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Leadership Articles

Emotional Intelligence

As a former teacher of identified Gifted and Talented students measured by an Intelligence Quotient (IQ), I have always found the concept of the EQ quite fascinating. Many of my students over the years were exceptionally high scoring in the area of intelligence however often appeared *impaired* when it came to social and emotional achievement (if it is actually possible to “achieve” in those areas.) So now we are looking toward leaders to be effective in the area of emotional intelligence. Will this be at the cost of the other or can you possess both a high IQ and EQ simultaneously?

Recently, I was pulled into a conversation between a Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and a few other district administrators. The conversation, of which I entered mid-stream, was a discussion of why a new BOE member continually questioned the Superintendent on every issue. The Asst. Super said it was because he didn't *emote*. “If you would just *emote*, then they would know how you were feeling about an issue or a situation. You really need to *emote*. *Emote* and they will know you better.” She added, “You may have the highest IQ of anyone in a room, but I have the highest EQ!” This conversation took a few twists and turns, and personally if I heard the word *emote* shrilled as a qualifier for superiority once more, I was going to burst out laughing. (Not a good response from an underling.) Somehow for me it is easier to revere a highly intelligent leader even if he lacks bedside manner, but that's me. It's like a default mechanism; they may have forgotten to greet me in the morning but when it comes to solving a difficult issue they are right on point.

Back about 10 years ago, I read Daniel Goleman's Primal Intelligence. It was part of a discussion we had in a Leadership Cohort developed by my then Superintendent. She was quite ahead of her time in many ways and as book discussions go, everyone said something mindful and interesting and introspective (but I cannot remember any of them specifically.) I took interest in some of the *neuro-bio-physio* assertions Goleman made about EQ and used the information for my own awareness. Ultimately, to me it is about: those who have, will do.

“The Leading by Feel” article was a nice selection of various viewpoints on this topic by gurus on the subject or if you will leadership “war-heroes.” It is a sampler of thoughts on the central topic of this course but a thought has just occurred to me: since from a particular viewpoint a leader may be considered transformational, but from another viewpoint may not be then there is no such thing as a transformational leader. It is the viewpoint of others that determines the quality of a leader and not the person's ability to lead.

The article “Leadership – Warts and All” by Barbara Kellerman was something I personally found more to my interest, since warts are real and everyone has some defect of the sort. Machiavelli said it well, that “the only truly bad leadership is weak leadership” and a weakness would include not leading for

fear of reprisal. Kellerman includes lessons and examples from her plethora of research on leadership and it is impressive for one person to possess such a deep understanding of an intangible asset.

A teacher who was completing coursework for educational administration once said to me, "Pat, when I become a Principal it will do what I did when I became a mother. I will consider the many, many bad parenting examples I have had in my life and not be *that!* At that point in my experiences, I had many, many wonderful examples of leadership then and thought she was jaded. Is it all perspective? Kellerman refers to the fact that the all-time pinnacles of tyranny such as Stalin and Hitler were in fact highly effective leaders. The obvious question is to what end?

Daniel Goleman's article, "What Makes a Leader?" was not refreshing at all. Don't get me wrong, he is brilliant and insightful and loquacious on the greatest of all topics: leadership! He is on-point with the identification of self-awareness and self-regulation as central to matured emotional actualization. The precept is thrilling, but the physiological aspect brings that thrill to an end for me. Whether emotional intelligence is naturally born in some, possibly nurtured or damaged in others causes me to pause. Can this in fact be a learned? Is it possible so late in the maturation process to develop such a deep and valuable quality? You see, BC (Before Cloyed) on the subject of good leadership, I was all in. I believed in what good leaders could and should and would do under any and all circumstances in order to benefit the whole- *the organization, its purpose... its primary goal for success*. I always thought that in the education setting, it was for the kids. It is difficult to ponder the underpinnings of such theories while such an important system ails. I am undeniably in support of leaders who possess empathy and social skills are probably excellent leaders. I certainly believe that those who possess those and high intelligence are even better. I am stuck however in an abyss where leaders who lack both carry on poison an institution already in critical distress.

I am fascinated with the possibility that believing such growth and change and self-actualization is possible. But really, where does it begin. I believe it is in the heart of (wo)man...amid the hurt and deception and distrust studying what makes low EQ people into leaders and why?

My apologies for the cynicism...no excuses.