Harnessing Emotions: The Impact of Developing Emotional Intelligence Skills on Perceptions of Teamwork

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About the Researcher
Alison teaches 12th grade A.P. Government, with a pedagogy structured on Project-Based Learning, in San Jose, CA. Alison's school is one of 12 high schools in SJUSD, a public K-12 district. Alison holds degrees in Psychology and Educational Administration, and entered the ASU doctoral cohort in fall, 2016.

Problem of Practice
When students engage in project-based learning, they must work with partners as a team to discover possible answers to the questions posed. The biggest challenges students encounter are communication, in-group conflict, and effective collaboration.

Ability Emotion Intelligence Theory
Ability emotional intelligence (EI) is described as a hierarchical set of abilities that contributes to an individual’s ability to navigate interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences. It is argued that EI is an intelligence construct and as such, skills can be developed to assist EI limitations. EI scholars Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer established the Four-Branch Model of ability EI, including the ability to accurately perceive emotion, use emotions, understand emotions, and managing one’s emotions. These four branches are the focus of the imminent study.

Sociocultural Theory: Collaborative Learning
The secondary theoretical framework for this study is Sociocultural theory, with a specific emphasis on collaborative learning. Sociocultural theory situates the individual student in a context where learning happens through social interaction. Students learn from teachers and peers alike; therefore, the learning process will benefit from enhanced skills related to social, interpersonal interactions. High ability EI is correlated with more positive social interaction outcomes, including social interaction in group work and conflict management.

"He who knows the universe and does not know himself knows nothing."
--Jean de La Fontaine, 1697
In Alison’s experience in teaching PBL-based lessons for the last seven years, the most significant concern that has arisen is in the effectiveness of teamwork and related productivity. Students appear to have the most difficulty not with the content, but with the navigation of social interactions and working constructively to reach a pre-determined goal with their peers. Therefore, the impending action research project will center on the development of ability emotional intelligence skills and its impact on the perception of teamwork among students working in groups.

The innovation will include multiple strategies to explicitly develop students’ ability EI in the following categories: (a) perceiving emotions; (b) using emotions; (c) understanding emotions; (d) managing emotions.

Innovation strategies include:

- **Ability EI Skill Development**—Activities will be used over the course of a 6 week intervention aimed at developing skills related to the four branches of ability EI
- **Diary-based reflection**—students will keep a diary, with updates required twice a week and using specific prompts. This will enable emotional reflection and potentially enable conflict management within groups

**Methods**

**MSCEIT + Self Report Inventory**

Students in the participating class will have their baseline ability emotional intelligence measured by the MSCEIT instrument. The MSCEIT results will be used to track students as they develop skills related to ability EI limitations. The self-report tool will be used as a pre-post test to determine correlation between EI scores, skill development, and perceived improvements.

**DIARY**

Students will keep a diary twice a week throughout the innovation, and will record any emotional experience that occurs during group work.

**INTERVIEWS**

Interviews with participants will provide interviews about their experience in the innovation, and reflections on their participation during teamwork. Questions will attempt to discover if the development of ability EI skills impacted their perception of teamwork.