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Emotional intelligence and subjective well-being in tertiary teaching: A pilot study

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Abstract

This is the third paper in a series reporting a multi-componential pilot study to investigate the emotional experiences and well-being of teachers in New Zealand tertiary (post-secondary school) institutions. Twelve of the tertiary teachers who completed emotion diaries and who were interviewed about their emotion regulation strategies, also completed a set of online questionnaires that included measures for subjective well-being, happiness and emotional intelligence (EI). The small sample size prevents any generalizations, and the results are treated as estimates only. Correlations were found between EI scores and tertiary teachers' subjective well-being. Multiple regression analysis of four interview questions obtaining categorical data against participants' EI scores, explained a significant amount of variance of these scores. With tertiary teachers being a relatively small cohort nationally compared to overseas samples, these indicators from this small sample provide a basis for recommending a larger and more rigorous study focusing on the New Zealand context in the future. This study contributes to the field in New Zealand specifically because previous New Zealand research evidence suggests that EI characteristics of tertiary teachers are significantly related to student enrolment.

Key words: emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, mixed methods research, subjective well-being

Background

In this paper we report the section of our research study that investigated the emotional intelligence, well-being and happiness of a small sample of tertiary teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand (see O'Toole, 2010; O'Toole, Ogier-Price & Hucks, 2010). Dirkx (2008) has observed that, "emotional issues never seem very far from the surface in adult learning contexts" (p. 9). We have found this to be also true for our sample. For example, from the diary study, we found that the tertiary teachers' daily experiences of emotions reflected their concerns for their students' well-being and achievement. Similar to findings from middle school teachers (eg Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), the tertiary teachers' specific experiences of individual emotions such as happiness and frustration or anger, reflected the successes or otherwise of their students (O'Toole, Ogier-Price & Hucks, 2010). From the interviews, we found that the tertiary teachers placed importance on high quality interactions with their students in the best interests of student outcomes, this being the main reason for their deliberate self-regulation of their negative emotions (O'Toole, 2010), which we have addressed under the terminology of "emotion regulation" (e.g., Gross, 1998, p. 275). Some participants identified an emotional cost in terms of increased personal stress, while others found that their skills improved with experience, these effects varying depending on the timing and method of emotion regulation (O'Toole, 2010). Overall there was consensus that not regulating emotions such as anger or frustration would have a negative impact on teaching and learning and the student-teacher relationship (O'Toole, 2010). In this paper we report the questionnaire findings that reflect the intrapersonal emotional demands placed on tertiary teachers due to the expectations of both tertiary students and the tertiary teachers themselves. We use the lenses of emotional intelligence (EI) theory (Mayer & Salovey, 1990), and

subjective well-being (Linley & Joseph, 2004, p. 5). Whereas emotions in teaching have been studied in middle and secondary school contexts (e.g. Hargreaves, 1998; Sutton, 2004; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), emotion in tertiary contexts remains under-researched (Hastings, 2008). We present our findings as preliminary estimates only, due to the small sample size, to show areas that we have identified as worthy of future research.

Recent New Zealand research has shown that university students' perceptions of the quality of teaching that they experience in their first year, have an important bearing on their continued enrolment (Leach, Zepke & Prebble, 2006). The characteristics of a good university teacher – according to these students, included adjectives such as “passionate and enthusiastic” (p. 123), consistent with Hargreaves' (1998) finding that teachers in general are expected to display passion, enthusiasm and tact. The New Zealand university students also appreciated teaching that they found “exciting” (Leach et al., 2006, p. 127). Another desirable teaching skill that has been identified as relevant to tertiary student outcomes is that of being able to recognize and understand students' emotions. For example, Greenwood and Te Aika, (2009) found that Maori students' tertiary success was enhanced when there was recognition of their “emotional and spiritual needs as well as their academic needs” (p. 6). They noted that the “burden of such recognition” (p. 90) lay with the teaching staff, who understand that this needed to be incorporated into the academic curriculum. Consistent with this observation, Kirkpatrick and Spiller (2010) found that when tertiary teachers in a New Zealand university-based post-graduate certificate in tertiary teaching programme recognized and responded to their students' negative emotions related to an assessment task, making adjustments to the assessment enhanced their students' outcomes. Kirkpatrick and Spiller have recommended that tertiary institutions “consider the powerful place of emotions in learning to be a teacher” (p. 177). They also recommended that tertiary institutions should provide “spaces [without] surveillance” (p. 177) for emotions.

Because teaching is a profession that requires an almost constant daily interactive process between teachers and students (Naring, Briet & Brouwers, 2006), it is impossible to consider the emotions of students without also paying attention to the emotions of their teachers. For example, based on the idea of emotional intersubjectivity which acknowledges that both parties in an interaction will be affected by the other's emotions (Denzin, 1984), and in line with the findings that emotions are contagious (Jenkins & Oatley, 1998), tertiary teachers' emotions as experienced during their teaching and supporting of students' emotions need to be taken into account. Teachers' emotions may be antecedents, correlates or consequences of their students' emotions, and vice versa. For example, the present sample have taken on the onus of regulating their own emotions to protect their relationships with students (O'Toole, 2010), reflecting their perception that their emotions may be antecedent to their students' emotions. Teachers' emotions as consequences have been described in middle school research that has shown that students were the main triggers of teachers' anger (Sutton & Conway, 2001) and other negative and positive emotions (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Tertiary teachers in the present sample also showed similar trends (O'Toole, Ogier-Price & Hucks, 2010). Australian teacher educators have reported feeling guilty when their pre-service teachers have not achieved competency, especially if they attribute this to their own shortcomings (Hastings, 2008). Therefore, Hastings has recommended that university teachers should be assisted to “cope with” (p. 511) negative emotions. In the second paper of this series, we have reported the present tertiary teachers' descriptions of their emotion coping methods (O'Toole, 2010).

The findings presented so far point to the need for tertiary teachers to possess the skills of: 1) being able to recognize emotions in others, 2) using their own emotions in their teaching, and

3) managing their own and others' emotions, all of which can be found in the following definition of EI:

The processes involved in the recognition, use, understanding and management of one's own and others' emotional states to solve emotion-laden problems and to regulate behaviour (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, 1990, cited in Salovey, Brackett & Mayer, 2004, p. i).

Hargreaves has critiqued taking an EI approach to teaching, based on Goleman's identified EI competencies (1995, 1998 cited in Hargreaves, 2000, p. 814). Hargreaves argues that emotion should “not be reduced to a set of skills” (p. 813). However Hargreaves does consider emotional understanding as theorized by Denzin (1984) to be important. Emotional understanding takes account of the socio-cultural and contextual variables (Hargreaves, 2000). Hargreaves explains that emotional understanding is an important outcome of positive relationships between students and teachers, as a result of which they should be able to “read each other over time” (p. 815). As shown above, this skill is encompassed in the Mayer and Salovey model of EI cited above (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, 1990, cited in Salovey, Brackett & Mayer, 2004, p. i).

Research studies have evaluated the usefulness of a range of EI measures, several of which we summarise here. For example, higher levels of EI as measured by the Assessing Emotions Scale (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2009), which is a shortened version of the measures designed by Mayer and colleagues, are associated with less depression and more optimism (Schutte et al., 1998). Higher levels of EI are also correlated with: subjective well-being; higher levels of positive affect; lower levels of negative affect and greater life satisfaction (Schutte & Malouff, 2011). Emotional intelligence in 164 insurance company employees as measured by the Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS) (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 1999, cited in Salovey, Mayer & Caruso, 2004) was shown to correlate highly with their managers' ratings of team performance in areas of listening to customer complaints. However there was a negative correlation with the speed with which they handled customers' complaints, suggesting that “dealing with customers' feelings adaptively takes time” (p. 70). Emotional intelligence as measured with the Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) 1998, 1999 correlated positively with self-reported empathy and negatively with social anxiety and depression (Salovey, Mayer & Caruso, 2004),

More recently the construct of Emotional Literacy has emerged from EI theory, and focuses on the perspective of EI as a set of specific abilities (in contrast to Hargreaves' 1998, critique noted above). Emotional literacy “posits that personal, social, and intellectual functioning improves by teaching children and adults how to recognize, understand, label, express and regulate emotions” (Brackett et al., 2009, p.331). This list of skills is captured in the acronym RULER, which “has constrained the set of skills” (p.333) to those that can be taught or enhanced through specially designed programmes. There is already empirical evidence that not only do students' emotional literacy skills and academic performance improve when emotion skills are taught using the RULER Approach (Brackett, Caruso & Stein, 2011), but the emotional literacy of school leaders and teachers who are involved in the programmes and who are teaching these skills to the children, also improves (Brackett et al, 2009). School leaders with emotional literacy skills tend to spend more time “dealing with people issues” (Brackett et al, 2009, p.336), including dealing with the feelings of their staff.

The emotion regulation ability (ERA) component of Emotional Literacy and EI was the focus of the interview component (see O'Toole, 2010). As Salovey, Caruso and Mayer (2004) also indicate, there has been a tendency to focus on this fourth branch of the EI model, due to

human nature perhaps hoping to “get rid of troublesome emotions” or hoping “to control emotions” (p. 66). However, this ability does depend on being able to recognize one’s own emotions and to reflect on what they mean for that moment in time, which acknowledges the other components of EI. Research focusing on ERA specifically has shown that people with higher ERA have a greater repertoire of methods to manage their own emotions and the emotions of others (Brackett et al., 2010). ERA is more successfully achieved by people who have the ability to differentiate between, and label, their negative emotions (Feldman et al., 2001). This highlights the importance of emotion vocabulary (Brackett et al., 2011). Teachers with higher ERA “tend to report less burnout and greater job satisfaction” (Brackett et al., 2009, p.336). Teachers with higher ERA should also be able to manage their stress levels and prevent the exhaustion associated with burnout (Brackett et al., 2010). For example, in a study of 123 British Secondary School teachers, Brackett et al (2010) found that higher ERA was associated with more skills in generating positive emotions using self-talk and cognitive reappraisals to redress negative emotions, to manage stress and to enhance their job satisfaction. As Brackett et al also argue, positive emotions themselves may also be regarded as a form of emotion regulation, because they are associated with more creative problem solving (e.g., Isen, Daubman & Goroglion, 1987), and are a buffer against stress (Brackett et al., 2010). Cote, Gyurak and Levenson (2010) have shown through two studies that there are positive relationships between the ability to regulate emotionally expressive behaviour and a) well-being (as measured by a questionnaire of their own design which was highly correlated with the Satisfaction with Life Survey); and b) disposable income and socio-economic status. They suggest that future research should include a longitudinal study to see whether being able to regulate emotional expressive behaviour actually “paves the way for well-being and financial success, whether well-being and financial success provide a platform for developing this ability, or whether both effects occur simultaneously” (p. 931).

Naring et al. (2006) have studied teacher burnout and recommend that it is time to take a positive approach to understanding teachers’ emotions as part of reducing teacher exhaustion and burnout. They state, “While it is important to investigate what makes people exhausted, there is increasing interest in what makes people enthusiastic about their work and what makes them feel competent” (2006, p. 313). This focus fits well with the approach taken within the field of positive psychology, defined as “the study of positive aspects of human experience” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003, p. 113). Csikszentmihalyi recommends that psychology should not just be about reducing pathology, but understanding qualities that make life worth living. EI research makes a useful contribution to positive psychology. Researchers in the field of positive psychology “are studying optimal human functioning in order to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive” (Sheldon et al., 2000, p. 114). For example happiness is a significant correlate of the things that make life worth living (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005). Happiness in teaching might be compared to “the emotional state associated with full engagement or optimal performance in meaningful activity” (Averill & More, 2004, cited in Bullough & Pinnegar, 2009, p. 245). Teachers have reported happiness as a result of students doing well (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). The present tertiary teachers reported similarly (O’Toole, Ogier-Price & Hucks, 2010). Hargreaves (1998) has found that many teachers describe teaching as a labour of love. As Naring et al also note, teachers need to genuinely feel the optimal emotions, which they term “emotional consonance” (p. 304). Faking emotions is not helpful as it is associated with emotional exhaustion and burnout (Ibid). The aim of the present paper fits well with seeking to find those attributes or skills that relate to genuine enjoyment of teaching for tertiary educators.

The Present Research

The present research responds to the call for more research into teachers’ emotion regulation goals and strategies (Schutz & DeCuir, 2002; Sutton, 2007), and their emotional well-being (Simon, Harnett, Nagler & Thomas, 2009), specifically in the tertiary context (Hastings, 2008). The aims of the overall project were to document and explore the following:

1. The range of emotions experienced by a group of tertiary teachers during teaching situations;
2. The emotion regulation goals and strategies of these tertiary teachers;
3. The self-reported subjective well-being and Emotional Intelligence (EI) of these tertiary teachers using existing psychometric measures;
4. Future directions for research into emotions in tertiary teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand.

For the purposes of this paper we focus specifically on Questions 3 & 4 with reference to selected items from the interviews as appropriate.

Methods

Participants

Four accredited tertiary institutions (one university bridging programme, one polytechnic, and two private training providers), offering a range of nationally accredited qualifications were approached and informed consent was obtained for the principal researcher to attend a staff meeting to invite staff to participate in this study. Fifteen tertiary teachers were willing to complete emotion diaries, fourteen of whom were also willing to be interviewed of whom 12 also completed a set of online questionnaires.

All participants were qualified in their domain (e.g., motor trades, hairdressing, art & design, language & literacy). Twelve participants also held a teaching qualification. Six of the participants were female (40 to 57 years of age) with teaching experience ranging from less than a year through to 13 years. The nine males (40 to 66 years of age) had been teaching from between one and 30 years. This sample size is regarded as sufficient for in-depth qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Measures

Data collection included daily emotion diaries, semi-structured interviews, both of which have been reported previously (see O’Toole, 2010; O’Toole, Ogier-Price & Hucks, 2010), and a set of on-line questionnaires, all of which were coded for anonymity and transcribed into electronic form. For the purposes of this paper we focus specifically on the questionnaires with reference to selected items from the interviews as identified below.

The Relevant Interview Questions which obtained categorical data (eg yes or no answers):

- Do you ever try to control, regulate or mask your emotions in the classroom?
- How successful are you when you try to control regulate or mask your emotions?
- Do you try to regulate positive emotions?
- Do you ever try to artificially create positive emotions in the classroom?”

Questionnaires

Participants completed an online set of psychometric tests. We sought to establish whether there was any relationship between emotion regulation skills as measured in EI questionnaires, and the tertiary teachers’ perceptions of their subjective well-being and

happiness. Since Flugel's pioneering use of self-recording methods to study emotional events in 1925, questionnaires have been used to measure subjective well-being. Despite much criticism of this method due to the subjective nature of the responses (Veenhoven, 2000), a high correlation of positive emotions has meant that short questionnaires usually display strong reliability (Lucas, Diener, & Larsen, 2003). For example, the five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (included in this present study) estimates internal reliability over 0.80 (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). For this reason, we have used three commonly-used questionnaires that have been well validated to measure happiness, satisfaction, and the experience of positive and negative affect. The combined use of multiple and diverse scales for measurement allows for a multi-dimensional capture of emotional experience.

Satisfaction with Life Scale. The *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) measures life satisfaction, using a five-item questionnaire, with a seven-point Likert-type scale. Responses are averaged to yield an overall score for each participant. Research has demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties for the scale (Diener, 1994). A reliability analysis for this study produced an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of .78. An example of an item from this scale is:

- In most ways, my life is close to ideal (Strongly disagree - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Strongly agree).

Fordyce Emotions Questionnaire. The Fordyce Emotions Questionnaire (Fordyce, 1977) is a two-question self-report measure of a person's current level of happiness. This questionnaire has been commonly used in research into happiness over 30 years, and has been shown to have significant validity coefficients with other commonly used happiness indicators. For this study, only the first question on perceived happiness is used, on a ten-point Likert-type scale. The second question which seeks an estimate of the time perceived as being happy or unhappy was not relevant to the present study. Reliability analysis was not performed on this scale due to the single item construct. The question used is:

- How happy or unhappy do you usually feel? (Extremely happy - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - Very unhappy)

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule. The *Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)* (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) is designed to measure the experience of positive and negative emotion, in order to appraise emotional state. The scale consists of 20 words that describe different feelings and emotions that may have been experienced in the previous 24 hours. Ten of the words provide a subscale for positive emotion, and ten provide a subscale for negative emotion. Participants select on a five-point Likert-type scale from 'Very slightly or not at all', to 'Extremely. The ten items in the positive subscale produced an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of .76 and the ten items in the negative subscale produced an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of .77. Examples of positive and negative emotion items from this scale are, respectively:

- Interested (very slightly - 1 2 3 4 5 - extremely)
- Distressed (very slightly - 1 2 3 4 5 - extremely)

Assessing Emotions Scale. The *Assessing Emotions Scale* (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2009) is a 33-item self-report inventory focusing on typical EI, based on the model of EI developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990). Studies have shown the 33-item measure to have

good internal consistency and test-retest reliability. A reliability analysis for this study produced an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of .93. Participants rated themselves on the items using a five-point scale. Total scale scores were calculated by reverse coding items 5, 28 and 33, and then summing all items. Higher scores indicate more characteristic emotional intelligence. An example of an item from this scale is:

- I know when to speak about my personal problems to others. (Strongly disagree - 1 2 3 4 5 - Strongly agree)

Results

The five scales described above were assessed, providing five dependent variables, and consideration was given to the assumption of normality for the data. Because of the small sample size of this pilot study, results of significance tests will be considered as estimates only.

Emotional Intelligence Score

A principal components' analysis was conducted to determine the factorial structure of the Assessing Emotions Inventory. Due to the small sample size, the four factor structure found in previous research (measuring perceptions of emotion, use of emotion, management of own emotion, and management of others) did not persist, and upon analysis of the results, a one-factor structure— suggesting a single EI score—was adopted. Again, due to the small sample size, the factorial structure of these data are questionable, however there were sufficient data for a principle components analysis to provide justification for combining the results of the questionnaire into a single EI score. EI scores were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale with higher scores indicating greater emotional intelligence. All further analyses make use of the average EI score which was obtained by aggregating the Assessing Emotions Inventory items. The average EI scores are presented in Figure 1.

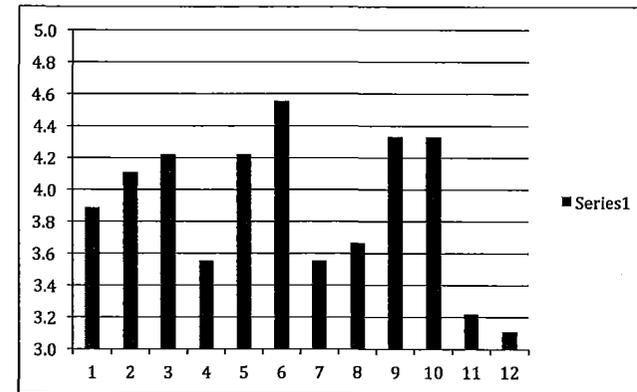


Figure 1. EI scores for tertiary teachers 1-12.

As shown in Figure 1, average EI scores ranged from 3.1 to 4.5 (Mean = 3.8). There were no significant gender differences across the 12 tertiary teachers.

Inferential Statistics

There are valid concerns regarding the sample size used in the following regression analyses. Generally, ten participants are recommended for each independent variable in a regression model. For this study, however, we were not seeking to generalize these results to the population of tertiary teachers in general. We were more interested in establishing an effect size that can be used in the planning of future research as well as exploring the structure of relationships between the variables measured in our pilot study. The results of the following analyses should be interpreted as preliminary findings rather than conclusions.

A Multiple Regression analysis was conducted by regressing participants' yes or no answers to the four categorical interview questions, Questions 3, 12, 9 and 15 onto the participants' average EI scores. This analysis showed that the four interview questions explained a significant amount of variance in participants' EI scores ($R^2=0.36$)⁵. Question 3 "Do you ever try to control, regulate or mask your emotions in the classroom?" and Question 12, "How successful are you when you try to control regulate or mask your emotions?" were both negatively correlated with EI (β 's=-0.38 and -0.26). Question 9, "Do you try to regulate positive emotions?" and Question 15, "Do you ever try to artificially create positive emotions in the classroom?" were positively related to EI (β 's=0.26 and 0.25). These results indicate that tertiary teachers in this sample with higher EI are less likely to try to regulate their emotions in the classroom, and are less likely to believe that they are successful when they try. This counter-intuitive finding will be addressed in the discussion. The tertiary teachers with higher EI do believe that they try to regulate positive emotions and they report that they do try deliberately to create positive emotions in the classroom.

Another regression model was calculated to predict subjective well-being (SWB) scores. "Subjective well-being" is defined as the sum of life satisfaction plus positive affect minus negative affect" (Linley & Joseph, 2004, p. 5). Having made this calculation the subjective well-being scores (SWB) scores were regressed onto both average EI scores and combined PANAS scores. Both independent variables had positive correlations with subjective well-being, indicating that higher levels of EI and positive emotions are related to higher levels of subjective well-being. While this model explained slightly less than half of the variance in subjective well-being ($R^2=0.18$) it was not statistically significant because of the low sample size. This model suggests that (1) the PANAS score explains 31% of the variance in subjective well-being when controlling for EI and (2) EI scores explain 37% of the variance in subjective well-being when controlling for PANAS scores for this sample.

In addition to these regression models, the statistical analyses revealed a number of interesting relationships among the demographic variables and the self-report measures. There was a negative correlation between age and EI score ($r=-0.28$) suggesting that increased age is related to lower emotional intelligence scores for this sample. There was also a negative correlation between EI and the proportion of male students in the classroom ($r=-0.40$) which would suggest that tertiary teachers with a higher percentage of male students in their class, tend to have lower emotional intelligence scores. Also, a strong negative correlation was found between Question 12, "How successful are you when you try to regulate or mask your emotions," and the negative affect score ($r=-0.69$); indicating that a more negative state of mind corresponds to lowered levels of perceived emotional regulation success.

⁵ For the purposes of this study the correlation is regarded as the effect size

Triangulating the Results

Given the limited statistical significance of the findings for this sample owing to the small sample size the data are nonetheless relevant in understanding the unique experience of individual tertiary teachers. For example, Tertiary Teacher 4 scored around the mean (for this group) for EI and was amongst the lowest scores for the happiness scale (FE). This tertiary teacher stated, "I'm not very good" at dealing with work-related emotions at the end of the day, giving the example below:

I don't have any strategies ... Yesterday there was a situation that happened, it was more tutor-related, but even going home I was still wound up about it. And it probably took several hours last night for me to just talk to myself, "There's nothing you can do about it, just put it away." It took a long time

... it was a constant thought that was going through my mind, was reliving that, that had made me feel frustrated. So I'm not very good.

Despite this teacher's negative attribution, she described her cognitive strategy, which worked eventually. It just "took a long time", which was the problematic aspect. This teacher also gave at least two examples of emotion regulation of anger during the day by walking away. Consistent with this tertiary teacher's EI average score falling around the mean for this group of participants, she demonstrated EI skills, but was aware that she would prefer to do better. This was congruent with her lower happiness score. The daytime strategy of walking away was more immediately effective than the cognitive retrospective method at the end of the day. The main difference in effectiveness between these strategies appears to be the time frame. This teacher's daily emotion experience would likely improve with some training in ERA.

In contrast, Participant Number 6 had the highest EI score, had reported the highest PA and NA, and had above average satisfaction with life and SWB scores. This person also said no to Question 9—"Do you try to regulate positive emotions?" However, as the interview progressed, it was clear that this teacher did use strategies. When asked to give an example, this participant was able to give an example of having felt "challenged" during class and waited until class was over to discuss the problem with the student. This was also a timing issue in that the tertiary teacher was able to control the immediate emotional response and wait till it was a more appropriate occasion arose to deal with the trigger to the event.

Discussion

In this paper we have focused on the third aim of the multi-componential study. This aim was to explore the self-reported subjective well-being and EI of the tertiary teachers. The statistical results of this study, which we offer as estimates only, indicate that EI in tertiary teaching is an area rich in measurable relationships. Further research extending the methodology with an increased sample size would allow for more detailed models of EI. For example, it was interesting to find that teachers with higher EI scores reported that they were less likely to try to regulate their emotions in the classroom and less likely to believe that they are successful when they did try. Yet all participants were able to describe in detail the emotion regulation methods they used, when given the opportunity to describe an example in which they had regulated their emotions. As noted above, this counter-intuitive finding perhaps reflects the wording of the question, namely whether they "try" to regulate. Perhaps teachers with higher EI may not have to "try" due to their higher ERA ability, and their increased likelihood of feeling a greater sense of greater personal accomplishment (Brackett et al., 2010). Alternatively, it may also reflect the potential for participants to underestimate

their abilities (Rivers, Brackett, & Salovey, 2008). Rivers et al. cited previous findings that “undergraduates’ self-reports of their EI correlated less than 0.20 with their performance on an ability test of EI in three separate studies” (Brackett et al., 2006, cited in Rivers et al., 2008, p. 443).

The potential for response bias in either under- or over-estimating one’s EI (e.g., for social desirability) can be addressed in the type of measure used. In the present study a self-report measure was used, whereas the findings indicate that a more objective measure of EI skills may provide more useful information for future research. Having obtained interview and diary data in addition to EI scores, this study has confirmed the potential for response bias, as also demonstrated by Rivers et al. (2008). We have been able to partly address this bias through triangulation of multiple sources of data, whereas Rivers et al. addressed bias by having more than one component in their EI measure. Future research could use a more detailed measure of EI such as the Mayer- Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (Mayer et al., 2002), which includes both self-report and performance tests for measuring ERA (Brackett et al., 2010).

The findings also suggest that higher levels of EI and positive emotions are related to higher levels of subjective well-being for this sample. These findings are consistent with previous research by Schutte et al (2009) that higher EI scores using their measure (the same measure we used) is associated with more optimism, higher levels of subjective well-being, and satisfaction with life. The findings are also consistent with Brackett et al. (2010; 2008) finding of greater job satisfaction for teachers being associated with their demonstrating greater skill in emotion regulation. This denotes an area worthy of future research and intervention. For example if Tertiary Teacher 4 were able to improve her EI and by inference her emotion regulation ability (ERA), this should lead to improved subjective well-being (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Improvements in teachers’ emotion regulation skills in general should therefore make a significant improvement to tertiary teachers’ job satisfaction and happiness. There are a number of interventions available for education and a growing body of interventions being used in the workplace (Salovey et al., 2002). For example the American Express Company has set up a programme that provides “emotional coaches for their employees” (Salovey et al., 2004, p. 72), which has yet to publish its findings (Ibid) although a set of guidelines have been published on the web (http://www.eiconsortium.org/reports/technical_report.html).

Future research with tertiary teachers should include interventional studies that can be empirically tested in context. In line with the research suggested by Cote et al. (2010), it should be possible to investigate whether possessing and/or developing emotion regulation skills might “pave the way” (p. 931) to job satisfaction. With tertiary teachers being a relatively small cohort nationally compared to overseas samples, these indicators from this small sample provide a basis for recommending a larger and more rigorous study focusing on the New Zealand context in the future.

Limitations

This exploratory study has a number of limitations. First, the sample size is small and any findings we have reported can be interpreted as estimates only. The online measures were reliant on self-report, were brief and did not discriminate the subtleties that more comprehensive or more frequent measures might be more likely to achieve. Future research should also take account of cultural differences in the norms of emotion expression and regulation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study makes a positive contribution to the existing literature through its focus on tertiary teachers and its findings on the significance of EI and subjective well-being as indicators for future research. As an exploratory study, with the acknowledged limitations, this research has also indicated the potential for future research. While it can be seen that these tertiary teachers can and do manage their emotions in the classroom, there are indications that there is room for improvement in the regulation strategies they use for their improved health, well-being, and career satisfaction. Further exploration is needed into ways in which tertiary teachers may enhance their emotional experience of teaching, for the best outcomes for students and for their own enjoyment of work and life.

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Writing about writing: New Zealand autobiographical practice

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Introduction

This paper addresses the value in writing autobiographies or memoirs as learning experiences, requiring reflection, the ability to research, to analyse and construct. New Zealanders are engaging in life writing in increasing numbers and the digital age is making such writing available to wider reading circles. Life-writing in New Zealand takes many forms, from blogging to oral history projects, to national distribution of local autobiographies or memoirs⁶ of sporting stars through bookshops. This paper will analyse one strand of such writing, the autobiography/memoir in print form, during two decades, 1960-1971 and 1993-2002. Autobiographies/memoirs written by farm people will be used as a case study of the tension between the conservative elements in their production and their potential for personal development or empowerment. Many autobiographies/memoirs are written by people late in life and their emphasis on transmission of the valued elements of the past contribute to this tension, which aspects of farm life reinforce. The extent to which this genre meets the transformative aspirations for narrative construction as a learning tool in adult education expressed by Rossiter and Clark (2007) will be addressed.

Rossiter and Clark's argument is that learning occurs through construction of narratives which allow us to bring the emotional and rational into balance. They hold contradictory information or missing elements within the story's framework until these tensions are resolved. For adults with rich life experience "narrative education seeks to bring content into direct relationship with the lived experience of the learner" (Rossiter and Clark, 2007, p. 165). Most of all, narrative is important to education because of its promotion of reflection and potential to rethink our lives. Learning as a social process encompasses the production of autobiographies/memoirs, whether this is during a career as a writer whose work is nurtured and polished by professional editors or produced by an elderly New Zealander working on a home computer with the help of a grandchild. While Rossiter and Clark are mainly interested in a guided experience directed at either enhancing learning or self-transformation, other forms of life-writing, including autobiographies and memoirs also achieve important educational goals. These are popular activities in New Zealand, supported by mentors and courses, and examination of completed works shows how the sense of a community of readers and writers has inspired people to historical research in pursuit of their own past as well as reflective interpretation.

Brady and Sky, who work with elderly people who produce life-writing, consider that it improves day to day coping skills, observation, and reflection, one participant commenting "I do believe that we become what we think and what we write" (2003, p. 160). Life-writing may bring a sense of satisfactory closure to the elderly and in some cases autobiographical memory (memory about the self) may be deliberately evoked in a therapeutic context, with elderly who are depressed, or those facing memory loss as well as being popular in general learning contexts (Webster, Bohlmeijer, & Westerhof, 2010).

⁶ Maynes, Pierce and Laslett (2008, p. 77) define autobiographies as being verifiable personal stories written retrospectively to explain a life, while a memoir might cover a phase of life or narrower theme(s).