

## Exploring Leadership for the Emotionally Intelligent School II

*In the second of a series of articles, Unilever Fellow Peter Rubery, Head of Ercall Wood Technology College in Telford, reflects upon the focus of his secondment and records the outcome of his 'conversation' at the London Leadership Centre on 8.2.01*

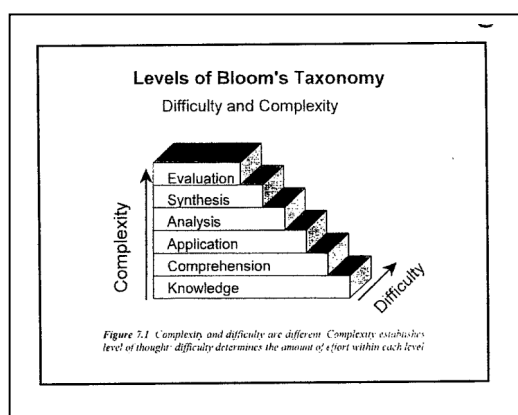
In the last edition of Leading Edge I offered a viewpoint of Emotional Intelligence at the start of the journey that has been my secondment (see Leading Edge volume 4 No.3). This article concluded with a series of questions: 'Can thinking skills be transferred? Can we teach Emotional Intelligence? Would a model of teaching, which promoted these aspects, be the key to continuous improvement?' Early perceptions of the notion that emotional intelligence and metacognition may be something that school leaders need to know more about and actively encourage have been confirmed by some fascinating 'fieldwork'. This article is intended to develop this theme and illustrate how two or three schools have addressed the issue, how their leaders have operated and to what effect.

To reprise, a working definition of emotional intelligence is provided by Mayor and Salovey (1997) who argue that they were the originators of the term – not Daniel Goleman (1996) who, according to his detractors (mainly those clinical psychologists who have not enjoyed his financial return), may confuse aspects of EI with personality traits.

Emotional Intelligence is:

- the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion;
- the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought;
- the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge;
- and the ability to regulate emotion to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

The references within this definition to thinking highlight the fundamental concept of metacognition or 'thinking about thinking'. This can be best understood by reference to Bloom's taxonomy and the benefits of engaging children in thinking beyond the knowledge base to: comprehension, analysis, synthesis and evaluation and the importance of giving time for that process to take effect .



*Sousa (2001)*

In the context of a post-modern, 'chaordic' world where the connections between subjects may be as important as isolated subject disciplines, (see Wheatley 1999), authoritative voices (Barber 2000, Bentley 1999, Hargreaves 2000, Senge 2000) are

calling for more creativity, entrepreneurship and flexibility. An appreciation of emotional intelligence and how to develop it may, therefore, be a useful starting point for school leaders attempting to give their students' educational experience the crucial elements of sense and meaning. We are clearly not alone in trying to understand this area as the notion of Emotional Intelligence certainly seems to be the hot topic of the moment. A perusal of the business pages of the broadsheets confirms that consultants are cashing in on a belief that emotional (or latterly spiritual) intelligence is the key to success – see Observer (21.01.01). Even the Government thinks we should be more emotionally literate (see Campaign for Emotional Literacy at [www.antidote.org](http://www.antidote.org)) and offers key phrases it thinks might help.

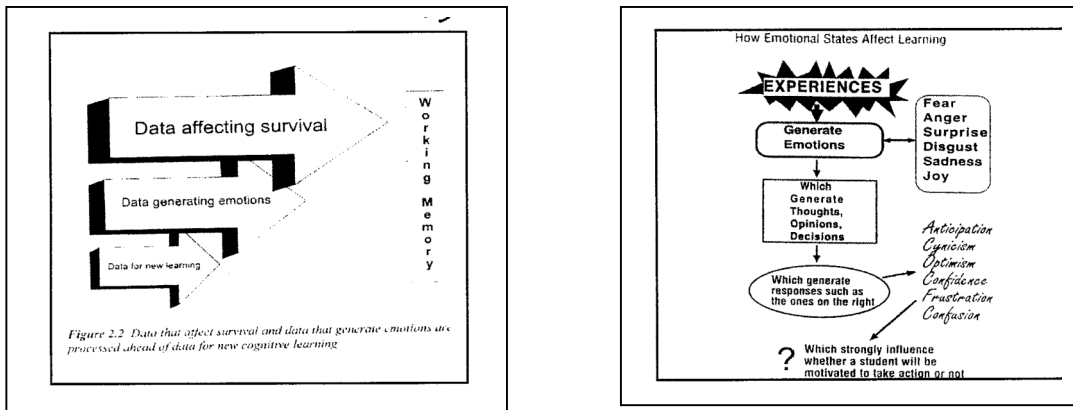
Such enquiry has led this practitioner to research for brain based learning. Any study of the emotions is bound so to do as the emotions are the trigger for attention and motivation. Whilst many of the claims of the potential benefits of brain research to education should be approached with caution, it is the convergence of research in neuroscience (particularly PET + MRI scanning), cognitive psychology and ICT that make this area worth exploring and potentially so valuable. Of the wealth of brain research available I offer four pertinent view points gleaned from attendance at the BrainExpo 2001 conference in San Diego in the New Year. Following up contacts via web and text publications illustrates how American educators have enthusiastically embraced such research and, whilst applying due caution, have created strategies that have (as conversations with American teachers revealed) had clear impact in the classroom.

Eric Jensen (1996) is a name to pursue as an introduction to this area as he is clearly the 'Guru' in the States and a well respected author in his own right. The conferences are his idea and the quality and reputation of researchers and authors willing to present (see BrainExpo 2002 at [www.thebrainstore.com](http://www.thebrainstore.com)) demonstrate his influence.

In this category fall Robert Sylwester, Renate Caine and Carla Hanniford, all three national figures in the USA that deserve exposure over here for their interesting perspectives.

Sylwester (1999 and article on [www.21learn.org](http://www.21learn.org)) takes the view of the biologist – everything is evolutionary and Darwinian and many of our established practices fly in the face of biological 'common sense'. He seeks to move understanding of brain function from the 'triune brain' theory of Mclean (1965) to a simpler metaphor that better describes the complex relationship between brain and body.

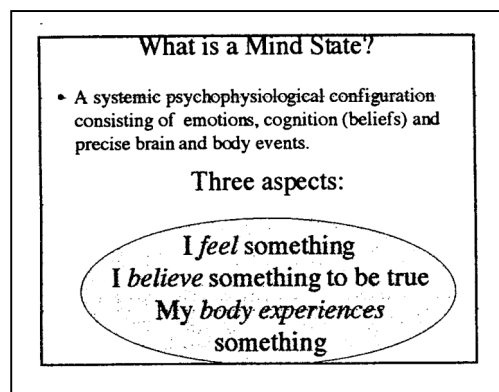
He notes that as data affecting survival and the emotions will always dominate data for new learning then the 'reflexive' response (fight or flight) has to be avoided or controlled in order to access to higher order or 'reflective' brain functions.



Sousa (2001)

In Mayor and Salovey's terms this is 'the ability to regulate emotion to promote emotional and intellectual growth'. The question therefore, is how many occasions in the course of a school day do our students face anxiety or a situation likely to induce a reflexive response? Or have we devised structures and models (including the school day and teaching styles) that actively promote this response?

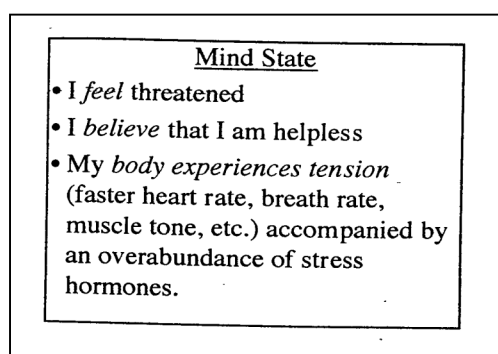
A student whose predominant state is 'reflexive' is, according to our second notable author, Renate Caine (2001), in a mindstate of 'vigilance' (or even hypervigilance) and is therefore limited to few intellectual functions beyond the concrete.



Caine (2001)

In order to allow access to higher cognitive functions such as abstract thinking, such students need to be moved from a mind state of 'vigilance' to a mind state of 'achievement'.

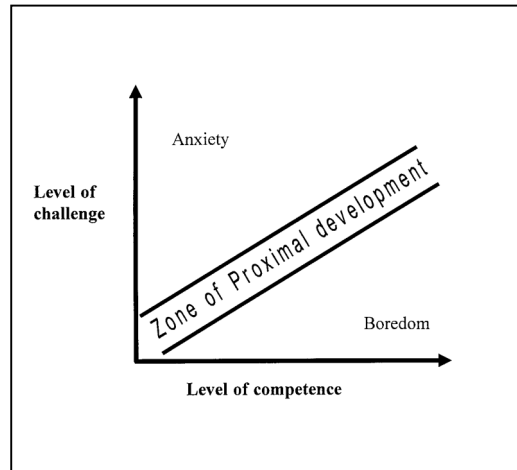
**Mindstate**  
**Vigilance**



Caine (2001)

The consequences for teachers are profound as expecting pupils to address issues beyond their ‘zone of proximal development’ will cause anxiety and compound the helplessness caused by lack of information or support, limited control and little interest and experience.

**Focused Teaching**



**Hill (2001)**

According to Caine, students in a mind state of ‘vigilance’ verbalise negative messages about their work (‘I can’t, I don’t I always, I never’), have fewer positive evaluations and more off task thoughts – sound familiar?

We should, therefore, focus on what they can achieve: discrete skills, honing accuracy, sequencing, improving speed and acquiring knowledge through repetition via visual, auditory and kinesthetic stimuli. By building the foundation for helping students to feel more relaxed emotionally i.e. structured group work to build respect and relationships; being consistent and reliable; shifting beliefs about their ability to learn; and including fun, novelty and connections to their own world, we can move them from a mind state of ‘vigilance’ to ‘achievement’.

**Mindstate Achievement**

**Mind State**

- I *feel* excited.
- I *believe* that I can do this.
- My *body experiences some tension* (faster heart rate, breath rate, muscle tone, etc.) and produces enough stress hormones to ensure success and access optimum memory.

**Caine (2001)**

It is only in a mind state of ‘achievement’, argues Caine, that metacognition can take place. If this is a key element of emotional intelligence (as defined by Mayor and Salovey) then, as school leaders or leaders in our classrooms, we have to create the conditions that will allow it to develop.

Also worth noting is the brief review of interesting ideas is the name of Carla Hanniford (1996) who emphasises the fundamental importance of play and movement in accessing reflective brain functions.

At a time of pressure on schools to improve results in the core subjects the value of physical activity could be under threat. Hanniford's passionate advocacy of releasing the brain's potential and by-passing the reflexive response by regular physical activity will resonate with anyone who has sat through hour after hour of presentations at INSET sessions (or even delivered them!) – and reflected on the process we put our students through on a daily basis. This view was supported by many of the eminent neuroscientists presenting at the USA conference whose research demonstrated the three elements necessary for the regeneration of brain cells: social conditions – community not isolation; a stimulating environment and exercise.

Having explored some of the theories I was keen to find practical applications of research in UK schools – who is addressing the issue of emotional intelligence with a systematic rather than instinctive approach?

Dr Chris Gerry and his staff at the Hugh Christie Technology College in Kent have a 'basket' of strategies designed to identify and develop emotional intelligence. They can cite an outstanding Ofsted report; exam results up from 19% - 47% 5+ A\*-C and phase III TC Status on indicators of success.

'Understanding emotional intelligence is at the heart of everything we do,' says Dr Gerry who claims a clear system of 'pastoral protocols' have created the foundation for good teaching to take place. But it is through language that they are making the most impact 'many children simply don't have the emotional descriptors and the issue is that without language you cannot think'.

Dr Gerry's research has caused him to question our perception of what adolescence is about and how we should educate this age group – a pertinent point at a time when the Government's next initiative is to focus on the lower secondary years and includes proposals to prescribe teaching styles and bring forward the end of key stage tests.

His team is exploring Theories of Mind as means of giving children the emotional language to cope in a variety of situations and move from the reflexive to the reflective Mind State. They have two major strategies to affect this strategy:

'One is to up the number of positive social encounters as we know that positive encounters affect Theories of Mind and secondly, through elaborate staff training, giving pupils pro-social language and expecting staff to model such use of language in the classrooms'.

Diet, hydration and physical fitness have also been the focus for debate and pilots are running in Year 7 and 10 for daily bouts of exercise. Also the importance of ceremony to mark the passage from childhood to young adulthood – and perhaps compensate for the decline of organised religion and community groups in society (see Putnam 2001 for the impact of this trend on American society).

Positive words and images are highly visible throughout the school, PSE programmes aim to introduce brain science to pupils and stories with high emotional content are

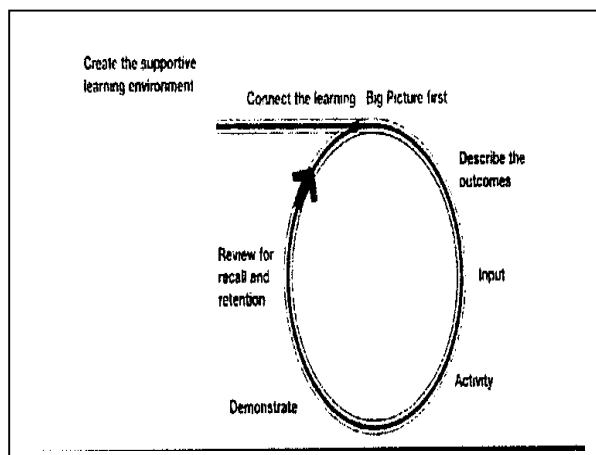
given prominence is the Hugh Christie school's systematic attempts to build emotional intelligence in their community.

Perhaps their most interesting strategy is the development, with the University of Sussex, of emotional intelligence screening tests that aim to identify pupils with limited E Q and then offer 'booster' programmes designed to compensate for this limitation and generate the emotional competence needed to succeed. This programme is currently in pilot form but the outcomes will be interesting to record.

A second example, which highlights the fundamental importance of focusing learning on the individual, is illustrated at Cramlington High School, a 14-19 comprehensive in Northumberland. They too have a headteacher, Derek Wise, who is driven by desire to transform learning and find the key to pupil motivation.

'We employ the Accelerated Learning model which is what I call teaching for learning' says Derek who, like Chris Gerry, brought in a consultant, in this case Alistair Smith, to introduce ideas to staff on a P D Day.

'But the learning to learn course is the other side of the coin as that gets pupils to understand where they are as a learner, what their learning preferences are, how they can take greater responsibility for their learning... it gets us away from this I come in, I'm taught and I learn idea'.



### Accelerated Learning Cycle

Smith (1998)

Ofsted visited the school in September 2000 and called it 'an exciting place in which to learn' and commended the emphasis on teaching and learning. It is a remarkably positive report, which will undoubtedly lead to the school featuring in next year's list of outstanding schools.

Derek's view of the importance of emotions in learning is the need to focus on 'novelty and what's in it for me... this is probably safer ground than talking about emotions, finding the hook to make lessons memorable... the value of high challenge low stress and no put down zones are all clearly understood by pupils and teachers'.

The most remarkable aspect of my visit to Cramlington was conversations with three Year 11 students who talked to me during the videoing of an Accelerated Learning science lesson taught by head of department Mark Lovatt. All three students knew

their preferred learning styles, understood the AL cycle and ‘chunking’ and appreciated what the teacher was attempting to do in each phase of the lesson, and why.

‘I’m a visual and physical learner’, said Dan, ‘which means I need to get up and do things, which isn’t very surprising as I find I switch off when he talks for too long and I don’t get enough out of the lesson’.

I asked Susan, who identified herself as a musical learner, how that helped in science. ‘Well, when we were studying atomic structures he played Atomic by Blondie and when we were doing electricity we played She’s Electric and he gets us up to do songs and dances ... it makes an association and makes you remember’. Within half an hour of the Head talking about the importance of novelty, these pupils were demonstrating how it had helped them learn and could articulate why!

They were also very clear about the value of structured group work where explaining a concept to a group member actually helps you learn.

All these strategies are used by good teachers at various times but it is the systematic adoption of the Accelerated Learning cycle with its roots in the emotional base of learning and brain research and sharing this knowledge with pupils that makes Cramlington so successful. The school development planning process requires all departments to adopt this model, prospective teachers are required to demonstrate a lesson using this model and enthusiasm for the impact on learning, relationships and classroom management is evident throughout the school.

As my ‘fieldwork’ continues in this area I hope to find further, cross phase, examples of schools adopting structured approaches to understanding emotional intelligence and how it impacts on learning. Such findings have led me to question my own school’s routines and processes, examine more closely the differences between teachers and discuss how the school day could be improved to create more sense and meaning for students.

Other schools were having similar success, notably Parrs Wood in Manchester and Mallet Lambert in Hull but from a brief but practical period of research it may be possible to infer common characteristics of schools finding success in this respect:

- a school leader who is passionate about learning
- a willingness to research and apply findings about the ‘science’ of teaching
- a commitment to professional development opportunities for staff in theories of learning, including the use of consultants and visits abroad
- the creation of dedicated ‘learning to learn’ courses to allow students to understand how they learn and share responsibility for the process ( see references)
- a willingness to support innovation and enthusiasm and make learning exciting and appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

I now look forward to returning to my school and working with colleagues to implement some of the strategies discussed above as we strive to turn rhetoric into reality, provide the best learning opportunities for our students, and systematically develop our emotional intelligence. I wish to record my thanks to Unilever and staff

at the London Leadership Centre for creating the opportunity for such stimulating reflection and for supporting me through a very worthwhile process.

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## Related Web Sites:

- [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org) American teachers' resource network
- [www.thebrainstore.com](http://www.thebrainstore.com) (Jensen's website with e-booklets)
- [www.eqtoday.com](http://www.eqtoday.com) the site of 6seconds – an excellent EQ reference point with articles resources
- [www.21learn.org](http://www.21learn.org) masses of references/articles about learning – really useful
- [www.cainelearning.com](http://www.cainelearning.com) Renate & Geoffrey Caine's site, very respected brain learning authors & full of useful guidance & knowledge
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