

Enhanced Capacity through Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills, for an Improved Self and Enlightened Conduct at Work



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Workshop presented:

Date: July 18th 2024

Venue: Manzoni Lodge (Athi River)

Participants:

55 Staff of Kenya Good Neighbors

Introduction (aim)

The workshop set out to *“Enhance staff capacity through emotional intelligence and communication skills, for an improved self and enlightened conduct at work”*. This aim was founded on the realization that the staff are the most important component of human capital that in turn builds on to the social capital that carries an organization (Waldstrøm, n.d). Civil Society Organizations, of which Kenya Good Neighbors is part of, also depend on people to serve people. Even when they interact with the environment, the primary aim is to build people. This goal is two ways, in that the staff that deliver the projects profit while the beneficiaries likewise profit. Therefore, any programme that seeks to enhance staff capacity, has its goal in the integral human and community development. On that note, it serves to realize social transformation.

Focus

The workshop chose emotional intelligence, as its area of focus. Intelligence “is a general mental ability for reasoning, problem solving, and learning. It is the most prominent quality that makes humans unique” (Sadiku, Ashaolu & Musa, 2020, p.35). The authors go on to say that through human intelligence an individual is able to “comprehend ideas, plan, solve problems, and use language to communicate... learn from experience, adapt to new situations, understand abstract concepts, and use knowledge to adapt to the environment”. The focus herein is the cognitive human intelligence. On this type of intelligence, the measure is the Intelligent Quotient (IQ). This measures the factual information, the ability to categorize, to conceptualize number problems, to define words, to comprehend common sense and finally to retain (short term memory) (Al-Hadrawi, n.d.).

Additional focus on human intelligence opens up the discourse to include abilities, also called talents or giftednesses. Significant in this area is Gardner Howard (Morgan, 2021). Gardner has eight intelligences.

Table 1 indicates each intelligence and a short explanation for each:

Intelligence	Ability to
Verbal-Linguistic	-learn languages and use language skills with ease.
Logical- Mathematical	- manipulate numbers
Spatial	-represent the spatial world in paintings, sculptors and in architectural works
Bodily-Kinesthetic	-use whole or certain body parts to create, solve and display skills of bodily movements such as in dance and athletics
Musical	-hear, recognize, remember and reproduce sounds and sound patterns
Interpersonal	- understand others, detect moods, intentions and desires of others (empathy)
Intra-personal	- anticipate how to react to experiences, choose the experiences that can be beneficial.
Naturalistic	- differentiate among living things such as plants, animals, minerals and rocks.

(Morgan, 2021).

NB: In the Kenyan formal educational system (mainly the 8-4-4), only two intelligences were emphasized: verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical. This focus then left out the other intelligences, and in so doing leaving out the contribution of many other citizens until much later into adulthood. Also, many of those who did not acquire high grades in the two intelligences, were often tagged failures, thus negatively affecting their esteem and subsequent delivery in adulthood (Nexxus, 2012). The coming in of the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) is meant to address, among other issues, this gap (Amutabi, 2019).

Origins of the Term “Emotional Intelligence”

In 1985 the term “emotional intelligence” was first used in a doctoral dissertation by Wayne Payne. The term “emotional quotient: was later used by Keith Beasley in 1987, and later in 1990, psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer published the first article on “Emotional Intelligence” (Impellus, 2020).

What Emotional Intelligence Entails

At this juncture there is need to differentiate between feelings and emotions. From the common use of the word “feelings” one can infer some sense: I feel hungry, I feel cold, I feel tired. These three sentences refer to a physical state that is experienced within and by the body (eGyankosh. (n.d). At that level one cannot say, “I am emotionally hungry, cold or even tired”. While “I feel” (verb) can be used for a physical state, the word “emotion” is not a verb and cannot be used for a physical state. A feeling therefore is a “general sense [of] what we may feel in any part of our body. These may be simple bodily sensations, such as hot or cold, pain, a touch or else they may be feelings associated with emotions, such as love or hate, joy or anger” (eGyankosh, n.da).

At the second level, one may say, “I feel angry”. On that note one can also say, “I am emotional”. At this level there appears to be a convergence between feel and emotion, though once

again, the first is a verb while the second remains a noun. The focus of this paper is on this second meaning of both feeling and emotion. For the sake of this paper the words “feeling” and “emotion”, shall be used interchangeably to mean this second reaction following a trigger (Voris, 2009). With this therefore, emotion is described as “[an] abstract, metaphysical state of mind [that offers] essential impressions of the world and one’s relationship with it...[it] establish[es] the person’s attitude toward reality, and provide[s] the needed drive for all of life’s pleasures” ((eGyankosh, n.db).

The paper also looks at feeling or emotion as an effusion which if not well managed, often displaces the cognitive processes. These emotions emanate from genetical dispositions (Vernon, Petrides, Batko & Schermer, 2008), experiences including childhood ones (Dimitriu, Colomeischi & Duca, 2023), and even from traumatic experiences (PTSD) (Gottfredson, & Becker, 2023).



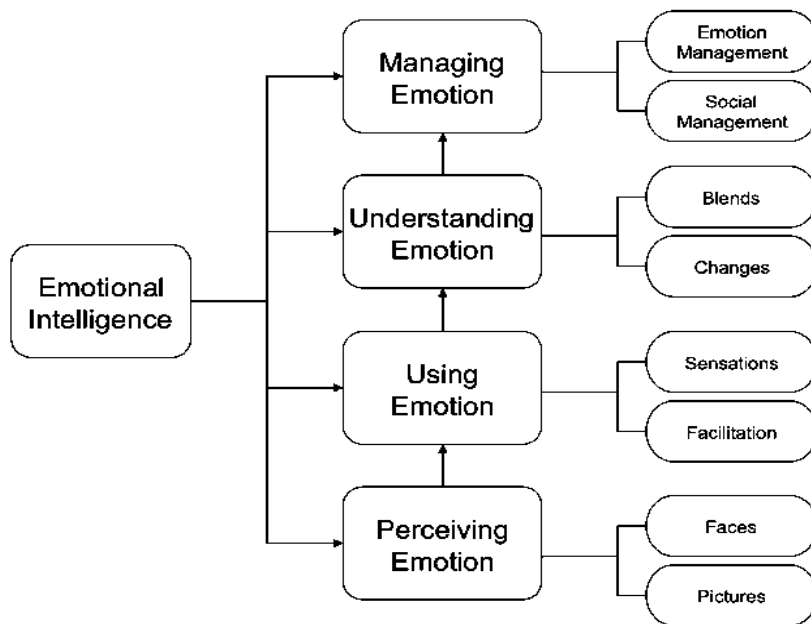
In Figure 1, there is a tree that is at the front of the others. This tree has a trunk that appears to tilt towards the left. At the same time, there is a branch that moves to the right. The trunk is taken to represent the cognitive pathway, while the branch represents the emotional effusion. The emotional path therefore is seen as a divergence from the main path. The further one moves into the intensity of the emotion, the harder one finds to come back to the cognitive path and the more the damage that one may make, while on the emotional path. Emotional intelligence therefore, is being able to know when one has deviated from the cognitive path. The quicker the realization, the more the avoidance of deviating from the cognitive path, and the lesser the damage caused. Emotional intelligence also entails awareness of the rate at which one deviates into the emotional path, and also the frequency. Additional awareness should also be the triggers to the deviation.

Emotional intelligence thus entails five competencies: (i) Awareness of emotions as well as understanding and expressing feelings; (ii) understanding how others feel and [having the ability to] interact with them; (iii) managing and controlling emotions; (iv) managing change, adapting and solving problems of a personal/ interpersonal nature; and (v) generating positive effect to enhance self-motivation, in order to facilitate emotionally and socially intelligent behaviour (Impellus, 2020). These five factors are further represented in fifteen sub-factors: interpersonal relationships, empathy,

social responsibility, problem-solving, reality testing, impulse control, emotional expression, assertiveness, independence, self-regard, self-actualization, emotional self-awareness, flexibility, stress tolerance, and optimism (Impellus, 2020).

In 2016, Mayer, Salovey and Caruso came up with a four-branch model of emotional intelligence.

Figure 2. Four Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence



(Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016).

As implied in Figure 2 on the Emotional intelligence model, an individual who is emotionally intelligent, is able to not only perceive, understand and manage emotions, but is also able to use the emotions to improve the self and also build relations. Caution is however, given to those who may use emotions as defense mechanisms. e.g. a staff that is asked for the reason of not having carried out a certain task and then s/he reacts angrily as a way to prevent the in charge from asking further. This may be more of manipulation or as mentioned previously, a defense mechanism. This is not emotional intelligence.

In addition to the four elements (perception, understanding (energy giving:-anger & happiness, as well as energy draining:-fear & sadness), managing and appropriate use), the emotionally intelligent individual knows the intensity of the emotion:

Table 2: Levels of Emotions

First level	Second level	Third level	Fourth level
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Boredom	Irritable	Angry	Furious
At ease	Satisfied	Happy	Excited
Unsettled	Worried	Fearful/Afraid	Terrified/Horrified/Anxious
Empty	Lost	Sad	Hopeless

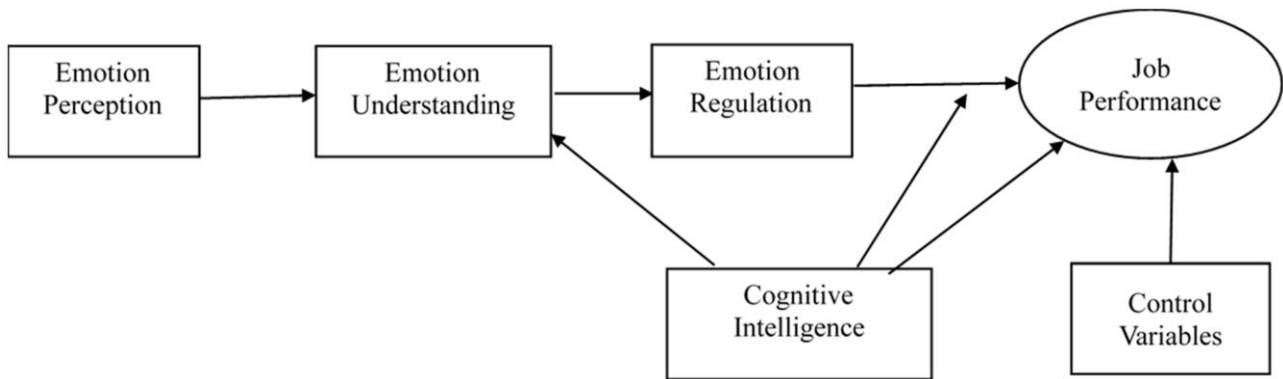
NB 1: We have deliberately left out the term “I feel depressed” since that can often be replaced by feeling hopeless. The term “depressed” is best left to manic depression which is a pathology/mental sickness (Kiingati, 2023b).

NB 2: Also, the term “stressed” has been left out of Table 2. This is also due to the level of misuse where some refer to feelings of anger, while others to feelings of being overwhelmed. Let it be noted that stress is actually not always negative; “Eustress” is the secretion of adrenaline sufficient to deal with the looming threat through flight or fight. When the secretion is however, disproportional to the threat, distress may be realized (Bienertova-Vasku, Lenart, & Scheringer, 2020). On that note therefore one could also talk of traumatic stress (brought about by a life threatening happening), or cumulative or multiple stress (as a result of successive issues each contributing to increased levels of pressure, hardly giving the one experiencing, time to process the issues independently (Slopen, Meyer, & Williams, 2018).

A little more focus on the positive or appropriate use of emotions, brings out the issue of getting overwhelmed. One that has emotionally intelligence, is **not** overwhelmed by the emotion, leading to reduced productivity, or even an over-reaction (Manz, 2009). The positive use of an emotion is often linked to understanding the emotion (cognitivizing/ subjecting the emotion through reason). In so doing, the spontaneous reaction is avoided through a pre-meditation. This therefore means that the energy gained or drained, is understood and appropriate well-thought action is carried out. At that point one can, be said to manage their emotions; they are in charge of their emotions (Manz, 2009).

In conclusion, this means that the dominant acting and relating processes of an adult, are meant to be cognitively intelligent. This refers to a perception (five common senses), followed by a logical interpretation of the perception. With this trend, one is expected to reason (use one’s rationale / justification) to determine the best response, putting into consideration the consequences (Kiingati, 2023a). The position leads to an increased understanding of one’s emotions and emotional patterns. With this, the individual is able to understand the dominant triggers and trigger situations that bring forth certain emotional reactions thus more capacity to manage the self. Having understood emotions (definition, difference between emotion and feelings, and emotional intelligence), the next section addresses the importance of emotional intelligence to the work place.

Importance of Emotional Intelligence to the Work Place



NB: The degree to which one is able to perceive, understand, manage and appropriately use the emotion, is the degree of emotional intelligence that one has. This means that one is able to understand when an emotional avalanche is approaching, know its intensity, as well as triggers and so manage it. The managing refers to subjecting the emotion to a pre-mediation that puts into consideration, the consequences.

Work is necessary in one's life. For the believers, it is a response to the co-creation mandate (Gen XXX). It gives purpose to one's life, and thus one gets identity (Kiingati, 2024). It is for this reason that one who completes their education, and acquires skills and competencies, yet is unable to secure work, often struggles with self-hate and could end up in depression (Kiingati, 2023b).

Note that the word "work" has been preferred to "job". Work entails co-creation, while job means employment (being given granted tasks to accomplish after which there will be remuneration). While it is important that people get employments commensurate to their education and qualifications, the case is not always so, more so in the developing world (Zubaria, & Sameen, 2023). In addition to unemployment, some are under employed and even mis-employed. One should however, at all times ensure that they have work to do. This is the invitation to be creative.

Emotional Intelligence is meant to facilitate one towards:

1. *Self-exploration/inquiry* (desire to know more of oneself)
2. *Self-evaluation*: with ease and listening to the voices of those that wish you well, be able to continuously evaluate one's abilities and situation. Also, identify that which one can do, not necessarily for money. While money is a motivator, it is often negative when it becomes the sole drive for the work. When the case is such, there is a temptation towards fraud, disgruntlement and boredom.
3. *Self-awareness*: What are my strengths and limitations? What competencies do I need to sharpen or even acquire for me to remain relevant in my work place? The invitation is to have a continuous self SWOT analysis. This could be done through feedback from friends: who are either (a) acquaintances, (b) people whose sharing drains you and

may even leave you feeling dejected, or (c) those that are intimately and authentically genuine. Only they that are in the third category, allow for openness, and expression of woundedness, that facilitates continued growth. If one has one in this third category, investment needs to be factored in to sustain the relationship. Also, caution is given that this level relationship needs to be very mutual and with it, discrete confidentiality (Bedrov, & Shelly, 2023).

4. Self-acceptance: This is who I authentically am. I cannot drastically change who I am but can continuously work towards improving the self.
5. Self-esteem: Sureness about one's self-worth and importance. This comes with gratitude of life, health, family, companions, and work, among other gratuitous gifts. It is also worth not taking for granted virtues of peace, security, infrastructure, and even technology, among many others. Invitation towards growth is to keep expanding the list, and having deliberate efforts towards being grateful (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).
6. Self-actualization: Being the best that life intends me to be. Closer and deliberate analysis of the self, looking at one's pathway to the present, often reveals a hand that is greater than the individual. One may call it coincidence, fate, luck or even benevolence. Whatever the term, the pathway informs hope for a better future. With continued and calculated efforts, one can keep improving the self towards realizing the best of one's capacities. It is when one searches for a virtue that is greater than the self, that happiness, a by-product of this search, becomes abundant (Frankl, 1992). On the contrary, when one gets so full of the self, and selfishly focuses on the self, happiness becomes elusive.
7. Self-Transcendence: This is the realization that one is a steward and not the owner, and that one owes it to past generations and so is duty-bound to ensure that the same appropriate mantle is passed on to coming generations

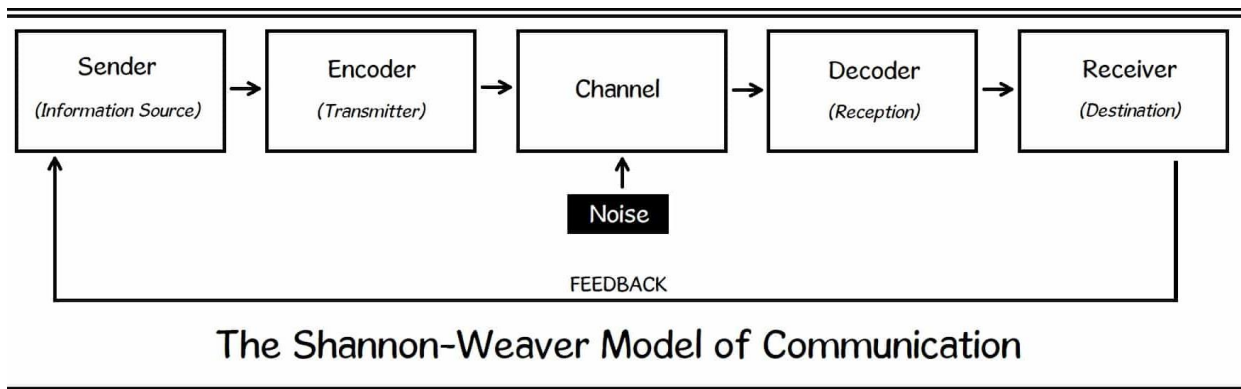
With the convergence between emotional and cognitive intelligence, and with the right attitude to work (job), one is able not only to avoid swaying into wrong pathways, they thus stay on the path of continued self and community development, and hence contribute towards social transformation (Bakamana & Kiingati, 2021).

What is the interlink between Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills for an improved and enlightened conduct at work?

For this quest to make sense, there is need to understand what is communication. In this understanding, the study shall also explore how communication interlinks with emotional intelligence for the self to be more productive at work.

What is Communication?

Figure 3. Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication (2004).



This model shows that communication is the passing of a message from a sender to a receiver. The sender encodes the message, then chooses a channel through which to pass the message. Once this is done, the receiver decodes the message and gives feedback. In the entire process, there are elements that destruct; these are referred to as noise.

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Types of Communication

There are two main types of communication namely verbal and non-verbal (VanLear, 2018).

Verbal: This mainly takes advantage of both the diction and the sentence construction. The process starts from the formation of sounds which link up to form meaningful segments (morphs). These in turn stand alone or join to form words, then phrases, clauses and finally sentences. A continuation of that leads to paragraphs. Through the choice of words, the communicator is able to pass the message as intended. The intensity of the message and the elicited emotions are majorly dependent on the diction.

Nonverbal communication is at times even more intriguing. Scholars in communication state that nonverbal communication accounts for over 55% (e (others state that it could be as high as above 70% (Eunson, 2012). Nonverbal communication entails among other things, facial expressions, head movements, eye movements, gestures, proximity, posture and even voice (tempo and pitch). Other components of nonverbal communication include clothing and adornment. All these communicate as we interact with others. It is almost not possible not to communicate when with people. Silence too is communication.

Channels of Communication

Channel refers to the mode of communication or the way we choose to pass the message (Sanina & Satinsky, 2017). Traditionally word of mouth was the mode of communication. This could be done through loud messages in places of convergence (The Kisii called their chief Omogambi”: - one who pronounces, speaks/says). To bacon listeners, they would also use horns or even drum beats. The traditional churches and worship centres used (some still use) the bell.

With longevity of distances, people started using letters. The post office started in 1837 in New York. This mode of communication has gradually developed through Telegrams, Fax, and today the Email and WhatsApp. These channels are going to continue changing with technology (Veldeman, Van-Praet, & Mechant, 2017). Due to this at our places of work, it is important to note formal/official and unofficial modes of communication and the effect of technology on our operations. As we consider that it is essential to know that which requires confidentiality, if in doubt consult.

The written channel of communication remains formal. This is because it is permanent in nature and thus cannot be altered (Sanina & Satinsky, 2017). It is with this that appointment letters are done officially in written, and signed. In addition, other short internal communications are in forms of memos, which also remain formal. Initially, when one sent a letter, the recipient had to sign the delivery note, as proof of receipt. Today, the sending of these communication messages through WhatsApp and Email is becoming more the practice. This also is increasingly becoming official. The computer or the Smart Phone is able to keep record of sent, and even received. The WhatsApp is even able to keep record of read messages by the change of colour of the ticks. It is therefore harder for anyone to claim that they did not receive a message sent through WhatsApp. Nevertheless, for legal purposes, it is important to have formal written communication, signed, scanned and sent.

As a matter of interest, short text messages sent through the phone are also recorded. Whenever there has been need to determine commission or omission of an act, short text messages have been retrieved from the service provider. This retrieval has generated communication, often times, enough to act as evidence.

Oral communication has also continued to develop. From the mouth, technology has been able to record and preserve. Through the phone, voice messages are recorded and transmitted. Even when we do not physically record using our gadgets, if need be, the service provider, can avail the voice communication. Due to the need to protect whistle-blowers, and even minors, voice is often disguised, together with the image, in reporting. It is however, important to note that voice can be retrieved and used elsewhere. Again, it is important to be discrete when confidential information is recorded; It may expose the organization to the public.

All in all, the channels that an organization uses need to be agreed upon by the administration and be in tandem with an agreeable culture (Dutta-Bergman, 2006). The people to handle the communication also should be well-known, competent, and given the relevant access (Ruppel, & Burke, 2014). Continued check to mitigate on fraud and access by unwarranted persons is needed; this is a continuous check process. As an individual, I need to be discrete on matters of channel choice. Only then can one limit the dangers that technology possesses in the area of channel.

As we choose the channel, it is worth noting that the spoken channel, especially face to face, allows for speedy correction, and the use of nonverbals (Berger, & Iyengar, 2013). Also, with the recipient being in close proximity, breeds familiarity and feedback is duly availed (Marett, Marett, & Litchfield, 2015). This enhances a back-and-forth communication destined to arrive at the desired goal. It is good to remember that pitch (high or low) and tempo (speed of speaking) are also part of the oral communication.

These advantages of the oral communication, are not part of the written communication. This means that there is need to appropriately apportion diction its rightful position. In addition, there is need to have a good command of written language aware of punctuation, voices (passive and active), and grammar. At organizational level, it is essential that written communication is almost faultless, for it is the face of the organization.

In conclusion, the study borrows from Sanina and Satinsky (2017), who state that for the channel to realize its goal it is supposed to be reliable, speedy, effective, communicative and result oriented. Despite the effectiveness of the channel, there still may be other destructors, also referred to as “noise” in communication.

Noise/Destructions in Communication

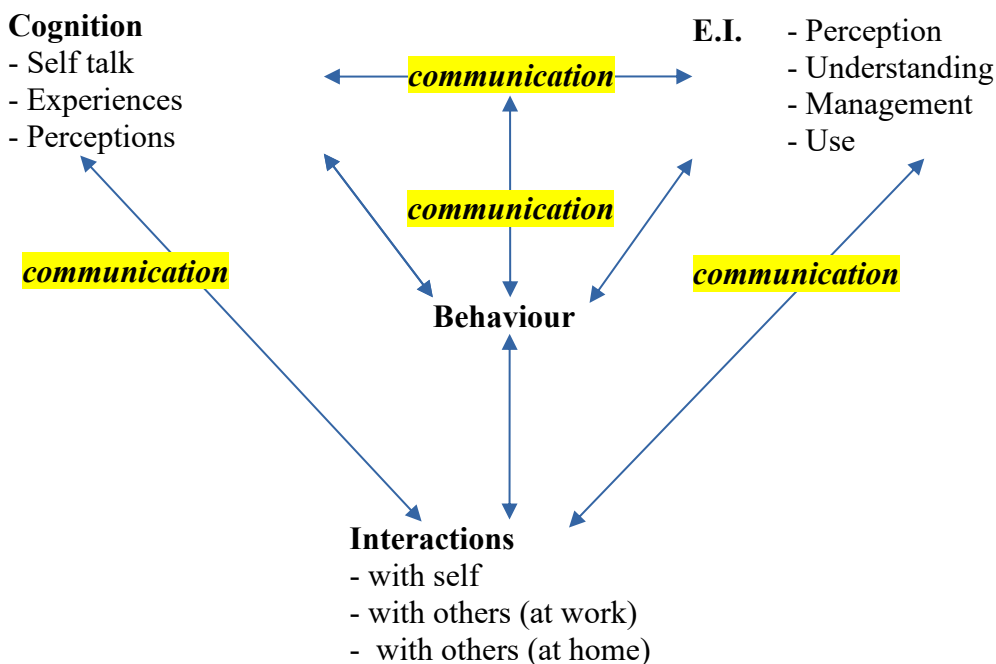
As communication is progressing, there are different barriers that interfere with the process. Kapur (2018) lists these as environmental and physical (time, space, place and medium), semantic, cultural, psychological and perceptual (one’s perception of issues). The communicator is called upon to be aware of both the internal (Personality: -Nature & Nurture, Cognitive & Emotional Intelligence, and experiences) as well as the external barriers (including environmental (Zaineb, 2010)) to their communication (Shrivastava, 2012).

There are suggestions on ways to deal with barriers and thus improve communication effectiveness (Skills You Need, 2011). These ways include use of simple language, elimination of noise levels, working on perceptions and interpretations, active listening, emotional wellness, simple and clear organizational structure, avoidance of work overload, proper media selections and finally flexibility (Kapur, 2018).

Where then is the interlink between Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills for an improved and enlightened conduct at work?

The human person is cognitive, emotional and physical. Different schools of thought have their perspectives on what causes the other. However, the concern of this paper is not on what causes the other, but rather how the interlink between the three, could work towards improving the self as well as interactions with the others. Among the areas to improve is one's communication.

Figure 4: Interactions and Influence



Conclusion

In Figure 4. the three components of the self are looked at; each relating with the other. The relationship is through inner communication within the person. However, each of the three components of the self, also relate with significant others (in the figure called interactions). The self is also treated as an entity that is related with. The awareness of what both (cognition and emotions) generate and how they manifest in behaviour influences the self-growth and thus one's productivity. The degree to which the self is grown, is the degree to which this self shall be able to influence the others through interactions, and productivity at work.

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