

Emotional Intelligence In High School Principals In Thailand

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence is a popular construct among the public due to the claim that it has the potential to increase work satisfaction, better relationships, and improve deviant behaviors. Apart from the claim that emotional intelligence improves quality of life, theorists of emotional intelligence also assert that leaders who are emotionally intelligent are also responsible for school effectiveness. The present study focuses on the examination of Emotional Intelligence levels of principals of effective schools in Thailand. The Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test was given to seventy principals, thirty five each from two categories of schools, one government schools with excellent Quality Assurance Rating and second private schools with excellent quality assurance rating. The result indicates that principals from both categories of school do not differ in levels of Emotional Intelligence and four branches of emotional intelligence as well.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Emotional Intelligence Branch Score

INTRODUCTION

Principals are the key component of any systematic school reform effort. Newman, King, and Young (2000) state that school capacity is a critical factor that affects instruction and student achievement. Principal leadership is one of the most important components of a school's capacity, particularly the brand of principal leadership that is centered on the development of teachers' knowledge and skills, the maturation of the school as a professional community, the structuring of a coherent school program, and the acquisition of essential technical resources (Fullan 2000).

Bennis (1989) described the modern leader as a social architect capable of generating intellectual capital in the organizations they lead. Schlechty (1990) added that leaders are in a position to influence others and must have the social skills to take advantage of that position. Fullan elaborated on the characteristics of educational leaders capable of leading sustained educational changes. He observed that "effective leaders combine a strong sense of moral purpose, an understanding of the dynamics of change, and great emotional intelligence as they build relationships" (Fullan 2003 p. 93).

Previously, Fullan (2001a) had identified five traits that principals must develop in this culture of change. These traits were: (a) a strong sense of moral purpose, (b) an

understanding of the dynamics of change, (c) a commitment to developing and sharing new knowledge, (d) a capacity for coherence making and (e) emotional intelligence as they build and foster relationships. The latter of these traits has received little treatment in the research literature where educational leadership is concerned and is therefore the primary focus of this discussion.

Fullan (2002) emphasized that “emotionally intelligent leaders are aware of their own emotional makeup, are sensitive and inspiring to others, and are able to deal with day-to-day problems as they work on more fundamental changes in the culture of the organization” (p. 3). Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002, p. 21) posited that leaders use emotional intelligence (EI) to develop relationships that are in-sync with their organization by forming “emotional bonds that help them stay focused even amid profound change and uncertainty.” Essentially, the principals of the future will need to be attuned to the big picture, and be able to think conceptually as they transform the organization through people and teams. They will also need to possess strong interpersonal skills, be able to get along with others, and exercise high levels of intelligence and energy.

The idea of EI has struck a particular chord with many leaders today because it affirms what many have assumed for so long that general intelligence, as measured by our IQ, is not the only critical factor in predicting the success of leaders in real everyday organizations. As Goleman (1997) stated, “IQ today gets you hired, but EI gets you promoted.” Goleman (1998a) suggested that as much as 80%- 90% of the competencies that distinguish outstanding leaders from average leaders are related to EI. If this is accurate, developers of leaders should look for ways to increase the acquisition and growth of these soft skills.

To be sure, today there is still considerable controversy over the construct of EI as a measurable ability and how it relates to effective leadership. In recognition of this, Palmer (2001) stated that “despite the recent popularity of the construct, exactly how and to what extent EI accounts for effective leadership is unknown. There is little research published that has explicitly examined this relationship” (p. 5). Given the discordant views of EI and its possible effect on leadership for capacity building, the singular intention of this research is to establish the extent to which EI does account for effective leadership.

Our definition of emotional intelligence is borrowed from Salovey and Mayer (1990) who considered EI as 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. They conducted a systematic study of EI to further develop the concept of EI and identify the specific skills associated with it. They later posited an ability model of EI called the Four-Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). In their deliberations, they postulated that EI consists of three

mental processes: appraising and expressing emotions in the self and other, regulating emotions in the self and others, and using emotions in adaptive ways. They divided EI into four branches of mental abilities: perceiving and identifying emotions, using emotion to facilitate the thought processes, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. "The order of the branches, from perception to management, represents the degree to which the ability is integrated within the rest of an individual's major psychological subsystems—that is, within his or her overall personality" (Mayer, 1998).

According to Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004), branch one reflects the perception of emotion and involves the ability to recognize emotion in the faces and expressions of others. This ability includes non-verbal perception and expression of emotion in the face other areas related to communication. Branch two, facilitation, explains the capacity of using emotions to assist thinking. Knowledge of the link between emotions and thinking can be used to direct one's planning (Izard, 2001). Branch three, the understanding of emotions, involves the capacity to analyze emotions, appreciate their trends over time and understand their outcomes (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso 2004). Branch four includes the ability to manage emotions. This ability involves the entire personality. Emotions of individuals "are managed in the context of the individual's goals, self knowledge, and social awareness" (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso 2004, p.199). An application of this is that we teach our children to control anger or sorrow.

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Effectiveness

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) described the current situation faced by leadership in public schools today in their position paper *Principal Shortage* (2000), "Principals are dealing with increased job related stress, heightened accountability, new curriculum standards, educating an increasingly diverse student population, addressing social issues that once belonged at home or in the community, while facing possible termination if their schools do not show instant results" This is true with Thailand too.

If Thai schools are to rise to the current challenges, they will require outstanding leaders with exceptional leadership skills, including interpersonal skills that have become integral to effective leadership. Where leaders were once seen to control, plan, and inspect the overall running of an organization, in today's successful organizations leaders must motivate and inspire others, foster positive attitudes, and create a sense of contribution and importance with and among employees (Hogan, Curphy and Hogan 1994).

Research Questions about Levels of Emotional Intelligence

The present study considers the following research questions to be analyzed:

- 1) If there are differences in the EI level of principals of high rated government and high rated private schools.
- 2) If there are differences in EI that exist among the four branches of EI, including perceiving, facilitating, understanding, and managing emotions in both categories of schools.

Methodology

The levels of emotional intelligence were measured in the two categories of school principals. These categories are government schools and private schools with excellent quality assurance rating by Ministry of Education. Thirty five principals each were selected from both categories of school. All these seventy principals are leading their respective schools for over five years. All the schools selected are considered as highly effective schools as per Quality assurance rating as per Ministry of Education

These principals were given the Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, and Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) to complete. This test measures levels of Emotional intelligence related to ability along four separate branches of EI; (a) Perceiving emotions accurately, (b) Using emotions to facilitate thought, (c) Understanding emotion and (d) Managing emotion.

The MSCEIT is a 141-item performance scale that assesses how people are able to accomplish tasks that are related to emotional sensitivity. Questions on the instrument are related to a respondent's actual ability to solve emotional problems. The MSCEIT provides 15 main scores, a total EI score, two area scores, four branch scores, and eight task scores.

The results of the two groups of principals for all four branch scores of the MSCEIT and the cumulative EI score were compared, using independent sample t-tests. The significance level was set at the traditional $p > .05$. The main focus of testing was whether principals of government schools differ from principals of private schools on the emotional intelligence ability to (a) perceive emotions accurately, (b) use emotion to facilitate thought, (c) understand emotions, (d) manage emotions, and (e) combine all four branches of EI.

Results

Table 1: Gender & Age Differences of Respondents

Type of Private School	N	Female	Male	Gender	Age Group
				45-50 yrs	Above 50 years
Government Schools	35	24%	76%	25(71.42%)	10(28.58 %)
Private Schools	35	24%	76%	27(77.14%)	8(22.86%)
All Principals	70	24%	76%	52(74.28%)	18(25.72 %)

From Table 1 it is evident that both groups of principals were identical in gender distribution, and in both groups most of the principals are between the ages of 45 and 50.

Table 2: Means of Principal's Emotional Intelligence Scores

Type of School	N	Mean	Std.Deviation
Government School	35	35.25	23.29
Private School	35	41.33	25.34

An independent samples t-test was performed to ascertain whether overall Emotional Intelligence scores differed significantly between principals from two different categories of schools. It is reflective from Table 2 the mean and standard deviation of principals from government school ($n=35$, $M=35.25$, $SD= 23.29$) and principals of private schools ($n=35$, $M=41.33$, $SD=25.314$).

Table3 : Independent sample t Test for Principal's Emotional intelligence Scores

Means Compared	t	df (2 tailed)	Sig. Difference	Mean
Total Emotional Intelligence Score	-.812	68	.325	6.08

Results of the t-test, as shown on Table 3 indicates a t of $-.812$ that was not statistically significant ($p = .325$). This indicates that the two groups of principals do not have statistically significant differences in overall Emotional Intelligence scores. In spite of this it can be commended that principals from private schools have better emotional intelligence levels than their counterparts from government schools

Table 4: Emotional Intelligence Branch Scores Comparison

EI Branch	Government Schools		Private Schools		Mean difference	Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Perceiving Emotion	30.2	24.4	37.4	28.3	7.2	.37
Facilitating Thought	40.5	26.2	42.8	26.7	2.3	.93
Understanding Emotion	43.8	22.3	49.3	21.1	5.5	.32
Managing Emotion	42.7	23.2	45.2	22.5	2.5	.82

On comparing the branch scores for the two groups of principals using independent sample t-tests, Table 4 indicates that there are no statistically significant differences in branch scores between the two groups of principals. In spite of this it can be commended that principals from the private schools have better scores in all the four branches of emotional intelligence. It can be inferred both of the groups are better in understanding emotions, than managing emotions, than facilitating thoughts. However perceiving emotions takes the last bench.

DISCUSSIONS

The results indicate that scores of emotional intelligence of principals from both types of school government (mean 35.25 and SD 23.29) and private (mean 41.33 and SD 25.34) is nearly same. This reflects that emotional intelligence of principals cannot be based on the nature of organization they work. All the schools taken as sample were the best rated schools as per their Quality Assurance rating on Key Performance Indicators which includes school effectiveness,, leadership behavior, customer satisfaction and it can be commended that effectiveness of these schools depend on emotional intelligence of their principals and it is in response to Palmer (2001) for his statement that “despite the recent popularity of the construct, exactly how and to what extent EI accounts for effective leadership is unknown”. However the scores of principals of private schools are slightly higher than that of government schools indicates the abilities of private school principals in developing their soft skills as suggested by Goleman (1997).

On comparing the emotional intelligence branch scores the mean scores for the principals from private schools (37.4,42.8,49.3,45.2) and principals from government schools (30.2,40.5,43.8,42.7) on four branches of Emotional intelligence perceiving emotions, facilitating thoughts, understanding emotions and managing emotions

respectively indicates that principals from private schools are better in all four branches of emotional intelligence than the principals of government schools.

However it's the need of time to explore the factors responsible for better emotional intelligence of private school principals than from government schools.

CONCLUSION

The study reflects the emotional intelligence of school principals as one of the reasons for school effectiveness. It also probes a question for differences in emotional intelligence of principals from government school and principal from the private schools. It suggests that principals should have abilities to develop their soft skills.

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