

Philosophical Examination of the Concept of Emotional Intelligence and its Implications for Education

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Abstract. This paper examines the concept of emotional intelligence in the context of education. It examines the concept in the process of education which involves teaching, learning, content and method. The examination is philosophical and it involves logical, linguistic, expository and critical analyses. Thus the research method in this study is philosophical research method. The research method involves the use of philosophical analysis which features logical, linguistic, expository, and critical analyses in the clarification of concepts and issues and their implications for education generally and education in Nigeria specifically. It was found that emotional intelligence involves recognition and management of feelings (moods, drives and so forth) for improved relationships with oneself (intrapersonal) and with others (interpersonal). It was also realised that the concept is laudable and deserves to be promoted in the process of education and in the society generally. However, it was concluded that acquisition of skills implied in the concept, in reality, should concern teachers more than learners since it is the teachers that are at the helm of affairs in the process of education and they (the teachers) determine the tone of the educational society. It was therefore recommended that the concept should lay more emphasis on the teachers and administrators than the learners in the process of education.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, education, philosophical analysis

1. Introduction

Emotional Intelligence is a concept used largely in psychological contexts and it is largely used to mean ability to recognise and control feelings (moods, drives) in ourselves and others; such as would manifest management of behaviour and improved relationships with oneself and with others (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso and Sitarenios 2001:232-242; Goleman 2001; Cowie, 2012:77-78; Nuhu, 2013:134-143). Thus it entails intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions; it also entails management of moods, feelings, fears, impulses, stress; adaptability (Cowie, 2012:77-78 Nuhu, 2013:134-143), disposition towards thoughtful processing in states of feeling, (Goleman, 2001, Cowie, 2012:77-78, Nuhu, 2013:134-143); and determination towards attaining positive goals in life and work (Bar-On, 1997, Cowie, 2012:77-78, Nuhu, 2013:134-143). Moreover, it promotes empathy as it builds ability to recognise and identify with the feelings of others (Goleman, 1995); further it promotes social interaction as it helps to recognise and understand the feelings (moods, stress, fears) of other people, (Goleman, 1995). Thus, emotional intelligence is an important concept that deserves attention in terms of its various dimensions that could be of immense value in the process of education and in the development of the society generally. In this connection various aspects of the concept deserve to be examined with the view to consider how the concept would fare in the process of education and in the development of the society. Thus, an attempt would be made in this paper to examine various aspects of the concept such as to see how the concept would fare in the process of education and in the

development of the society. The examination would be in philosophical perspective whereby various aspects of emotional intelligence would be examined in terms of logical, linguistic, expository and critical analyses (Akinpelu, 1984:167-206; Akinpelu, 2005: 131-140).

2. Research Method

The research method used in this study is philosophical research method. This is because the paper intends to analyse concepts in this study and their implications philosophically. Therefore philosophical analysis which is a feature of philosophical research method would be employed in this study. It would be employed for clarification of the concepts and their implications. It would feature logical, linguistic, expository and critical analyses. The analysis is expected to help in sound clarification of the concepts and their implications for education and the society at large (Akinpelu, 1984:167-206; Akinpelu, 2005:131-140).

3. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence involves ability to recognise and control feelings (moods, drives, fears, impulses, stress and so forth) in ourselves and others such as would manifest management of behaviour and improved relationship with ourselves and with others (Mayer, et. al. 2001:232-242; Goleman, 2001; Cowie, 2012:77-78; Nuhu, 2013:134-143). Thus it involves ability to recognise and control feelings, moods, fears, drives and so forth such that one is able to demonstrate management of behaviour whereby one would have intrapersonal and interpersonal improvement in behaviour. It is expected to result in manifestation of improved relationship with oneself (disposition towards internal peace) and improved relationship with others (disposition towards external peace).

It is expected to lead to the recognition and understanding of our moods and the moods of others, our feelings and the feelings of others, our fears and the fears of others, our drives and the drives of others, our stressful situations and the stressful situations of others – such that we could manage them for improvement in our

situations and our relationships. Recognising and understanding the moods and feelings of others could enhance empathy whereby we could gain the trust and love of others that we have empathy for. Moreover, such empathy could encourage adaptability on our part to the requests of others within reasonable limits. This is to suggest that management of feelings encourages disposition towards identifying with other people's feelings in a thoughtful manner. In effect, emotional intelligence could foster thoughtful processing of our own feelings and the feelings of others (Goleman, 2001, Cowie, 2012:77-78, Nuhu, 2013:134-143). The foregoing show that emotional intelligence fosters social interaction (Goleman, 1995). But it also fosters determination towards attaining positive goals in life and work, (Bar-On, 1997, Cowie, 2012:77-78, Nuhu, 2013:134-143).

Emotional intelligence as can be seen from the details stated above involves ability to recognise and manage feelings thoughtfully for the improvement of oneself and the society. It also involves determination to attain the recognition and management of feelings whereby positive goals are achieved at work and in life generally.

It follows that emotional intelligence is a good skill that can be aspired for by leaders in the society as well as followers. This is because it would help leaders, to recognise and manage the feelings of their followers without which there could be unresolved issues of fears, stressful moods, mistrusts, and chaos. Moreover leaders need the skill so that they could recognise and manage their own feelings too for improvement in their own situations (as individuals and corporate entities). Their fears as individuals and corporate entities, stress, moods, drives, and impulses need to be recognised and managed for the internal peace of the individual leaders as well as external peace in terms of their relationship with other leaders and the followers.

Similarly followers need the skill so that they could recognise the moods, fears, stress, and feelings of their leaders towards improved relationship with their leaders at work and in life generally. Moreover, they need the skill so that they could recognise and manage their own

feelings, fears, stress and moods towards improvement in their feelings as individual followers and collective followers and towards improvement in the relationship with themselves and with the leaders.

The skill helps both leaders and followers in the issues of adaptability, empathy, determination to attain positive goals at work and in life generally and towards thoughtful processing of states of feeling. However, much as the skill can be seen to be desirable, it can also be seen that some of the qualities are not directly and ordinarily attainable particularly in an authoritarian society. For instance, while one might be willing to undergo the process of identifying ones fears, moods, drives, stressful situations and feelings; one might not be willing to be thoughtful about managing the perpetual oppressive dictates of leaders who are hardly interested in democratic leadership that encourages the welfare of the masses.

Such leaders might be making leadership pronouncements that give impression of democratic leadership while in reality their style of leadership increases the suffering of the masses perpetually: for instance, in connection with employment, education, electricity supply, water supply, remuneration, good roads and so forth (all of which could lead to perpetual stress, fears, and some other negative feelings).

Definitely the followers in such a dictatorship situation would be willing to identify clearly their feelings (intrapersonal and interpersonal) but they would not be generally willing to perpetually manage the stressful, unpleasant and negative feelings of their leaders. Nor would they be willing to be perpetually thoughtful about such feelings. Moreover they would not be willing to adapt to the feelings of such leaders, nor would they be willing to empathise with such leaders.

Thus, emotional intelligence in such oppressive societal situation should recognise emphasis more on leaders than on followers for the improvement of the society. The followers in such society would appreciate the leaders identification and management of their (the

followers) suffering (stressful situations) for the attainment of positive goals in the society. The followers would appreciate the leaders adapting to the realities in the suffering society. Moreover the followers would appreciate the leaders empathising with them rather than the other way round. In addition the followers would be hardly ready to help the leaders to attain their goals (which the leaders consider to be positive goals). Finally the followers would not be ordinarily willing to be encouraged to identify and manage the stressful leadership style of authoritarian leaders perpetually.

In effect, emotional intelligence when it does not emphasise the need for leaders to be more concerned about identifying and managing feelings in oppressive societies and situations may not achieve as much as when it lays more emphasis on leaders in such situations.

4. The Concept of Emotional Intelligence and Its Implications for Education

It follows that if the analysis above is transposed to the educational situation; emotional intelligence could be found to be an ability that would be worth acquiring by the members of educational community: teachers as well as learners. In the educational process teachers, learners, the curriculum as well as the method would be involved.

In this regard it would be desirable for teachers (including administrators) as well as learners to acquire emotional intelligence skills of identification and management of feelings for improved relationship with themselves (intrapersonal) as well as with others (interpersonal). It would help to attain positive goals in the educational society. It would help adaptability on the part of teachers and administrators as well as on the part of learners. It would help to manage fears, stress, moods and crisis in the educational society. It would help to promote empathy. It would help thoughtful processing of states of feeling. Finally it would help to promote social interaction in the educational society.

On the part of the learners, it would help them to identify various factors that make them feel disinclined towards learning various subjects and dispositions. It would help them to manage feelings, fears, moods, and stress such that they could attain desired goals in their academic careers and in life generally. It would help them to relate better with other learners and with their teachers and administrators; and to relate better with the society generally. It would help them to empathise and adapt to desired situations in the society (school and larger society). It would help them to process their states of feeling thoughtfully. So the advantages of acquiring emotional intelligence are enormous for learners.

But so are the advantages of acquiring emotional intelligence for teachers and administrators. Teachers and administrators would similarly be helped to identify and manage their feelings for the improvement of their relationships (intrapersonal and interpersonal). They would be helped to empathise with other members of the educational society. They would be helped to adapt to desirable situations. They would also be helped to process their states of feelings thoughtfully. Moreover they would be helped to work towards attaining desirable goals at work and in life generally; and they would be helped to promote social interaction in the educational society and in the larger society.

The lofty goals are desirable, but since the teachers and administrators are at the helm of affairs in the educational society, they may make or mar the attainment of the goals, depending on their styles of teaching and administration. If for instance, the style of some of the teachers manifests authoritarianism rather than democratic leadership, the identification and management of feelings towards improved relationship with oneself and with others will be such that the end result will be towards improved relationship with oneself and not with others. Thus the learners would perpetually find it difficult to understand and follow the teachers. The learners would continue to be under stressful situations. Eventually there would be chaos and crisis; as in an authoritarian larger society.

However where the teachers and administrators are willing to identify and manage feelings for the improvement of relationships with themselves and with others, there would be improved relationships among the teachers and administrators as well as between the teachers (and administrators) and the learners. Such relationship would manifest desirable democratic process in education (in terms of teaching, learning, content, and method). It would identify the feelings, moods, fears, drives, stresses, and other problems of learners and the society. The teachers and administrators would empathise with the learners and the society and enjoy the trust and love of the learners and the society as is the case in a democratic society with democratic leadership.

Thus, emotional intelligence in a desirable process of education should emphasise the need for the teacher and administrator to be more concerned on identification and management of feelings than the learners, for improvement of relationships with oneself and with others. This is (again) because it is the teacher and the administrator that are at the helm of affairs; thus their style of teaching and administration go a long way to determine the tone of the school.

In effect, the teacher in his content of teaching and method needs to be conscious of the desire to manifest emotional intelligence that would help to portray democratic leadership and not authoritarian leadership. This as has been seen would help identification with learner's and societal feelings, and adaptation; it would help attainment of positive goals for the improvement of the educational society and the larger society; it would also help the learners to be encouraged to process their states of feeling thoughtfully.

Thus, when emotional intelligence in the process of education (that involves teaching, learning, content, and method) lays more emphasis on the teacher (and administrator) than the learner, the concept would have realistic justification.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined the concept of emotional intelligence generally in the process

of education. The philosophical examination indicates that emotional intelligence which involves recognition and management of feelings (moods, drives, stresses and so forth) for the improvement of relationships with ourselves (intrapersonal) and with others (interpersonal) is laudable. Moreover it should be promoted in the process of education (which involves teaching, learning, content and method). It is however, indicated that the promotion should lay more emphasis on the teachers than the learners since the teachers are at the helm of affairs in the process of education and largely determine the tone of the educational society.

Recommendations

It has been found that emotional intelligence is desirable for the teachers and the learners. It is desirable for the educational society and the larger society; it is desirable for the leaders and followers. It is therefore recommended for acquisition by teachers (and administrators) and the learners; and the leaders and followers in the larger society.

The recommendation lays more emphasis on the teachers (administrators) and the leaders in the larger society than the learners and followers, since the teachers (administrators) and the leaders determine the tone of the schools and the larger society.

If the recommendations are adopted and processed, oppressive educational systems and societies would give way for democratic and empathetic educational systems and larger societies whereby educational system in Nigeria and the larger social political milieu would manifest emotional intelligence and societal development. Similarly educational systems worldwide and socio political milieu would manifest emotional intelligence and social development.

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