

Developing Undergraduate Business Students' Emotional Intelligence in a Block Class

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Abstract

Research suggests that developing undergraduates' emotional intelligence (EI) may improve current academic and future work performance, as well as health and well-being. Curriculum to help undergraduate business management students improve their EI competencies was designed and implemented in a 4-credit course taught over 18 days. During 3-hour class periods, students participated in activities such as mindful walks, journaling, and guided meditations designed to improve self-awareness and self-management competencies. The steps in the Multiple Approaches to Understanding instructional design model are explained and illustrated with the entry points, analogies, and activities of the EI curriculum.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, block teaching, self-management, self-awareness, multiple approaches to understanding instructional design model

Introduction

Institutions of higher education play an important role in the development of student abilities and competencies. Schools strive to improve their students' cognitive abilities and knowledge through coursework. However, look at any organization's leadership team and you may notice that the social and emotional aspects of interpersonal communication have an important part to play in post-graduation success. In the workplace, emotional intelligence (EI) is referenced as a crucial and desirable set of abilities (Boyatzis, 2001; Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2002; MacCann et al., 2020) and research supports the power of EI to positively predict job performance (Allen et al., 2021; Joseph et al., 2015; O'Boyle et al., 2011), as well as health, adaptive coping, and well-being (Keefer et al., 2009; Martins et al., 2010; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016; Schutte et al., 2007). As universities prepare students to enter the workforce and strive to support student health and well-being, some undergraduate courses may want to embrace the challenge of developing undergraduates' EI competencies. This paper describes an example of how undergraduates were introduced to practices to develop their EI within a business management course taught synchronously in an 18-day block format, and offers recommendations for future research to measure the impact. Before presenting the specifics of the curriculum, some of the literature that informed the course design and indicates the benefits of improving EI competencies will be reviewed.

Literature Review

The framework of EI has been proposed as a set of intra- and interpersonal traits (Petrides et al., 2007a), abilities (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), or competencies (Boyatzis, 2009; Goleman, 1998). In K-12 systems, developing EI is operationalized as social and emotional learning, and research supports its relationship with positive academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; Jazaieri, 2018; Taylor et al., 2017). Within higher education, efforts also exist to develop graduate and undergraduate students' EI (e.g. Boyatzis & Cavanagh, 2018; Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012; Joyner & Mann, 2011). A meta-analysis of 188 findings from studies involving students supports a connection between EI and academic performance, with the specific abilities of understanding and managing emotions (two subsets of the full range of EI abilities) showing the strongest predictive possibility (MacCann et al., 2020). The literature contains different conceptualizations of EI, so the next section will explore these definitions.

Emotional Intelligence Definitions

EI is broadly defined as "the abilities to regulate and recognize emotions in ourselves and in others" (Goleman, 2001, p. 14) and "to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). Some scholars consider these abilities to be facets of intelligence (Brackett et al., 2006; Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012; Mayer et al., 2003; Salovey et al., 2008; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and others view these abilities as competencies, skills, or traits (Bar-On et al., 2007; Boyatzis, 2009; Boyatzis et al., 2000, 2015; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Goleman, 1998, 2001; Goleman et al., 2002; Petrides et al., 2007b). The disparate definitions began with the development of multiple EI assessment tools (Bar-On, 1997; Boyatzis et al., 2000; Mayer et al., 2003), which coincided with popular attention from the public and organizations' attempts to measure and develop EI in their employees (Zeidner et al., 2009).

Three models—Salovey and Mayer (1990), Goleman (1998), and Mayer and Salovey (1997)—are foundational models in the EI literature. All three were inspired by the theory of multiple intelligences, which introduced the idea of unique intelligences within individuals (Gardner, 1983). The original eight identified intelligences are linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalist, interpersonal and intrapersonal. The multiple intelligence theory posits that one can develop abilities within each intelligence over time, altering one’s unique combination of strengths and weaknesses (Gardner, 1983). According to this theory, one uses several of these intelligences to navigate challenges at school, work, and life, but only two of these intelligences, linguistic and logical-mathematical, are the focus of most secular educational systems (Christodoulou et al., 2011).

Building on this work, especially the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, the Salovey and Mayer (1990) model of EI comprises: (a) appraisal and expression of emotion in self and other, (b) regulation of emotion in self and others, and (c) using emotions, which include flexible planning, creative thinking, redirected attention, and motivation. Goleman (1995) expanded and modified Salovey and Mayer’s (1990) model in bestselling books that brought much attention to the concept of EI (Goleman, 1995, 1998). Mayer and Salovey (1997) responded to criticisms and misrepresentations of their original model with an updated model focused on using cognition in the world of emotions and a robust measurement tool, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT and MSCEIT V2.0), from the psychometric tradition of intelligence testing (Mayer et al., 2004). Researchers using the Goleman EI definition often use the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI) which entails interviewing multiple people for each participant to create a comprehensive profile and avoid the problems with self-reported data (Boyatzis et al., 2015; Hay Group, 2011). The model popularized by Goleman is the most well-known conceptualization (Joseph et al., 2015), and the definition used in this paper.

The lack of consensus around the conceptualization and measurement tools is a common criticism of EI (Grewal & Salovey, 2005; MacCann et al., 2020; Rooy et al., 2005; Waterhouse, 2006; Zeidner et al., 2008, 2013). However, Keefer et al. (2018) make the case for “the multiplicity of EI models as a healthy indicator of a relatively new and generative research area” (p. 6). Though a concept that was introduced thirty years ago may not seem “new,” recall that research on general intelligence has been underway for over one hundred years (Brackett et al., 2006). Consensus may be building for viewing ability, competency, and trait models as complementary (Keefer et al., 2018; Kirk et al., 2011; MacCann et al., 2020), especially since they often share core elements with the original Salovey and Mayer (1990) model (Keefer et al., 2018).

Goleman’s Competency Model

Goleman (1998) and Boyatzis (2009) cooperatively evolved the competency-based EI framework over time to four domains and twelve competencies as shown in Table 1 (Boyatzis, 2009).

Table 1. Emotional Competencies in Four Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Self-awareness	Self-management	Social awareness	Relationship management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional self-awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional self-control Adaptability Positive outlook Achievement orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational awareness Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict management Coach Influence Inspire Teamwork

(Boyatzis, 2009)

The EI definition in this performance-focused, behavioural paradigm

refers to the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships. It describes abilities distinct from, but complementary to, academic intelligence, the purely cognitive capacities measured by IQ. (Goleman, 1998, p. 317)

The four domains and twelve competencies cover a broad set of behaviours, so concerns about the multiple types of constructs used in the model—abilities, competencies, and personality traits—have been voiced (Joseph et al., 2015; Joseph & Newman, 2010).

Supporters of the Mayer and Salovey (1997) EI model object to the use of the term *intelligence* to refer to competencies, skills, behaviours, or traits that do not literally refer to emotions and intelligence, such as the competency of teamwork (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Goleman has also been criticized for using anecdotal evidence (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005) and over-stating the importance of EI in relation to performance (Waterhouse, 2006). However, an analysis of college course syllabi found that when EI is taught, 35% teach Goleman’s model, compared to 3% for the Mayer and Salovey (1997) model (Joseph et al., 2019), so this curriculum focused on the Goleman model, despite the criticisms. The following section reviews some of the correlational studies supporting the benefits of developing EI in undergraduates in the areas of work performance, academics, and well-being.

Potential Benefits of Developing Emotional Intelligence

Work Performance

EI is significantly and positively correlated with job performance, as measured by the MSCEIT versions, the ESCI, and other reliable and valid EI measurement scales (Joseph et al., 2015; Joseph & Newman, 2010; O’Boyle et al., 2011). EI has been extensively studied and the results combined in multiple published meta-analyses of EI and work performance research (Allen et al., 2021; Harms & Credé, 2010; Joseph et al., 2015; Joseph & Newman, 2010; Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019; Miao et al., 2017a, 2017b; O’Boyle et al., 2011; Rooy et al., 2005). Leadership and EI competencies appear to be significantly associated (Boyatzis & Cavanagh, 2018; Côté et al., 2010; Goleman et al., 2002; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Nafukho et al., 2016; Salovey et al., 2008). Research also provides evidence that EI is a predictor of employees’ job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and organizational commitment (Miao et al., 2017a). Allen et al. (2021) found that EI was a better predictor of success as an entrepreneur than cognitive ability by

calculating the relative contribution of cognitive ability, which explained 10.9% of the success variance, and EI, which accounted for 89.1% of the variance. Typically, cognitive ability is a stronger predictor of work performance (O’Boyle et al., 2011), but perhaps the intensity of emotions that accompany the elevated risks associated with entrepreneurship help explain these results (Allen et al., 2021).

Academic Performance

According to studies and meta-analyses, positive correlations have been found with academic performance (Brackett et al., 2012; Schonfeld et al., 2015), as well as skills such as goal setting, perspective taking, conflict resolution, and effective decision-making (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Additionally, positive attitudes, prosocial behaviours, a reduction in risky behaviours, and improved relationships between students and teachers are associated with the development of EI competencies (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Procrastination is negatively associated with academic performance, but emotionally intelligent students may be less likely to procrastinate, according to one study that found a significant, negative correlation (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016).

When considering the relative value of EI, cognitive ability, and personality factors in predicting academic performance, evidence supports EI adding to the incremental validity of models which include all these factors (di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2009; MacCann et al., 2020; Perera & DiGiacomo, 2013). MacCann et al. (2020) found cognitive ability was the strongest predictor, the personality trait of conscientiousness was second, and EI was third. However, in a relative weights analysis comparing intelligence, five personality factors, and four separate abilities within the Mayer and Salovey (1997) EI model, the ability to understand emotions, as well as the ability to manage emotions, were second only to cognitive ability as a predictor of academic success, and better predictors than all personality traits (MacCann et al., 2020). According to these results, it is “not enough to be smart and hardworking—to have the added edge for success, students must be able to understand and manage emotions to succeed at school” (MacCann et al., 2020, p. 174).

Health and Well-being

Self-awareness is an important aspect of emotional intelligence (Boyatzis et al., 2000; Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Goleman, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Mindfulness, a component of self-awareness (Goleman, 1998), has been shown to correlate with stress-reduction (Birnie et al., 2010; Zenner et al., 2014) as well as increased attention and working memory (Jha et al., 2020). By increasing awareness and limiting reactivity, one creates space to choose a skillful response to challenging circumstances and interactions (Germer & Neff, 2018). EI has been positively associated with reduced stress (Dunning et al., 2019; Matthew et al., 2017; Zeidner et al., 2012) and is significantly correlated with the ability to recover from acute stress (Lea et al., 2019). Self-awareness contributes to another facet of EI —self-management—and the benefits of developing competencies in both areas are symbiotic (Goleman et al., 2002). Self-management competencies help one tap into the motivating power of positive emotions and moods (Miao et al., 2017a). EI was found to correlate with using positive (adaptive) strategies to cope with challenges and to negatively correlate with self-blame in undergraduates (Mikolajczak et al., 2008). Canadian undergraduates’ EI scores were positively associated with

rational coping and healthy behaviours, specifically exercise, a healthy diet, and visiting medical providers (Saklofske et al., 2007).

In a meta-analysis with twenty-five studies, corrected correlations demonstrate that EI is significantly and positively associated ($r_c = .32$) with subjective well-being (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016). In research looking at health metrics, significant and positive results were found after analyzing the results from 80 studies with 105 different hypotheses tests (Martins et al., 2010). EI and mental health ($r_c = .36$) exhibit the strongest relationship, but the results for psychosomatic health ($r_c = .33$), and physical health ($r_c = .27$) are not much lower. From these correlational studies, it appears that students may benefit from instructional efforts to develop their EI competencies. The next section examines the results of studies examining the efficacy of EI development efforts.

Emotional Intelligence Can Be Developed

Empirical studies support the assertion that EI can be developed with training in children (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017), undergraduates (Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012; Nelis et al., 2011; Schutte & Malouff, 2002; Vesely-Maillefer & Saklofske, 2018), graduate students (Bonesso et al., 2019; Boyatzis, 2001; Boyatzis & Cavanagh, 2018; Joyner & Mann, 2011; Thompson et al., 2020), and working professionals (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Fer, 2004; Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019; Palacios & Lemberger-Truelove, 2019). A meta-analysis of over 200 social and emotional learning programs in K-12 schools calculated a significant, moderate, mean effect size for developing emotional competencies (Durlak et al., 2011). Another meta-analysis using only participants aged 18 or older also found a positive, moderate effect size ($d_c = 0.45$ for studies with control groups and $d_c = 0.61$ for pre-post designs) from 58 studies (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019).

Studies with undergraduate participants show that EI can be developed during higher education (Clark et al., 2003; Kirk et al., 2011; Nelis et al., 2011; Schutte & Malouff, 2002; Thompson et al., 2020). A quasi-experimental study of students taking an eleven-week class for credit reported significant improvement in understanding and managing emotions when compared to an active control group (Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012). EI can also be developed even without directly teaching about an EI model with its associated abilities, traits, or competencies (Christopher et al., 2016; Clark et al., 2003; Manring, 2012). For example, a study of 140 business undergraduates participating in 15 hours of service learning found that students developed skills in all the EI competencies from the Goleman model, even though EI was purposely never mentioned to the students (Manring, 2012). In addition, Clark et al. (2003) significantly improved undergraduates' EI scores compared to a control group through teaching business management skills.

Studies of shorter interventions also offer support to the claim that EI can be developed (e.g. Choi et al., 2015; Gilar-Corbí et al., 2018; Kirk et al., 2011; Kozlowski et al., 2018). Kirk et al. (2011) asked participants, in this case working adults (median age = 35 years), to write for 20-minutes at the end of their shift for three days about salient emotional experiences and specifically to reflect on how they were understanding, perceiving, using, and regulating their emotions. An active control group was assigned a different writing task. The participants in the EI writing intervention scored significantly higher than the control group at posttest (Kirk et al., 2011). In addition, a study of undergraduate nursing students in South Korea measured EI

before and after a 4-week intervention designed to improve empathy and communication skills by creating videos of effective conflict resolution scenarios. Participants' EI scores increased significantly compared to the control group in this quasi-experimental study (Choi et al., 2015). Researchers state that more interventions of this type are needed, especially in higher education (Bonesso et al., 2019; Edwards & Ashkanasy, 2018; Joseph et al., 2019). In response to this request, this paper describes a 3-week curriculum used in a business management course taught in the block schedule format.

Emotional Intelligence Curriculum in a Business Course

The curriculum was designed using the Multiple Approaches to Understanding (MAU) instructional design model (Gardner, 1999). This model for designing curriculum was created by the same person who inspired the foundational theories and models of EI (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) by first theorizing about multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983). With this model, multiple entry points capture students' attention and guide them to "the center of a disciplinary topic" (Gardner, 1999, p. 82). These points can be narrational (tell a story), numerical (an eye-popping statistic), foundational (why a topic is important), aesthetic (an image, song, poem, artwork), hands-on (engaging activity), or social (interpersonal activity). From here, the process moves to telling analogies to help students relate this new material to what they already know, while being mindful not to mislead. The last steps involve designing activities to present the material (Gardner, 1999). A strength of this model is the assumption that instructional material should be presented in multiple formats to students because multiple representations of the topic enhance each learner's understanding (Gardner, 2000). Providing options also allows students to adapt or avoid activities that may trigger harmful memories. For example, if closing one's eyes triggers a stressful response, students are provided the option to gaze softly down or choose a different activity.

Block Teaching

The MAU model's emphasis on identifying the core of the topic makes it a good fit for synchronous courses taught in a block or time-compressed format. An institution in the United States, Colorado College, began innovating with this unique format for higher education in the 1990s and now other institutions have embraced block formats (Muscat & Thomas, 2023). Students in this business course attend class for 3 hours per day, Monday through Friday, for 18 consecutive business days. Typically, students enrol in one 4-credit course at a time and take four block courses in a semester. Since lecturing for 3 hours, 5 days in a row is unrealistic and ineffective for instructors and students, block courses incorporate a variety of activities, giving students the opportunity to experience and apply the concepts they are learning (Thomas & Roberts, 2009). With the extended class periods, the instructor often becomes more of a guide and facilitator as knowledge is constructed and relationships are built through student-to-student and student-to-teacher instructional activities (Muscat & Thomas, 2023), as well as informal interactions during breaks. When designing a block course, the core of the topic, key content, and essential outcomes are necessarily prioritized, which is consistent with the MAU design model. In the context of Goleman's EI model, the self-awareness and self-management domains were chosen as the core focal points for developing these business students' EI competencies.

Focus on Self-awareness and Self-management

Cultivating an emotional self-awareness competency requires a focus on reflection and attention (Kabat-Zinn, 2014). “People with strong self-awareness are realistic—neither overly self-critical nor naively hopeful” (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 40). As one develops self-awareness, one becomes attuned to emotions, motives, and values (Goleman et al., 2002). This awareness helps with decision-making because when an individual is clear on what is most important, one is more likely to choose projects or jobs that align with one’s values (Goleman et al., 2002). Students with high self-awareness are better equipped to identify skills they need to develop to achieve goals (Bonesso et al., 2019).

Aspects of self-regulation and motivation are combined with the competencies of emotional balance, adaptability, achievement, and positivity in the self-management domain (Boyatzis, 2009). The desire to continuously improve oneself and one’s work processes to achieve goals, and then push on by setting new goals, are a hallmark of this domain (Goleman et al., 2002). When encountering obstacles, a response that is balanced and confident about the possibility of adapting, instead of over-reactive, negative, and defeatist, is the goal for developing self-management.

Implementation by Week

Each week of the curriculum follows the MAU model by starting with entry points, then an analogy followed by multiple activities, and ending with a written assignment to allow students to reflect on what they learned. Self-awareness is the focus of the first week and the entry points include a story about how a student used self-awareness to navigate an academic challenge (narrational point), a poem (aesthetic point), a personal story from the instructor (narrational point), and an embodied awareness exercise (hands-on point). The first week’s analogy describes the awareness activities as *inner strength training*: one does not expect to be strong without lifting weights regularly, so one needs to “go to the gym” for the mind. There are a variety of strength-building exercises a trainer assigns one at the gym, such as bicep curls, squats, and sit-ups. Similarly, when one is building self-awareness, a variety of exercises are available to build this inner strength. Students choose at least one activity to complete independently from breathing exercises, yoga, a musical awareness activity, mindful coloring, mindful walking, and an attention-training exercise with a stone.

During the 3-hour class periods, activities to develop EI competencies are used as breaks from the management topics of the day. For example, students are assigned a mindful walk activity (Wrench et al., 2020) during one of their breaks. They are asked to mentally identify a 5-minute route they walk from the classroom and make a list of what they expect to see on this route. As they walk the route alone, they are directed to stay present throughout the walk instead of distracting themselves with their phones or listening to music through headphones. When they return to the classroom, they share examples of what they noticed through this awareness-building activity. Incorporating restorative break activities provides an alternative to students passively scrolling on their phones.

The second week seeks to build self-management competencies by giving students an adaptive alternative to beating themselves up after making a mistake or failing to rise to a challenge. Students are coached to respond to themselves compassionately. As one cultivates self-awareness by looking closely at one’s thoughts, negativity and problems may arise (Germer &

Neff, 2018). Human brains are wired with a negativity bias (Hanson, 2013; Rozin & Royzman, 2001), which means more weight is placed on negative events, moods, and emotions than positive. As these negative thoughts arise when one is developing attention and awareness, the practice of self-compassion provides active support and emotional regulation for navigating inner discomfort or turmoil (Neely et al., 2009). Jazaieri (2018) made a compelling argument for incorporating compassion training in the education system from kindergarten through graduate school, which may include compassion-focused meditation practices. Mindfulness is associated with improved emotion regulation and tolerance of distressing circumstances (Luberto et al., 2018), so students are offered awareness building activities. The concept of self-compassion is introduced, which includes mindfulness, taking a moment to appreciate common humanity, and a focus on self-kindness (Neff, 2003). Self-compassion research supports a correlation between undergraduates' level of self-compassion and conscientiousness (Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2007), well-being (Neely et al., 2009), psychological health (Fong & Loi, 2016), and ability to weather difficulties (Terry et al., 2013). Self-compassion includes both the self-awareness to notice painful emotions and the self-management to choose a compassionate response, so it fits well with Goleman's EI model.

The second week's entry points include a shocking statistic (numerical point), a quote from a previous student (narrational point), and a writing activity (hands-on point) to highlight the difference between how one typically talks to oneself after a mistake and how one talks to a friend in the same situation (Germer & Neff, 2018). The analogy for developing self-management competencies with self-compassion related how one treats a poorly behaving pet to how one treats oneself after a mistake. Trust isn't built with a pet by always speaking or acting harshly to it, and a relentlessly negative inner critic in one's own head is similarly unhelpful. Students choose to build their skills this week through guided meditations, a compassionate body scan, finding a soothing touch, journaling, and identifying a song that supports a self-compassionate frame of mind. Most of the activities are adapted from self-compassion books and studies (Bluth, 2017; Donovan et al., 2021; Germer & Neff, 2018; Neff & Germer, 2013; Smeets et al., 2014). During class time, students listen to brief guided meditations and do journaling exercises to break up the management content.

The final week incorporates self-appreciation for progress and encouragement to continue building self-awareness and self-management competencies. A student testimonial is shared as a narrational entry point, a visualization activity provides a hands-on entry point, a review of the three components of self-compassion is the foundational point, and a poem is read to the students (aesthetic entry point). The importance of playing both offense and defense during a basketball game is the analogy for combining awareness and action in the face of challenges. In addition, students are encouraged to replace any cruel and bullying inner-coach voices with a supportive inner-coach who holds players accountable, motivates the team, and celebrates milestone victories. Students choose from a menu of activities that includes writing a letter to oneself, a body scan meditation, a drawing activity, a guided walking meditation, and a gratitude writing practice. At the end of the final week, as with the first two weeks, students complete a reflection assignment.

Student Responses and Future Recommendations

Though initially appearing apprehensive about these novel activities for a business course, several students voluntarily used awareness and breathing exercises in the classroom to

mentally and emotionally prepare for final presentations. In the final week's reflection assignment, students wrote about which activities were personally helpful and how they might continue to use these practices. Responses included:

- The most helpful activity for me has been journaling. This is one that I have continued to do and it has help me decompress at the end of the day. It has aided in getting me through this high-stress point in my life and understand my emotions more before I express them to other people. I will continue to journal beyond this class seeing as it has benefited me so much. I really enjoyed the “walking in friendliness” it really made me stop thinking about the hardships in my life and helped me understand that it is normal and that I’m not alone. It also made me understand I am human and the feeling that I feel everyone has also felt.
- I like how the video for this week mentioned that it takes time for big changes to happen. I think this is a good reminder I would like to use as I continue to work on inner communication trainings. It will take time for a big change to happen but if we keep moving forward that change will occur.
- One important idea I learned from this week is showing more gratitude in hardships. I would like to use this through the rest of the semester because it helps to rid myself of negativity.
- For the rest of the semester, I would like to put myself in other people's shoes before I act or talk with them. As the strength training taught, it is helpful for me to remember that they are a human that has felt the same ways that I have and they want some of the same things I do such as happiness and to be loved.

From these responses, it appears that weaving EI development activities into block courses may support students as they develop these competencies. However, research is needed to measure the impact.

One future research option includes measuring students' EI competencies with the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory – University Edition (ESCI-U) assessment tool, which aligns with the EI conceptualization used in this curriculum. A quasi-experimental study could gather baseline ESCI-U scores from voluntary participants at the beginning of this block course and collect scores again at a later date. The ESCI-U requires a few days to conduct since data is collected from three to four sources for each participant (Boyatzis & Cavanagh, 2018), so separating the pre- and post-test data collection by multiple blocks is advisable. A control group could be selected so that scores could be analysed over time and between groups. Another option for future research would be to collect pre-test academic, health, and well-being data from participating students before the course begins. The literature suggests that EI is associated with improved outcomes in these areas, so a quasi-experimental study analysing pre- and posttest data from student participants would be a beneficial contribution to the field.

Conclusion

The 3-hour class periods of a business management course using the block format are well-suited to incorporating EI development activities throughout each day. Gardner's (1999) MAU instructional design model guided the development of curriculum to help students improve their self-awareness and self-management competencies. Beyond these two EI domains,

Goleman's (1998) EI conceptualization also includes social awareness and relationship management, which were not a focus of the instruction. However, 3-hour synchronous class periods provide a helpful structure for developing these EI domains as well since students are not sitting passively listening to lectures, but rather often engaged in student-to-student interaction.

Eason et al. (2023) have described how multidisciplinary block format classes have been used to illustrate the research cycle, so perhaps developing the social EI competencies is another challenge that could be addressed with a multidisciplinary approach across blocks. Students indicate that the self-awareness and self-management activities are helpful and research has confirmed that these competencies can be developed and improved over time. Perhaps the development of EI competencies is another benefit the innovative block format courses may provide, though research is needed to appropriately measure EI development and student changes over time.

Disclosures

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