

New Directions in Assessing Emotional Competencies From Kindergarten to College

Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment

30(4) 315–319

© 2012 SAGE Publications

Reprints and permission:

sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0734282912449438

http://jpa.sagepub.com



Carolyn MacCann¹, Anastasiya A. Lipnevich²,
and Richard D. Roberts³

Keywords

Emotional intelligence, education, academic achievement, student wellbeing

This issue of *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment* addresses the role of social and emotional competencies at every stage of education, from the developing competencies of preschoolers right through to the emotional intelligence of classroom teachers. Emotions and emotion-related skills are important in education for two reasons: (a) as facilitators of traditionally valued outcomes such as academic skills, higher test scores, and better grades; and (b) as a valued outcome in and of themselves. While academic skills are certainly important, it is a worthy goal to have happy students with strong emotional skills, and who are resilient to negative emotions, irrespective of their grades. Contributors to this issue highlight the important role of emotions and emotional competencies for both sets of outcomes, considering the role of constructs like emotion regulation, emotional reactions to school, and other aspects of emotional intelligence. Table 1 contains a brief overview of studies that were selected for this special issue.

Research on emotional contagion further highlights the importance of emotions in the classroom, suggesting that one individual's emotional experiences may impact the surrounding students, class, and even school (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993). For example, a teacher's emotional tone may translate to a happy or unhappy class, who are more or less well-behaved, and may be more or less likely to seek help or guidance. Nizielski, Hallum, Lopes, and Schutz's (2012) contribution to this issue shows that teachers' emotional intelligence predicts students' classroom conduct. Similarly, one student's anger-management or anxiety issues can affect a whole project group, a whole classroom, and even a whole school. Conversely, one student's enthusiasm for school can spread to their peers. In fact, Lipnevich, MacCann, Bertling, Naemi, & Roberts' (2012) contribution to this issue suggests that positive emotions are more important than negative emotions in predicting students' grades and well-being.

¹The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

²Queens College, The City University of New York, Flushing, NY, USA

³Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ, USA

Corresponding Author:

Carolyn MacCann, University of Sydney, School of Psychology, Brennan MacCallum Building (A18), The University of Sydney, Sydney, 2006, Australia

Email: carolyn.maccann@sydney.edu.au

Table 1. Summary of Studies Included in this Special Issue of *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*

Authors	Title	Sample	Country	Main variables	Outcome variables
1 Nizielski, Hallum, Lopes, & Schutz	Attention to student needs mediates the relationship between teacher emotional intelligence and student misconduct in the classroom.	300 teachers	Syria	Emotional intelligence (self-report); attention to student needs (self-report)	Teacher-perceived student misconduct
2 Garner & Waajid	Emotion knowledge and self-regulation as predictors of preschoolers' cognitive ability, classroom behavior, and social competence: Direct, additive, and mediational associations.	74 preschool students ($M = 48.93$ mos; $SD = 8.4$)	USA	Two facets of emotion knowledge (expression knowledge and situation knowledge) and two facets of self-regulation (attentional control and positive emotionality)	Cognitive competence (scores on DIAL-R), classroom behavioral problems (teacher-report), and home social competence (parent-report)
3 Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey	Measuring emotional intelligence in early adolescence with the MSCEIT-YV: Psychometric properties and relationship with academic performance and psychosocial functioning.	Study 1: 775 fifth through eighth grade students (range: 10 to 13 years). Study 2: 273 fifth- and sixth-grade students ($M = 11$, $SD = 1$)	USA	Emotional intelligence (self-report)	Social and emotional competence (teacher and student report); reading and math ability, grades
4 Burger, Nadirova, & Keefer	Moving beyond achievement data: Development of the student orientation to school questionnaire as a non-cognitive assessment tool.	615 upper-elementary and 1,356 junior-high school students	Canada	Student orientation to school	
5 Lipnevich, MacCann, Bertling, Naemi, & Roberts	Emotional reactions toward school situations: Relationships with academic outcomes.	451 high school students	USA	Emotional reactions toward school (self-report)	Life satisfaction (self-report), disciplinary infractions (school records), grades (school records)

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Authors	Title	Sample	Country	Main variables	Outcome variables
6 Keefer, Parker, & Wood	Trait emotional intelligence and university graduation outcomes: Using latent profile analysis to identify students at risk for degree non-completion.	1,015 undergraduate students ($M = 19.23$, $SD = 0.71$)	Canada	Emotional intelligence (self-report, followed by latent profile analyses to derive classes of student with similar EI profiles)	Graduation outcomes (registration status)
7 Troth, Jordan, & Lawrence	Emotional intelligence, communication competence and student perceptions of team social cohesion.	273 university students ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 2.1$)	Australia	Communication effectiveness and appropriateness (peer rating); emotional intelligence (self-report)	Team social cohesion (self-report)
8 James, Bore, & Zito	Emotional intelligence and personality as predictors of psychological well-being.	196 university students ($M = 21.2$ years; $SD = 6.2$)	Australia	Emotional intelligence (self-report); personality	Psychological well-being; alcohol use; self-esteem; coping; life satisfaction
9 Li, Saklofske, Bowden, Yan, & Fung	Measurement invariance of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale across three Chinese university student groups.	Study 1: 680 university students (20.85 years ($SD = 2.36$)) Study 2: 302 university students (two groups: group 1 ($M = 23.03$; $SD = 3.12$); group 2 ($M = 20.37$; $SD = 3.28$))	China, Canada	Emotional intelligence (self-report)	

Collectively, the contributions to this issue demonstrate that emotions and emotional competencies have an important impact on education throughout a student's educational path, relating to both students' academic development and their social and emotional development. The issue covers the full trajectory of education, from preschoolers (Garner & Waajid, 2012), elementary and middle school students (Rivers et al., 2012), high school students (Burger & Nadirova, 2012; Lipnevich et al., 2012), university students from a variety of disciplines and different countries (James, Bore, & Zito, 2012; Keefer, Parker, & Wood, 2012; Li, Saklofske, Bowden, Yan, & Fung, 2012; Troth, Jordan, & Lawrence, 2012) and even teachers themselves (Nizielski et al., 2012).

Garner and Waajid (2012) show that even in preschool, emotion knowledge and self-regulation are significant predictors of children's social competence, cognitive competence, and classroom-behavior-problems. That is, the early development of school-readiness may rely on young children's emotional capabilities just as much as their cognitive capacities. Further along, along the educational trajectory, Rivers et al., (2012) demonstrate that scores on the youth version of the MSCEIT (an ability-based assessment of emotional intelligence) relate to healthier psychological functioning and greater social competence among elementary and middle school students. Moreover, the authors demonstrate that abilities such as emotion perception, emotional understanding, and emotion management may be reliably measured by psychometric tests in young teens. As well, Li et al. (2012) provide support for the robustness of the emotional intelligence construct and its measurement across cultures and languages. Our contributors also show that emotions are important for high school students, with emotion-related constructs predicting a variety of valued outcomes, including life satisfaction and students' school grades (Burger & Nadirova, 2012; Lipnevich et al., 2012). Three other contributors also demonstrate that emotional intelligence is important for success at university, predicting six-year dropout rates, student well-being, and social cohesion among student teams (James et al., 2012; Keefer et al., 2012; Troth et al., 2012). Finally, Nizielski et al. (2012) demonstrate that emotional intelligence is not just important for students, but for their teachers: Emotionally intelligent teachers pay more attention to their students' needs which in turn leads to lower levels of student misconduct.

In addition to multiple stages of education, the current special issue represents research from multiple countries around the world, and is truly international in scope. Participant samples in these studies are drawn from the United States (Garner & Waajid, 2012; Lipnevich et al., 2012; Rivers et al., 2012), China (Li et al., 2012), Syria (Nizielski et al., 2012), Australia (James et al., 2012; Troth et al., 2012), and Canada (Burger & Nadirova, 2012; Keefer et al., 2012; Li et al., 2012). As such, findings represent an international context for studying the effect of emotional skills in educational settings.

This special issue of *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment* demonstrates that emotional skills may be universally important at every stage of education. Learning is a much more complicated process than just the transmission of knowledge from textbooks or teachers to students' minds. Students need to negotiate teamwork and group assignments with their peers, develop good working relationships with their teachers, and be able to share resources ranging from coloring books in kindergarten right through to out-of-print books at university. Thus, if educational programs intend to adequately prepare young people for the challenges and demands of the current time, the sole focus on improving cognitive abilities (e.g., expanding their knowledge base) will not suffice. Instead, attention should be paid to effective assessment and subsequent development of students' social and emotional skills. The current contributors attest to this claim and show that a range of emotion-related skills are critical for students' academic and personal success. We hope and trust that this collection of articles will encourage researchers, teachers, and policy makers to focus on the critical role of emotions in student academic achievement and life functioning.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Burger, J. M., & Nadirova, A. (2012). Moving beyond achievement data: Development of the student orientation to school questionnaire as a non-cognitive assessment tool. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 30*, 367-386.
- Garner, P. W., & Waajid, B. (2012). Emotion knowledge and self-regulation as predictors of preschoolers' cognitive ability, classroom behavior, and social competence. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 30*, 330-343.
- Hatfield, E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Rapson, R. L. (1993). Emotional contagion. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 2*, 96-99.
- James, C., Bore, M., & Zito, S. (2012). Emotional intelligence and personality as predictors of psychological well-being. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 30*, 425-438.
- Keefer, K. V., Parker, J. D. A., & Wood, L. M. (2012). Trait emotional intelligence and university graduation outcomes: Using latent profile analysis to identify students at risk for degree non-completion. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 30*, 402-413.
- Li, T., Saklofske, D. H., Bowden, S. C., Yan, G., & Fung, T. S. (2012). The measurement invariance of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale across three Chinese university student groups. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 30*, 439-452.
- Lipnevich, A. A., MacCann, C., Bertling, J. P., Naemi, B., & Roberts, R. D. (2012). Emotional Reactions toward School Situations: Relationships to academic outcomes. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 30*, 387-401.
- Nizielski, S., Hallum, S., Lopes, P. N., & Schutz, A. (2012). Attention to student needs mediates the relationship between teacher emotional intelligence and student misconduct in the classroom. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 30*, 320-329.
- Rivers, S. E., Brackett, M. A., Reyes, M. R., Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (2012). Measuring emotional intelligence in early adolescence with the MSCEIT-YV: Psychometric properties and relationship with academic performance and psychosocial functioning. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 30*, 344-366.
- Troth, A. C., Jordan, P. J., & Lawrence, S. A. (2012). Emotional intelligence, communication competence and student perceptions of team social cohesion. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 30*, 414-424.

Bios

Carolyn MacCann, Ph.D., is a psychology lecturer at the University of Sydney. Her research interests include: the development of new assessment paradigms for emotional intelligence, personality, and related noncognitive constructs; issues of factor structure in personality and emotional intelligence; the prediction of educational and workplace outcomes; and the role of response distortion in psychological assessment.

Anastasiya A. Lipnevich, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of educational psychology at Queens College of the City University of New York. Her research interests include: instructional feedback and its effect on student performance, alternative ways of cognitive and noncognitive assessment, and the role of noncognitive characteristics in individuals' academic and life success.