Personal skills for teachers: Measuring and developing their emotional competencies

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Personal Skills for Teachers: Measuring and Developing Their Emotional Competencies

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This paper considers how emotional competencies are embedded within current listings of attributes of effective teacher graduates. One conceptualisation of the personal skills that teachers require in effectively managing complex relationships involves the construct of emotional intelligence (EI). Final year teacher education students completed a 360-degree measure of emotional competencies, Emotional Competence Inventory-University edition (ECI-U) and reviewed their development of such attributes. Results suggest that this final semester student cohort gave low ratings to their existing competencies to some of the most highly ranked teacher competencies, supported by industrial and registration standards and measured in the ECI-U clusters of Self-management and Relationship management. The future design of undergraduate programs for professional training of teachers needs to include consideration of development of such competencies and the use of a viable measure of interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies.

Personal skills and competence for teachers

Research on the development of emotional competencies in preservice teachers is in its infancy but appears to have implications for teacher education programs. Interpersonal skills and competencies seem to be essential for teachers to manage their professional roles and responsibilities, and self-management skills also seem to be essential to cope with the nature and range of these school-related demands. Teacher educators, therefore, need to better understand the development of these intrapersonal (self-awareness and self-management) and interpersonal (social awareness and relationship management) skills before, during, and after the process of completing an undergraduate course of study (Davies & Bryer, 2003).

Hughes, Abbott-Campbell, and Williamson (2001) constructed a self-generated comprehensive list of competencies that Australian teachers value. Their qualitative and quantitative research over 5 years of work involved 4,000 teachers. Teachers ranked the importance of these competencies within school and classroom domains (see practitioner-based listing in Table 1, column 1). Hughes et al. also reported the way in which teachers prioritise these competencies. The most highly rated competencies involved specific personal and practitioner skills that relate to the teacher-learner relationship rather than administrative and organisational competencies. The most highly ranked competencies, which crossed the primary-nonprimary boundary, were "use of a range of teaching strategies", "initiating and guiding learning", "facilitating independent

learning", and "planning for student learning." Lowest ranked competencies on which teachers showed universal agreement included "daily administrative responsibilities", "accessing curriculum resources", and, in the classroom domain, "effective timetabling."

Emotional competence in teacher education

The construct of emotional intelligence (EI) has attracted considerable interest in business practice and educational reform. Assumptions about the possibility of improving such abilities through training have been implanted in the construct disseminated in business and education. "Training programs for EI are escalating in contemporary applied psychology, particularly in managerial training. In some commentators' eyes, EI provides the medium by which educational reform can and finally will reach its full potential, across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of schooling" (Zeidner, Matthews, Roberts, & MacCann, 2003, pp. 70–71).

Goleman (1998) defined an "emotional competence" as a "learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work" (p. 24). As outlined in Davies and Bryer, (2003), an early definition of emotional intelligence characterised it as being any desirable feature of personal character that is not cognitive intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Goleman (1995) argued that emotional intelligence has offered a theoretical structure for the organisation of personality and has linked it to a theory of action and job performance. Goleman (2001, p. 22) later also suggested that emotional thought is part of and contributes to logical thought and to intelligence in general, but correlations between IQ and EQ range from 0 to .36.

In updating his mixed model of emotion-and-cognition, Goleman (2001) proposed that the competencies associated with emotional intelligence relate to the ability to recognise emotion and regulate emotion in the self and others. A definition that integrates the work of Goleman (1995, 1998) and that of Boyatzis (1982) is that emotional intelligence is observed when a person demonstrates the competencies that constitute self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills at appropriate times and ways in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation. These four clusters of emotional competence are identified in the Emotional Competence Inventory-University edition (ECI-U) and are described in Table 2.

The ECI-U (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2002) was selected for use in this study because of its parallels with listings of teacher competencies developed, empirically, by practitioners and, conceptually, by organisations with oversight of the teaching profession (see Table 1, column 2). Personal skills and competencies have been documented across professional, industrial, and academic perspectives on teacher performance in Queensland (see Table 1, columns 3, 4, and 5). It can be seen that these aspirational listings articulate a converging desire to address issues of personal effectiveness as a critical contributor to life and career success over and above graduate status and professional registration (Davies & Bryer, 2004).

Table 1

A comparison of lists of attributes of teacher education graduates

PRACTITIONER	SCIENTIFIC	PROFESSIONAL	INDUSTRIAL	ACADEMIC
Teacher Competencies (Average Rankings School Domain components bolded, Classroom Domain components unbolded)	**Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI-U)** (Cluster headings bolded)	**Board of Teacher Registration Standards**	**Education Queensland Standards**	**Griffith University Domains of Capability**
Knowledge/enthusiasm for subject (4.2) **Curriculum development (4.7)** Pedagogical knowledge (7.7) Demonstrating and developing curriculum expertise (7.8)	**Self-awareness** Emotional Self-Awareness Accurate Self-Awareness Self-Confidence **Relationship Management** Developing others Change Catalyst	Graduates will possess and be able to apply professional and disciplinary knowledge bases.	Structure flexible and innovative learning experiences for individuals and groups.	Learning and adaptability Problem solving Information literacy
Responsiveness to special needs (3.9) Classroom management (4.0) Assessment of student achievement (6.3) **Effective timetabling (5.6)** **Administering School policy (5.7)** Developing own theoretical understanding (8.0) Accessing curriculum resources (8.4) Daily administrative responsibilities (9.2)	**Self-management** Emotional self-control Trustworthiness Conscientiousness Adaptability Optimism Achievement orientation Initiative **Relationship Management** Developing others Change Catalyst	Graduates will possess and be able to apply a range of literacies relevant to their professional roles.	Contribute to language, literacy & numeracy development. Integrate information & communication technologies to enhance student learning. Assess & report on student learning.	Written communication Oral communication Information literacy Interpersonal skills Self-management Personal effectiveness

PRACTITIONER	SCIENTIFIC	PROFESSIONAL	INDUSTRIAL	ACADEMIC
Use of range of teaching strategies (3.6) Initiating and guiding learning (3.6) Facilitating independent learning (3.7) Planning for student learning (3.8) Responsiveness to individual difference (3.9) Classroom management (4.0) **Knowing student background (4.0)** Responsiveness to special needs (4.1) **Effective resource utilization (4.8)** Student discipline and control (5.3) Adaptability to differing contexts (5.9)	**Social Awareness** Empathy Organisational awareness Service Orientation **Relationship Management** Developing others Inspirational leadership Influence Change Catalyst Conflict Management Building bonds Teamwork & Collaboration **Self-management** Emotional self-control Conscientiousness Adaptability Initiative	Graduates will exhibit the skills to create supportive and intellectually challenging learning environments to engage all learners.	Create safe & supportive learning environments. Construct intellectually challenging learning experiences. Construct inclusive & participatory learning experiences. Support the social development and participation of young people.	Learning and adaptability Problem solving Conceptual and analytical skill
Interaction with colleagues (2.9) **Interaction with parents and the community (3.8)** Foster interpersonal relationships (4.7) **Review of assessment procedures (5.8)** **Ethical and legal obligations (6.1)** Evaluating programs/units (7.9)	**Relationship Management** Developing others Inspirational leadership Influence Change Catalyst Conflict Management Building bonds Teamwork & Collaboration **Self-management** Conscientiousness **Self-awareness**	Graduates will understand and participate in relationships that characterise ethical professional practice within and beyond learning communities.	Construct relevant learning experiences that connect with the world beyond school. Build relationships with the wider community. Contribute to professional teams.	Community and citizenship Career and vocational Organisational membership Interpersonal skills Team and group skills
Self-Appraisal and Reflection (3.4) **Developing professional judgement (3.9)** **Leadership & Decision-making (4.3)** **Staff development participation (4.6)** Self-criticism of own teaching (6.7)	**Self-awareness** **Relationship Management** Inspirational leadership Influence Teamwork & Collaboration **Self-management** Conscientiousness	Graduates will be committed to reflective practice and ongoing professional renewal.	Commit to professional practice.	Professional effectiveness Self-management Personal effectiveness

Table 2

The Goleman & Boyatzis model of emotional intelligence, as portrayed in the Emotional Competence Inventory - University edition (ECI-U), and definitions.

EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE CLUSTERS	DEFINITIONS
Self-awareness	
Emotional self-awareness	*Recognise own emotions and their effects*
Accurate self-assessment	*Knowing inner resources, abilities & limits*
Self-confidence	*Belief in capability to accomplish*
Social awareness	
Empathy	*Understanding others accurately*
Organisational awareness	*Understand group power*
Service orientation	*Desire to help/serve others needs*
Self-management	
Emotional self-control	*Keep impulsive emotions and feelings under control*
Trustworthiness	*Actions consistent with what you say and value*
Conscientiousness	*Taking responsibility for your personal performance*
Adaptability	*Flexible, able to work in changing conditions*
Optimism	*"Glass half full, not half empty"*
Achievement orientation	*Working toward a standard of excellence*
Initiative	*Identify and take action*
Relationship management	
Developing others	*Foster development of others*
Inspirational leadership	*Able to lead team or group*
Influence	*Persuade others to support your agenda*
Communication	*Clear effective messages*
Change catalyst	*Lead groups to make changes*
Conflict management	*Diplomacy and tact*
Building bonds	*Build and maintain relationships*
Teamwork & collaboration	*Working cooperatively*

Methodology

Participants in this study were 4th year students (N = 48) undertaking a final semester course in interpersonal psychology as part of their bachelor of education, mostly in special education. This cohort had a strong gender bias with only two males in the sample. As an introduction to the course, the students were asked to complete a short university student version of the Emotional Competency Inventory (the 63-item ECI-U), which measures 21 components organised into four clusters: Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, and Relationship management. At the time of completing the ECI-U, these students were beginning a course in interpersonal psychology, a core special education course that was to cover competencies in change, conflict management, power and influence, and emotional self-control through assertiveness training and group leadership skill development.

This self-assessment questionnaire also involves a 360-degree assessment that includes other people's ratings of the individual. According to the ECI Technical Manual (Sala, 2002), 360-degree assessments strengthen the internal consistency reliability of the overall measure because other raters have higher internal consistency coefficients than a self-rater. Use of the 360-degree feedback system has been found to enhance self-knowledge and improvement in behaviour among business clients (London & Beatty, 1993).

Participants asked three other raters who knew them well from different aspects of their life (e.g., shared residence, family members, university and work colleagues) to complete the same measure. Most participants (n = 41) were able to secure three completed rater assessments, while other participants located two (n = 5), one (n = 1), or none (n = 1). To ensure confidentiality of the other-raters scores, raters were provided with envelopes with the researcher's name on it that could be sealed and mailed back to the researcher.

The students were also asked to write short reflective answers to three questions about aspects of their acquisition of emotional competencies: "What emotional competencies have you acquired? What emotional competencies would you ideally like to develop? How can you acquire these competencies?" Each student was e-mailed a form with space for 200 words on each question. Most students (n = 42) completed the 3 questions and returned the completed questions via e-mail to the researcher.

Data and analysis

The completed ECI-U ratings from 48 students and 134 other raters were scored as suggested by the ECI-U workbook and then analysed. The average scores for each of the 21 competencies shown in Figure 1 are separated into the four cluster groupings from left to right: Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, and Relationship management. The comparison between self-rater and other rater scores are also indicated in Figure 1.

Some significant differences were found through multivariate tests of the estimated marginal means of self-rating scores and other-rater scores. The ECI Manual (Sala, 2002) reported differences between self and other raters, with self-raters always achieving higher scores. In this sample, the opposite trend was identified, with lower self-rater scores for Self-confidence, Emotional self-control, Trust, Conscientiousness, Developing others, and Building bonds ($p < .001$). When combined into clusters, self-raters scored significantly lower compared to other-raters in two of the four clusters (i.e., Self-management and Relationship management).

A visual inspection of Figure 2 shows the mean scores of the 21 competencies from all raters combined. The 95% confidence limit indicates that these teacher education students gave significantly different ratings to many of the competencies. Inspection of Figure 2 shows that the highest rated competencies include, in order, Teamwork and collaboration, Empathy, Conscientiousness, Service orientation, Communication, Accurate self-assessment, and Optimism. The lowest rated competencies were Initiative, Change catalyst, Conflict management, Influence, Achievement orientation, Emotional self-control, and Adaptability. All of the highly rated competencies were significantly

higher than the lowest rated competencies.

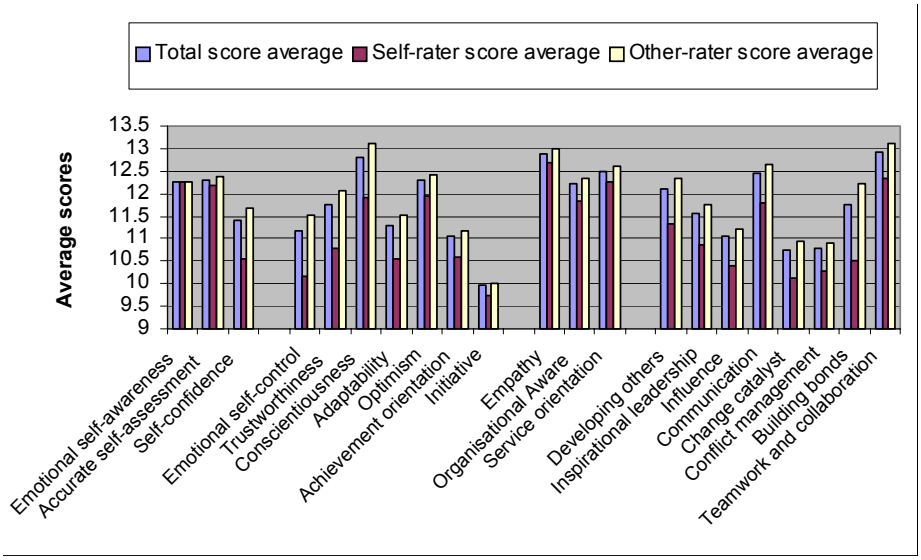


Figure 1.

Mean emotional competency scores for self-raters, other-raters, and for total ratings.

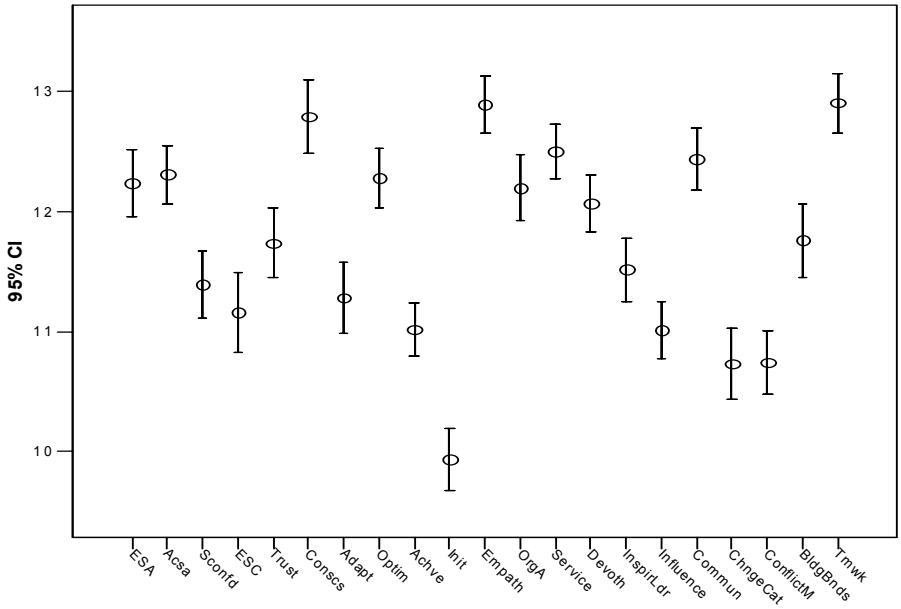


Figure 2

Means for 21 emotional competencies and confidence limits.

These 21 competencies were then clustered into four subsets as suggested in the ECI-U manual. Figure 3 displays the mean scores from all raters on each of the four clusters. The 95% confidence limit indicated that Social awareness was rated significantly higher than all of the other clusters. The Self-awareness cluster was rated significantly higher than Self-management, which was significantly lower than the top two clusters.

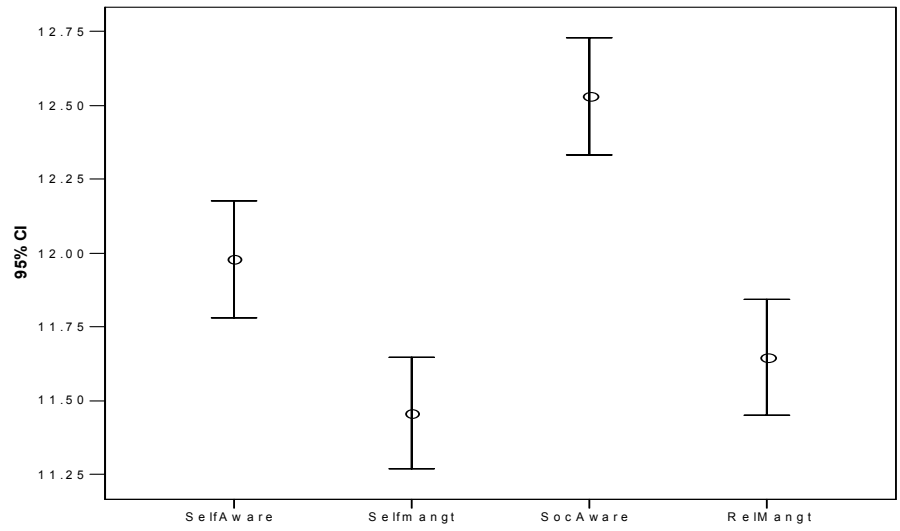
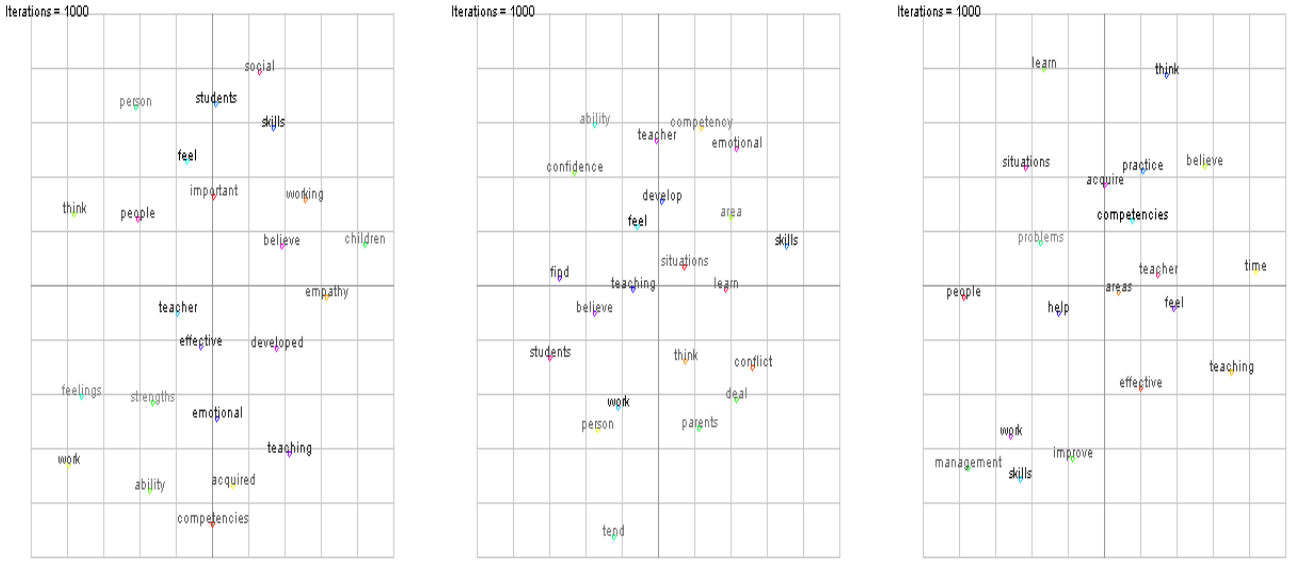


Figure 3

Means for Emotional Competency Clusters and Confidence Limits.

Content analysis of responses from the three questions asked of the 48 students sought to clarify major themes. The three questions were separately prepared for text analysis by the software package, Leximancer (Smith, 2002), which generates a nonselective exploration of samples of text. Leximancer computes the frequency with which each term is used, after discarding text items of no research relevance (such as "a" and "the"), and then computes the distance between each of the terms via computations equivalent to nonparametric factor analytic or cluster analytic procedures. As with other factor analytic procedures, there is no single solution, and the quality of particular solutions is judged in terms of their interpretability. The results of computations are displayed in two-dimensional spatial representation that can be explored through rotation to optimise the arrangement of terms and to explore the family of associations with any one term. The clusters of terms in each of the four quadrants can be interpreted as forming patterns of associations. Figure 4 presents three diagrams that display clusters derived from analysis of each of the three questions, respectively



Competencies acquired | Ideally like to acquire | How can you acquire

Figure 4.

Spatial representations of clusters of organising terms for questions 1, 2, and 3.

Analysis of text supplied for the first question (i.e., *What emotional competencies have you acquired that you will need to be an effective teacher?*) showed axes of students and teachers (vertical) and external child-related and self-rated tasks and internal work (self) and other-related processes (horizontal). The representations indicated that *students' emotional competencies* dominate the vertical dimension, with terms associated with *children* on one side and adults on the other, and self issues on the lower half and others on the higher half. *Empathy* dominates the horizontal dimension and informs both child-focused quadrants. *Working* with *children* and *believing* is clustered with social skills in the upper right quadrant. *Empathy* is associated with *developed* and *teaching* in the lower right quadrant. *Feel/think* and *person/people* cluster in the upper left quadrant, and *feelings/strength/ability* and *work* dominate the bottom left quadrant.

For the second question, *What other emotional competencies ideally would you like to acquire to become an effective teacher?,* the analysis shows the terms *teacher, develop,* and *competency* straddle the vertical in the upper half. *Learn* seems central to the right hand quadrants with *skills* in *situations* in the top quadrant, and *think, deal, parents,* and *conflict* cluster in the lower quadrant. *Teacher* unites the left hand quadrants with *believe, students, work,* and *person* in the lower quadrant, and *feel, ability,* and *confidence* in the upper left quadrant.

The analysis of the final question, *"How can you acquire these competencies?"*, indicated that *acquire competencies* dominate the vertical dimension, with terms associated with *teacher time* on the right side and *help people* on the left, and context issues on the lower half and strategies for acquisition on the higher half. *Improve work management skills* clusters in the lower left, with *effective teaching* on the right. *Learn situations* and *problems* cluster in the top left quadrant and *think practice* and *believe* are in the upper right.

Discussion

The lower self-ratings of this cohort compared to other-ratings may reflect their pregraduation standing. That is, the tendency for higher self-ratings reported in the ECI-U manual may reflect the self-confidence of mature business people.

An informative observation from these finding is that, in terms of the ECI-U, this student cohort, in the final semester of their 4-year teacher education program, achieved highest ratings in the Social awareness cluster. Specifically, they reported strongest ratings in the competencies of Empathy (2nd highest rating) and Service orientation (4th highest). Organisational awareness, however, was ninth highest. The comparatively high standing of Social awareness may reflect undergraduate training in sociocultural and developmental sensitivity to children and their families. This result may have been driven to some extent by the fact that this student cohort had already completed a 3rd year core course in counselling that has empathy as a central foundation skill. The humanistic occupational expectation of teaching as a profession might account for the high Service orientation competency rating. Other highest rating competencies included Teamwork and collaboration (Highest), which perhaps reflects group learning activities in tutorial and workshops in their university studies and field experiences; Conscientiousness (2nd highest), a teacher trait for successful teachers; and Communication (5th highest), also inherent in sound teaching professional practice. Accurate self-assessment (6th highest rating) may reflect the strong reflective emphasis of special education field studies experiences.

These high rating competencies on the ECI-U show comparability with the highest ranking teacher competencies from Hughes et al. (2001). Specifically, these teacher education students' ratings showed comparability with experienced teachers' top three school domain components of Interaction with colleagues, Self-appraisal and reflection, and Interaction with parents and the community (see Table 2, column 1).

The lowest rating cluster was the Self-management cluster. In particular, students recorded low scores in Initiative (lowest), Achievement orientation (5th lowest), Emotional self-control (6th lowest), and Adaptability (7th lowest). The other low rating competencies include many Relationship management competencies such as Change catalyst (2nd lowest), Conflict management (3rd lowest), and Influence (4th lowest). In comparison with the competencies from Hughes et al (2001), it is illuminating that students' lowest rating competencies seem to be reflected in teachers' highest ranking classroom domain components (Use of a range of teaching strategies, Initiating and guiding learning and Responsiveness competencies). It would seem that the experiences offered through the 4-year program were not perceived to be equipping students with important Self-management and Relationship management competencies. These two clusters also displayed significantly lower self-ratings compared with other-ratings, which indicates that other-raters are less critical of this cohort's abilities in these competency clusters. Lack of confidence in these areas appears to be an issue.

Qualitative analysis of the question, *What emotional competencies have you acquired?,* provides confirmation of the ECI-U results. The first two content analyses of competencies already acquired and prioritised for later acquisition showed a general consistency with the 4 ECI-U clusters. *Empathy* is a major influence on one half of the spatial representation, consistent with the ECI-U second highest competency. *Feelings, thinking, strength*, and *work/working* and *children* are consistent with Service, Conscientiousness, and Communication. In terms of the responses to *"What competencies ideally like to acquire"*, the terms *learn/skills* in *situations*, and *deal, parents,* and *conflict* are consistent with many of the Relationship Management cluster. *Feel, think, believe, ability,* and *confidence* would seem to reflect perceived problems in competencies from the Self-management cluster.

The analysis of the final question, *How can you acquire these competencies?,* indicated that the spatial representation split across halves anticipated classroom and school domains and the professional competencies required for these domains (Hughes et al., 2001). Other clusters suggested that thought-provoking topics for this cohort include *teacher time, help people, improve work management skills, effective teaching, learn situations,* and *problems* and *think practice* and *believe.*

Conclusion: Implications for further research

This trial of the ECI-U has provided information about how special teacher education students in a final semester view their existing competencies and deficits. The results suggest that this cohort does not self-report high levels of existing competencies in some of the most highly ranked competencies identified in Hughes et al. (2001) and supported by industrial and registration standards. The experiences offered through the program were not perceived to be equipping students with important competencies in many of

the ECI-U competencies. This result would suggest that, in the current review of the Griffith University primary and special education program, both content and teaching strategies need to be reviewed to ensure learning and practice in emotional competencies, particularly in the areas of Self-management and Relationship management. Current development of the course The Ethical Professional in the new Primary program, and Interpersonal Psychology in the special education program might yet meet these apparent needs. More generally, there is an argument for including emotional competencies in undergraduate teacher education programs to ensure substantive weighting of the development of these competencies compared with curricular and professional competencies. Consideration of how best to train teacher education students to develop emotional competencies in line with a more clearly defined and integrated set of professional skills and competencies also need to take place.

Further trialling of this and other measures of interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies will also assist in the professional training of teachers and will have implications for measuring the development of teacher competencies in students as they move through their undergraduate program.

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