

The origins of Emotional Intelligence theory

Overview

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate emotions. It has been suggested that EQ, the 'emotion quotient', or measure of emotional intelligence, is even more important than the somewhat less controversial 'intelligence quotient' or IQ.

Emotional intelligence didn't become popular as a term until around 1990 and interest has grown tremendously over the last 30 years. As early as the 1930s, psychologist Edward Thorndike described the concept of "social intelligence" as the ability to get along with other people. During the 1940s, psychologist David Wechsler proposed that different components of intelligence could play an important role in how successful people are in life.

The 1950s saw the rise of humanistic psychology with the likes of Abraham Maslow focusing on the different ways that people could build emotional strength. In the mid-1970s, Howard Gardner introduced the idea that intelligence was more than just a single, general ability.

The emergence of Emotional Intelligence

It was not until 1985 that the term 'emotional intelligence' was first used in a doctoral dissertation by Wayne Payne. In 1987, an article published by Keith Beasley in *Mensa Magazine* uses the term 'emotional quotient.' Reuven Bar-On¹, an Israeli psychologist proposed a quantitative approach to creating "an EQ comparable to an IQ score" in the first copy of his doctoral dissertation, which was submitted in 1985. In 1990, psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer² published their landmark article, 'Emotional Intelligence,' in the journal *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*.

In 1995, the concept of emotional intelligence was popularised after the publication of Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* which we have used as the basis for EI content in our Organisational Leadership Skills course. Below is an overview of a couple of the other prominent models mentioned above in the development of EI theory.

¹The Bar-On concept of emotional and social intelligence

Bar-On's model described emotional and social competencies that determine how effective individuals are at understanding and expressing themselves, understanding others and interacting with them as well as coping with daily demands and challenges. These competencies are clustered into the following five meta-factors – the ability to:

1. Be aware of emotions as well as to understand and express feelings
2. Understand how others feel and interact with them
3. Manage and control emotions
4. Manage change, adapt and solve problems of a personal/ interpersonal nature
5. Generate positive effect to enhance self-motivation, in order to facilitate emotionally and socially intelligent behaviour.

These five meta-factors comprise a total of 15 factors.

- Interpersonal relationships
- Empathy
- Social responsibility
- Problem-solving
- Reality testing
- Impulse control
- Emotional expression
- Assertiveness
- Independence
- Self-regard
- Self-actualisation
- Emotional self-awareness
- Flexibility
- Stress tolerance
- Optimism

²Mayer and Salovey developmental model of Emotional Intelligence



The Mayer and Salovey developmental model of emotional intelligence comprises four branches:

1. The ability to **perceive emotions** in oneself and others accurately.
2. The ability to **use emotions** to facilitate thinking.
3. The ability to **understand emotions**, emotional language and the signals conveyed by emotions.
4. The ability to **manage emotions** so as to attain specific goals.

'What differentiates EI from the 'personal' intelligences is that EI does not focus on a general sense of self and the appraisal of others – rather, it is focused on recognising and using the emotional states of the self and others in order to solve problems and regulate behaviour'

Mayer and Salovey, 1990

The revised model of Emotional Intelligence by Mayer, Salovey and Caruso – 2016

In 2016 a new description of the four-branch model of emotional intelligence was released and included added areas of reasoning.

1. Perceiving emotions

1. Identify deceptive or dishonest emotional expressions.
2. Discriminate accurate vs. inaccurate emotional expressions.
3. Understand how emotions are displayed depending on context and culture.
4. Express emotions accurately when desired.
5. Perceive emotional content in the environment, visual arts, and music.
6. Perceive emotions in other people through their vocal cues, facial expression, language, and behaviour.
7. Identify emotions in one's own physical states, feelings, and thoughts.

2. Facilitating thought using emotions

1. Select problems based on how one's ongoing emotional state might facilitate cognition.
2. Leverage mood swings to generate different cognitive perspectives.
3. Prioritise thinking by directing attention according to present feeling.
4. Generate emotions as a means to relate to experiences of another person.
5. Generate emotions as an aid to judgment and memory.

3. Understanding emotions

1. Recognise cultural differences in the evaluation of emotions.
2. Understand how a person might feel in the future or under certain conditions (affective forecasting).
3. Recognize likely transitions among emotions such as from anger to satisfaction.
4. Understand complex and mixed emotions.
5. Differentiate between moods and emotions.
6. Appraise the situations that are likely to elicit emotions.
7. Determine the antecedents, meanings, and consequences of emotions.
8. Label emotions and recognise relations among them.

4. Managing emotions

1. Effectively manage others' emotions to achieve a desired outcome.
2. Effectively manage one's own emotions to achieve a desired outcome.
3. Evaluate strategies to maintain, reduce, or intensify an emotional response.
4. Monitor emotional reactions to determine their reasonableness.
5. Engage with emotions if they are helpful; disengage if not.
6. Stay open to pleasant and unpleasant feelings, as needed, and to the information they convey.