

Pugh, Eamonn (2008) Recognising emotional intelligence in professional standards for teaching. *Practitioner Research in Higher Education*, 2 (1). pp. 3-12.

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Recognising emotional intelligence in professional standards for teaching

Practitioner Research
in Higher Education

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Vol 2 (1): page 3-12

If emotionally intelligent teaching isn't on our standards agenda, is our ladder leaning against the wrong wall?

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Abstract

A project conducted in a primary school explored the hypothesis that student teachers could reflect upon feedback to improve their use of emotional intelligence in the classroom, thereby making consequent improvements to their teaching as defined by the required professional teaching standards. The small body of literature on the emotional intelligence of teaching is reviewed, informing a definition of the term 'emotional intelligence' and the project's research methodology.

Four student teachers and their teacher mentors participated with a teacher educator to provide two data sets – joint lesson observations records and semi-structured interviews. The joint observations were conducted with the teacher educator, using an observational checklist based on an emotional intelligence competencies framework, and the mentor, assessing demonstration of the required professional standards. Two lessons per student were observed with a four week interval. Shortly after the second observation, student teachers and mentors were interviewed in peer pairs. The outcomes show linked improvements in terms of emotional intelligence and the professional standards, with the mentor and student teacher participants confirming the value and relevance of assessment through an emotional intelligence filter. The findings have implications for emergent and established teachers in school and higher education settings. They call for a learning community to share good practice and support each other's development through observation, discussion and modelling of emotionally-intelligent teaching and conduct.

The study concludes that higher education programmes and partner schools would benefit from time, curriculum provision and government agency support to recognise, reflect upon and develop emotional intelligence in teaching.

Introduction

Successful teaching requires not just subject knowledge and appropriate teaching methods, but also affective skills. Broadly speaking, we know this as a combination of thinking and feeling or of head and heart. Since the discovery of Daniel Goleman's zeitgeist book (Goleman, 1995) a decade ago, I've known those skills as 'emotional intelligence'. I've reflected on them in myself, and observed them in others. Most recently I chose to study the significance of emotional intelligence in student teacher performance and learning.

In this paper, for the sake of clarity, I refer to the school teachers who support the student teachers during work placements as ‘mentor’.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Understanding of emotional intelligence has broadly fallen into one of two camps: a broad concept linking emotions, personal and social capabilities into an ability to cope with one’s environment (Bar-On; 2000) or more closely-defined processing skills to identify, relate to and manage emotions in oneself and others (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004). Psychologists Jack Mayer and Peter Salovey coined the term emotional intelligence, presenting an emotional intelligence capabilities model (Mayer and Salovey, 1989) which Daniel Goleman, who subsequently popularised the term, has presented as a more detailed Emotional Competence Inventory (Goleman, McKie and Boyzatis, 2002).

My understanding is within the latter camp, informed by other sources, most notably Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993). It is summarised by a simple matrix framework (Table 1) .

Table 1 Emotional intelligence: a theoretical framework

	PERSONAL (OR INTRAPERSONAL)	SOCIAL (OR INTERPERSONAL)
Awareness of feelings	Recognising our own feelings	Recognising the feelings of others
Behavioural response to feelings	Managing our own feelings effectively	Action that takes account of the feelings of others.

My subsequent definition of emotional intelligence is simply—*Tuning into emotions and taking appropriate action*. Though I recognise the colloquialism ‘tuning into’ is likely to make pedants wince, this contraction of Geetu Orme’s definition (2001) appeals because it is likely to have currency with teachers in England.

The bulk of research on emotional intelligence has focused on leadership, where it finds a commercial market (for example, Cherniss and Goleman, 2001). There has long been a recognition that teachers experience a wide range of positive and negative emotions while teaching and interacting with pupils (Hargreaves, 1998). But emphasis on emotional problems, such as dealing with teacher anger or anxiety, has helped retain a traditional caution towards the subject (Sutton & Wheatley 2003).

However, effective schools are becoming affective schools. *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004) places pupil emotional wellbeing as a central concern and studies reveal the benefits to pupils when emotional intelligence is integrated into the school curriculum (eg Qualter, Whiteley, Hutchinson & Pope, 2007). ‘Working on pupils’ emotional intelligence could also be seen as an economic and political function to produce emotionally-aware consumers (Hartley, 2003).

Whatever the driving force, schools and supportive local authorities will need to address the part that teachers play in the process though little research has been published on the development of teachers’ own emotional intelligence. Notable exceptions are Alan Mortiboys’ excellent guidebook to support FE and HE lecturers wishing to develop their own emotional intelligence (Mortiboys, 2005) and Brian Dwyer’s model incorporating understanding of emotional intelligence alongside brain-based learning, multiple intelligences and personal reflection (Dwyer, 2000).

A dearth of work on emotional intelligence in teacher education is recognised by educationalists (for example, Tickle, 1991; Hayes, 2003; O’Hanlon, 2005) and starkly stated in Sutton and Wheatley’s review:

Researchers know surprisingly little about the role of emotions in learning to teach, how teachers’ emotional experiences relate to their teaching practices, and how the sociocultural context of teaching interacts with teachers’ emotions. Researchers also know little about how teachers regulate their emotions.

(Sutton and Wheatley, 2003:328)

Perhaps there is little guidance to successful ways to support emotionally-intelligent teaching because the concept is viewed with scepticism as well as caution. Emotional intelligence is a commonly known term, but has been diversely defined, overlapping the study of feelings, behaviour, brain function or psychology (McIntosh, 2004). One study, rejecting its claim to be a scientifically-measurable construct, labelled it 'old wine in a new bottle' with little to add to existing knowledge (Matthews et al, 2002).

Nevertheless, this critical report also concluded that observing behavioural response in emotional interpersonal situations is a valid way to assess proceduralised knowledge. So an observer with experience of the context (a classroom, in this case) could confidently assess emotional intelligence in action by reading underlying feelings and observing the subject's behaviours (see Table 1). This argument, however, hinges on the assertion (Orme, 2001) that all observers have the ability to notice emotions.

Research focus

So, while Sutton and Wheatley (2003) identified glaring gaps in knowledge about emotions in teaching, it was the almost incidental findings of Matthews (2002), together with Orme's assertion (2001), that shaped my first premise – that valid and reliable formative assessment of student teacher emotional intelligence could be made in the interpersonal environment of a classroom. It was to be tested with this question:

- could a teacher educator give student teachers valid feedback on their emotional intelligence?

Secondly, as a practitioner seeking improvement for others as well as myself, I was to test a proposal that sharing these assessments with student teachers would result in reflection on the feedback and 'raising their game' in terms of emotional intelligence. So,

- would their reflection on this feedback lead to better classroom use of emotional intelligence?

The third supposition was that such improvement would result in better teaching as defined by the professional standards required for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

- If emotional intelligence improves, does this lead to improved teaching performance?

Methodology

Within my HE teacher educator role, I serve as link tutor, a role providing teacher mentors and the student teachers themselves with support from the programme institution during placements. This includes moderating assessments of mentors who, on a final placement, make summative judgements on whether the students meet the professional standards for the award of QTS. Consequently, I conducted this practitioner research as link tutor, collecting data within one primary school with eight participants— four student teachers and their four mentors. The project was undertaken with a qualitative and interpretivist approach by means of a focused sample and a methodology manageable within time and resources constraints of my normal link tutor visits to student teachers in school.

Seeking this insight into the sensitive area of student teacher feelings and behaviours had ethical implications. All prospective participants were given a brief description of emotional intelligence and of my methodology. They had written assurances of their right to withdraw at any stage and of anonymity in reporting or publishing the project. Four of the six student teacher/mentor pairs made the informed choice to participate.

Nevertheless, it was inevitable that the student perception of the power relations would be different from my own. I accepted that the student teachers may not share my view of us all being co-learners in this research and that, at interview, they may express the views they thought I wished to hear. However this risk of invalidation was countered by data triangulation, as I explain below, and by holding the interviews when the placement reports and grades had already been shared with the student teachers i.e. when the mentors and myself no longer held such possible leverage over the student teachers.

Observational data was essential; assessment of one person's emotional intelligence by another requires the behavioural evidence of what the subject says, does or shows (Goleman, 1995). Reliability was assisted by using an emotional intelligence observation record sheet assessing emotional competencies, adapted from Mortiboys' self-assessment proforma for higher education lecturers (Mortiboys, 2002: 23). It added flesh to the bones of the theoretical framework (Table 1) by listing behaviours indicative of student teacher awareness and response to their own feelings and those of their pupils; actions such as *eye contact*, *facial expression*,

Figure 1 Emotional Intelligence lesson observation proforma: example from 1st set of observations

This feedback should be read alongside any feedback using the QTS standard criteria						
Student Teacher—XXXXXX		Class—Y2 (26 pupils)		Subject—Science		
Date—XXXX						
Use of non-verbal communication – maintained throughout lesson.						
Eye contact Good on 1 to 1; develop shifting eye contact amongst pupils		Gesture Some use to aid explanations		Voice intonation Some, within narrow range		
Facial expression Initially hard faced, but softened! Then smile registered relaxation; developed to show range of positive feelings		Humour Quite good; mainly reactive; developed to initiate humour more		Voice volume Quite good; loud enough without being dominating or intimidating		
What responses were shown to the mood of the class? Certainly recognised mood in anticipating that pupils were sluggish about 'work'. However, you acknowledged this to them, without acting positively to change the mood.						
Example of student giving pupils a chance to voice their feelings as well as thoughts? Unfortunate message, three times, that you 'didn't want anyone bothering you'. Unintentional, I'm sure ... might have been better phrased to emphasise time needed with investigation group.						
Example of response to the feelings of any pupil. No examples noticed.						
Student response to show that she fully listened and understood what pupils said. Some examples of affirming – nodding, "Ah-huh". Some examples of interrupting before child finished talking; also rhetorical questions that didn't really seek a response ("Isn't that right? - Yes").						
Response to pupils' non-verbal communication (above categories) You noticed XXXX pulling a face; reassured her with a smile and said "don't look so gutted; you'll get a turn" [with investigation].						
What feelings did she show to the pupils? Interest (particularly one-to-one and with guided group), amusement, urgency, tension, impatience.						
Behaviours that indicated anxiety or anger; any example of "emotional hijack"? Just one incident – halting whole class, instructing them all to put hand up to get their attention, then rebuking them while they sat with hands up. Did you think which pupils were off-task, why and what were your choices of response before acting?						
Example of student apparently managing her own feelings. No examples noticed.						
How many pupils had responses acknowledged in manner that valued them? All pupil names used? Yes.		1-3	4-5	7-10	11-20	20+
How often did she refer back later to individual contributions? Likely to develop as placement progresses.		0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7+
Evidence of any apparent prejudice towards particular pupils? No.						
End score: Success in creating positive emotional environment. (10 highest) 5						
Students Emotional Intelligence strength(s). Conscientiousness (willingness to work hard, preparation, etc), Service orientation – focused on children's learning. Some empathy – picking up pupil moods.						
Student's EI area(s) for development. Self-control (when anxious or irritated), being a change catalyst – evaluate, assess and be prepared to change approach & activities). More empathy – listening closely, more upbeat communication (modelling positive feelings towards learning and pupils).						

voice tone/volume, response to the moods of pupils, depth of listening to pupils and incidents of 'emotional hijacking' – the 'fight or flight' reaction where we act on impulse without thinking (Goleman, 1995).

Each student received two full lesson observations and subsequent written feedback, the second observation four weeks after the first. The purpose was to consider the effect of the first feedback upon the student's level of emotional intelligence in the next observed lesson.

This data-collection method alone would not ensure validity, relying on the claim that as an observer, I could 'read' the emotional awareness by the student teachers that prompts behavioural response. I could not assume an understanding that went beyond behaviour to the underlying feelings and decision processes that governed their teaching behaviours. Nor could I rely entirely upon them sharing their thoughts and feelings openly at interview.

So the observational data was triangulated with semi-structured interviews with the student teachers, audio-taped semi-structured and transcribed discussions building on the observational data to shape a socially-constructed understanding. They drew out recollections of student feelings and reactions during the observed lessons (prompted by the written feedback sheets they received after the observations) and their subsequent views about the value of formative assessment of student emotional intelligence.

I interviewed the students in pairs to allow participants to react to and draw comparisons with what others said. Nevertheless, opportunity was also given within the interview for individual depth of response, recognising that each would construct differently the 'emotional knowledge' stemming from how a teacher feels (Zembylas, 2005: 67), particularly about relationships in the complex context of a classroom.

Further triangulation was provided through the mentors. Firstly, the lesson observations were conducted jointly. While I assessed emotional intelligence, the mentor assessed the same teaching against the professional standards, which was the previously established approach to observations. This teamwork provided the student teachers with two written feedback proformas for each lesson, recording strengths, weaknesses and targets, based on our respective observation criteria. Comparison would show the level of correlation between emotional intelligence and general teaching performance.

The mentors were successful teachers with a wealth of experience which this level of participation was designed to utilise. They were also interviewed in pairs to share their perspectives on their own student teacher's development in terms of emotional intelligence and the professional standards, as well as to discuss the relationship between these two frameworks and possible developments in this area of research.

Results

Did the teacher educator give student teachers valid feedback on their emotional intelligence?

The student teachers accepted my emotional intelligence judgements and comments as fair and valid. The first observation was, however, uncomfortable for two of them, including one who instructed the whole class to stop work and put their hands up while she publicly rebuked an unnamed minority of pupils who were unnecessarily noisy. Had those student teachers been interviewed at that stage, they may not have been as rationally reflective or, indeed, emotionally intelligent in their response to the feedback. In choosing not to lead the interviewees by asking the above question directly, my analysis coded the dialogue transcripts to sift implicit acceptance of the feedback. None challenged my interpretation and validity of the data was affirmed by comments such as *"I could feel it going wrong at an early point and I was mad at myself"*.

The mentors all affirmed agreement with the emotional intelligence assessments and four fifths of the identified emotional intelligence strengths and weaknesses were closely related to the mentors' own assessments. As one said, *"It's interesting because a lot of emotional intelligence things overlapped with what I picked up through the normal lesson observation format"*.

Did student teacher reflection on feedback lead to better classroom use of emotional intelligence?

Scored on a 1-10 scale for their ability to use emotional intelligence effectively in the class, two of the four students improved from 5 to 7.5 by their second observed lesson, one from 8 to 9 with the fourth scoring 7 in both lessons. These scores were an overview of the emotional competency assessments recorded on

the observation proformas (see Figure 1). Amongst these successes was a student teacher who showed greater control of her anxiety or irritation with any classroom noise, another who showed improved ability to empathise by listening closely to pupil contributions without interrupting, and one who responded with group activities that enabled collaborative learning when needing to build pupil teamwork in the class.

Did this lead to improved teaching performance?

Constructed from the proforma data, comparative tables of strengths and weaknesses showed improved emotional intelligence competencies corresponding closely to the professional standards that were identified and successfully addressed. One illustration is a student teacher whose emotional intelligence feedback advised her to respond to the class atmosphere and professional standards feedback set her a target of taking more control and leadership of the class. She reflected on both and, in showing more empathy with how the pupils were feeling, she was simultaneously more decisive in adjusting her planned delivery in response to the pupils during the lesson. When interviewed, the mentors were able to point to examples of how formative assessment of emotional intelligence had led to improved student teacher performance.

The mentors valued the specific feedback on emotional intelligence as an empowering tool, calling for it to be more explicitly recognised within the programme:

You do seem to forget that's the most important part of being a teacher really. But it all seems to be about subject knowledge and teaching techniques.

Sorry... what is 'the most important part'?

Interacting with the children. ...all the things that seem to get lost. It was nice to refocus back in on that side of it because that's teaching really.

This was mirrored in the student teacher dialogue. A typical reflection on the value and validity of the emotional intelligence focus was:

Yeah, if they looked at emotional intelligence as part of your observation... as well as your teaching, planning and all that...

And it's not extra work for us is it?

No; it's us as teachers. I found, when my mentor was observing with you, some things crossed over. It shows that they are picked out when people are observing you. If that [the formative assessment process] was part of it, it'd be great.

Discussion

The participants had enough faith to participate with little understanding of emotional intelligence. I made a judgement that the basic information I gave was an appropriate disclosure and that they would learn more through the first lesson observation feedback. This was a baseline measurement to test the research theory and the student teachers responded with improved practice.

Two of them took greater ownership of the emotional intelligence concept by proposing that they get feedback from their pupils. However, one less confident student felt threatened by the early part of the process:

If I'd had a bit more background knowledge, I'd have been a bit more relaxed and confident about what you were actually going to observe. Being observed is nerve-wracking enough, but not knowing what you were looking for...

If the emotional intelligence focus was adapted to impact on the achievements of student teachers with lower emotional intelligence starting points or less classroom experience (this was a final placement), they would need more than support. Formative assessment of their emotional intelligence while teaching would need to be placed in the context of other programme provision aimed at understanding and application of emotional intelligence.

There was also a good relationship between each student teacher and her mentor. When interviewed, these committed, confident mentors recognised their responsibility to model emotionally-intelligent teaching for their pupils and the student teachers. They were also working with students who were open and quite self-assured in embracing scrutiny of their emotions and responses. Others individuals or pairings may need more support.

Two mentors also flagged the importance of student teacher relationships, not only with the pupils, but with the mentor and all adults with whom they interact in the school. Student teachers have to deal not only with their own emotions and those of their pupils, but also those of their mentors, other teaching and support staff and, sometimes parents (Brackett M, Katulak N, 2007). The mentor/student teacher relationship, in particular, has to be a trusting one if both are to discuss emotional intelligence, show it in action and reflect honestly upon their strengths and weaknesses.

With all participants being female, other than myself, the gender issue inevitably arose:

I think it links more to the nurturing side of somebody as a teacher, the way they really value and nurture children in the classroom. Maybe men are less ... [sentence tailed away].

I think the mentor speaking recognised the political incorrectness of her comment at that point, but it was legitimate to reflect on whether male student teachers demonstrate more, less or the same emotional intelligence levels. I informed her that test results (Bar-On, 2000) show no significant overall gender difference, with men scoring higher on personal competencies and women on social ones.

Kate Hawkey, in the context of teacher education, considered that learning about the impact of the emotions on learning may be useful for researchers, mentors and student teachers in raising self-awareness, but that *"it is not clear... that it would impact on the thinking or behaviour of either mentor or student"* (Hawley, 2006:141). This study provides evidence of such an impact.

While recognising that these findings may not be generalisable to all primary schools or all institutions providing teacher education, it does provide insights that might be applicable to similar contexts. If the methods were repeated, or adapted, with consenting participants using an emotional intelligence lens cross-referenced to the prevailing teaching standards, then similar success could be achieved

I nodded sympathetically as several of the mentors and student teachers asked why emotional intelligence wasn't addressed more explicitly through teacher education and continuous professional development. Table 2 (page 10) shows a mapping of emotional intelligence abilities against the most relevant professional teaching standards (though I acknowledge others may match them differently). Such an exercise could lead one to conclude that these abilities are already embedded in the standards. However, like the research participants, my view is that this vital part of teaching others needs to be explicitly recognised within such standards.

A recommendation from DFES-commissioned research had indeed urged support for the development of teachers' emotional and social competence and wellbeing by conducting an audit of current teacher training provision and *"working within the Ofsted inspection framework and criteria, both for schools and teacher education establishments"* (Weare and Gray, 2003). However, since that framework refers to the current professional standards, it would seem that the place for the emotional intelligence in teacher education to be overtly recognised, and thereby systematically addressed, is within those standards.

The study shows formative assessment of emotional intelligence in the classroom as a manageable and effective tool to raise student teacher performance. Government policy in Britain has placed schools as full partners in the education of teachers and we have seen a shift in emphasis from theory in teacher education to more 'learning by doing'. While having reservations and recognising that teaching can only become a Masters level profession if theory and practice inform each other, the acid test of teaching standards is indeed application of theory at the chalk face. Assessment of emotional intelligence cannot be solely reliant upon paper or online tests of emotional intelligence, such as Mayor and Salovey's MSCEIT (2004) or Bar-On's EQ-I (2000). Valuable though they would be for selection purposes – for ITE student teacher recruitment or teaching posts – they are primarily summative assessments without a context in which to assess procedural knowledge.

Alongside other means of supporting student teacher reflection on their emotional intelligence – such as reflective journals, placement tutorials or peer support – classroom assessment has latent power to transform our view of teacher development to one that knowingly engages and assesses feelings as well as actions.

Table 2 Emotional intelligence and the professional teaching standards

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITIES (Mayer and Salovey, 1989)	STANDARDS FOR AWARD OF QUALIFIED TEACHER STATUS (TDA, 2007)
<p>Self-awareness Knowing one’s internal states, preferences, resources, intuitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional self-awareness • Accurate self-assessment • Self-confidence 	<p>Q8 Have a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation, being prepared to adapt their practice where benefits and improvements are identified</p>
<p>Self-Management Managing ones’ internal states, impulses, and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional self-control • Transparency • Optimism • Adaptability • Achievement orientation • Initiative 	<p>Q2 Demonstrate the positive values, attitudes and behaviour they expect from children and young people</p> <p>Q9 Act upon advice and feedback and be open to coaching and mentoring</p>
<p>Social Awareness Awareness of other’s feelings, needs, and concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy • Organizational awareness • Service orientation 	<p>Q4 Communicate effectively with children, young people, colleagues, parents and carers</p> <p>Q5 Recognise and respect the contribution that colleagues, parents and carers can make to the development and wellbeing of children and young people, and to raising their levels of attainment</p> <p>Q21 (b) Know how to identify and support children and young people affected by changes or difficulties in their personal circumstances</p>
<p>Relationship Management—Adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing others • Change catalyst • Inspirational leadership • Influence • Conflict management • Teamwork and collaboration 	<p>Q1 Establish fair, respectful, trusting, supportive and constructive relationships with children and young people</p> <p>Q32 Work as a team member and identify opportunities for working with colleagues, sharing effective practice with them</p>

Conclusion

As a practitioner researcher, my link tutoring is now more adaptive to the affective skills that students need; I am more reflective about the qualities of effective teaching and I have incorporated an emotional intelligence lens into my own peer review process (feedback from observation of my teaching). For the participants, this research project was a positive introduction to emotional intelligence in teaching that left them wanting more. From the forefront of growing research into emotional intelligence for pre-service and in-service teachers in the USA, Janet Kremenitzer argues:

Teacher preparation programs need to support teacher candidates by scaffolding the reflective abilities surrounding emotional intelligence and by providing sufficient time within the curriculum to infuse this process.

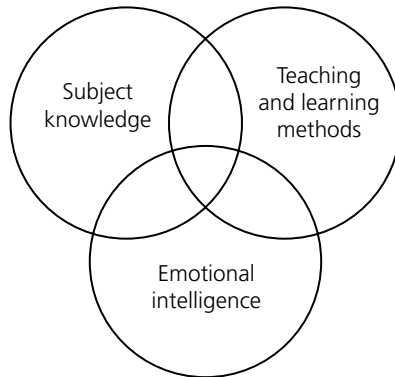
(Kremenitzer, 2005:7)

In the collaborative context of initial teacher education partnerships in Britain, our aspirations should indeed go beyond emergent teachers to a wider learning community in school and higher education settings, to professionals who will openly share existing good practice and support each other’s development through, observation, discussion and modelling of emotionally-intelligent teaching.

The findings demonstrate the value of underpinning teacher education with a model of effective teaching which includes emotional intelligence at the core, as well as subject knowledge and teaching and learning methods. (Figure 2, page 11).

Figure 2

Effective teaching
(Mortiboys, A, 2005)



Emotional intelligence can be developed, is integral to effective teaching and is measurable. Yet key external drivers for teacher education in England; the professional teaching standards and the government inspection framework for initial teacher training, don't adequately recognise the impact of emotional intelligence on teaching standards. I suggest therefore that we are working with a flawed model for current and future generations of teachers. In recalling Stephen Covey's definitions of leadership as 'doing the right things' and management as 'doing things right', his analogy is of leadership determining whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall before management efficiently climbs up it (Covey, S, 1999). When we explicitly recognise emotional intelligence in teaching, our ladder will be leaning against the right wall for us to go on to assess and develop it.

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