender and EI. Interestingly, one study did find differences in gender but was able to distinguish between emotional intelligence components. Salami (2010) discovered that females were better at “emotions appraisal” and “use of emotions” whereas males were better at “use of emotions” and “regulation of emotions.” The researcher attributed the differences to societal expectations of how men and women should and should not handle emotions.

In regards to culture, Shao, Doucet, and Caruso (2014) found which emotional intelligence components were more universal versus cultural specific. Emotion perception, emotion understanding, and emotion regulation were both universal and culture-specific. Additionally, emotion perception was the most universal domain of emotional intelligence and emotion understanding and emotion regulation were the more culture-specific. For example, research found differences between South Korean and Chinese students in regards to emotional intelligence. Chinese students were better at perceiving and regulating their own emotions and assessing others’ emotions than the South Korean students (Jiang, 2014). This difference was contributed to the cultures’ response to uncertainty, China being more accepting and South Korea being more avoidant. Another example regarding culture affecting emotional intelligence is the difference between a collectivist culture and an individualistic culture. It was found that cultures with higher collectivist orientation were more likely to have better EI (Bhullar, Schutte, & Malouff, 2012). In this particular study, the researchers used India as the sample for a collectivist culture and Australia as the sample for an individualistic culture.

Emotional Intelligence and Career Development

It is presumed that emotional intelligence is a tool to manage one's life and to use it in regards to how one interacts with others as well as themselves. One of the most significant aspects of managing life is in regards to making a decision about one's career, therefore, emotional intelligence is key to successful career development. Studies have shown that there is a relationship between high levels of emotional intelligence and higher career decision-making self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the confidence in your ability to carry out a task (Dubrin, 2017); therefore, career decision-making self-efficacy is an individual's confidence in their ability to make a decision about their career. Salami (2010) found that having a high ability to perceive emotions, use emotions, understand emotions aids in successfully completing career-related tasks. Jiang (2014) found that college students with increasing EI had more confidence in making decisions about their career. They were able to evaluate and manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Furthermore, the study found that understanding of emotions was the strongest EI factor affecting career-making self-efficacy. Another study confirmed that people who are better able to understand and manage their own emotions would be more likely to predict the emotional consequences of a potential career choice (Afzal, Atta, & Shujja, 2013).

Since emotional intelligence is foundational for career development, it is important for educators and career counsellors to incorporate EI in school. Salami (2010) suggests that counselling psychologists should consider teaching students how to regulate emotion and the use of feelings to motivate, plan and achieve their career goals. Unfortunately, adolescents are not always equipped to recognize what they are feeling, why they are feeling that way, and what to do with it. Therefore, students need to learn that emotions, negative and positive, can be tools to support the decision making processes that they will encounter.

Since this type of education has been found valuable, schools need to find formal programs to assist them in adding EI into their classes. Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence has developed such a program to help students grow in their EI. The program is called RULER (recognizing, understanding, labelling, expressing, and regulating emotions) for all the components within emotional intelligence. Since this author is a College & Career Counselor at a high school, a program like RULER would be highly beneficial in promoting post-secondary success. RULER has created secondary student curriculum that promotes to help students build greater self-awareness, build a vision and set goals, identify strengths and challenges, engage in self-reflective practices, and learn how to achieve their goals (Nathanson, Rivers, Flynn, & Brackett, 2016). The curriculum is aligned with the objectives and standards for Compass Honors High School's PSYC 140 Human Relations for Career and Personal Success course that all 10th grade students are required to take. It would be easy to transition the curriculum of RULER into the curriculum of the PSYC 140 course.

However, one thing to consider in teaching students about emotional intelligence, is that it can be used as a tool to manipulate others. With understanding of emotions within oneself and in others, there is the opportunity for individuals to abuse that knowledge. With the popularity of emotional intelligence increasing, there has been research coming out regarding this so-called "dark side" of EI. One study found that high levels of EI were significantly related to emotional manipulation for both males and females (Grieve & Panebianco, 2013). The study looked at factors such as psychopathy, social skills, aggression, empathy, and self-serving cognitive

distortions. The combination of factors for manipulation were different depending on whether the individuals were male or female. Another study compared other factors such as delinquency, Machiavellian Tactics, behaviours like inauthenticity and concealing, as well as managing emotions of others. Bacon and Regan (2016) found that high-EI females reported higher levels of delinquency, high levels of Machiavellian Tactics, and high levels of prosocial enhancing and diverting behaviours, as well as inauthentic and concealing social behaviours. For males, they found that high-EI males reported generally low levels of delinquency with high levels of managing emotions of others behaviour and low levels of non-prosocial behaviours, concealing and inauthenticity.

Needless to say, with the variety of factors involved, more research needs to be done regarding the negative effects of EI. This is especially important since so many schools are incorporating and promoting the benefits of high EI. Schools should not be found negligent in educating students about emotional intelligence but there should also be measures in place for monitoring students that fit the profiles of emotional control, delinquency, narcissism, and psychopathy. An easy addition for schools in regards to bullying behaviours, harassment, and victimization is to consider the components of emotional intelligence in the handling of these incidents.

With that said, another concern regarding the ethics of emotional intelligence is the tendency to regulate and monitor peoples' emotions. A formal EI program can end up arming people with the tools to judge emotions, demand conformity, and expect adherence to inflexible protocols. Neophytou (2013) believes that EI is "shaped through a bipolar context and discourse of inclusion and exclusion where 'positive' emotions are welcomed and 'negative' emotions are banned and considered as deficits (p. 148)." The caution is for educators to not shame students on their lack of EI but to consider the context of the situation, the culture and generation in which the student is raised in, the character of the student, and to focus on the purpose of educating and growing these skills. Educators also need to be taught that there should not be a label of negative or positive emotions, or ones that you should or should not feel, but rather teaching and modelling how to understand and manage the emotion regardless of the worth one puts on it. For example, Kristjansson (2006) states that the "aim should not invariably be to cool down anger or extinguish it, but rather to experience it in the right proportion, at the right time (p. 48)" and use it in a constructive manner. Therefore, it would be wise for counsellors to train teachers before implementing an EI program in the classroom. Teachers should have a foundational psychological understanding of emotions, how they work, and how to articulate it back to students. Administration cannot assume that teachers have an understanding of EI and have the confidence to teach the students about a multi-layered concept.

In conclusion, regardless of the controversy about what is considered intelligence, there is plenty of research that shows that a key importance to career decision-making self-efficacy is related to emotional intelligence. It is this author's job and passion to help prepare students for their post-secondary journey. Therefore, it would befit the author to include emotional intelligence into the other set of tools already being used for career development. Furthermore, this author needs to advocate for the education of the teachers in Compass Honors High School to learn the importance of emotional intelligence and how to help their students grow in the different components of EI.