



# A Historical Overview of the Evolution of Emotional Intelligence

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## Abstract

Emotions have been a subject of study for ages. Many great thinkers have critically analysed emotions and built various theories - some of them complimentary, emphasising the importance of emotions as inextricable aspects of human life, and yet many criticising the pernicious influence emotions could have if not tempered with reason. The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed several empirical studies on emotions, and we find a scientific approach towards understanding the different dimensions of emotions.

Presently, 'Emotional Intelligence', also referred to as 'Emotional Quotient', has gained significant attention in the world of business. Organisational leaders have realised the importance of Emotional Intelligence and its contribution to the success and growth of an organisation. This paper attempts to chronicle the significant milestones in the development of the concept of 'Emotional Intelligence,' tracing its origin from the pioneers to the present time.

**Keywords:** Emotion, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Quotient

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Since the dawn of humanity, emotions have been a subject of debate. We find umpteen examples of historical figures in the vortex of a dilemma having to choose between the head and the heart, i.e. the rational mind and the emotions. Sometimes these historical figures have fought within themselves vis-à-vis their positive and negative emotions. The questions that emerge out of history are—what are emotions? How do they emerge? How do emotions affect us? What are the functions of emotions? Are emotions complementary to the rational mind? Much more such questions intrigue our minds and seek an answer, as emotions are an integral part of our existence and experience.

In most of the early studies by various thinkers and philosophers, there is a predominant importance given to the rational mind where emotions were perceived to be a hindrance to right action. Solomon (2008) says that emotions have always been a threat to reason and a danger to philosophy and philosophers. Aristotle in his famous work *Rhetoric* (as cited in Solomon, 2008) defines emotion as, ‘that which leads one’s condition to become so transformed that his judgment is affected, and which is accompanied by pleasure and pain.’ Though Aristotle was critical of a total absence of emotions, his primary argument was that emotions usually cloud one’s judgment and mislead us. According to Descartes emotion is a type of passion. He defines passion as ‘the perceptions, feelings or emotions of the soul which we relate specifically to it, and which are caused, maintained, and fortified by some movement of the (animal) spirits’ (as cited in Solomon, 2008). Descartes’ criticism of emotions stems from his premise that passions make judgment ‘confused and obscure’. Solomon (2008) observes that across the Middle Ages one finds that emotions are connected to desires particularly those which are mostly related to self. Baruch Spinoza perceived emotions as ‘thoughts that, for the most part, misunderstand the world and consequently make us miserable and frustrated’ (as cited in Solomon, 2008). At the same time Spinoza talks about the contrasting active emotions which he says stems from our real nature and that which helps us to be more aware. Immanuel Kant while making a ‘distinction between reason and “inclinations” (emotions, moods and desires)’ dismisses emotions as ‘intrusive and disruptive’. William James (1884)

‘argued that emotion is a sensation or set of sensations caused by a physiological disturbance...’ (as cited in Solomon, 2008).

While we do have a lot of criticism about emotions, there are many thinkers and philosophers who understand the importance of emotions and the significant role they play in our lives. Often we have heard of French mathematician, Blaise Pascal’s statement – ‘the heart has its reasons, of which reason knows nothing’ (as cited in Church J., 2005). While on the subject of the interrelation between reason and emotion Plato in *The Symposium* suggests that ‘there are emotions involved in reason as well.’ David Hume believed that emotions are integral to human existence and they ‘deserve central respect and consideration’. Hume’s theory is important because of his defence for passion and particularly because ‘he questioned the role of reason’. Kant is believed to have said that ‘nothing great is ever done without passion’. Friederich Nietzsche, in his *On the Genealogy of Morals* speaks of the importance of passions and in fact, goes on to say that they have ‘more reason than Reason’. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote two important works – *The Emotions: Sketch of a Theory* and *Being and Nothingness* where he does a ‘detailed “phenomenological” analyses of emotion’. Sartre almost gives a fairy-world description of emotions when he conceptualises it as ‘magical transformations of the world.’ He proposes that emotions help us to cope with ‘a difficult world’. He believed that emotions are important and most basic and said that we are human on account of the preexisting emotional base (Massey, 2002).

## **Empirical Study on Emotions**

Several empirical studies have been conducted to understand intelligence. With the introduction of the concept of Intelligence Quotient (IQ), the world focused its attention towards the development of this important domain of human ability and various theories and theoretical models emerged. However, as early as the eighteenth century, ‘psychologist have recognised a three-part division of the mind – (a) Cognition (or thought), (b) affect (including emotion), and (c) motivation (or conation)’ (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Intelligence Quotient was an empirical study in the ‘cognitive sphere which included functions such as human memory, reasoning, judgment, and abstract thought’ (Mayer &

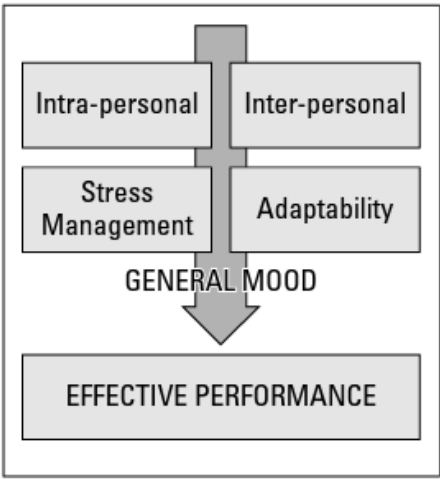
Salovey, 1997). The concept of Intelligence Quotient since its emergence dominated the empirical world for a major part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest studies on emotional intelligence, a term which came to be recognised in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are found in the works of Robert Thorndike and Stein (1937). While working on what makes up ‘intelligence,’ they proposed that ‘social intelligence’ was an important part of general intelligence which included ‘the ability to understand others and to act or behave wisely in relation to others’ (as cited in Bharwaney, 2008). He was among those early researchers who focused attention on the ‘non-intellective’ (affective and cognitive) factors considering them as general intelligence. Another pioneering contributor to the study of emotional intelligence was David Wechsler. He defined intelligence as ‘the aggregate or global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally and to deal effectively with his environment’ (as cited in Cherniss, C., (2000). He believed that if we have to measure total intelligence, some of the measures of non-intellective factors have to be included in it.

	Self	Social
Recognition	<div style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid white;"><b>Self Awareness</b></div> <p><u>Self- Confidence</u></p> <p>Emotional Self Awareness</p> <p>Accurate Self Assessment</p>	<div style="background-color: #90c000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid white;"><b>Social Awareness</b></div> <p><u>Empathy</u></p> <p>Organisational Awareness</p> <p>Understanding the environment</p>
Regulation	<div style="background-color: #ff9900; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid white;"><b>Self Management</b></div> <p><u>Self- Control</u></p> <p>Trustworthiness</p> <p>Conscientiousness</p> <p>Adaptability</p> <p>Drive and motivation</p> <p>Initiative</p>	<div style="background-color: #0099cc; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid white;"><b>Social Skills</b></div> <p><u>Influence</u></p> <p>Inspirational Leadership</p> <p>Developing others</p> <p>Influence</p> <p>Building bonds</p> <p>Team Work and Collaboration</p>

Source: [www.educational-business-articles.com](http://www.educational-business-articles.com)

### Key Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Several other researchers and psychologists pursued empirical research in this domain. The Vineland Social Maturity Scale was developed in the year 1935 by Australian psychologist, Edgar Doll to assess social competence. The scale gave a social quotient (SQ) score to indicate the level of social maturity of the individual. In the year 1940, David Wechsler proposed his idea of ‘non-intellective intelligence’. He was among the first researchers to indicate that there was a range of intelligence. Another researcher who contributed to the research was R. W Leeper (1948), who said that ‘emotional thought’ was part of the ‘logical thought’ and that it contributes to intelligence in general. By this time it appears that the foundations to the emergence of the concept of emotional intelligence were being laid.



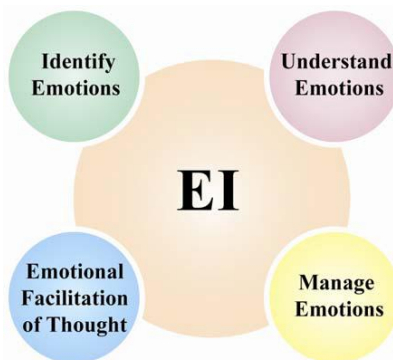
Source: <https://clientmanagementvn.wordpress.com>

### Bar-On Model of Emotional Intelligence

Well-known clinical psychologist, Reuven Bar-On did phenomenal research on ‘emotional health and wellbeing’. He developed the oldest instrument for measuring emotional intelligence, Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i™) which he used in several countries. His work culminated into the coining of the term ‘emotional quotient’ (EQ) in the year 1985. He defined his model ‘in terms of

an array of traits and abilities related to emotional and social knowledge that influence our overall ability to cope effectively with environmental demands.’ The original instrument which he developed was ‘a self-report assessment which was evolved to a 360-degree assessment’. However, the instrument is perceived to have certain limitations when it comes to actual work-life situations.

Meanwhile, another important researcher, Howard Gardner (1983) developed his model of ‘multiple intelligence’. Cherniss (2000) states that only when Howard Gardner started writing about ‘multiple intelligence’ that attention was paid to this important domain of intelligence. Gardner (1998) believed that ‘human beings are better thought of as possessing a number of relatively independent faculties, rather than as having a certain amount of intellectual horsepower (or IQ) that can be simply channelled in one or another direction.’ In his book *Frames of Mind*, Gardner describes seven kinds of intelligence – spatial/visual, linguistic, intrapersonal, musical, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal and logical. Later, he went on to add two more types – naturalistic and existential. Among these, ‘social adeptness’ (interpersonal) and ‘knowing one’s inner world’ (intrapersonal) were related to emotions. Though Gardner’s research was not widely accepted initially and was called a ‘radical theory’ the fact remains that it was a major breakthrough as the study established a clear distinction between emotional and intellectual capabilities.



Source: [www.selwyn.org](http://www.selwyn.org)

## Mayer-Salovey Model of Emotional Intelligence

The now popular term, 'emotional intelligence' was coined by two Harvard professors, Dr John Mayer and Dr Peter Salovey. Around 1988 they were intrigued by the local elections in their state where because of a scandal about his extra-marital affair, a Democratic candidate lost the faith of the electorate (Bharwaney, 2008). Their basic premise was that how is it possible that an intelligent man can organise his own destruction. Wanting to develop valid measures of emotional intelligence they undertook a comprehensive research program. While doing one such study, they observed that those who scored high in emotional clarity, that is, the ability to identify and name a mood being expressed, they were able to recover quickly than others while watching an upsetting film (Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey and Palfai, 1995). Salovey and Mayer published their first research paper in the year 1990 in which they used the term, defined it and provided the first scientific measure of emotional intelligence. They defined emotional intelligence as 'the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.' (Mayer & Salovey, 1997)

<p><b>The Emotional Competence Framework</b></p> <p><b>Self-Awareness</b> Knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions</p> <p><b>Self-Regulation</b> Managing one's internal states, impulses and resources</p> <p><b>Motivation</b> Emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals</p> <p><b>Empathy</b> Awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns</p> <p><b>Social Skills</b> Adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others</p> <p>Extracted from Working with Emotional Intelligence, 1998</p>	<p><b>Emotional Intelligence Domains</b></p> <p><b>Personal Competence</b> These capabilities determine how we manage ourselves</p> <p><b>Self-Awareness Self-Management</b></p> <p><b>Social Competence</b> These capabilities determine how we manage relationships</p> <p><b>Social Awareness Relationship Management</b></p> <p>Extracted from The New Leaders, 2002</p>
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Source: <http://managementpocketbooks.wordpress.com>

## **Goleman Model (The Emotional Competencies Model)**

Daniel Goleman, a science writer for the New York Times and later, a professor at Harvard University published his path-breaking book, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) which widely popularised the relatively new concept of emotional intelligence. It is said that even the publishers of the book did not realise the actual worth of the book. The book sold over 5 million copies by the year 2008. Later an article published in the Time magazine asking 'What's your EQ?' became 'one of the hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles around the world which have popularised the concept.' On reading the article, the CEO of Johnson & Johnson was overwhelmed, that he immediately sent out copies of the article to 400 top executives in his organisation (Cherniss, 2000). The article stated that it might not be the IQ but EQ which could be the best indicator of success. Goleman developed the Emotional Competence Inventory to measure emotional intelligence. Goleman's model is a mixed model which includes five areas: (a) Self-Awareness, (b) Self-Management, (c) Motivating Oneself, (d) Social Awareness, and (e) Relationship Management

## **Conclusion**

The concept of emotional intelligence, as can be seen, has evolved over a period of time. The due importances to emotions have come rather late but rightly and from credible scientific quarters. The tremendous work on emotional intelligence put forth by the scientific community has helped us understand the human mind and personality better. In the past where IQ was the most discussed human intelligence, today we find a place for emotions through the concept of EQ. Years of research and application in IQ has reinforced its importance and impact on our day-to-day life. If the human race has to progress, the heart cannot be ignored. The skewed importance in favour of IQ can be countered only by a systematic and consistent research in this important domain of human intelligence.



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