



## **Editorial: Introducing Emotional Education**

### **What is Emotional Education?**

After seemingly ages of neglect, the past couple of decades have seen a widespread growth in interest in the importance of emotions in relation to education. Along with this has come the demand for more humanistic and holistic approaches to educational practice which are informed by a developing understanding of the ways in which social, cognitive and emotional factors interact and contribute to the learning process. A growing band of theorists and practitioners is calling for educational policy makers to abandon simplistic performance indicators and to embrace the view that a key purpose of educational intervention in the twenty-first century must be to contribute to the formation of academically, socially and emotionally literate young people who have the skills, abilities and emotional resilience necessary to navigate the uncertain but fast moving environmental and economic present and future.

Emotional intelligence, emotional literacy, and social and emotional learning have become key concepts in contemporary educational discourse, underscoring the foundational role of emotions in learning and behaviour. Recent research in neuroscience has required us to revisit some of our previously held assumptions about learning and child development, underlining the key role of emotions in learning and development. This shift towards an educational agenda which embraces a more holistic conception of what it is to be a human being has, in part, been brought about by the realisation that the tendency of education systems to privilege a narrow range of cognitive skills, has not only created stress and anxiety in the lives of children and young people, but has left many school leavers without the necessary competencies and social-emotional resources to face the ‘tests of life’ (Elias 2001). Questions have been raised about the value and effectiveness of educational systems which have become out of step with the contemporary world. As Nel Noddings (1992) has put it:

the traditional organization of schooling is intellectually and morally inadequate for contemporary society. We live in an age troubled by social problems that force us to reconsider what we do in schools (p. 173).

In order for people to survive as autonomous, active, productive and resilient citizens in a fast changing world, they need to have particular competencies and resources to achieve their goals. They need to be creative in problem solving and effective in decision making. They need to build and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to be willing and able to work collaboratively with others. They also need to mobilize their personal resources in times of difficulty, and sustain their psychological and social well being. These are the qualities and competencies that must be fostered in young people if they are to become active and constructive citizens of the world. The role of formal education is vitally important here, as is the wider cultural and political context in which children and young people develop.

Effective social and cognitive functioning in children and young people is predicated on emotional competencies which involve the understanding and regulation of emotions as well as the ability to read and empathise with the emotional states of others (cf. Rogers 1950; Maslow 1970; Bowlby 1975). Psychodynamic theory convincingly argues that emotional functions need to be regulated by cognitive processes, and this is reflected in modern theories of emotional intelligence and emotional literacy. In the absence of emotional competence, individuals are prone to instinctual responses to basic emotional drives, particularly fear, which in turn lead to an overemphasis of basic fight or flight responses. The key point here is that emotional competencies are **learned**. That is, they are modelled and reinforced in families, schools, peer groups, and through the media. In short, these competencies develop through socio-cultural processes.

Various terms have been coined to define this domain, such as emotional intelligence (Goleman 1996; Mayer and Salovey 1997), emotional literacy (Antidote 2003) and social and emotional learning (Elias 2001). We prefer the term “emotional education” which may be defined as *the process by which an individual develops emotional competence, which in turn develops through a social learning process*. In using the term ‘education’ we seek to place the emphasis on the conditions and processes which contribute to the development of social and emotional competence.

Emotional education is concerned with the broad, multi-dimensional nature of learning and teaching. Included here are biological, emotional, cognitive and social aspects of learning and teaching. The term also enables us to bring in both interpersonal and institutional aspects which are crucial

influences on learning. This suggests a comprehensive, holistic and biopsychosocial model of education. In this respect, ‘emotional education’ is broader and more inclusive than other terms used in this area.

### ***International Journal of Emotional Education***

The *International Journal of Emotional Education* has been established to make a specific contribution to this growing field in the educational and social sciences. It is our intention to focus in particular on the applications of relevant research findings to improving the quality of the emotional education experienced by children and young people. It follows that whilst we are particularly interested in the contribution that is and can be made by schools and other formal educational structures, we are equally interested in the educational experiences that children and young people have in the more informal settings of the family, peer group and wider community.

The *International Journal of Emotional Education* will provide a platform for high quality scholarship in the above areas. These will include, conceptual and empirical papers, which will help to broaden understanding of what emotional education is and how it can be successfully fostered. We welcome in particular empirical papers which describe emotional educational process, and others which evaluate interventions and programmes. The editors also welcome papers which deal with philosophical aspects of emotional education.

The *International Journal of Emotional Education* is, in its initial format, an academic, peer-reviewed, international, electronic journal which is distributed free of charge. The journal is supported by an international board of reviewers with high level expertise in the field. Some of the areas covered by the *International Journal of Emotional Education* include amongst others emotional intelligence, social and emotional development, educational resilience, social and emotional health, social and emotional literacy, social and emotional competence, social, emotional and behaviour difficulties, health promotion in schools, mental health in children and young people, mental health in schools, behaviour management and behaviour modification, and teaching and learning. The *International Journal of Emotional Education* will be accessible to practitioners working in the area as well. Besides its European and international focus, and its integration of theory and practice, another key feature of the journal will be the variety of papers which will be published. Papers will vary from 3500 to 10,000, the longer papers being reviews of themes and areas related to emotional education.

The *International Journal of Emotional Education* is published through the *European Centre for*

*Educational Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health* (EDRES) at the University of Malta, and is supported by the *European Network for Social and Emotional Competence* (ENSEC).

ENSEC is an international and collaborative network of researchers and practitioners devoted to the development and promotion of evidence-based practice in relation to socio-emotional competence and resilience among school students. ENSEC was set up in December 2007 and presently it consists of more than forty members from various countries engaged in research and practice in the area of social and emotional education across a range of contexts and cultures. The network organises a biennial conference, engages in collaborative empirical research within a European dimension, and serves as a repository for information and data about strategies for the promotion of socio-emotional competence and resilience in schools in Europe. This journal is one medium through which this information will be disseminated.

The *European Centre for Educational Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health* at the University of Malta, which publishes the *International Journal of Emotional Education*, has been recently established to undertake and publish local, European and international research in the promotion of social and emotional health and resilience and in children and young persons. The Centre seeks to establish collaborative partnerships with local, European and international researchers and practitioners in the promotion of socio-emotional health and resilience in school children and young persons, and serves as a regional base for ENSEC.

### **This Issue of the *International Journal of Emotional Education***

The theme of this issue of the *International Journal of Emotional Education* explores the question: What works for children and young persons with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties? The six papers deal with various aspects of this theme, particularly in relation to the education of students with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties.

In the first paper, Cefai (Malta), Cooper (UK) and Camilleri (Malta) presents the result of a national study on social, emotional and behaviour difficulties in Maltese schools, the first one of the kind in Malta. The study was conducted by the University of Malta in collaboration with the University of Leicester. The study made use of ten per cent of the school population in over one hundred state and non-state primary and secondary schools in Malta, with seven thousand students, their parents and teachers selected to participate in the study. It sought to explore the nature and distribution of SEBD in Maltese schools, examine the relationships between SEBD and socio-cultural factors as reflected in the

school, family and community contexts, and identify the risk and protective factors for SEBD. This paper presents the key findings of the study, and makes various recommendations in the prevention and management of SEBD and the promotion of socio-emotional literacy in schools. A key message is the complexity and multi-factorial nature of this phenomenon, and the need for multilevel, multisystemic interventions.

In the second paper, Ed Smeets (Netherlands) proposes a systematic approach to the management of social, emotional and behaviour problems on the basis of various studies carried out in the Netherlands. The approach relates improvement in educational practice to a more systematic approach to the identification of SEBD and the setting up and evaluation of various prevention and intervention strategies; more focus on the provision of an adequate instructional environment for children at risk of or with SEBD; and better communication between schools and parents about the pupils' social, emotional, and behavioural development. It proposes a model of guidelines aimed at recruiting pupil engagement through the provision of instruction tailored to the needs of all pupils, including those with SEBD,

The next two papers discuss the provision of services for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the UK. In the first paper, Peter Farrell and Neil Humphrey (UK) discuss the major challenges facing stakeholders, including teachers, professionals, parents and pupils, as they strive to improve services for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They identify five major challenges, namely working with families, low educational attainments, inclusion, transition from school to college or employment, and early intervention and prevention. On the basis of a review of research evidence in each of these areas, the authors discuss possible solutions to these challenges, concluding with various suggestions for the development of carefully planned and evidence based interventions for students with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. In the second paper, Ted Cole (UK) reviews the literature on how to address the educational needs of students described as being disruptive and disengaged. Cole discusses at length the issue of inclusion and mainstreaming for students with such students, underlining various characteristics of effective practice which go beyond simple placement, including values, the quality of relationships and the delivery of the curriculum amongst others.

Terje Ogden and Mari-Anne Sørlie (Norway) describe the implementation and evaluation of two family and school based intervention programmes in Norway, namely Parent Management Training and PALS, a school-wide intervention programme. PALS was organised as a universal intervention for the

whole school combined with PMTO for parents of high risk children. The authors maintain that no other country has implemented and evaluated empirically based family and school programmes on such a large-scale basis. They describe in detail this national strategy, and the main components and immediate outcomes of the PMTO- and PALS-programmes, concluding with the key principles underlining the effectiveness of the programmes in Norway.

In the final paper, Lesley Hughes (UK) focuses on one group of students with social, emotional and behaviour problems, namely students with ADHD. Through interviews with children, parents and teachers, Hughes sought to explore what they perceived to be effective in engaging students with ADHD in mainstream education. Various narratives from these three groups of respondents illuminate models of good practice in inclusive classrooms for students with ADHD, with an accent of adapting the learning context to the needs of these students. Examples are drawn from environmental, personal, organizational and structural factors that are believed to influence the children's behaviour and learning.

Paul Cooper  
University of Leicester, UK

Carmel Cefai  
University of Malta

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