Classroom Crucible: Emotional-Social Intelligence and Student Participation

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Overview

This literature review serves as a foundation for a research project to understand the relationship between Emotional-Social Intelligence and student classroom participation. While the study of Social Intelligence (SI) has an increasingly robust academic constituency, correlation between Social Intelligence and positive outcomes such as classroom leadership and participation provide a relatively new field for researchers. Following a review of relevant literature, a methodology for future research is proposed. The methodology involves administering the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory created by Hay Group and a locally produced Associate Participation Survey to participants within a Plebe classroom environment at the United State Military Academy. The results will determine if organizations should utilize multi-dimensional surveys to assess student classroom participation and grow Social Intelligence among members. Increased levels of Social Intelligence may facilitate a more effective classroom learning environment and impact an organization’s ability to select, develop and retain future leaders.

Introduction

The college classroom is a crucible for understanding and developing Social Intelligence. Institutions of higher learning that demand small classroom sizes understand the value of classroom participation, especially in disciplines encompassed by the humanities and social science. In this context, student participation is vital and essential to learning. Indeed, students may learn more in dialogue with peers than through any instructor-dominated lecture.

At the United States Military Academy, where the mission is to educate, train, and inspire cadets to become leaders of character, the classroom provides rich opportunities to grow Social Intelligence alongside a model of teaching that revolves around student participation. After over a decade of war, leaders at all levels in the U.S. Army have emerged with a new understanding of what it means to be an effective leader, and how to prevent the rise of so-called toxic leaders. Toxic leaders may be related to “toxic teachers,” teachers who care little about the students or cadets they teach, or improving their effectiveness as an instructor. In this sense, developing and growing Social Intelligence applies equally to teachers and students in the classroom.
Outside of the Army, defining, measuring and correlating Social Intelligence to positive outcomes has eluded researchers for almost a century. One method of measuring Emotional and Social Intelligence that is gaining popularity involves the utilization of others’ input from within a shared social context. This method has been codified by researchers such as those associated with the Hay Group (2012) and involves survey instruments that take emotional and social competencies into account. If this process is proven accurate, multi-dimensional feedback related to Social Intelligence may demonstrate positive correlation with student classroom participation.

**Annotated Readings and Literature Review**


Recent scholarship has revealed increasing interest in the study of human interaction as it relates to Social Intelligence. However, researchers have yet to explore any specific relationship between Social Intelligence and classroom participation. Therefore, the purpose of this literature review is to evaluate scholarship related to the burgeoning field of Social Intelligence. If Social Intelligence is defined as the ability to skillfully interact with others, it merits investigation with regarding to organizational, leadership, academic, and classroom success. Recently, Daniel Goleman (2006) and Karl Albrecht (2006) have advanced works with differing perspectives in the field.

Goleman, a leading proponent in the study of Emotional and Social Intelligence, elevated the field to new levels in 1995 with his innovative work in *Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, 1995). In 2006, he responded to new developments in social neuroscience by publishing *Social Intelligence*, which expanded a “one-person psychology – those capacities an individual has within – to a two-person psychology: what transpires when we connect” (Goleman, 2006, p. 5). Whereas *Emotional Intelligence* focused on a crucial set of human capacities within individuals and the ability to manage emotions and inner potential for positive relationships, *Social Intelligence* was aimed at “understanding a wider swath of our personal world,” including what governs human interactions (Goleman, 2006, p. 6).

According to Goleman (2006), Social Intelligence can be considered a shorthand term for not just being intelligent about relationships, but also in them. Goleman organizes Social Intelligence into two broad categories, social awareness and social facility. Social awareness is sensing another’s inner state (what they think, feel, or intend) and being attuned to complicated social situations. It includes empathy (both feeling and understanding others), listening and receptiveness, and understanding how the social world works (social cognition). Social facility is executing smooth, effective interactions with others. It includes nonverbal interaction, effective self-presentation, influencing others (shaping the outcome of social interactions), and concern or caring for others’ needs.
In a 2008 interview with Diane Coutu, senior editor of the *Harvard Business Review*, Goleman refers to a conceptual framework for Social Intelligence as a person’s ability to understand himself and how his actions and attitudes affect those around him. For example, Social Intelligence recognizes that success depends on everyone else’s success. In this interview, Goleman loosely defines Social Intelligence as “The way you handle yourself . . . being aware of feelings and the things that excite . . . being aware of what makes us effective and what things get in the way, and also how we manage our emotions” (Goleman, 2008, 1:00-1:30). Goleman also correlated Social Intelligence to the success of organizations – especially military units. Based on ten years of research, Goleman concluded, “There is a direct correlation between the Social Intelligence of leadership – at every level – and how an organization performs” (Goleman, 2008, 3:00-3:30). Therefore, the Social Intelligence of teachers and students contribute to the effectiveness of the classroom learning environment. Perhaps especially important in the classroom is a teacher’s ability to perceive the emotional stability and the degree of stress of his or her students. Social Intelligence includes empathy and interaction skills, along with organizational rapport and chemistry between teachers and students.

According to Goleman (2008), to be socially intelligent one has to first be comfortable with oneself; the only way to discover your own true nature is through the eyes of others. In this sense, though receiving candid feedback can sometimes be difficult, leaders must be humble and able to take constructive criticism to heart without losing confidence. According to Goleman, weak areas in a leader’s personality become blind spots within conscious experience (Goleman, 2008).


Though Goleman (2006) may be hesitant to publish an outright definition of Social Intelligence per se, he defers to the work of Cantor and Kihlstrom (2000) regarding the intricacies of classifying Social Intelligence. Cantor and Kihlstrom expand on the earliest work in the field of Social Intelligence, which is usually attributed to that of E.L. Thorndike. Thorndike, in a 1920 article titled “Intelligence and its use” in *Harper's Magazine*, defined Social Intelligence as “the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls – to act wisely in human relations” (p. 228). A few years later, researchers Moss and Hunt (1927) stated that Social Intelligence is simply “the ability to get along with others” (p. 108). More recently, however, Cantor and Kihlstrom (1987) redefined Social Intelligence as an individual’s fund of knowledge about the social world.

Further research by Cantor and Kihlstrom attempted to construct complex models of Social Intelligence, but the projects ran into difficulty measuring Social Intelligence and determining its essential elements. Critics claimed that Social Intelligence was nothing more than general intelligence applied in the social domain, and pointed out the substantial correlations
between IQ and scores on the Social Intelligence subtests (Riggio, Messamer, and Throckmorton, 1991). In response, Cantor and Kihlstrom (2000), stated that their studies went only part of the way toward establishing the construct validity of Social Intelligence, with little evidence for the ability of the tests to predict the external criteria of Social Intelligence.


Unlike Goleman, Albrecht (2006) is not hesitant in suggesting a definition for Social Intelligence. His recent book, *Social Intelligence: the New Science of Success*, is in part a reaction to Goleman’s work published the same year. Albrecht proposes a simple definition for SI: “Social Intelligence is the ability to get along well with others and get them to cooperate with you” (p. xiii). Albrecht’s approach is unique in that he visualizes a direct link between Social Intelligence and management. He writes, “[It is] well overdue to make SI a developmental priority in our early education, *public schooling* [emphasis added], adult learning processes, and in business…managers need to understand and connect with the people they’re appointed to lead. Social Intelligence can reduce conflict, create collaboration . . . and mobilize people toward common goals” (Albrecht, 2006, xiv).

Whereas Goleman links Social Intelligence with advances in social neuroscience (Lieberman and Ochsner, 2001) and interpersonal neurobiology (Siegel, 1999), Albrecht assumes a more practical, consultant-oriented approach. This approach matches the work of Bradberry et al., who corroborate advances in the field that appeal to a more generalized non-academic audience, including *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* (Bradberry, Greaves, and Lencioni, 2009). According to these authors, Emotional Intelligence is a means for developing self-awareness and self-management, and is a complimentary dimension to Social Intelligence. Their work represents an attempt to contrast Emotional and Social Intelligence with traditional IQ, complementing that of Cantor and Kihlstrom (2000), who explain Social Intelligence as a distinct psychological concept within the field of psychometrics. However, according to Goleman (2006), a cohesive theory of Social Intelligence that clearly distinguishes it from IQ and that has practical applications has thus far “eluded psychology” (p. 332).


The problem of linking Social Intelligence with positive outcomes such as student classroom participation and teaching effectiveness is not entirely new. Most institutions understand that employees who are able to work well with others to accomplish common goals create stronger organizations, so they are searching for methods to evaluate, train, and retain individuals with these skill sets. There is also an increasing awareness and movement to eradicate toxic leaders from organizations before they dispense undue damage and harm
(Goldman, 2009). Goldman explains that organizations require certain methodologies for identifying, assessing, and developing highly leaders in order to prevent the effects of negative Social Intelligence (toxic leaders). Goldman also proposes that the development of Social Intelligence increases social competence among members of an organization. According to Goldman (2009), selection based on Social Intelligence may involve examining 360-degree feedback, peer evaluations, and other instruments in contrast to traditional evaluative approaches. Therefore, a relationship between Social Intelligence and positive outcomes has broad implications for institutions interested in leveraging the social competencies of their personnel.


When did Social Intelligence first become associated with positive outcomes? Perhaps at its most basic level, Social Intelligence involves getting along with and managing interactions with others, two qualities also inherent in positive outcomes such as student classroom participation. Thorndike (1920, 1937) made this connection when he concluded that a person’s ability to understand and manage other people was related to successful engagement through adaptive social interactions. Measuring Social Intelligence, however, has proven to be a difficult endeavor for scientists. Thorndike first noted that “convenient tests of Social Intelligence are hard to devise; it eludes the formal standardized conditions of the testing laboratory” (p. 231).

One of the first correlative studies, the George Washington Social Intelligence Test (GWSIT), was validated by Hunt (1928) through correlations with adult occupational status, the number of extracurricular activities pursued by college students, and supervisor ratings of employees’ ability to get along with people. Hunt found GWSIT scores correlated $r = .54$ with aggregate scores on the George Washington University Mental Alertness Test (GWMAT), an early IQ scale. Moreover, measurements of Social Intelligence had a tendency to be complicated by variance in abstract intelligence.


Brown and Anthony (1990) demonstrate that since Hunt’s initial studies in 1928, measuring Social Intelligence as a distinct construct continues to present a problem to investigators and scholars across the humanities and social sciences (Brown and Anthony, 1990; Hunt, 1928; Moss, Hunt, Omwake, and Woodward, 1955; O’Sullivan, Guilford, and deMille, 1965; Thorndike and Stein, 1937). Social Intelligence tests have evolved to include various constructs and competencies, similar to several other intelligence self-tests, including the recent inclusion of Social Intelligence tests involving measurements and assessments from peers, subordinates, and supervisors in addition to self-tests (Goleman, 2006). A study by Brown and
Anthony (1990) measured Social Intelligence in accordance with peer and teacher ratings of social competence, self-reports of social competence, and a judgment based on an individual interview. In this study, the three ratings of social competence were more highly predictive of the interview ratings of social competence than were the academic measures. Other studies yielded similar results: scores on various dimensions of Social Intelligence in these tests were found to be essentially unrelated to measures of verbal and abstract intelligence.


Though the correlation of Emotional Intelligence to positive outcomes has been the focus of numerous studies, Stricker and Rock (1990) note that few studies have correlated Social Intelligence with performance outcomes. Therefore, a significant research gap exists regarding the relationship of Social Intelligence and performance outcomes, such as student classroom participation. Moreover, since classroom participation presents a difficult rubric to quantify, an adequate correlation model has not yet been developed. Research by Stricker and Rock (1990) revealed that there was no correlation of Social Intelligence to grade point average, a proxy for academic intelligence related to traditional academic ability. Despite these results, the researchers asserted that more studies employing performance-based measures were needed before any definitive conclusions could be drawn about the relationship between Social Intelligence and other intellectual abilities.

Another deficiency in intelligence studies involves the attempt to utilize various researcher-constructed participant self-tests. Since Social Intelligence involves relationships – social awareness and facility – using self-tests as a measuring device has been considered counterproductive by experts. This is the stance taken by the Hay Group, an industry-leading agency that studies behavioral measures of emotional and social intelligence based on hundreds of competency studies conducted in organizations throughout the world (Hay Group, 2012). According to Wolff (2006) of the Hay Group, “Self-ratings do not provide valid and reliable measures for research purposes” (p. 6).


A review of the relevant literature would not be complete without mentioning the work of H. Gardner (1983, 1993). Gardner defined two types of Social Intelligence: intrapersonal intelligence, the ability to gain access to one’s internal emotional life, and interpersonal intelligence, the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals. These two types of intelligence make up his theory of multiple intelligences, which states intelligence does not
consist of a unitary cognitive ability but is represented by seven different kinds of intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

Researchers have attempted to correlate Social Intelligence to Gardner’s various intelligences, such as academic intelligence. These efforts have been extended by several studies featured in prominent journals (Jones and Day, 1997; Lee, Wong, Day, Maxwell, and Thorpe, 2000; Marlow, 1986; Riggio, Messamer, and Throckmorton, 1991; Weis and Suß, 2007; Wong, Day, Maxwell, and Meara, 1995). Based on Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, which serves as the foundation for subsequent research, recent scholarship has also identified the importance of Emotional and Social Intelligence, among the other intelligences, in determining various positive outcomes. Specifically, measurements of Emotional Intelligence have been correlated through survey methods to certain positive criteria or outcomes (Kerr, Garvin, Heaton, and Boyle, 2006; Kobe, Reiter-Palmon, and Rickers, 2001; Riggio and Reichard, 2008). Whereas Emotional Intelligence determines self-awareness and management, researchers propose that Social Intelligence is related to interactions with others, such as social awareness, facility, and relationship management (Goleman, 2006). Therefore, in terms of a correlation relationship with classroom participation, it would appear that Social rather than Emotional Intelligence is more essential for positive learning outcomes in a classroom environment.

The definition and understanding of Social Intelligence has evolved over the past century as research regarding various types of intelligence continues to challenge scholars. According to cumulative literature on the topic, measuring Social Intelligence is a formidable challenge and has an equal history of success and failure. Within distinct social groups, research has shown that perhaps the most effective way to measure Social Intelligence is by surveying other individuals within the same group, instead of utilizing self-tests. In this sense, collective feedback from associates interacting within a common social context may provide the most accurate assessment of any individual’s particular level of Social Intelligence. Therefore, if individuals within a member’s social community should be used to evaluate the Social Intelligence, a similar approach may be utilized to effectively gauge classroom participation in future research.

Methodology for Future Research

To compliment this Literature Review, methodology for future research is proposed to determine the level of correlation between Social Intelligence and student classroom participation among future officers in the Army. The purpose of this proposal is to test the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) as it relates to leadership by examining the relationship between Social Intelligence (an independent variable measured a survey instrument) and student participation (a dependent variable measured by an associate participation survey instrument) for Plebe Army cadets at the United State Military Academy, West Point. The central research question reflects the correlation problem: is Social Intelligence associated with classroom participation among Army cadets? It is hypothesized that there is a strong positive correlation
between Social Intelligence and student participation, so that higher Social Intelligence is associated with higher student classroom participation.

Correlating Social Intelligence with positive behavioral and performance aspects has been accomplished in previous studies as covered in the literature review. But determining the relationship between Social Intelligence and student classroom participation presents a new field of research and exploration. With the recent development of industry and institutional tools related to social science, including 360-degree feedback within defined social groups, determining the level of correlation between SI and classroom participation will provide a meaningful contribution to the pursuit of educational excellence. This study may have particular significance for those interested in the academic and social development of cadets and instructors at the United States Military Academy. Broader implications of Social Intelligence apply to educational development and classroom research efforts throughout the world. Organizations can benefit by utilizing various forms of multi-dimensional feedback to focus on recruiting, developing, and retaining individuals with high levels of Social Intelligence as demonstrated in a classroom environment.

The proposed central research question is: Does the theory of multiple intelligences explain the relationship between Social Intelligence and student classroom participation in Army cadets, controlling for the various effects of age, gender, rank, education level, etc.? In other words, is Social Intelligence associated with classroom participation among Army cadets? To evaluate this question two sub-questions must be answered through research: (1) What are participants’ percentile rankings on student participation based on the Classroom Participation Index as developed by the Associate Participation Survey, and (2) What are participants’ percentile rankings on Social Intelligence based on the Social Intelligence Index as developed by the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (Hay Group, 2012)?

The null hypothesis for the proposed research is that no significant relationship exists between Social Intelligence and student participation among Army cadets. The alternative hypothesis is that a strong positive relationship exists between Social Intelligence and classroom participation, e.g. higher SI equals higher classroom participation (strong positive correlation is defined as $.5 < r < .75$).
Additional Resources and References


