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Assessing Emotional Intelligence and Its Impact in Caring Professions: The Value of a Mixed-Methods Approach in Emotional Intelligence Work with Teachers

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1. Introduction

There has been a growing interest in the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) since it was first identified by Mayer and Salovey (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The concept is one that has attracted many claims including the view that it can be assessed using pen and paper type tests (as with more traditional ‘intelligence’ models) and that it can predict one or another type of success in life, including academic success. One early account of emotional intelligence – now widely critiqued – even claimed that it “can matter more than IQ” (Goleman, 1995). Even if claims of this magnitude are no longer held to be justifiable, they have in many ways contributed to the popular excitement surrounding the concept. Consequently, academic researchers and theorists are thinking about the concept more critically and using more sophisticated methods of test design, interpretation and application.

Considerations stemming from such debate and concern has led to the development of a number of pen and paper type tests that claim to measure emotional intelligence (though in many cases the concept that is being measured is defined differently and the results of these tests are not really comparable in the way in which different tests of traditional intelligence models would claim to be). At the same time, theorists such as Gardner (1983, 1993) have argued that there is a need for more portfolio forms of assessment for non-traditional intelligences, while others (Sternberg, 1988; Sternberg, Castejón, Prieto, Hautamäki, & Grigorenko, 2001; Thoma, 2002) have argued that there is a need for tests to be framed in more domain specific ways if they are to validly assess cognitive operations. Corcoran (2011) highlights the importance of crossing methodological boundaries when conducting research on emotion and shows how embracing both quantitative and qualitative methods, that is being methodologically ecumenical, can help to make sense of what is actually being measured by such psychometric approaches. Indeed numerous researchers (Denzin, 1984; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Zembylas & Schutz, 2009) working on emotion have argued that


Emotional intelligence is an emerging construct for applied research and possible interventions, both in scholastic, academic and educational contexts, organizational contexts, as well as at an individual level in terms of people's well-being and life satisfaction. From the presented contributions, it emerges how this volume is characterized by an interest to give an international overview rich of stimuli and perspectives for research and intervention, in relation to a promising variable of current interest, such as emotional intelligence. The goal is that this book further contributes to the affirmation of a particularly promising variable, such as emotional intelligence, which requires a greater interest and attention in both research and application field.

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