Teachers' emotional intelligence: The impact of training

Niva Dolev[1][a] **and Shosh Leshem**[b]

[a]*Kinneret Academic College, Israel*

[b]*Oranim Academic College, Israel*

A growing number of studies have suggested that teachers' personal competencies, and more specifically Emotional Intelligence (EI), are particularly important for teacher effectiveness. Recently, there has also been a growing recognition of the importance of social-emotional competencies to students' learning and academic achievement. However, there has been a neglect of emotions in the field of teaching, and little is known about the impact of training aimed at developing teachers' EI on their EI levels and their practice. The current study investigates the impact of a teacher- centered EI training on teachers' EI in Israel. The study followed a two-year EI training in one school, employing group workshops and personal coaching. The study used a mixed methodology, making use of pre-post EQ-i assessment and semi-structured interviews. The findings illustrate that the training programme was perceived by the participants to have enhanced their EI competencies, as defined by the Bar-On model. Most participants integrated these competencies into their personal, professional and group identities and modified their EI-related behaviours.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; teachers; professional development; EI training; SEL.

Introduction

Israeli schools, like those in much of the Western world, emphasize academic achievement (Tal, 2005; Bar-On, 2007 respectively). However, academic achievement in Israel have not risen (Lior, 2008; Yogev, 2008), disciplinary and behavioral problems are on the rise (Kfir & Ariav, 2008) and students often

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[1]
Corresponding author. Email address: nivadolev@hotmail.com

report experiencing some form of violence during their years at school (Benbenishti, Astor, & Marachi, 2003; Gottlieb, 2009). Such focus on academic output neglects important areas in education, such as social, affective and behavioral aspects which have been known to impact learning (Day, Sammons, Stobard, Kington, & Gu, 2007). In particular, it may not be addressing what Cohen (2006) views as one of the main challenges schools face today, namely helping students be healthy, happy and successful in meeting the challenges of their increasingly complex social environment. Indeed, Israeli parents and students testify that schools fail to prepare children for adult life in today's world (Amir, 2006; Shavit & Blank, 2011), while teachers voice a similar concern (Smith & Pniel, 2003).

There has been a growing recognition of the importance of social-emotional competencies in students' learning and academic success (Brackett, Alster, Wolfe, Katulak, & Fale, 2007, Shahinzadeh, Barkhordari , & Ahmadi, 2015), their well-being (Sánchez-Álvareza, Extremera, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2016), positive interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers (Brackett & Katulak, 2006; Cohen & Sandy, 2007; Wols, Scholte, & Qualter, 2015), and pro-social behaviours and lower involvement in disruptive, violent and addictive behaviours (Freedman & Jensen, 2008). Consequently, social emotional learning (SEL) programmes are increasingly being implemented, showing a range of positive effects on students' academic and social behaviours (Freedman & Jensen, 2008; Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). Yet, although most Israeli schools claim to employ a 'whole child' approach, programmes aimed at enhancing social-emotional competencies, life skills and general values typically comprise only a small part of school curricula.

Furthermore, even in countries where "a great deal of attention has spotlighted students' EI development, there has been little focus on teachers' own development" (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 496). More generally, until recently there has been a 'neglect of emotion in the field of teaching' (Hargreaves, 2001a, p. 1057). Thus, little is known about the impact of developing teachers' EI on their EI levels and related behaviours and on their practice, in particular in Israeli context. The current study investigates the impact of a teacher- centered EI training on teachers' EI. It also examines the impact of the training on teachers' EI related classroom behaviors, teachers' effectiveness, and the school as a whole.

Theoretical framework

The concept of Emotional intelligence (EI) has highlighted the interdependence between cognition and emotions and the importance of emotions and emotional processes to thinking and decision making. Salovey and Mayer (1990) described EI as "the ability to monitor one's own and other feelings and emotions, discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). They suggested EI to be comprised of the ability to identify, use, understand and regulate emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). In a model argued to be particularly suitable for teachers (Drew, 2006), Bar-On attended to the emotional and social behavior-related competencies underlying EI and defined EI as "a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands" (Bar-On, 2006, p. 3). He suggested EI to be comprised of five major areas, each consisting of a number of competencies, namely Intrapersonal (emotional self-awareness, self-regard, assertiveness, independence and

self-actualization); Interpersonal (empathy, social responsibility and interpersonal relations); Adaptability (reality testing, flexibility and problem solving); Stress management (stress tolerance and impulse control); and General mood (happiness and optimism) (Bar-On, 2006).

Using different EI frameworks and related measures, such as the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso (MSCEIT) ability measure (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) and the Bar-On EQ-i self report measure (Bar-On. 2006), research has linked EI to life and work effectiveness in diverse types of occupations and different levels of the organization (e.g., Jennings & Palmer, 2007; Siegling, 2014). A growing number of scholars have also suggested that teachers' EI competencies are particularly important for teacher effectiveness (Hassan et al., 2015; McCown, Jensen, & Freedman, 2007; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). It has been argued that emotionally intelligent teachers would demonstrate care, create an emotional climate that enhances the learning environment, and be more effective in achieving the academic goals they set for themselves (Cotezee & Jensen, 2007; Ramana, 2013). In a study involving 257 elementary school teachers and 157 secondary school teachers, teachers designated as most effective, had the highest EI as measured by the EQ-i (Stein & Book, 2000). Similarly, Haskett (2003), Hwang (2007) and Drew (2006) found significant links between various aspects of effective teaching and EI competencies.

Intra-personal EI competencies, and in particular emotional self-awareness, are key to successful teaching and handling of challenges faced by teachers (Stein & Book, 2000), as teaching is a highly emotional profession (Hargreaves, 2001b). Teachers' emotions affect their well-being (Nias, 1996); motivation (Morris & Casey, 2006), energy levels and creativity (Hargreaves, 2001a); job satisfaction and sense of self-efficacy (Pianta, 2006); social relationships, in particular with students (e.g., Perry & Ball, 2007; Palomera, Fernandez-Berrocal, & Brackett, 2008); and teaching and learning processes (Hargreaves, 2001b). These, in turn, impact upon students' feelings, classroom atmosphere; and the success and achievement of students (Hargreaves, 1998). It has been suggested that in order to remain effective while maintaining their well-being and work/life balance, in a profession in which the investment of emotional energy is inherent rather than optional, teachers need to understand and to manage successfully cognitive and emotional challenges (Day et al., 2007).

EI, and in particular emotional self-awareness allows teachers to recognise and understand their emotions in the classroom and to anticipate the effects of their emotional expressions on interactions with others (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). They also enable teachers to identify personal emotional difficulties and use reflective approach in negatively charged situations (Perry & Ball, 2007). They are then more able to regulate their emotions in interactions with students, to motive themselves (Stein & Book, 2000) and to react to students in an appropriate manner (Brackett et al., 2009). Emotion-management is particularly important as teachers' non-regulated behaviours were noted to contribute to the creation of an unsafe and unpredictable environment for students, which, in turn, could negatively affect students' emotions (Stein & Book, 2000).

Furthermore, emotional self-awareness enables teachers to understand the emotions of others (Goleman, 1995) and to express interest, care and empathy (Brackett et al., 2009). Indeed, a large body of knowledge has pointed to interpersonal competencies, in particular empathy and interpersonal relationships, as crucial to teachers (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Stronge, 2007). Empathy and care were noted to affect

teachers' ability to understand students' views and needs (Mugno & Rosenblitt, 2001), to develop and maintain caring, meaningful and supportive relationships with students (e.g., Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Nodding, 1992), and to teaching effectively (Boyd, 2005). Positive teacher-student relationships have been noted to be an important element of quality teaching (e.g., Birch & Ladd, 1998; Stronge, 2007), providing students with stable, safe, supportive and pro-social classroom atmosphere which enhances overall growth, well-being, positive behaviours, motivation and academic success (e.g., Brackett & Katulak, 2006; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Such an atmosphere also contributes to teachers' own well-being (Split, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011).

EI efforts in organizations and academic institutes demonstrated that EI can be developed in adults (e.g., Sala, 2002; Slaski & Cartwright, 2003; Boyatzis, 2009), and that such development efforts produce positive personal, professional, and organizational outcomes (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Bar-On, 2006). Based on these findings and the links between EI and effective teaching, it has been suggested that teachers and schools could benefit from developing teachers' EI (Haskett, 2003; Brackett et al., 2009).

Firstly, a growing number of scholars support the inclusion of teacher-targeted EI competence development as a crucial element of SEL programmes (e.g. Brackett et al., 2007; McCown et al., 2007; Palomera et al., 2008), arguing that such inclusion would support EI development in students (Weare & Gray, 2003; Brackett et al., 2009). In an SEL context it will enable teachers to "walk the talk" (Cohen & Sandy, 2007, p. 70), and to "practice what [they] preach" (Cohen, 1999, p. 18). In particular, teachers who develop their own EI competencies are better able to model desired EI behaviours, apply EI-based principles to everyday situations and facilitate interpersonal problem-solving and conflict resolution (e.g. Elias et al., 1997; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Furthermore, it has been suggested that EI development should become part of general professional development programmes for teachers (Palomera et al., 2008; Weare & Gray, 2003; Drew, 2006). Developing EI competencies could enable teachers to better understand what underlies their motivations and behaviours (Haskett, 2003), and has the potential to enhance less-developed competencies (Kaufhold & Johnson, 2005); contribute to greater understanding of students' emotions (AbiSamra Salem, 2010); improve teacher-student relationships (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009); and promote effective teaching (Cohen, 2001).

A small number of studies have explored the impact of EI trainings for teachers, mostly within an SEL program for students. Results typically indicated positive impacts, among them increased recognition of the importance of EI to schools (Maree & Mokhuane, 2007); increased use of emotional information, both own emotions and those of students, in lesson plans and in the classroom (Brackett & Katulak, 2006); enhancing teachers' sensitivity to students' emotions in different situations (Brackett et al., 2007); increasing their ability to respond constructively to students' social-emotional needs (Brackett et al., 2009); and acquiring SEL strategies (Fer, 2004). However, Boyd (2005) and Corcoran and Tormey (2010) failed to find significant change in teachers' own EI levels, attributing the results to the insufficient length of training or to the fact that it took place with teaching students rather than active teachers.

Nevertheless, EI development efforts among teachers and studies examining such trainings remain

scarce (Corcoran & Tormey, 2010; Fer, 2004). It has been argued that "little attention has been given to the importance of adults being social-emotional learners themselves" (Cohen & Sandy, 2007, p. 71), and that teachers are rarely provided with opportunities to engage in the development of their own emotional competencies (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The current study aimed to explore whether a teacher-targeted EI training, conducted in a single, Israeli school setting, would enhance teachers' EI and bring about positive professional and organizational changes. For the purpose of this study EI was conceptualized as a set of individualized interrelated social and emotional competencies which are likely to impact upon teachers' work effectiveness and which can be developed.

Methodology

The study followed a 2 two year teacher-centered EI training which took place in one school. The training, which was a unique training in the country at the time, employed 12 group workshops and 10 personal coaching. The study employed a mixed methodology within a mainly qualitative framework, using pre-post EQ-i assessments and semi-structured interviews with all training participants.

Research Setting and Sample

Both the EI training and the study were set in a secondary school in northern Israel, which at the time of the study the school had 70 full-time teachers, and 600 middle and high school students. Students' population was diverse and included student from different ethnicities, economic status, academic abilities and living formations (urban and rural).

The participants of this study were all the training participants- twenty-one teachers: 4 males and 17 females, ages ranging from 33 to 64. All the teachers were experienced teachers and had worked at the school for at least 5 years. The majority of the participants were active teachers, and more than half were homeroom teachers, a position which involves the overall responsibility for the class beyond subject teaching. Many were in leadership roles - the school principal and his deputy, mid-management staff (department heads, coordinators), educational counselors, subject specialists, and the head secretary. All the participants completed the EQ-i both at the beginning and end of the training and 20 of the 21 training participants were interviewed.

The context for the study

The EI training was a school-based program aimed at developing teachers' social emotional competencies for their overall effectiveness. The training was led by an external team of experts and lasted two school years. It included a first group of teachers, with the aim of including all the teachers in cycles. Participation was voluntary and open to all, but teachers in leadership roles were approached first. The training included 12 workshops lasting from a few hours to a full day, in 3-4 weeks intervals, after school hours and on holidays, and 10 one hour sessions of personal coaching 2-3 weeks apart for each teacher. Personal coaching began after a number of workshops have already taken place, and held on teachers' free periods. Group workshops focused on EI's theoretical and empirical foundations and the various EI

competencies included in the Bar-On model of EI; EI relevance to education and ways in which EI can be developed, on personal exploration and development of EI in self and students. Among topics discussed were self-awareness, emotion regulation, proactive behavior, empathy, interpersonal relationships and communication, cultivating positive emotions, optimism, assertiveness and self-regard. Personal EI coaching focused on developing each teacher's EI competencies and achieving personal and professional goals. Personal EQ-i assessments at the beginning and end of the training were used as a research and developmental tool.

The study

Following the method commonly used in recent organizational EI studies (Bar-On, 2006), the pre-post EI assessments completed at the beginning and end of the training were used to examine the impact of the training. The Bar-On EQ-i and underlying model served as a framework and as an assessment and a development tool in the training. At the same time, the study aimed to gain a deep understanding of the impact of the EI training, which is considered a complex and personal development process (Cherniss, Goleman, Emmerling, Cowan, & Adler, 1998), and to capture the perceptions and experiences of participants regarding their EI development. Thus, the study employed a mainly interpretative approach and interviews with all training participants were conducted.

The combined use of EQ-i scores and interviews served to broaden the scope of the research and triangulate the findings. Indeed, Bar-On (2006) recommended the use of a wide variety of methods in studying EI. Furthermore, as pre-training personal EI profiles played an important part in the development of the participants' personal EI competencies, deep knowledge of the EQ-i results promoted deeper understanding of the participants' training experiences. Furthermore, results from post-training EQ-i assessments served as a device to prompt discussion of perceived changes and experiences in the course of the interviews, and hence an integrated look at these two sets of data appeared beneficial.

Research tools

The Bar-On EQ-i inventory: The EQ-i, a self-report measure of social-emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2007), is a product of 20 years of psychometric research and extensive use and considered the most widely used EI measure to date in both research and practice. It has a large normative basis with a large normative base and satisfactory validity and reliability with an overall average predictive validity coefficient of .59 (Bar-On, 2007). It has been suggested to be particularly suitable for teachers (Drew, 2006) and have been widely used in educational studies (Haskett, 2003).

The EQ-i contains 133 items in the form of short statements and employs a five-point Likert Scale with a textual response format ranging from 'very seldom or not true of me' (1) to 'very often true of me or true of me' (5). Sample items from the EQ-i include the following:

- I know how to keep calm in difficult situations (Stress Tolerance)
- I would stop and help a crying child find his or her parents, even if I had to be somewhere else at the same time (Empathy)

- It's difficult for me to change my opinions about things (Flexibility)
- I think that most things I do will turn out ok (Optimism)

The measure also includes four validity indicators: omission rate, inconsistency index, positive impression and negative impression, as well as a built-in correction factor which uses these impression scores to enhance the questionnaire's reliability (MHS, 2006). The questionnaire is suitable for individuals aged 16 and older. EQ-i raw data are processed by the publisher (MHS publications) and are automatically tabulated and converted into standard scores based on a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. Each set of data generates three types of EQ scores: a total score, 5 composite scale scores and 15 subscale scores, as well as validity indicators scores. The EQ-i was administered in its Hebrew version.

Semi-structured interviews: A single list of open-ended questions was used flexibly with all participants, allowing for a different order of answers and for new topics to emerge. Participants were asked whether and in which ways the training had impacted their EI and what effects it had on their behaviours and practice. They were also asked to predict the trend and magnitude of their post- EQ-i scores. They were then presented with their post-training scores and asked to comment on them. This allowed gaining a deeper understanding of the perceived impact of the training on the participants' EI.

Data analysis

EQ-i scores, coded and standardized by the EQ-i publisher (MHS) were analysed. Differences between pre- and post-training scores were used to determine EI shifts among individual participants. For group analysis, differences between pre- and post-training scores were examined with the non-parametric paired Wilcoxon Z test, reflecting the relatively small sample size and the non-normal distribution of the scores. The interview transcripts data were analysed using a thematic content analysis approach as described by Weber (1990), which increases accuracy and sensitivity in understanding and interpreting data (Boyatzis, 1998), and allows them to create rich descriptions by engaging in a step-by-step process of uncovering the dominant themes in the data (Patton, 1990).

Results

Pre-post EQ-i analysis

Pre-training scores: Prior to the training the mean total EI group score was slightly above the measure's standard mean value of 100 (101.57; SD=14.98), as were three of the five composite scales mean scores: Intra-Personal (103.05; SD=14.02), Interpersonal (106.57; SD=11.33), and General Mood (102.24; SD=14.00). The two remaining composite scale scores, Stress Management and Adaptability, were slightly below the standard value (99.43; SD=19.41 and 97.81; SD=14.68, respectively). Pre-training mean scores for nine of the 15 subscales were above standard, with the three highest values measured for Emotional Self-Awareness (M=112.00; SD=9.38), Empathy (M=108.95; SD=11.19), and Interpersonal Relationships (M=106.38; SD=11). Mean scores for Flexibility (M=97.57; SD=15.98), Impulse Control (M=96.62; SD=19.12), and Problem-Solving (M=95.95; SD=15.90) were the lowest.

Pre-post training scores: Analysis of post-training assessments indicated positive gains in mean total EI (from 101.57 versus 105.24; Gain=3.67), and in mean scores for all five composite scales, all of which were above-standard value at post training level. Highest pre-post training gains were noted in Stress Management (99.43 versus 103.81; Gain=4.38), and in Adaptability (97.81: 102.10; Gain=4.29), which were lowest at pre-training. The Interpersonal composite scale, highest at pre training level, featured the lowest post-training gain (106.57: 106.81; Gain=0.24). Furthermore, pre-post training mean score gains in 14 of the 15 subscales were found. Only Empathy, among the highest at pre-training, showed no gain. Twelve post-training mean subscale scores were above the standard score of 100, with Assertiveness, Independence and Flexibility shifting from below to above standard. The highest post-training mean scores were found for Stress Tolerance (M=108.10; SD=12.59), which also showed the largest gain (6.05), Emotional Self-Awareness, Empathy, and Interpersonal Relationships (which were the highest also at pre-test level). Large pre-post training gains were found also for Assertiveness (99.86 versus 105.24; Gain=5.38), and for reality testing (100.71 versus 105.95; Gain=5.24). On the other hand, Impulse Control (M=98.52; SD=17.12) and Problem-Solving (M=97.67; SD=11.63), among the lowest-score competencies at pre-test, both showed relatively small pre-post mean score increases (gains of 1.90 and 1.72, respectively).

Pre-post EQ-i changes in mean group scores were tested for significance using a non-parametric paired Wilcoxon Z test. Significant gains (*p<.05)* were found in two of the fifteen subscales: Assertiveness (Gain=5.38) and Stress Tolerance (Gain=6.05). Other above–noted increases in post-training mean scores, including increases in total EI and in the five EI composite scales, were found to be non-significant.

Individual pre-post scores: As EI development is an individual process, the examination of individual shifts was expected to provide further insights on the EQ-i results. While the group pre-training mean total EI score was above the standard value, the corresponding individual scores varied greatly, ranging from 56 to 124, with twelve participants scoring above the standard, and with five of these in the 'enhanced functioning zone' (above 114). Of the nine below-standard scores, two were in the 'area for enrichment' zone (below 86). Comparison of pre- and post-training individual total EI scores revealed a generally positive training impact in many participants. Fifteen participants improved their total EQ-i scores, with positive shifts ranging from 1 to 29 points. Gains were found among participants with both high and low pre-training EI scores. A majority of participants whose pre-training scores were below the group mean score showed large gains. Commensurate with previous findings (Bar-On, 2006; Lennick, 2007) participants with the lowest pre-training scores showed the largest gains. No gain or a small decrease in the total EI score was noted for six participants. Individual scores for subscale competencies revealed complex patterns. In each personal profile shifts of different magnitudes and over different competencies were noted. Furthermore, post-training gains in total EI were often accompanied by small losses over one or more competencies, and vice versa.

Correlations: Spearman correlations between age and pre-post training gains in both total EI and in the 15 subscales revealed non-significant links and a random pattern. Similarly, differences in pre-post training EQ-i gains between homeroom teachers (n=12) and other teachers or staff members (n=9), proved to be non-significant. Thus, age and pastoral role did not appear to moderate the effects of the training. Correlations with gender could not be tested due to the small number of males in the sample.

Qualitative findings

In view of the complex and individualised nature of EI development (Neale, Spencer-Arnell, & Wilson, 2009), which was also evident in the individual patterns revealed during data analysis, interviews were used to explore the perceived impact that the EI training programme had upon the participants' EI competencies, related behaviours, and their practice. Interview data revealed a much larger perceived shift in EI than that depicted in the pre-post EQ-i. A majority of participants were convinced that they had enhanced their overall EI levels, many of them to large extents, and that this enhancement had been accompanied by positive and notable shifts in specific EI competencies*: 'I think I had enhanced my EI, in fact I am sure I did (SE)*; *'I definitely improved my assertiveness' (FE)*. Participants also noted links between these shifts in EI competencies and change in related behaviours, both at school and outside.

While many described notable behavioural changes, several participants described latent changes that have not yet been manifested in behaviours or have not become part of them: *'I improved the competencies that I had worked on, but I still don't use them consistently' (RY)*. They typically explained that the training engaged them in a deep introspection, self-exploration and development process that required much time and effort. Two participants, on the other hand, described initial difficulty and reluctance in engaging in a personal development process and perceived little change in EI and related behaviours, although they indicated shifts related to their work. Furthermore, all of the participants viewed EI change as an on-going process, noted specific areas that had still not improved or require further improvement, and stressed the need to maintain and further improve enhancements that were achieved.

EI shifts: EI shifts that were credited to the training were highly individual in nature and extent and encompassed most EI competencies and a wide range of EI-related behaviours. A number of EI competences, however, were described as enhanced by the majority of the participants, the main ones being self-awareness, empathy and interpersonal relationships, which are often associated with effective teaching. Interestingly, these competencies were already high at pre EQ-i.

Firstly, all the participants reported enhancing awareness of EI and viewed it as one of the most important gain of the training. They described a growing awareness of their emotions and the thoughts that underlie them, and how they impact upon their behaviours, choices, relationships and effectiveness at work and outside it: *'[Now I'm aware of] those competencies that are good for me, that serve me well, and of those that don't... [I now know] how best to impact upon various aspects of my life' (BP)*. Pre-test EQ-i scores, presented individually and confidently to each participant in a feedback session, played a major role in enhancing awareness to EI competencies. Most of the participants found the EI profiles to both resonate with who they are, and to provide useful insights for understanding themselves, their impact upon students and upon a variety of interpersonal and professional challenges. It also contributed to engagement in EI development among a majority of the participants: '*Once you (sic) became aware of things...had understood things, you could start changing... (USH)*.

Participants further noted that the shifts in emotional self-awareness also enhanced their awareness to students' emotions and their EI competencies, driving changes in the way they view and interact with them.

They noted that they had become more attuned to emotional situations in the classroom and more often addressed them, which contributed to better class management and improved climate:

> I see it more often now…the role emotions play in almost every class situation… I now stop the lesson and together we discuss their feelings. I have come to realise that [negative emotions] interfere with learning… that I should acknowledge students' emotions, even at the expense of my original lesson plans (MT).

Many participants also spoke of a growing awareness of the nature of relationships with their students and of a general shift towards establishing more personal, closer and more meaningful relationships with their students through listening, asking questions and initiating informal encounters:

> I went through a tremendous journey … [I developed] the ability to understand their needs…to form closer and more open relationships with them' (MS). 'Students should leave the school knowing that they had been seen for who they are, as human beings…' (OY)… [I wanted] to get to know their world (MT).

At the same time, becoming aware of their over protective and overly tolerant approach to students, which was viewed prior to the training as expression of care and empathy, participants noted a change towards higher expectations and accountability, which they became to view as expressing care: 'They *[the students] didn't have to make an effort because they knew we would do their work for them' (LI)*. In this, the enhancement of emotional self-awareness, empathy and interpersonal relations represented a shift in perceptions of these competencies. Furthermore, all the participants described becoming aware of students' EI competencies, which helped them better understand students; what underlies their behaviours, learning and academic achievements. This helped them attend better to their needs, motivate them, and react more appropriately to a variety of students' behaviours and associated outcomes: '*EI competencies, they are highly important to students, [they impact upon their] learning... and even more so upon their lives!' (SE)*. It followed that the participants began to develop students' EI through informal interactions, using daily events as learning opportunities and EI terminology in all their interactions, and to voluntarily incorporate EI lessons and activities in their teaching:

> Quarrels, or negative remarks… I introduce EI to the children so they can learn from it' (MS); 'I started using a different language. Instead of saying 'stop complaining' I now refer to 'the circle of complaint'. It makes a difference…(VA); '[At the beginning of each lesson] I would ask the students to describe something happy that had happened to them that week, or something they were proud of… something which was related to their strengths' (MT); ' I brought exercise from our workshop and designed lessons around them (WN).

Beyond those changes, which were shared by the majority, the participants described individual EI shifts in a variety of competencies, at different levels, and in various related behaviours in class and outside. In particular, participants described shifts in competencies which they had targeted for development within the training and others, closely related to them. Competencies which were discussed by a relatively large number of participants included: self- regard, assertiveness, impulse-control, stress-tolerance, flexibility, happiness and self- actualization. In each of the EI competencies, participants described gaining insights on how those less developed competencies impacted them and how their enhancement affected their work.

Enhancing *Self-regard and Assertiveness*, often discussed simultaneously, were described in terms of becoming less self-doubting, defensive, reserved or withdrawn, or less pleasing and avoiding confrontations, acknowledging their strengths and accepting themselves more. *'I'm much more self-confident. I'm more likely to express my opinions in public' (OD).* Enhancing *impulse control* was described in terms of acting less impulsively, getting less angry and thus reacting more appropriately to students: *'I'm more in control now, I don't act rashly…I no longer shout at children in class, I stop to choose the right response' (SE).* This enabled these participants to maintain a more positive classroom atmosphere and to better manage their classes. Improved *stress tolerance* was described as more effective problem-solving, being less domineering and delegating more responsibilities, and to improved well-being *'…The stress made me feel sick and interfered with my performance… I would then not let anyone help and they felt left out and insignificant'(TD).* The enhancement of *flexibility* allowed participants to become less judgemental, less controlling in class, using time more flexibly, involving students in lessons more and stopping to react to emotional situations: *'I tended to be judgmental. I always knew what had to be done, what's right and what's wrong, and I didn't give them [the students] enough room [to form their own opinions]' (SE).* In particular, a number of participants spoke of identifying and challenging stereotypes regarding students, and becoming more tolerant towards cultural diversity. Enhanced *happiness* was described in terms of improving well-being and enjoyment of life which also radiated upon students. It was often linked to self-actualisation - identifying and pursuing personal and professional vision which was encouraged within the training. Those enhancements were linked to improving class atmosphere and relations: *'I had always loved them … But when you are happier and at peace with yourself these things are more likely to shine through and to affect others' (SIH).*

As noted before, some of the shifts were noted to be more latent than others, not being strongly manifested in behaviours or not yet becoming a habit. Furthermore, all the participants noted areas which required further development, and expressed willingness and interest to continue developing.

Reactions to post-training EQ-i scores: When asked to predict the pre-post training shifts in the second part of the interview, a large number of participants predicted positive changes in both total EI and specific competencies, reflecting their belief that the training had a significant impact upon their behaviour: *'I think my [EQ-i] scores had improved…in all parameters…because I had changed' (VA).* Some predicted small shifts or no shifts, arguing that they have enhanced their EI but that their behavioural manifestation is not yet strong and consistent. The two participants who were not engaged in EI did not expect a measured shift, but described an impact on their work and relations with students. When presented with their post-test results, it appeared that a majority of participants had intuited the pattern and general magnitude of the total EI shifts and of shifts in specific competencies, and these were broadly in line with many participants' descriptions of their EI development at the first part of the interview. In particular, participants were able to predict shifts in competencies they have targeted for development. When presented shifts were lower than expected, participants typically noted that they were convinced that their EI had improved and that it will become evident in the future. Furthermore, the participants' commitment to future EI development efforts was not affected by their EQ-i results. Interestingly, while professing to be highly aware of their post-training emotional development, the participants were eager to see their post-test results and were glad to be presented

Special Issue Volume 8, Number 1, April 2016   pp   85

with enhancements, thus demonstrating the importance they attributed to their EI development. *'I'm glad that the main improvements were in self-regard and reality testing, the competencies which I had worked on the most' (OD).*

Impact beyond the individual level: Beyond personal shifts, participants noted that the training programme, and in particular the above-described EI shifts and related behavioural changes, had an impact upon the entire team of participants and the school as a whole.

Team: Many participants found the training to have impacted upon them as a team, and viewed it as an important outcome of the training: *'The staff room is different [now], the atmosphere is different' (GY).* Among the main team impacts they described were an atmosphere of openness and self-disclosure, closer relationships and new and improved communications between participants, increased collaboration and cooperation and the creation of a new and shared EI language*:'[There is] a sense of partnership. We work as a team' (RY).* These changes also served as the base for school changes.

School change: In an outcome which was viewed as equally important, participants noted that the training brought school level changes, related to EI. Adopting the view that developing students' social emotional competencies should be part of school' mission, the participants initiated, designed and executed efforts to include EI in the school curriculum. School efforts included instituting formal weekly EI lessons, taught by all but one of the participating homeroom teachers in their respective classes, and a school-wide initiative for school change, referred to by the participants as *'the pilot programme'*, which included providing EI lessons and a set of personal coaching sessions for students as a pilot in one grade level. The participants also began designing a 'personal excellence' program aimed at increasing academic achievement through enhancing EI, accountability and goal setting.

Sustainability effort: the participants took responsibility over continued EI development for their group and other teachers at the end of the formal training, and kept studying and developing EI as a group. Furthermore, the school launched a training programme to a second cohort of 26 teachers.

Discussion

The majority of the participants in the study conveyed a strong belief that the training programme had improved their EI competencies and related behaviours, and that these shifts had a positive impact upon their practice. They also noted that the EI training had affected their view of their students and of their role as teachers, as well as impacted their performance as a team and upon the school as a whole. The findings are supported by the Pre-post EQ-i positive trend and individuals gains for many participants. The perceived shifts in EI found in this study suggest that teachers' EI competencies can be developed through training and lend further support to previous claims that EI competencies in adults can be actively developed through training (Boyatzis, 2007; Goleman, 1995; Neale et al., 2009). Furthermore, the participants associated shifts in specific EI competencies with changes in EI-related behaviours, many of which had been previously found to contribute to effective teaching (e.g., Stein & Book, 2000). For example, enhanced self-awareness, linked to effective teaching (Brackett & Katulak, 2006; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), enabled the participants to identify and understand self-behaviours and EI competencies and engage in EI development as well as to

better understand students and form closer relationships with them. Similarly, many authors linked teachers' ability to demonstrate interest, care and empathy and form positive relations to effective teaching (e.g., Brackett et al., 2009; Nodding, 1992), making the present finding particularly important for students, teachers and schools.

Alongside the changes which are at the heart of teaching and were shared by many, during the training, participants were encouraged to focus on developing personal competencies identified by them as in need for development. It has been noted that effective EI trainings need to focus on personal development (Neale et al., 2009). In particular, the negative impact of low levels of those competencies and the benefits of their enhancement has been demonstrated (Stein & Book, 2000). These individual changes are particularly important in view of the inherent difficulty in identifying and changing behaviours in oneself (Argyris, 2000), and the effort involved in such changes (Cherniss et al., 1998).

Beyond individual changes, the training programme under study had a positive impact upon the group of participants as a team. This impact marks an important outcome of the training, as teachers' collaboration is important to their success and well-being. Cavins (2005) indeed noted that high EI is linked to the ability to form strong connections among co-workers, while Fullan (2002, p. 7) argued that "the single factor common to successful change is that relationships improve". This echoes Wenger's theory of 'communities of practice' which focuses on learning as social participation (Wenger, 1998).

The voluntary incorporation of informal and formal SEL efforts as a result of the training suggests that teachers' EI development can extend beyond individual teachers to students and the school. This finding, unique to this study, is of significant importance given the increased interest in developing students' EI (McCown et al., 2007), and the inherent difficulties motivating teachers to be fully engaged in EI efforts (Goleman, 1995), and more generally in change processes (Anderson, 2004; Haynes, 2007). The direct and indirect efforts to develop SEL in students demonstrate the participants' high motivation, their commitment to EI and to its implementation, and their sense of ownership over EI implementation efforts. It also reflected a shift in their view of their own role as teachers, one towards proactively equipping students with social-emotional competencies for present and future success.

However, in contrast to the EI shifts reported in the interviews, the pre-post EQ-i analysis revealed a more modest impact of the training. The significant increases in stress tolerance and assertiveness found in this study are of importance in themselves, as both competencies have been noted to contribute to effective teaching (e.g., Bar-Lev, 2006). Furthermore, in view of the high levels of stress commonly associated with teaching, equipping teachers with stress-coping skills has been deemed highly desirable (Palomera et al., 2008). However, the lack of significant quantitative group shifts in other EI competencies and in total EI was somewhat surprising given the length and intensity of the training and the participants' testimonials in the interviews. It also stands in contrast to previous studies in commercial and higher education settings which showed significant EI gains, including increases in EQ-i scores, following EI training programmes (Boyatzis, 2007; Lennick, 2007; Slaski & Cartwright, 2003).

Two statistical factors could account for this apparent disagreement, namely the relatively small sample size and the participants' relatively high pre-training EI scores (101.57), which may suggest a ceiling

effect. However, beyond statistics, the smaller-than-expected shifts between pre- and post- training group EQ-i scores could be attributed to several, often intertwined, mechanisms which emerged from the qualitative data. Firstly, the non-significant findings can be attributed to the individual nature of the EI development. Highly individualized processes, although highly recommended (Boyatzis, 2007), may not be easily captured through group-level changes (Cherniss & Adler, 2000). Sala (2002) claimed that changes in targeted (and often underdeveloped) competencies provide an important criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of EI training programmes. Furthermore, the interviews revealed a process of EI competency development which came to manifest itself in behaviours only with the aid of time and practice, and which for some required more time than for others. Changes that had not yet been manifested in large, or more permanent, behavioral changes were less likely to be captured by the EQ-i. Additionally, shifts in pedagogic views and in the perceptions of students, changes in class practice, teams or entire organizations, are also less likely to be captured by the EQ-, although of much importance to schools.

The relatively modest shifts can be also related to the nature of the teaching profession. Indeed, other studies of teachers' EI training revealed no, or only modest post-training measured change (Boyd, 2005; Corcoran & Tormey, 2010). Teaching is a reflective practice (Schön, 1983), a relatively slow process, and it is possible that teachers' engagement in self-exploration and enhancing self-awareness is higher than in other professions. Furthermore, teachers are concerned with the development of others (Drew, 2006) and indeed the participants became engaged in promoting EI to their student parallel to their own EI development. Thus, EI development in teachers may require more time and effort than similar processes in other professions and for significant positive shifts in EQ-i to occur. Thus, in agreement with Fer (2004, p. 564), the experiences and perspectives of the teachers which participated in the study were found to be "a crucial source in providing an adequate evaluation of an EQ program".

It is important to note that the present findings are limited to the specific case under study. Furthermore, the findings rely to a large extent on participants' testimonies and thus mostly reflect perceptions rather than objective measurements. While these limits and some others, suggest some caution, the study attends to a gap which exists in the literature regarding teachers' EI trainings, and the overall positive impact of the training programme under study suggests the potential benefits of such trainings. Others may further explore EI training to enable a better understanding of such training and promote the development of teachers' EI.

The participants believed that the training programme under study enhanced their EI competencies, as defined by the Bar-On model, and they were able to integrate these competencies into their personal, professional and team identities and to modify their EI-related behaviours. EI was embraced by all participants, was incorporated into their professional practice and was adopted as part of the school ethos. At least some of the shifts were described as sustainable (ones that *'cannot be reversed' (USH)),* and thus independent of future changes in school agendas or priorities. In what could be viewed as the culmination of this process, a school SEL programme had been voluntarily designed and implemented by the participants. Furthermore, the participants declared the concept worthy of being at the centre of professional development training programmes for teachers and many recommended it to be an integral part of CPD efforts. The

significance of this outcome is further highlighted by recent studies that noted the importance of developing students' social-emotional learning (e.g. Haynes, 2007; McCown et al., 2007) and by suggestions on the role of teachers in this development (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

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