

# The role of special educators' emotional intelligence in self-efficacy: A review

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**Abstract:** A review of current studies role of emotional intelligence of special educators in self-efficacy. Based on the available empirical evidence from the above studies, it can be concluded that educator's EI has the potential to improve educator's teaching performance. Similarly, emotionally intelligent educators improve their self-efficacy, which becomes a source of enhancing their teaching performance. Educators with high emotional intelligence can foster a constructive competition in the workplace, which can be helpful for other educators to compete with others to enhance their performance. This can motivate educators to do more to prove their worth. Educators' EI boosts teachers' self-efficacy and performance.

**Key words:** Educators' emotional intelligence, self-efficacy.

## 1. INTRODUCTION : Emotional intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is a subject that has received a lot of attention from academics across different fields the past years creating a rich literature base. Despite the fact that Emotional Intelligence can be considered a modern concept, similar ideations have been studied for the greater part of the previous century.

Mayer and Salovey (,1990) aiming to define emotional intelligence start by offering definitions on both notions. Thus, emotions are viewed as coordinated reactions that span several psychological subsystems, such as the "physiological, cognitive, motivational, and experiential systems". Again, as in Steiner's research an extensive span of emotions is recognized to be partaking in the human experience both positive and negative and at different intensities. Additionally, emotions are closely linked to the social experience by the researchers. Rather than following some literary traditions of their contemporaries and considering emotional intelligence as a misnomer and hence, deeming it as being incompatible with what was traditionally, considered to be "intelligence" the researchers adopted a revolutionary course. People's distinctive intelligences have also been studied by intelligence researchers within subareas such as social behavior and, on rare occasions, emotions. A major focal point on Mayer and Salovey's definition of intelligence is the term "social intelligence", which can be interpreted as the power to interpret one's personal and others' emotional responses, motivations, and behaviors, and to respond appropriately upon these grounds of that information. However, social intelligence has often been characterized as a manipulative manner. The researcher's view on intelligence is an outcome of their influence from Thorndike and S. Stein (1937) and Weinstein (1969).

The main advantages of demonstrating high emotional intelligence can be visible in daily life, according to the researchers. People who approach activities of daily living with emotional intelligence will probably face lesser limitations when it comes to adapting to challenges. It is because of that justification that such abilities should be included in the emotional intelligence conceptual framework. People's concerns and how they frame them will almost certainly be further linked to individual's internal experience than the issues discussed by someone else. An example posed to illustrate their point was that of the focus an individual might regarding their career options. Individuals who

have higher emotional intelligence present a higher possibility of favoring a career option that satisfies them than a career that might have been more lucrative but cause them to experience a constantly negative state of emotion. Individuals with these skills might also be highly inventive and versatile in finding potential alternative approaches after framing a challenge. The researchers indicate that these individuals demonstrate higher possibility of taking emotions into consideration when deciding between options. Therefore, said approach may result in a behavior that is compassionate and empathetic of their own and others' internal experiences. In fact, the researchers have categorized emotional intelligence amongst the most important skills for a successful life.

Goleman (1995) defines emotional intelligence as a combination of skills and abilities that include self-discipline, passion, and perseverance, as well as the desire to inspire oneself. Goleman's theory revolves around the pillars of knowing, recognizing, managing emotions both on ourselves and on other as well as, being able to motivate ourselves and handling relationships. The researcher considers this skillset to be indispensable for all sections of life from business management and leadership to romance (Goleman, 1995, p. 36). Regarding emotional intelligence Goleman (Goleman, Boyatzis, Rhee 1999, Goleman 2012) will later discuss another relevant term, that of emotional competence. In this concept, they integrate the notions of emotional intelligence and effectiveness in a multitude of areas and applications linking higher emotional intelligence to outstanding performance in the sector of occupation of the subject. Although at the time IQ was considered to be the prevalent predictor for success in the workplace their studies have proven that it is actually more complex than that (Goleman, 1998). It is noteworthy, however, that the researcher declares that but for its high importance this skill is not going to lead to immense success when it is not combined with the necessary academic/ technical/ or other types of knowledge and intelligence required to perform a task. Essentially, they move the term closer to what they refer to as "a learnt capability", a set of competences/skills that can be acquired through an educational process. On this ground, Goleman has studied the emotional well-being of children in the United States, which in 1995 found to be in decline and thus, proposed a solution; a model to teach young children how to recognize and manage their emotions and keep themselves motivated. In other words, how to be emotionally intelligent through Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

For Bar-on (1997) and Parker (Bar-on and Parker 2000) emotional intelligence is again a complex set of skills and abilities that affect various aspects of our everyday lives. The researcher considers effective social human behavior to be dependent on social-emotional competencies such as interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence (1997b, 2001, 2014). The EQ-i, which was originally designed to assess different facets of this framework as well as explore its conceptualization, is theoretically based on the Bar-On model. Emotional-social intelligence, according to this paradigm, is a set of intertwined emotional and social competencies, abilities, and enablers that decide how well we comprehend and articulate ourselves, perceive others and react to them, and communicate with everyday demands. To be emotionally and socially intelligent, according to this model, one would need to be able to adequately comprehend and articulate oneself, acknowledge and communicate well with others, and efficiently manage everyday needs, difficulties, and stresses. This is concentrated on one's intrapersonal capacity to be mindful of oneself, consider one's strong and weak points, and communicate one's emotions and opinions in a non-destructive way. In short Bar-On (1997) concentrates his research in a model discussing Emotional Intelligence in five distinct categories; a) intrapersonal skills, b) interpersonal skills, c) adaptability, d) stress management and e) general mood. However, he later retracted on the fifth category supporting it rather possesses the function of the mediator among the main four than being a separate category on its own.

## **2. Self-efficacy :**

Self-efficacy is a theoretical conception developed by Albert Bandura in 1977 and it discusses the correlation between self-efficacy personal success and well-being as well as changes in our behavior. (Lippke, 2017). According to Bandura (1978) self-efficacy is a determinant factor for success as it has a significant influence on an individual's chosen activities and to the degree that it is possible, the environment they place themselves. It is explained that individuals with low self-efficacy choose activities that perpetuate this negative state and, in a sense, obstruct their progress. On the opposite end, individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to partake in activities that will have a positive, constructive effect towards their evolution. It also made clear that different experiences can also be formative of an individual's perception of efficacy and it is not an inherent personality trait rather that an acquired one formed through our experiences and with the potential to be altered. Interestingly, self-efficacy is also inextricably linked to the amount of effort that is to be put on the pursuit of a goal. Consequently, people who demonstrate higher self-efficacy are more possible to demonstrate higher persistence in their efforts and hence higher achievements as competency acquisition often requires stable effort and dedication.

A relationship between self-efficacy and success in diverse situations has also been explored by a plethora of scholars.

Moe and Zeiss (1982) based on Bandura's theory found significant correlations between self-efficacy and social skills. What is more, there has been a correlation between depression and expectations of efficacy but it seems to be affected by social anxiety.

Jerusalem and Mittag (1995) put this notion into unique perspective as they release it from any domain-specific or situation-specific ideation and study it under a uniquely stressing situation, that of immigration under the separation of East and West Germany. They study the processes of psychological and emotional management and adaptation for immigrants in the latter circumstances. The main pillars of their study are whether perceptions of efficacy are affected by the stressors of the new environment (such as unemployment) and to which extent "interindividual differences" affect or are affected by self-efficacy. It is rather noteworthy that despite all these stressors and their young age the migrants demonstrated a stably formed sense of self-efficacy that seems to be unaffected by the drastic changes, they have been through. One explanation for this, as provided by the researchers, was their young age as a catalytic factor to an unbreakable "crystallized" formation of beliefs that cannot be altered by external circumstances. Another possible explanation offered in the study was migration as a formative characteristic, as young people who left their communities in search for a better future already had an augmented sense of self-efficacy and confidence that they managed to maintain.

Marlatt, Baer, & Quigley, (1995) discuss the correlation between self-efficacy and overcoming addiction. The role of self-efficacy in the study is crucial both while initiating a change in the behavior of a drug user (towards stopping using substances) and in order to maintain that behavior and develop resistance to drug use with the focus being shifted to preventing addictive behavior from reoccurring. In other words, the degree of self-efficacy of the addicted person is positively linked to their ability to prevent a relapse and maintain their treatment.

### **3. Self-efficacy in educators :**

The sense of self-efficacy of educators is a topic echoed in a lot of research.

Guskey (1988), conducted research on the matter utilizing a variety of tools on a subject of 120 elementary and secondary school teachers regarding their attitudes towards "implementations of mastery" and overall effectiveness. The results of the study indicated that teachers demonstrating higher self-efficacy, a higher degree of confidence and love towards their occupation were indeed more effective in the instructional process and also more receptive towards professional evolution in terms of new strategies and approaches.

Klassen, Chiu and Ming (2010) explore how the notion of self-efficacy interacts and how it is affected by the educator's characteristics (gender, level of education and years of teaching experience). Their study measures self-efficacy regarding "instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement" their relation to stress/ feelings of anxiety that is caused by or heavily relevant to the job and the degree of satisfaction they demonstrate about their position. By looking at the result of their exploration we see that there is an absence of a linear connection between the domain of self-efficacy mentioned above and the educators' experience. On the contrary, numbers seemed to be fluctuating, with the mentioned factors demonstrating an upward tendency from the beginning to the middle of the career of the subjects and then decreasing. Gender was a factor of significant differentiation in the subject of stress. Male teachers scored lower on workload stress as well as in stress related to students' behavior in the classroom. While female teachers reported to have more stress, they scored higher on self-efficacy regarding classroom management. Regarding the level of education, they were teaching in, teachers of elementary schools reported higher self-efficacy regarding classroom management and student engagement. Overall, educators that demonstrated higher levels of self-efficacy also had a more satisfactory working experience.

### **4. Emotional Intelligence and Teachers' Efficacy – Theoretical Background**

Modern research takes a strong swift from understanding and describing desirable teacher behavior from strictly rational to recognizing the importance of Emotional Intelligence and Literacy regarding teachers' efficacy. Since the beginning of the millennium Hargeaves (2001) recognizes and studies a change in educational policies. For Hargeaves this is a form of evolution, in a world of rapid changes where soft skills and creativity become increasingly important educational constitutions cannot remain rigidly fixated only on the developing of cognitive skills. As quoted "they do not get to the heart of it" referring to rigid standardized practices being the only measure of successful or quality teaching. Teaching in Hargeaves is thus, recognized as an emotional practice and emotional labor.

Essentially, this shift in the focus of educational systems revolutionizes the very core of education by recognizing non-academic skills as equally important to academic ones. Poulou (2017) examines the relationship between teachers' efficacy and their perceptions of social emotional learning (SEL). In her study she attempts to affirm the connection between teachers' Emotional Intelligence and their ability to put to implementation Social and Emotional Learning in order to create and maintain quality relationships with their students and especially with students facing behavioral difficulties. In particular she explores the relationship among perceived efficacy, emotional intelligence (EI) and the construction of relationships with their students. Based on existing and widely recognized literature (as cited; Brackett et al., 2012; Gunter et al., 2012; Hamre et al., 2008) she hypothesized that teachers reporting higher on EI and SEL would also build better interpersonal connections with their students, viewing these qualities as necessary skills. Interestingly, her hypothesis was verified with significant correlations between the higher teachers EI and SEL and the building of relationships with students facing difficulties such as hyperactivity.

Similarly, Valente, Veiga-Branco, Rebelo, Lourenco and Cristóvão (2020) discuss the relationship between teachers' Emotional Intelligence Ability (EIA) and teachers' efficacy recognising teaching as heavy emotional labour that requires a variety of emotional regulation skills and abilities. Their study focuses on the way and degree EIA or, as described, in quote "the ability to perceive, understand, express, classify, manage and regulate emotions", affects Teaching Efficacy. Their hypotheses are tested on sample of 634 Portuguese teachers and their findings show a positive correlation between their EIAs and efficacy. Moreover, their study indicates that furthered teacher education was positively associated with higher EIAs. Contrastingly, in their findings, teachers with greater experience (in terms of length of serving) scored lower in EIAs, which on my viewing, could be an indication of burnout.

Additionally, in a sample of Italian teachers, Fabio and Palazzeschi (2008) explore EI with regard to self-efficacy. The main notions explored are interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and EI with male identifying participants scoring higher in intrapersonal skills and female identifying participants in interpersonal. They note an observation in differentiation regarding the participants' age as well. Although they correlate perceived self-efficacy to intrapersonal skills, they underline the need for further research.

In accordance, in a sample of teachers based in Hong Kong Chan (2008) also examines the influence of emotional intelligence in their perceived efficacy, placing however a higher focus on emotional regulation. On positive use and emotional assessment, teachers ranked particularly high, followed by empathic sensitivity and positive regulation. Positive regulation emerged as the positive determinant in predicting general self-efficacy using the four elements of perceived emotional intelligence as indicators of self-efficacy perceptions, while empathic sensitivity arose as the positive determinant in estimating self-efficacy to benefit others. Connotations of the results for investigating the associations for multiple groups of teachers across different elements of perceived emotional intelligence and different specific perceptions of self-efficacy. Intriguingly, Chan (2007) had also associated the teachers' emotional intelligence to their efficacy towards stress coping. In the latter study, it has been observed that intrapersonal emotional intelligence and interpersonal emotional intelligence reflect highly successful stress coping mechanisms. It has been observed that intrapersonal emotional intelligence and interpersonal emotional intelligence reflect highly successful intelligence. Although, there was slight indication that educators' self-efficacy could interfere with their intrapersonal emotional intelligence in the evaluation of active coping, — particularly for male subjects, teacher self-efficacy did not contribute independently to the prognostication of active coping. The underpinnings of the results are explored for preventive intervention measures to address teacher stress by teaching educators, ways to develop a higher degree of emotional literacy.

Emotional literacy in teaching is deemed as indispensable by Eminoğlu-Küçüktepe, Akbağ and Eminoğlu-Ozmercan (2017) that have also a published study on the correlation between the levels of Emotional Literacy (EL) and the teachers' self-efficacy. They examined a sample of 318 people (pre-service teachers). An interesting result in their study was that of gender result differentiation, where female identifying participants demonstrated significantly higher scores in both social competence and emotional literacy subscales. Female identifying participants also demonstrated higher scores regarding their self-efficacy in facing external factors creating possible ground for correlation both between EL levels and self-efficacy/ perceived skills and between gender and EL, which is in direct connection to Fabio and Palazzeschi's (2008) research findings mentioned earlier.

## **5. CONCLUSION :**

Based on the available empirical evidence from the above studies, it can be concluded that educator's EI has the potential to improve educator's teaching performance. Similarly, emotionally intelligent educators improve their self-efficacy,

which becomes a source of enhancing their teaching performance. Educators with high emotional intelligence can foster a constructive competition in the workplace, which can be helpful for other educators to compete with others to enhance their performance. This can motivate educators to do more to prove their worth. Educators' EI boosts teachers' self-efficacy and performance.

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