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The Future of Education Reform: The Role of Emotional Intelligence for School Leaders

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Abstract

With the demands for better outcomes and greater change from school leaders such as superintendents, principals, central and building-level administrators, there is a need to understand how emotional intelligence can help these leaders meet new demands in the near future. There are three models of emotional intelligence from Daniel Goleman, Salovey, Mayer and Caruso, and Bar-On that may have benefits to offer school leaders. The facilitators currently teach in an Executive Leadership Doctoral Program and wish to gain insights from program graduates who are current leaders in their fields. However, before a study is developed, it would be helpful to discuss and gather advice from others interested in this topic to best capture ideas and perceptions on the study of Emotional Intelligence to enhance training for school leaders

Disciplines

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Comments

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The Future of Education Reform: The Role of Emotional Intelligence for School Leaders

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Abstract

With the demands for better outcomes and greater change from school leaders such as superintendents, principals, central and building-level administrators, there is a need to understand how emotional intelligence can help these leaders meet new demands in the near future. There are three models of emotional intelligence from Daniel Goleman, Salovey, Mayer and Caruso, and Bar-On that may have benefits to offer school leaders. The facilitators currently teach in an Executive Leadership Doctoral Program and wish to gain insights from program graduates who are current leaders in their fields. However, before a study is developed, it would be helpful to discuss and gather advice from others interested in this topic to best capture ideas and perceptions on the study of Emotional Intelligence to enhance training for school leaders.

Introduction

In a recent article in the Harvard Business Review, Daniel Goleman (2013) wrote about the need for leaders to focus attention on three areas: oneself, others and the wider world. Goleman believes this type of focus is important because the challenges of today's world require leaders to direct their attention more skillfully. In addition to more purposefully directing one's focus and attention, leaders must recognize empathy and its three types. The first, cognitive empathy, is the ability to be curious about and understand others' perspectives. The second type of empathy is emotional empathy, or the ability to feel what others are feeling. The third type of empathy is empathic concern, or how one senses what others need (Goleman, 2013, p. 55).

The HBR article and other studies on Emotional Intelligence (EI) spark questions about the needs of today's leaders. Furthermore, the potential benefits of EI come to mind when considering the daunting role of the school leader in the 21st century. Given the extensive pressure of school reform in the United States today, school leadership roles demand changes in direction and in skill. Is EI a resource for school leaders trying to navigate change and uncertainty in the midst of current reforms? Would a leader's ability to demonstrate focus, attention and empathy help move schools forward?

Background

EI has been described in three primary ways by key researchers. One of the models of EI is the result of studies by Salovey, Mayer and Caruso (2004). These three researchers define emotional intelligence as "the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions, to enhance thinking. EI includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (2004, p. 197)." Salovey et al. (2004) look at EI as having multiple parts. They refer to these parts as the four-branch model. Salovey et al. (2004) divide EI into: the ability to perceive emotion, use emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotion, and manage emotion.

The Goleman model of EI encompasses interpersonal awareness and social facility (Goleman, 2006). By these terms, Goleman means that the brain can attune itself to others and cause one to adjust and interact in alignment with others. The ability for adjusting and aligning includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management (Qijie, 2014). The importance that Goleman places on interpersonal understanding has implications for leaders, including school leaders.

In Bar-On's model of EI (2010), there is an array of 'interrelated emotional and social competencies and skills that determine how effectively individuals understand and express themselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands (p. 57).'' Bar-On's competencies and skills include an individual's adaptability, stress management and dispositions (Qijie, 2011).

When thinking about school leaders and the complex demands for accountability today (Bushaw & Lopez, 2013), it may be valuable if school leadership training included a more direct focus on EI skills and competencies. Goleman suggests that a school's culture and climate is the synopsis of the interactions and decisions that take place every day (Goleman, 2006). If this is the case, then the understanding of the impact of daily interactions and their effects on decision-making is imperative. Knowledge of the areas of emotional intelligence may be able to assist.

Among other school leaders, the school principal is a linchpin in school change and success. The school principal is a critical factor in the path to school reform (Moore, 2009). Additionally, Moore states that the role of the principal is becoming increasingly more difficult (2009). The ability of a school leader to recognize and understand the needs of teachers and staff during reform is significantly helpful in the reform process (Moore, 2009).

Leone (2009) identifies two key roles in the future of the principalship: the principal needs to be a bridge of knowledge and encouragement; and the principal needs to be a navigator (Leone, 2009). Principals need to be skilled in motivating others and being able to understand the needs of a variety of stakeholders in and outside the school environment (Leone, 2009). If principals are to be successful in these key future roles, preparation and practice must adapt.

Description of the Session/Interaction

The purpose of the session is to gather information from interested peers on the benefits of understanding EI for school leaders such as, superintendents, principals, central and building-level administrators. To focus on the future of K-12 education, it is important to review the models of EI in the literature from the past decade. What do these models have to offer school leaders and how can a better understanding of these models support change initiatives in instruction and management?

Session objectives:

- ³⁵/₁₇ Briefly review the three models of Emotional Intelligence;
- ³⁵/₁₇ Discuss how these models might help school leaders in the midst of change; and
- ³⁵/₁₇ Gather information from Roundtable participants on how to further study Emotional Intelligence in order to help in the training of effective leaders.

Implications and Next Steps

The Roundtable facilitators are both faculty members in an executive leadership doctoral program that includes candidates from Higher Education, P-12 Education, Business, Health & Human Services and Non-profit Management. Given the urgency for better outcomes and increased accountability from K-12 leaders, faculty members are currently developing a study to gather experiences and ideas of program graduates to help inform curriculum and leadership training. The Roundtable session will help in the design of a new study by gathering advice from conference attendees interested in the topic of EI. Participant discussion and advice will help effectively design research whose participants would be recent program graduates who are leading schools and other organizations into a future where new skills are needed.

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