

Emotional Education: A Selective Literature Review and an Emerging Model

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Abstract

This paper presents the concept of emotional education (EE) as one of the major challenges to the field of formal education. We posit that the main confusion about and lack of promotion of EE in most formal education settings stems from the lack of a coherent, consistent model that allows the asking of questions and that applies the concept in research and practice.

We review the literature on EE and present new perspectives from which a new developmental model emerges, one that may help propel both research and educational practice in various settings.

Keywords

Emotions; Education; Emotions and learning; Teaching

1. Introduction

Emotional education (EE) is usually referred to as part of the social-emotional learning (SEL) framework (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2016). This relatively new yet prolific field of study and practice is based on the assumption that effective learning and development occur beyond the relatively narrow domain of academic skills and declarative knowledge, which are traditionally the focus of the education system. It is often suggested that the goals of education in our time go beyond transferring knowledge, to preparing young persons to become well-adapted individuals in a world that is more diverse, dynamic, and challenging than ever (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014). One approach that takes a holistic view of growing and developing effective members of future societies who are also well balanced and well adapted is that of SEL (or social and emotional education [SEE], depending on who you ask).

SEL/SEE emphasizes the role of emotions and interpersonal relationships in our daily life as integral to everything we do: it assumes that almost any task to be performed, be it an academic assignment, or a job-related goal attainment, let alone family and community-related activities, requires an effective use of emotional and social resources (Diekstra & Gravesteyn, 2008). Practitioners in this gradually burgeoning field see this framework as encouraging the development and honing of skills related to self-management (self-awareness and self-regulation), social responsibility and ethics, and interpersonal relationships (social awareness and social skills) (CASEL, 2017; Weissberg et al., 2016).

Blaming its relative popularity in recent years, some authors claim that the field is growing and developing with somewhat loose definitions of what SEL is and what it isn't, and with too little evidence to support the validity and feasibility of the concepts and tools that it embraces. Critics of this framework claim that SEL is basically a fad, representing veteran concepts such as self-awareness and self-regulation in a seemingly new guise, adding nothing new to our knowledge or practice. Others blame inconsistent definitions and incoherent measures for stalling empirical support (or refutation) of the model (e.g., Gorman, 2016).

This paper, then, offers a clear working definition of EE, reviews the seminal evidence surrounding it, and offers a model to guide future research and practice in this arena.

2. Method and Data Organization

We used a selective literature review technique (University of Alabama Libraries, 2018) to sample from the available body of knowledge on the subject to describe the main components associated with the emotional learning component of the literature on SEL/SEE. In this method a literature review is built around an argument to show its feasibility given the existing body of knowledge, rather than exhausting the existing literature.

A literature search was conducted using two popular search engines (PsychInfo and Google Scholar). The search terms were defined as “emotional education” or “social emotional learning” or “social emotional education.” We limited the timeframe for the search to the years 2000 through 2018.

The preliminary searches yielded 1,710,000 results. When limited to empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals only in psychology and education, the count dropped to 383. The manuscripts' titles and abstracts were screened and included in the review only if they included clear and direct reference to concepts associated with emotional aspects of learning, which left us with 38 items including literature reviews and empirical studies.

These items served as the basis for the selective review presented herein.

3. What Is Emotional Education? Toward a Working Definition of an Elusive Term

While the literature on SEL/SEE is quite mature and in general agreement on the five aspects of social

and emotional abilities and skills at the core of any SEL curriculum (CASEL, 2017), many of the components are often used interchangeably when it comes to differentiating between the social and emotional aspects of skills and behaviors. Although this blunder may not be crucial for practice purposes (most research in this field focuses on validating intervention programs), it requires clarification and disambiguation to allow further theoretical definition and development. So what is EE?

Based on existing definitions, EE may be viewed as the process by which children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions, and regulate emotion and behavior (O’Conner, De Feyter, Carr, Luo, & Romm, 2017). Its final aim is to give learners the competencies that are considered the basic building blocks of effective adaptation and function in everyday life (Diekstra & Gravesteyn, 2008). Because emotional reactions are considered to be the most rudimentary and powerful responses, often guiding or misguiding human behavior and function, it is worth looking at what emotional competencies typically consist of.

Emotional competencies can be generally defined as an amalgam of potentials that allow individuals to effectively cope with emotional experiences (Lopes & Salovey, 2004). More specifically, these competencies are often mentioned in the literature as related to individuals (a) identifying and being aware of their own and others’ emotions; (b) understanding emotional experiences, their causes, and possible consequences; (c) regulating emotion so as to adapt effectively to varying situations; and, in some sources, (d) expressing emotions effectively, which is most commonly associated with empathy and assertiveness (Groves, 2005; Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013).

Some authors suggested that the main function underlying most emotional competencies is effective regulation of emotion (Gross, 2014). Emotion regulation is a psychological process or function by which individuals manage and modulate their emotional reactions. Effective regulation requires acuity of insight into one’s and others’ feelings and emotions, and allows channeling reactions into productive, goal-oriented behaviors (Graz & Roemer, 2004). Emotion regulation has long been associated with adaptive behavior across the lifespan, long-term performance in various tasks, and well-being (Gross & John, 2003; Mischel et al., 2010). Since the 1970s, studies have shown that children as well as adults who can manage and regulate their emotional responses adapt better, function and perform better, and are at lower risk of psycho-social pathologies and challenges than others (Mischel et al., 2010). It therefore makes perfect sense that emotion regulation is a competency located at the very heart of EE.

3.1. *On the nature of emotional education*

If EE is predominantly about emotion regulation, what does this mean for its nature, and how it can be taught and learned? This of course raises a question: How do we “learn” emotions and emotion regulation throughout life?

The literature on emotional development and emotional competency development is pretty consistent: emotion is first and foremost an innate reaction deeply etched into our so-called hardware or nervous system (e.g., O’Conner et al., 2017), but our emotional education does not end in genetics and physiological processes. Ample evidence suggests that emotional reactions are also modulated and learned in numerous ways, all sharing one common denominator: interpersonal interaction (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). Numerous theoreticians suggest that early interactions with primary caregivers shape our ability to manage emotions, especially frustration and satisfaction—perhaps the most basic emotional reactions—and later empathy and aggression (e.g., Seal, Naumann, Scott, & Royce-Davis, 2011). As we develop, our interactions grow more and more complex and intricate—offering both richer opportunities and challenges to our emotional competencies: learning through interactions with peers, through surrogate authority figures (teachers, spiritual and community

leaders), as well as through observing and vicariously experiencing others' interactions becomes an ongoing process that never ends but becomes more malleable to change and development up to our late teens (Boyatzis et al., 1996; Cefai & Cavioni, 2014; Seal et al., 2011). While studies maintain that emotional competencies can be learned later in life (as in college; see, for example, Boyatzis et al., 2002), it seems that it is hard to rewire learning (or the lack of it) that took place in earlier life periods. School may therefore be the optimal setting to integrate EE for ongoing effectiveness.

3.2. *School behavioral programming, school programs, and emotional education*

Learning, especially in the early years of development, wasn't always relegated to schools and formal institutions of education (Gray, 2017). In preindustrial cultures, most learning took place in small groups formed around prominent figures: a parent in the early years and, later, professionals or experts (be it the town's clergyman or the village's blacksmith). In medieval Europe and Japan, children were given to a master to serve under him or her, learning their profession and gaining skills through service. Even in medieval university settings, learning took place in tandem with the professors, through apprenticeship, tutelage, and mutual training (Gray, 2017). What we currently identify as schools and schooling are actually a rather late model, with roots in the late Middle Ages (15th century onward in Europe), and blooming in the wake of the industrial revolution. Basic education became a necessity for maintaining an industrial society in which skilled workers are essential, and national interests as well as financial ones drove the state to take over most educational organizations and to standardize learning goals, materials, and the criteria by which they are judged. These systems were created by a technocratic society to foster the "production line" mentality. Indeed, schools may be looked upon to this very day as a production line guided by such values as standardization, quantitative measurement of outcomes and quality control, and values such as discipline, acceptance of authority, and following instructions (Strauss, 2015). In this sense, and despite numerous novel and noble ideas about how education may and should be managed, schools have remained more or less the same as they were in the second half of the 19th century, referred to by some as "factory-model schools" (Leland & Kasten, 2002). In our context one might claim that traditional school programs counteract what we want to teach in EE, with their emphasis on technical skills (reading, writing, math—they call it core studies or STEM, depending on who you ask). Emphasis is purposefully given to academic literacy, an academic skill (National Research Council, 2011). Little, if any, attention is paid in formal programs of study to emotional skills, interpersonal communication skills in academic and nonacademic settings, conflict management, or any other emotional skills. Thus, a critical window of opportunity (development-wise) might be missed, left unattended.

Moreover, not only does the dominant content of our teaching and learning programs stand in our way as we explore the possibilities for EE, and not only does the standardized structure of schools seem to undermine the very idea of natural communication between learners and learning facilitators, but the mere ideas of "classes," "assignments," located at the epicenter of our school system seem to go against the way emotional and social skills are acquired. Studies examining the development and acquisition of emotional skills and abilities as well as social skills and abilities emphasize early-life learning patterns: not those typical of school settings but rather learning by experience, feedback on performance, and following role-figures (e.g., Bandura & Walters, 1977; Durlak et al., 2011). In other words, to allow for effective emotional learning to take place in the schools, one needs to change the structure of the vast majority of schools in the western world to be able to implement what we call "an island of training rather than learning" within the existing system. Such a module will need to be geared toward learning through acting, experimenting, and experiencing within safe and controlled social and emotional environments, following in the footsteps of an appreciated role-figure / trainer / life coach / teacher, something that goes against most practical considerations in most schools—but more on that later.

3.3. *Emotions and development: Social development, development of self, and the creation of life-long learners*

The development perspective can clarify a number of controversies related to emotion, emotion learning (EL), and SEL. What is emotion, and how is it different from feelings and from physiological reactions, whether conscious or not? A reductionistic position would be that emotions are such feelings as are rooted in our body; any awareness is simply icing on the cake. There are three good sources of evidence for that stance. First, newborns begin with such physiological reactions, which can also be called feelings or emotions. Vygotsky (1934/2008) described this early physiological beginning of development nearly a century ago: “The nature of development itself changes, from biological to sociohistorical” (p. 117). Emotion development is part of that change. Thus, at the early end of development, emotion is essentially physiological but does not stay there, with the possible exception of two situations—phobia and automatic thinking. In phobia, a person may have a physiological reaction contrary to their thinking. For example, a person’s fear of heights increases their heartrate even when they see clearly that there is probably no chance of falling. The other situation is when the physiological leads the mind. Schachter and Singer’s (1962) classic experiment, together with Kahneman’s (2013) “fast thinking,” shows that the awareness dimension of emotion mainly explains the existing feeling, possibly rooted in some biological stimulation, not far from simply being the icing on the cake.

Humans, beyond the infant stage, have a choice to switch to Kahneman’s “slow thinking,” beginning with awareness. The Mayer and Salovey (1993) camp posits awareness or “perceiving emotion” at the beginning of the four branches (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011, p. 92). These are (a) perceiving emotion; (b) using emotions in decision-making processes; (c) understanding complex emotions, their origins and causes; and (d) managing and regulating emotions. Within the first branch, people have three ability levels, from lowest to highest:

- In oneself: to identify emotions in one’s own physical states and thoughts,
- Outside of oneself: to identify emotions in other people,
- To express one’s emotions appropriately (effectively and in a manner congruent with situational demands and restraints). (Brackett et al., 2011, p. 91)

From a developmental perspective, the three levels of abilities in this first branch are not supported. Developmentally, babies cue into others’ emotions first (second level) before they react with their own (first level). For example, if parents are angry, babies reflect signs of anger in themselves; only later do they show the complement emotion to that anger, namely fear in the face of anger. Such evidence in babies may not show the levels in adults, but it suggests that the three levels may not be as hierarchical as Salovey and colleagues posited.

Brackett et al. (2011) methodically listed three hierarchical levels for all four branches (Table 1).

Table 1

Mayer and Salovey et al.’s four branches, each with three hierarchical levels, of emotional intelligence

Highest	Express E appropriately	Produce E states to foster different thinking styles	Recognize how one E leads to another E	Monitor and reflect on E in self or others
Middle	Identify E in others	Generate E or mood to aid judgment	Interpret meanings and origins of E, including blends	Engage or detach from E, depending on utility
Lowest	Identify E in self	Direct attention to prioritize thinking	Compare and contrast E with labels	Attend to both pleasant and unpleasant feelings
BRANCH	Perceiving E→	Using E→	Understand E→	Manage E

Note. *E* = emotions. Summary from M. A. Brackett, S. E. Rivers, and P. Salovey, 2011, "Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Personal, Social, Academic, and Workplace Success," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5, 88-103, pp. 91-92.

Goleman (2001), the popularizer of the EI concept, proposed a simple 2×2 matrix, without the developmental context (Table 2).

Table 2

Goleman's (2001) emotional abilities.

	Self	Other
Recognize	Self-awareness	Social awareness
Regulate	Self-management	Relationship management

Goleman (2001) has the advantage of simplicity. Mayer and Salovey et al. elaborated EI into a complex 3×4 matrix with hierarchies among the four branches and among the three levels within each branch (Table 1). Yet the hierarchy does not have clear empirical support, and the elaboration is confusing in numerous ways. For example, why is Expressing Emotion the highest level of Identifying Emotion, and not of Using Emotion? Furthermore, do we need to finish all three levels of Perceiving Emotions before going to the first level of the next branch, Using Emotion, or not? If not, how do the different levels of the four branches fit together?

There are other conceptualizations of emotion and EI, such as Petrides-Furnham's "sampling domains" (Petrides, Furnham, & Mavroveli, 2007), which has over a dozen traits, some of which overlap with Mayer and Salovey, some with Goleman, and there are others such as empathy, happiness, and optimism. This wider net probably decreases the discriminant validity of emotion and EI while omitting other emotions that may be essential, such as gratitude. What is essential depends on a theoretical model, which we suggest next.

3.4. Emotional intelligence, interpersonal interaction, and learning: An emerging model

Our model is influenced by Erik Erikson and Jane Loevinger. Both authored theories and models that have long transcended the boundaries of science and professional practice and have embedded themselves in our cultural perceptions and social structures.

Many textbooks at various levels and in various fields present Erikson's eight stages of development, but we have not seen a single text that presents it correctly, the way that Erikson always presents it in all of his books, starting from the classic *Childhood and Society* (1950).

In one of his latest works, Erikson (1984) lamented this misunderstanding from the professionals in the field:

I must "once more" briefly present in order to clarify the epigenetic connection between old age and infancy. However, I employ such repetitiousness with ever fewer apologies, because we have learned over the years how difficult it is even for highly trained individuals to keep in mind the logic of a contextual conceptualization of developmental matters. (p. 157).

The misunderstanding is simple, stark, and substantial, and it has implications for our conceptualization of emotional learning. Textbooks present his theory in eight sequential stages. Erikson always presents them as a matrix of 8×8 , with 64 boxes to fill in. Table 3 amalgamates the boxes from various books by Erikson.

Table 3
A two-dimensional model of developmental stages by Erikson

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
FAITH	Will is weakened	Initiative & purpose: uncertain	Meaningful work is rare	Identity restricted to 'has been'; but free existential	Holds generations together	Grand-parenting	Integrity v. despair	8
						Generativity v. stagnation		7
					Intimacy v. isolation			6
Temporal perspective v. time confusion	Self-certainty v. self-consciousness	Role experimentation v. role fixation	Apprenticeship v. work paralysis	Identity vs. confusion	Sexual polarization v. bisexual confusion	Leader- and followship v. authority confusion	Ideological commitment v. confusion of values	5
			Industry v. inferiority	Task identification v. sense of futility				4
		Initiative v. guilt		Anticipation of roles v. role inhibition				3
Experience of hope	Autonomy v. shame-doubt			Will to be oneself v. self-doubt				2
Trust v. mistrust	Anticipating crisis of will			Mutual recognition v. autistic isolation			Keep together	1

In this matrix, Integrity does not wait until old age. Beginning with birth and the first stage, Integrity helps the child to “keep together,” to figure out themselves as a unity separated from others in the world. At the fifth stage, Integrity helps us to build a coherent ideology. At the last stage, Integrity helps us makes sense of our whole life—mistakes included. Erikson leaves many boxes empty and invites us to fill them in.

The first issue or “crisis,” as Erikson calls it, continues to develop all the way to the end of life, and so do the other seven crises. Every issue develops alongside all others in a coherent way.

Learning from Erikson’s epigenetic scheme of human development, we propose the epigenetic scheme of emotional learning shown in Table 4. The scheme echoes the “recognize” and “regulate” distinction by Goleman but places each in an expanded spectrum. On the other hand, it combines “self” and “others” because they are quite intertwined.

Table 4
Epigenetic development of emotion

	Be aware of & integrate E
Express & manage E	

Note. E = emotions.

This model is substantially different from the hierarchy of Salovey and colleagues, which would have been a unidimensional Express & manage → Be aware of & integrate. In the epigenetic conception, there are always two dimensions at all times, although at different levels. At the lower levels of development, the emphases are more on expression and being aware of emotions. At the higher levels, people manage and integrate emotions better. Managing is related to both “use” and “manage” by Salovey et al. Integrating is related to both “perceiving” and “understanding” by Salovey et al.

Thus, for example, infants already express and regulate their emotions, but not in the way that an old sage would. Infants may not achieve self-awareness of or reflection on or integration of their emotions, but there is already a preliminary awareness in them.

Next, we borrow theory and data from Loevinger's research on ego development (Loevinger, 1976; Hy & Loevinger, 1996) to lay out the development of these two dimensions through various stages of development.

Table 5

Emotional development through ego stages

Ego stages	Express & manage E	Be aware of & integrate E
I9. Integrity	Practice familiar E habits congruent with the chosen self	authenticity; Emotional devotion: honing one's integrated self, including past failures
I8. Autonomous	Discern values among conflicting E; train chosen E habits, such as gratitude, to foster the chosen self	Diverse E in self and among people have their values; concern for diverse other people
I7. Individualistic	Tolerate conflicting E toward a rich inner self	E are complex and mysterious, both positive and negative; respect for others
I6. Conscientious	Control E to fuel achievement	E can enhance or deter one's goals
I5. Self-aware	Recognize the complexity of E: not all fit nicely into a social system	E may differ from social prescription in valid way
I4. Conformist	Express socially-approved E	E tends to be globally positive
I3. Self-protective	Physical; control behavior to get out of trouble; not controlling E	Realize that E can have negative consequences
I2. Impulsive	Follow impulsive drive, including sexual, crudely; dysphoric; lack of control	Consider impulsive E as true self; See life binarily as simply good or bad, and tends to be bad

Note. E = emotions. This table is adapted from Table 1.1 in L. X. Hy and J. Loevinger, 1996, *Measuring Ego Development*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum, p. 4.

Loevinger bases her theory on data, and because there are not enough data points at the higher stage to accurately show the complexity there, we borrow concepts from the late psychologist-philosopher Robert Solomon's *True to Our Feelings* (2008).

There are different types or shapes of changes through the stages. For example, in terms of positivity and negativity, the lowest stage (I2) tends to be globally negative, turning into globally positive at the I4 level; then, the higher stages combine both positive and negative. Thus, it is not a rectilinear change. At the same time, there is a rectilinear change from simplified and global emotions at the lower stages (I2 to I4) to complex combinations at higher stages. A more important linear dimension is the integration of meaning and value of emotion into the self at the higher stage.

3.5. *Emotions and learning outcomes*

Learning how to identify, integrate, and manage emotions is not only paramount for adaptation and effective coping in the intra- and interpersonal realms. Evidence associates emotional viability with academic outcomes in a very convincing manner. Beginning with early childhood, reports support a model associating emotional regulation and the ability to identify and understand emotions with language acquisition, comprehension, and a broad range of additional measures of academic performance (Graziano et al., 2007; Eisenberg et al., 2005). Evidence continues to support the emotion-regulation / emotional abilities / academic performance link in K-12 as well as academic learning settings (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; MacCann et al., 2011; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2011).

The mechanism by which the association is supported is somewhat debated: while some authors suggested a direct causal relationship between emotional acuity and regulation mechanisms and cognitive processes underlying academic learning tasks, others suggested a more complex model, summarized in Fig. 1 (Zysberg, 2016).

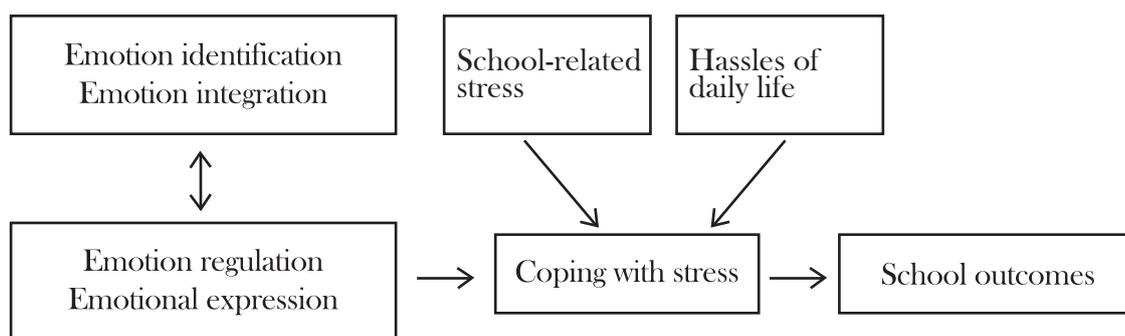


Fig. 1. A model associating emotional abilities and skills with academic achievement.

This amalgamated model suggests that as emotional abilities and skills develop, they allow more efficient coping with stress. Stress may be inherent in the process of learning (school-related tasks and demands; coping with additional stressors that “come with the territory” such as study habits, responding to feedback, collaborating, etc.). Additional stressors may stem from extracurricular factors such as family support and social and economic resources to support or undermine learning. The effective regulation of stress allows optimal performance—in this case, in the academic arena. This model fits perfectly with the existing literature associating stress with a broad range of outcomes from health to job performance (e.g., Cohen, 1980). What’s fascinating about this model is that evidence suggests that it is extremely robust throughout the lifespan—which may suggest that the dynamics presented in this model apply to the full range of developmental stages, at least from early childhood to adulthood.

While this model seems to be the one most frequently suggested and partially supported in the literature, more research is needed to test its relevance and validity, especially vis-à-vis competing models.

3.6. *Learning emotions: The smarts that counts*

The discussion so far serves as the necessary preamble to the learning of emotion for better functioning in the world and higher development of the self.

There are hundreds of SEL programs in the UK and the US, with the following guidelines quoted from Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2012):

Curricular materials need to target the whole person:

- “SEL skills should be taught in the context of school activities and integrated with the rest of the curriculum” (p. 167);
- “Programs should provide developmentally and culturally appropriate instruction” (p. 168);
- “Arrangements need to be made for training of teachers, administrators, and students” (p. 168); and
- “Systematic program evaluation should be conducted” (p. 168).

Both the guidelines and the basic skills are laudable; yet, from a developmental perspective they can conflict, or at least are not as effective as they can be. For example, “appreciating diversity” is now heavily emphasized in schools at all levels. Clearly diversity, with the underlying value of respecting every person, is nonnegotiable. At the same time, this skill is crucial at the I5 developmental level (Self-aware) and above. This is the wisdom of Erikson: whereas all eight aspects are operative all the time, some are more crucial than others. He uses the term “crisis” in his own way, which is easily misunderstood. The same concern applies to every skill. “Accurate self-perception” means vastly different things at various developmental levels. Therefore, when we implement the guideline of “developmentally appropriate instruction,” each of these skills and basic components needs to be packaged differently. When we add the guideline of “culturally appropriate instruction,” particularly in a diverse community, the skills become hugely, inescapably complex.

To handle this complexity, we can identify functions and domains that work across the various developmental levels and cultural settings (Fig. 2).

	SELF		OTHERS	
MANAGE				
		Decision making		
AWARE				

Fig. 2. A matrix representation of the domains of emotional education.

A developmental model needs to integrate the functions (awareness/management) with the domains (self/others) while representing the development axis using the models presented above (in this case, ego development). Fig. 3 is a schematic representation of such a model.

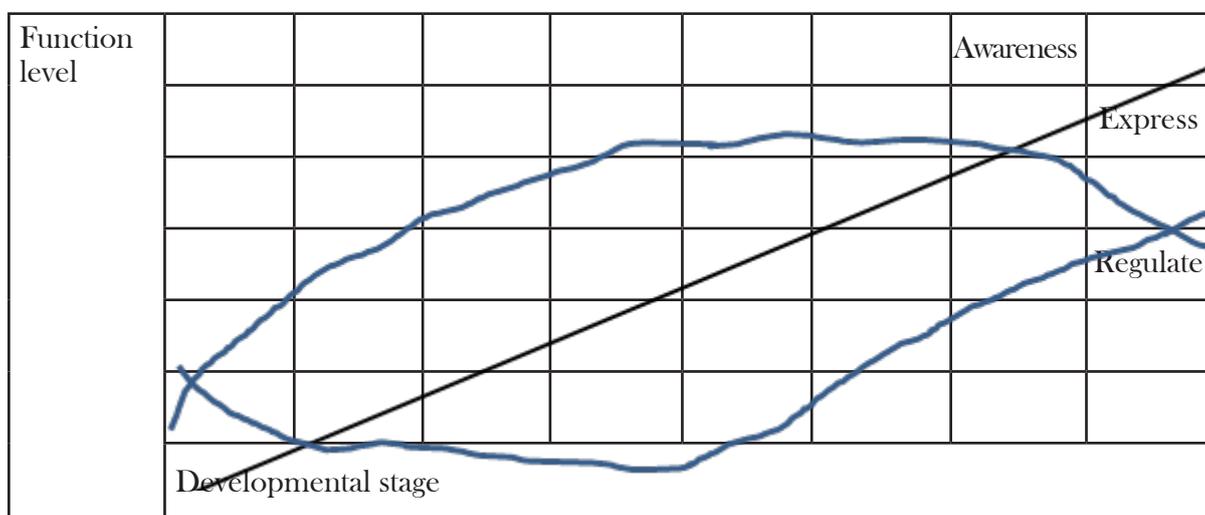


Fig. 3. A developmental model of emotional abilities.

While much SEL takes place along a single dimension, we offer a developmental perspective on the four components emerging from the literature as the core of emotional learning: identifying emotions (in self and others), integrating emotions in decision making and reasoning, regulating emotion, and effectively expressing emotion. We cross-tabulate these four elements with the stages of ego development as reviewed above.

The model sees a common trend of growth in emotional abilities throughout the lifespan, but this trend varies across the dimensions/abilities. Expressing emotion is already quite effective upon birth—leave it to a newborn to alert caretakers to his or her hunger or discomfort. This expression is moderated as it comes under increasingly effortful regulation, which begins at a much lower starting point and will develop dramatically only around adolescence (physiological maturation of the prefrontal cortex, and changes in perception). Over time, measured in years and decades, the effort becomes a habit, requiring less energy as it becomes more effective. Identification of emotion, perhaps the most rudimentary emotional skill, takes time to mature and typically begins with identification of emotion in the self, with identification of emotion in others maturing substantially later. All three components—expression, regulation, and awareness—gradually build up integration. At a low level of development, the main ingredient of that integration is the spontaneous and impulsive expression of emotion. At a middle level of development, effortful regulation is the focus, leading to achievement. At a high level, regulation requires less effort, and well-trained emotion can be both spontaneous and highly effective. Moreover, emotion can feed the central identity of the individual.

Age is necessary but not sufficient for development and brings different outcomes for different stages. For example, the Impulsive stage, characterized by spontaneous expression of impulsive emotion and little regulation, is adaptive for infants but maladaptive for teens.

Can a person regress in development? Probably, which makes the Integrated stage deceptive. A person

who has cultivated a keen and spontaneous gratefulness even in the midst of conflicts and other adversities can be considered highly developed and integrated. Another person, on the other hand, may have alcohol addiction as a habit, is also older, has less regulation and more spontaneous expression—sharing characteristics of an Integrated person—but has really regressed to a low, Impulsive level of development. One way to assess this by outcomes: the grateful person is effective; the addicted person is not.

The graph lines in Fig. 3 represent these varying trends as proposed by the model.

4. Educational Implications of the Proposed Model for Emotional Education

EE has yet to mature as a discipline or branch of education, and we are already suggesting a change in the way we view it. We propose that the SEL framework, although important and inviting, is too overarching, and thus may be somewhat difficult to realize and implement in school settings. Since the literature tends to see emotions and emotional reactions as basic, semiautomatic reactions preempting action, we too tend to give priority to emotional education as the basis on which self-regulation and social skills sit. If we accept this hypothesis, then it does make sense to approach EE first, using the emotion components of the SEL model as anchors and treating them differentially across the continuum of ego development (as emotion management falls into the realm of ego function). This is exactly what our model posits, suggesting a stacked set of vectors of increasing complexity within the four components as we approach older student audiences.

A few principles may be of added value for research and practice seeking to use the model as a basis:

1. The rate and onset of development varies across the dimensions of EE. For example, expression of emotion begins earlier than awareness and develops at a different rate as we age. The components need not develop rectilinearly. Expression and regulation peak at opposite times. Developmentalists call these “milestones” (Fig. 3).

2. The hierarchy of the components of EE crossed by developmental stages now has a different order: whereas in theory identification and integration serve as the basis for regulation and expression of emotion, in reality expression comes first, followed by incremental developments in awareness and regulation, and integration may reach maturity at a much older age.

This new order of things in a developmental perspective requires much more research before it can be established.

EE emerges from the literature as one of the core components of postmodern education. However, overpopularization of the concept might have undermined the consistency and reliability of its definition and operationalization. To address this gap in the literature, we began by crystallizing a working definition of the concept and proposing an evolving developmental model of EE, integrating ideas and concepts from the developmental perspective into the emerging EE model.

Should additional research support the added value of this model, it may be useful as a guide for future exploration and research as well as for teaching practices in a broad range of settings, in formal and informal education systems, preparing young people for a new, challenging world.

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