Emotional Intelligence and Student Behaviour, 1(2)

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Abstract

School performance league tables place pressure on teachers to meet explicit targets in terms of student achievement and behaviour. Experience has shown that external reinforcement models of behaviour management are inadequate because they take insufficient account of the individual's contextual framework and, by conditioning students to respond to the teacher's expectations, they may undermine students' ability to set and meet appropriate behavioural standards independently.

This article outlines some strategies, drawn from the work of Gibbs (1995), which have been used to develop students' social and emotional maturity and to contribute to a positive learning climate in the classroom.

The authors would welcome feedback from teachers in other countries who have tried this approach.

Introduction
Discussions on raising standards of students’ performance and school improvement frequently include references to reducing the incidence of "misbehaviour." There are numerous models of behaviour management, which aim to secure student behaviour conducive to learning or, in some cases, to bring about the behaviour which demonstrates that the teacher is firmly in control. They fall broadly into three categories, interventionist (Canter, 1976), interactionist (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1982; Balson, 1993) and non-interventionist (Gordon, 1991). In each category, the emphasis may be on corrective, supportive or preventive strategies, involving students at different times and to different degrees (Jordan, 1996). However, some models only involve students who conspicuously conform with or contravene rules, (thereby incurring rewards or "consequences") and it may be possible for some students to complete their school career virtually unnoticed by their teachers and therefore uninvolved in the social learning process.

External reinforcement models of learning and behaviour management have been criticised because:

- misbehaviour is not context-free and, whilst given behaviour may be unacceptable to adults, it is possible that the student, because of age, understanding or level of involvement, does not realise that it is inappropriate;
- teachers may contribute to student misbehaviour through inappropriate responses, which may escalate low-level disruptions into major issues (Murphy, 1986). Some behaviour management strategies might actually support poor teaching practices leading to misbehaviour by mitigating the worst effects of those practices (Stockport Education Psychology Service, 1993);
- these strategies may fail in the short term where students do not share the teacher’s link between "misbehaviour" and "consequence" (In this case, students may perceive an unpleasant "consequence" as random aggression and may respond aggressively or even violently.);
- in the longer term, "conditioning" students to respond to the teacher’s expectations and reliance on reward and punishment wipe out intrinsic motivation and may restrict the effectiveness of behaviourist models to the specific context (Hill, 1990) and undermine students’ ability to set standards and to assess their performance independently.

Misbehaviour and low academic achievement may result from students’ social and emotional difficulties, coupled with an inability to use socially skilful ways to gain teacher support (MacMullin, 1994). The more socially skilled the student, the more effective he or she is in helping to establish a framework of behaviour and the better he or she resolves any inconsistencies between behaviour and the agreed expectations.

Others stress the importance of teachers’ acknowledging and dealing positively with students’ emotions, because the physiology of the brain means that learning and strong emotions compete for space in the working memory (Goleman, 1996). In support, Gibbs (1996) argued that strong emotions of anger, love concern, hate, fear, excitement, sadness, or jealousy need to be addressed before students can effectively solve problems or reflect critically.
An individual’s ability to analyse and deal effectively with emotions and the resulting behaviour in relation to his or her goals, is one aspect of what Goleman (1996) defined as emotional intelligence. Another dimension concerns the individual’s relationships with others. Gardner (1993) described these dimensions as intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence, where intrapersonal intelligence ... is a capacity to form an accurate, veridical model of oneself and to be able to use that model to operate effectively in life. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work cooperatively with them (p. 9).

If we, as teachers, accept that emotional growth and social skilling are essential to enable students to analyse and adapt their behaviour according to different circumstances, we ensure that they are part of students’ educational experience, in terms of the classroom culture, curriculum, and our own behaviour.

**Strategies for Developing Students’ Emotional Intelligence**

Kohn (1996) stressed the importance of moving from compliance with teachers’ expectations to the development of a learning community. In *Tribes: New Ways of Learning and being Together*, Gibbs (1995) outlined a "democratic group process aimed at creating a positive environment that promotes human growth and learning" (p. 21). "Tribes" is the term she used both for the small groups within the classroom community and for the process, which addresses students’ emotional intelligence by engaging them in social skilling and, through structured reflection on the process, helping them to develop both social and metacognitive skills. The following strategies, grouped under the headings of classroom culture and curriculum, are drawn from Gibbs’s book.

**Classroom Culture**

The primary objective is to achieve a safe, inclusive environment because it is only within a supportive social context that students can develop interpersonal skills. A lack of skill or sensitivity on the part of the teacher and a school environment which is unreceptive, or even hostile, will inhibit students’ willingness to take the risk of making mistakes, which are essential for the development of skills and judgment which are transferable to other situations. The process, which is as important as the outcome, requires the "tribe" to respect the "tribe agreements," that is, to listen attentively, to express appreciation and avoid "put-downs," to have the right to pass (i.e. not to contribute on this occasion), and to exercise mutual respect.

a) *Awareness of self (intrapersonal) and others (interpersonal) and recognition that differences are "OK."

**That’s me/that’s us**

Ask students to stand up and respond "That’s me" to statements which apply to them, e.g. "How many people have moved in the past two years?" "Have green eyes?" or "Like broccoli?" Ask tribes to stand up and respond "That’s us" to statements which apply to the group, e.g. groups in
which there were no "put-downs" today, in which everyone participated, or which worked out
why the rainforest in the Amazon is threatened.

Reflection

- What did I find out about my tribe today?
- What is one more question I would like to add?
- Why was listening important?
- How did I feel about standing up?
- How could I tell that my tribe would stand up?

I used to be/we used to be

In tribes, students compare the following things about themselves today with things from the
past, e.g. physical appearance, favourite things to do, behaviour, hobbies, beliefs, fears, or
friends. Express these in a poem: "I was ...now I am ..." Share the poem with the tribe. Now
create a group poem "W e used to be .. but now we are..."

Reflection

- What did I learn about tribe members?
- In which ways have I changed?
- How well did I honour tribe agreements during this activity?
- How do I feel about tribe members now?
- How do I feel about how I have changed?
- What other changes do I want to make?

b) Creating a climate of support - to enable risk taking.

Community Circle

Sitting in a circle, students complete statements such as: "I feel happy when...," "Friends are ...," "Put-downs make me feel..." or "When I grow up I want to ...."

Reflection

- What is one new thing I learned?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to find something to say in a large group?
- How does sharing in this way help our class?
- How did I feel about sharing with the class community?

c) Creating a supportive culture, inviting appreciation.

Appreciating Others
Discuss statements of appreciation (e.g. "I like it when you...," "Thanks for...," or "I´m glad you..."). Ask students to write a positive statement about: self, family members, friends, or classmates. Share statements in small groups; record the common ideas. Suggest that students tell one of their statements to the person it was about.

Reflection

- Why did we learn to give statements of appreciation?
- What were three statements shared by my tribe?
- How do I feel when I receive a statement of appreciation from someone else?
- Why is it important to make statements of appreciation to friends, family and others?
- How can making statements of appreciation help a team work better?
- Which of the statements I made about others made me feel good?

Teachers can invite expressions of appreciation at the end of other classroom activities.

Curriculum

Emotional intelligence is best developed by involving students in doing, experiencing, and building on their existing knowledge. Thus, the curriculum must provide explicit opportunities to practice skills such as personal and group goal setting, decision making, problem solving, and resolving conflict. Students also need to learn to express their views and feelings and to develop their understandings by reflecting on the content, social, and personal aspects of the activities.

a) Involving students in setting and achieving social as well as academic expectations and targets, for individual and group activities.

Ideal Classroom

Ask students to think about how people would act/interact in an ideal classroom. In pairs, write down suggestions of "ideal" behaviours. Reflect on these overnight. On the next day, use the consensus-building procedure (see below) to select most important ideas. Invite students who wish to put these into practice during the next week/month/year to stand up and say "Me."
Discuss who will help remind others to respect the agreements.

Reflection

- What is the ideal classroom?
- What would we need to change to make our classroom ideal?
- What social skills would be needed
- Why is working in pairs a good idea?
- How can I make our classroom better?
- How can these rules apply to other areas of my life?

Personal Contract
In small groups, ask each member to list a personal goal (behaviour, attitude, or achievement). Explain how personal contracts (commitment to make specific attainable change within certain period of time) make change easier because we have support from those around us. Have two witnesses sign the contract; support, check progress, and review periodically.

Reflection

- What did I want to change about myself?
- Why is developing a personal contract difficult?
- How can a personal contract help me make the change?
- What role did the witnesses play in this contract?
- What support did I get from my group members?
- How does having a contract make me feel?
- How will this help me change?
- How did I feel as a witness?
- What support did I give to others?

b) *Making students aware of how their behaviour is perceived by, and affects others, and learning to express their feelings about others’ behaviour in a nonaggressive way.*

Resentment/Appreciation

"I" messages (e.g. "I feel angry when I cannot have a turn." or "I appreciate Mary’s thoughtfulness in making hot chocolate for us.")

Reflection

- Which appreciation/resentments did I share?
- Why might sharing appreciation/resentments be positive for me?
- Why does trust need to be developed before people share?
- How could I tell that other students were listening?
- Why is sharing helpful to a community?
- How do I feel now that I was able to say how I felt?

c) *Helping students develop empathy and negotiating skills to influence decisions and resolve conflict and thereby promote their own and others’ learning.*

Brainstorming

Explain the DOVE rules:

- Defer judgment
- Off-beat, original suggestions
- Vast number
- Expand/elaborate
In tribes, call out and rapidly record all ideas on designing a better bike, better car, or better school, for example. After five minutes, read the list and applaud each group’s creativity.

Reflection

- Why is brainstorming fun?
- How do the DOVE rules help?
- What would have happened if we had judged, commented or discussed ideas as they were offered?
- How could I tell group members were enjoying themselves?
- How well did my tribe follow the DOVE rules?
- How much did I participate?

Consensus Building

In tribes, have each student list five suggestions for class outings or class projects, for example. In pairs, discuss suggestions, eliminating all but four. Repeat this process in fours and eights. Each group reports its four best ideas to the class for discussion and elimination of impractical or less possible ideas. Students then award points for their first (15 points), second (10 points) and third (five points) choices. The highest scoring option is implemented.

Reflection

- Which ideas did my group suggest?
- Why might making decisions this way be difficult sometimes?
- How did my group come to an agreement (consensus)?
- How did I feel when my group made its final choices?
- How did I influence the decision?

Conclusion

Explicit teaching of social skills and for guiding students to set the framework for acceptable performance and conduct will not bring about the desired changes in student behaviour if they conflict with the example set by the teacher. Teachers, therefore, need to model appropriate, nonconfrontational behaviour by demonstrating empathy and appropriate patterns of social interaction. In this way, they contribute to a supportive classroom climate and help defuse the tension which inevitably arises when a student challenges the shared behaviour norms.

When behaviour problems arise, teachers can use the explicit social skilling exercises (e.g. ideal classroom, I-statements, and conflict resolution strategies) to help individual students review why their behaviour is inappropriate and how it affects others. If the seriousness of their behaviour makes it necessary to relocate individual students temporarily, teachers must make them aware of the reason for their relocation, its duration, and the behavioural changes required for re-entry into the group. The maintenance of a positive, inclusive environment makes it essential that teachers provide an opportunity for the student to move beyond the incident and re-
establish a positive relationship with others. Teachers must reinforce the understanding that the behaviour, and not the individual, is unacceptable.

A teacher’s ability to deal with problems firmly but with empathy, reassures vulnerable students that the security of their environment will be protected, whilst reinforcing the model of supportive but assertive interactions for the class as a whole.

In this way, students’ emotional development is fostered by a harmony among the explicit skills training, the reflection on personal learning and development (social and emotional as well as academic), and an environment in which emotionally mature behaviour is modelled and encouraged.

We hope that teachers in other countries who have tried this approach will share their experiences with us. [Contact Don Jordan, Woodbridge District High School http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/schwoodb/schwoodb.htm]

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References


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