



**INCORPORATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE(EI) INTO
THE BUSINESS CURRICULUM: REDEFINING THE SUCCESS
MANTRA AT WORKPLACE**

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ABSTRACT

Today most of the MBA programs running across the country are facing scarcity of students. The traditional business curriculum is losing its charm in the current scenario. The candidates who are hired by employers are not able to meet their expectations. This clearly indicates that there is a lacuna in the present business curriculum which is deficient in equipping the students with the required skills. Therefore, the challenge today is to integrate the development of these competencies into the curriculum as an essential element in its mission. This paper is an attempt to highlight the gaps in the current business curriculum and also to suggest some remedial measures to enhance the quality and utility of MBA programs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

- 1).To introduce the concept of Emotional Intelligence and its various related aspects.
- 2).To accentuate the need of understanding EI and its positive impact at workplace.
- 3).To examine evidence that EI skills can be taught in MBA programs.
- 4).To describe the theory/practice for EI skill development and to identify the best methods for individuals to learn EI skills.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, MBA, skills, workplace

INTRODUCTION

The time has come for introspection of our business curriculum and to prepare action plan for enhancing cognitive skills in future managers and developing their ability to read people and understand emotions. As per the alarming figures, stated in Rajasthan Patrika (August 3, 2011), one of the leading daily Hindi newspapers in Rajasthan,

there has been a great decline in the student's interest for management studies. Furthermore, nine colleges affiliated with Rajasthan Technical University(R.T.U.)have requested permission for not conducting the session 2011-12 of MBA. In the year 2011, only 4781 students appeared in Rajasthan Management Aptitude Test (RMAT) for approximately 10,000 seats. Out of these, only 1809 students appeared for counselling. This condition is prevailing due to the fact that the current business curriculum is not meeting the requirements of the recruiters as a result the number of students who are placed is either less or their expectations are not matched in terms of profile and salary packages.

To add further, according to Daily News Analysis(July 23, 2011), a news agency in Ahmedabad, the two-day 'Conference on Management Education: The Road Ahead', which began at Indian Institute of Management(IIM), Ahmedabad on July 22, 2011, shattered certain myths. The management experts, professors and even recruiters revealed the fact that an MBA graduate from USA would outscore an Indian counterpart in the current scenario."The American graduates are good at social skills and at adaptability. They easily fit into an organization. We have to wait for some time before we can put the Indian graduate to the client," said Rajan Srivatsan, Managing Director, Bain & Co, one of the leading recruiting companies. "The MBAs fall short on emotional intelligence and oral and written communication skills," said Amit Dhiman, professor of IIM, Calcutta.He said, to overcome the shortcomings, "More courses on self-awareness, problem solving and decision making should be introduced. Communication labs to improve communications skills can be looked at." Also, the findings of Porter and McKibbin (1988) stated that students required not only knowledge, but also the ability to integrate various disciplines within the business environment. They recommended that soft skill training be assimilated into the business school curriculum to assist students in their future roles in the corporate world. However, there is much debate and disagreement about the development of soft skills in the MBA classroom. A common dirge from recruiters of MBA graduates is that they have learned the hard skills of accounting, finance and marketing, but do not have expertise in the soft skill areas (Eberhardt & Moser, 1997).

These concerns have resulted in the emergence of emotional intelligence (EI).With our economy growing at rapid pace; we need to develop large number of high quality management professionals. It is now a necessity that Indian MBA graduates hone their soft skills and possess the core competencies desired by employers.

METHODOLOGY

The study is purely based on secondary data collected from literature review of previous studies and articles published in journals, books and newspapers related to emotional intelligence and its significance in the workplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An Introduction to Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Evolution of EI

There is hardly any concept in the study of human behaviour, which is as controversial as that of emotional intelligence. For instance, Robert Thorndike wrote about "social intelligence" in the late thirties (Thorndike & Stein, 1937). David

Wechsler (1958) defined intelligence as “the aggregate or global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment.” In 1983, Howard Gardner began to write about “multiple intelligence.” He concluded that people possessed multiple intelligences and he initially identified seven types of intelligence. The seven were: (a) linguistic, (b) logical, (c) musical, (d) kinaesthetic, (e) visual/spatial, (f) intrapersonal, and (g) interpersonal.

- *Mathematical-logical*- the ability to organise thoughts sequentially and logically.
- *Verbal-linguistic*- the ability to understand and express ideas through language.
- *Bodily-kinaesthetic*- the gaining of knowledge through feedback from physical activity.
- *Musical* - sensitivity to tone, pitch and rhythm, and the ability to reproduce them.
- *Visual-Spatial*- the ability to learn directly through images and to think intuitively without the use of language.
- *Inter-personal*- the ability to notice and make discriminations regarding the moods, temperaments, motivations and intentions of others.
- *Intra-personal*- having access to one’s own feelings, involves recognising and responding to our own emotions.

Gardner (1983) proposed that “intrapersonal” and “interpersonal” intelligences are as important as the type of intelligence typically measured by IQ and related tests. His research was one of the reasons for emotions being given greater recognition and priority than had previously occurred.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) coined the term ‘emotional intelligence’. They described emotional intelligence as “a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action”.

Sometimes later, Daniel Goleman (1995) wrote a book titled *Emotional Intelligence*, which is a landmark in the field of EI and familiarized both the public and private sectors with the idea of emotional intelligence. He gave the popular mixed model of EI.

The Mixed Model of EI

Goleman's model outlines four main emotional intelligence dimensions.

- 1). Self-awareness is the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact while using gut feelings to guide decisions.
- 2). Self-management, involves controlling one's emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances.
- 3). Social awareness includes the ability to sense, understand, and react to other's emotions while comprehending social networks.
- 4). Finally, relationship management, entails the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict (Goleman, 1998).

Goleman includes a set of emotional competencies within each dimension of emotional intelligence. Emotional competencies are not innate talents, but rather learned capabilities that must be worked on and developed to achieve outstanding performance. Goleman suggests that individuals are born with a general emotional intelligence that determines their potential for learning emotional competencies.

After the inception of EI, two major schools of thoughts emerged regarding the composition of EI. One school of thought views EI as traditional intelligence composed of a set of specific, interrelated abilities. Another school of thought views EI as a set of abilities, added with some personality related traits like optimism,

conscientiousness, etc. Both the school of thoughts have conceptualized EI differently. In spite of the differences, researchers agree that individuals differ in their EI level, EI can develop with age and it is very important for our personal and social lives (Gehr and Renstrom, 2004).

Need of understanding EI by MBA's

Evaluation of effectiveness of MBA curriculum

Elliot, Goodwin, and Goodwin (1994) doubted whether a business school curriculum was meeting the needs of business. They emphasized that many employers believe that MBA programs focus too much on quantitative skills and analytical abilities while flouting the development of qualitative management and people skills. On the basis of the work of Buhler (2005), Strebler (1997), and Tilley (1992), skill areas that have been traditionally labelled “soft” are interpersonal, problem solving, teamwork, and oral communications. The hard skill moniker has been associated with technical, quantitative, computer, and written communication proficiencies.

According to Schachter (1999), the narrow focus of the MBA has produced graduates who have led the acronym MBA to mean —mediocre but arrogant. The researcher claimed that corporations seek out-of-the-box thinking and creative problem solving not just quantitative skills. Bailey (2004) asserted that employers complain that MBA graduates have adequate numerical analysis skills but do not have the necessary people skills to function in today's business climate. According to Alsop (2002), one cause of this might be that soft skills are more difficult to teach than hard skills such as accounting and finance.

To add further, EI competencies are significant to a successful career in business. This is evidenced by Northeastern University's College of Business interview of over two dozen Global 500 companies to learn what skills were most valued for their graduates to possess before being hired (O'Connor, 2006). Their findings emphasized on the revision of curriculum with a greater focus on training in the EI areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Bennis and O'Toole (2005) asserted that what separates competent business managers from less competent ones was the development of EI skills. Alsop (2002) stated MBA programs that have produced high EI graduates are being recognized and rewarded by recruiters and also the EI metric was becoming a greater branding asset than academic quality and research expertise.

Impact of EI at Workplace

In the corporate world, according to personnel executives, Intelligent Quotient (IQ) gets you hired, but EI gets you promoted. Among the ingredients for success, researchers now generally agree that IQ counts for about 20%; the rest depends on everything from class to luck to the neural pathways that have developed in the brain over millions of years of human evolution.

In this regard, Goleman (2001) attempts to theoretically clarify the relationship between I.Q. and E.Q., and their respective applicability to job performance. He theorizes that I.Q. is a strong predictor of what jobs individuals can enter as well as a strong predictor of success among the general population as a whole. Emotional intelligence, on the other hand, is described by Goleman as a stronger predictor of who will excel in a particular job when levels of I.Q. are relatively equal.

Mechanisms by which High EI leads to better Job Performance

The ability to manage feelings and handle stress is particularly important aspect of emotional intelligence that contributes in success of business. A study of store managers in a retail chain found that the ability to handle stress predicted net profits, sales per square foot, sales per employee, and per dollar of inventory investment (Lusch & Serpkenci, 1990). Mullar (2010) suggested that employees displaying genuine concern about their colleague's problems should build stronger bond than the employees whose concern seem less genuine. Individuals with high EI may employ their abilities to manage emotions to develop good social relationships that may result in enhancement of task performance via advice and social support.

Empathy is another aspect of emotional intelligence, which adds to occupational success. Rosenthal and his colleagues at Harvard discovered over two decades ago that people who were best at identifying others' emotions were more successful in their work as well as in their social lives (Rosenthal, 1977). For instance, a survey of retail sales customers found that apparel sales representatives were valued primarily for their empathy (Pilling & Eroglu, 1994). Moreover, in most of the jobs, organization members publicly display their emotions through facial, vocal, and bodily signals that provide important information about their goals, attitudes, and intentions (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987; Sutton, 1991). This information may be converted into high task performance by individuals with EI.

However, the notion that "emotional intelligence" is important for success in work and life is actually somewhat simplistic and misleading. Both Goleman (1998) and Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso (1998b) have argued that by itself emotional intelligence probably is not a strong predictor of job performance; it only provides the foundation for competencies. Goleman has tried to epitomize this idea by making a distinction between emotional intelligence and emotional competence. Emotional competence refers to the personal and social skills that lead to superior performance in the world of work. "The emotional competencies are linked to and based on emotional intelligence. A certain level of emotional intelligence is necessary to learn the emotional competencies (Gowing, in press)."

Evidence that EI Skills can be taught in MBA Programs

One of the most controversial aspects of EI is whether or not it can be taught or developed. Emmerling and Goleman (2003) attempted to give justification regarding the ability to develop EI skills. Firstly, they acknowledged that genes play crucial role in the determination of EI but also highlighted the fact that geneticists themselves recognized the ability of nature to shape gene expression. Secondly, they argued that it is very difficult to improve any aspect of EI in individuals without sustained effort, commitment, and attention. Lastly, they highlighted research findings that accentuated development of EI, for instance, in a longitudinal evaluation of the competency-based curriculum of the MBA program at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management EI was found to be improved by 50% seven years after program completion (Boyatzis, Cowan, & Kolb, 1995).

Results for students who went through the Weatherhead MBA program had been compared with those of students who previously went through the traditional program. Both full-time and part-time MBA students and Professional Fellows were involved in this study. Preliminary results of fifty-year longitudinal study suggested that the new competency-based program resulted in full-time students improving on 71%, and part-time students improving on 81%, of the abilities assessed (Boyatzis, Leonard, Rhee, & Wheeler, 1996). Full-time students in the competency-based MBA

program experienced a significant improvement in networking, developing others, self-confidence, oral communication, flexibility, and initiative, while students in the traditional program improved only in self-confidence. Part-time students in the competency-based MBA program increased in initiative, self-confidence, empathy, flexibility, persuasiveness, networking, oral communication and developing others, while part-timers in the traditional program only improved inflexibility.

Other benefits of the new competency based-program were reflected from the 75% increase in applications to the full-time program from 1989-1990 to 1995-1996. This increase occurred at a time when there was a 17% decrease in the number of people taking the Graduate Management Aptitude Test (GMAT), suggesting that the Weather head School had increased its appeal at a time when MBA programs in general were losing some of their charm.

Doh (2003) claimed that management skills can be taught by higher education. The study interviewed a number of scholars on the subject and reported management knowledge can be taught and that the acquisition of EI skills may be best transferred to students through coaching and mentoring.

How to develop EI skills?

Description of the Theory/Practice for Emotional Intelligence Development

According to Cherniss and Goleman (1998), programs which apply a cognitive learning process involve placing new information into already existing frameworks and ways of understanding, consequently enriching and expanding the neural circuitry of the brain. This type of learning is generally ineffective when trying to teach emotional intelligence competencies as these skills involve expanding the neural circuitry of the brain while re-training the brain centres which control emotion. Thus, emotional rather than cognitive learning techniques must be used to teach emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, a study of 198 MBA students concluded that learning styles specializing in experiencing were the most effective in developing interpersonal effectiveness (Mainemelis, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002). Interpersonal effectiveness was defined as working on teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading, negotiating, and working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds. The concept of this specialization originated from the experiential learning theory defined by Kolb (1984) as “the process where by knowledge is created from the combination of grasping and transforming experience.” Johnson and Spicer (2006) proposed that action learning was the best practice for EI development. In this framework, students seek to solve real-world problems in business.

Bennis and O’Toole (2005) argued that business schools should stop using the scientific model and teach according to the professional model of others. They argued that each business school should run its own business, offer internships, and encourage action research.

Identifying methods to develop EI skills through MBA programs

Emotional intelligence or quotient (EI/EQ) is an important feature of communication. Communication is the bridge that connects us to our fellow beings and society as a whole. If language is the key to communication then EI is the key to language and social interaction. So, EI theory should be incorporated into the business communication curriculum. As suggested by Myers and Tucker (2005), a student-centred learning assignment can be used to enhance student learning which allows students to explore EI concepts both intrapersonally and interpersonally.

Significant efforts have been made in some business schools for the development of EI competencies in students. But in India there are only few business schools where EI skills are being taught such as XLRI, Jamshedpur and MDI, Gurgaon etc. One significant reason for EI being not very popular is that there is dearth of expert faculties who can teach EI skills so non - expert faculties should be encouraged to attend EI workshops for enhancing their EI skills.

Furthermore, considering the competency-based curriculum of the MBA program at Weather head School of Management as the basis, a “Managerial Assessment and Development course” should be designed. The goals of this course will be “to learn a method for assessing one’s knowledge and abilities relevant to management,” to develop “plans for acquiring new management-related knowledge and abilities throughout one’s career,” and to become more aware of “one’s own values and the values of others” (Boyatzis, 1994). From this course, the student will learn about his or her strengths and weaknesses in those areas that are most critical for superior managerial performance. This self-knowledge will be the basis for a Learning Plan that will guide the next two or three years of MBA study.

In implementation of the Learning Plan, students will be helped by the Executive Action Team (EAT), which may comprise of a group of randomly selected students, a corporate executive advisor, and an advanced doctoral student who serves as a facilitator. The facilitator will act like a career counsellor. The corporate executive advisors may be either CEOs or people who report directly to such an office of a private or public organization. They will provide a valuable opportunity for students to develop meaningful relationships with working professionals. The EAT will help students integrate knowledge from the various courses they take as well as from other types of experiences such as internships, mentorships, and clubs. The faculty will ensure that the EATs are effective by encouraging activities like network and communication workshops. “The Learning Plan should provide a method for lifelong self-directed development and function as a type of learning contract for the students.” (Boyatzis, 1994)

CONCLUSION

Today a major challenge to MBA education is to develop the ability to use management knowledge. Drucker (1997) claimed that by 2027 the large university campuses will be an artefact due to uncontrollable expenses without any measurable improvement in either the content or the quality of business curriculum. One has to wonder if these words could become

reality. Consistent mismatch between the MBA program curriculum and the employer’s expectation should be heard as an alarm bell. What employers expect needs to be expressed in the curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum must influence employer’s expectations by developing an MBA graduate with the required EI skills to excel in the workplace. This will help in developing new talents who will further explore the field of EI and contribute in new researches. Caudron (2006) very rightly stated, “Like it or not, emotions are an intrinsic part of our biological makeup, and every morning they march into the office with us and influence our behaviour.”

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