

The Algerian School: From a Culture of Cognitive and Rational Intelligence to an Education in Emotional Intelligence.

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Abstract:

At the dawn of the third millennium, Algeria undertook a profound reform of its educational system. The country shifted from an objective-based pedagogy to a competence-based pedagogy. In order to encourage our educational institutions to embrace this pedagogical innovation, we have conducted a study to delineate the semantic field of emotions, examine the emotions at play within the educational space, review research highlighting the interplay between emotions and learning processes, and identify the most suitable pedagogical approaches for professional practice.

Keywords: Algerian School, Education, Cognitive Intelligence, Positive Psychology, Emotional Intelligence, Academic Success

1. Introduction and problem statement:

At the beginning of the third millennium, Algeria underwent a profound reform of its educational system. It shifted from an objective-based pedagogy to a competence-based approach. However, despite the implementation of this new pedagogical approach, Algerian schools have remained focused on cultivating cognitive or rational intelligence rather than emotional intelligence in young learners to this day.

Nevertheless, recent research in the field of positive psychology has emphasised the omnipresence of pleasant and unpleasant emotions in educational spaces, as well as their impact on the school climate, pedagogical relationships, learning quality and academic performance. These specialised studies have prompted

several educational systems to promote pedagogical practices oriented towards developing this new facet of intelligence in students.

Educational systems have long neglected or even ignored the presence and role of emotions in school contexts. They were preoccupied with developing cognitive processes (understanding, analysis, synthesis, reasoning and critical thinking), which they deemed essential for ensuring individual progress, social integration and professional integration.

The exclusion of emotion from the field of education was largely inspired by the negative attitudes adopted by several scientists towards this topic. Notably, Plato (427–347 BC), René Descartes (1596–1650) and Charles Darwin (1809–1882) regarded emotion as a “disruptive element that prevents the rational mind from functioning effectively”¹.

In order to counteract the disruptive effect of emotions on children’s mental and cognitive functioning, teachers and educators were historically required to encourage students to suppress, repress or prevent the expression of their emotions in educational spaces through constraint, punishment and humiliation.

However, towards the end of the 20th century, attention towards emotion in educational settings resurged, primarily due to the publication of research by American psychologists Howard Gardner and Daniel Goleman on emotional intelligence.

This interest expressed by educational stakeholders in the emotional dimension of students has significantly increased in recent years.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the interest expressed by educational stakeholders in the emotional dimension of students, which has resulted in the introduction of programmes within the educational systems of several countries that are aimed at developing emotional competencies.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that, despite the important role of emotional education in various Mediterranean countries’ (e.g. USA, Canada, Finland, France) educational systems, our school remains much more concerned

with educating cognitive, mental and intellectual functions than emotional intelligence.

In order to encourage our educational institutions to embrace this pedagogical innovation, we have conducted a study to highlight emotions in the school environment, the general attitude adopted by educational systems towards emotions, the position of the Algerian school towards emotions, and the semantic field of emotional intelligence. Finally, we will make a call for the rehabilitation of emotions within our educational establishments.

1. Emotions in the School Environment:

The school environment is deeply permeated with emotions. These emotions are omnipresent in all areas of the educational institution. They can emerge, be expressed, rebound or crystallise at any time during the school day. They can be perceived in the playground, the cafeteria, the classroom, and in interactions between students and between learners and teachers. They can also be perceived in the relationship that children have with the subjects taught or with knowledge in general².

By 'emotion', we mean an individual's response to a triggering event, which can be exogenous (e.g. frustration, humiliation, threat, death, insult, or the frustration of a highly significant need) or endogenous (e.g. a thought, memory, imagination, anticipation, worry, or mental rumination).

This response is not directly elicited by the event itself, but by the individual's interpretation and evaluation of it. In a sense, it is the consequence of how the situation is represented, perceived, and evaluated³.

More explicitly, emotion consists of these essential components:

- a stimulus or triggering event;
- a cognitive appraisal and evaluation of the internal or external event;
- a feeling: a pleasant or unpleasant psychological state;

- Bodily or physiological manifestations, such as an accelerated or decelerated heart rate, sweating, paleness, feelings of suffocation, muscle tension, and so on.
- A behaviour or approach/avoidance response.
- Emotions should be distinguished from related concepts such as feelings, moods and temperaments.
- 'Mood is a general tendency to perceive situations in a particular way (e.g. happy, sad or grumpy). It differs from emotion in that it has no triggering element, is diffuse, and has a relatively long duration⁴.

Mood encompasses 'the set of dispositions or affective states that constitute a more or less durable background, positively or negatively influencing the unfolding of daily life'⁵.

Temperament "generally includes dispositions present from an early age, influenced by a combination of biological, environmental, and maturation factors"⁶.

It is also associated with 'the innate part of our personality', that is, the biological, genetic and instinctive dimension of our personality.

In young children, it manifests as a very pronounced tendency to express positive or negative emotions (good or bad moods), causing those around them to describe the child as either "pleasant and easy-going" or "unpleasant and difficult"⁷.

The four types of temperament frequently cited in psychological literature were developed by Galen of Pergamon:

- Choleric: Applies to individuals who are passionate and energetic, but who become angry and irritated very easily.

Melancholic: Pertains to individuals who are sad, easily moved and highly artistic.

- Phlegmatic: Distinguishes individuals who are cold and rational.

- Sanguine: Describes the happy, optimistic type who openly expresses affection towards others and exudes self-confidence⁸.

A feeling is a mental or psychological concept. It can be an extension of an emotion, such as anxiety related to fear or disappointment related to sadness. It may also arise from a combination of unexpressed emotions. For instance, anger and fear that are not expressed can manifest as feelings of guilt. Moreover, a key characteristic of feelings is their ability to persist outside of an external stimulus and potentially endure for years if maintained.

The emotions that energise and colour school life are extremely varied. They can be categorised as either positive or negative. The former are pleasant, such as enthusiasm, joy and ecstasy. These emotions are highly sought after as they are sources of pleasure, relaxation, security, comfort and general well-being.

The latter are unpleasant, such as fear, anger and shame. Such emotions are undesirable because they create displeasure, discomfort, suffering or a sense of lack.

Emotions can also be classified as primary or secondary (also called mixed or social).

Primary emotions, also known as fundamental, basic or universal emotions, are experienced by everyone, regardless of their culture or society. Various philosophers and scientists who have influenced Western thought have identified this category of emotions, including:

- Aristotle (384–322 BC): He highlighted anger, pity, fear, and desire, which are associated with pleasure or pain⁹.

Charles Darwin (1809–1882): In his 1872 work *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, he mentioned six types of primary and universal emotions: fear, joy, sadness, disgust, surprise, and anger. These emotions are more innate than learned and are practically independent of the individual's country and culture.

- René Descartes (1596–1650):

In his 1649 book *Treatise on the Passions of the Soul*, he proposed a list of six fundamental emotional states: admiration, love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness¹⁰.

- Carroll Ellis Izard (1923–2017):

In 1977, he identified joy, surprise, anger, fear, sadness, contempt, distress, interest, guilt, shame and love.

- Robert Plutchik (1927–2006): Identified acceptance, anger, anticipation, disgust, joy, fear, sadness and surprise in 1980¹¹.

- Theodore David Kemper (born 1926): Identified fear, anger, depression and satisfaction in 1981.

Paul Ekman (1926-): Highlighted anger, fear, sadness, joy, disgust and surprise in 1992¹².

In addition to these primary emotions, whose nature and number varies depending on the author, scientists have noted the existence of another category of emotions known as secondary emotions. These are more complex and result from the combination of two or more basic emotions.

To elucidate secondary emotions, we will present Robert Plutchik's emotional model.

In this model, he highlighted the eight primary emotions:

- eight primary emotions: joy, acceptance, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, anger and anticipation.

- eight secondary emotions:

Love: a combination of joy and acceptance;

Submission: a mix of acceptance and fear.

Fear: a combination of fear and surprise.

Disappointment consists of surprise and sadness.

- remorse, which contains sadness and disgust;

- Hostility is formed from disgust and anger.

Aggression includes anger and anticipation.

Optimism combines anticipation and joy¹³.

2. The school's attitude towards emotion:

However, despite the existence of all these emotional categories within the school environment, it is important to note that educational system designers have cultivated a sort of systematic denial of this human dimension for centuries. This has manifested in the educational field through the exclusion of emotions from school curricula. For these experts, the school's mission is not to educate in emotion, but to cultivate, promote and develop "reason and intelligence", which is the negation of instinct and thus of emotions.

In other words, schools were designed to produce individuals who can calculate, think, decide and evaluate — essentially rational thinkers who are disconnected from their emotional sphere, meaning they are capable of controlling their fear, anxiety, love, laughter, pleasure and displeasure¹⁴.

In doing so, children remain alien to their inner world of emotions, feelings and needs. They are unaware of the essential markers that could trigger creativity and the relational skills required in life¹⁵.

This attitude of denial has its roots in a tradition of philosophical and scientific thought (mainly inherited from Plato and René Descartes) that pits emotion against reason, proclaiming that emotions disrupt and derail the proper functioning of reason¹⁶.

However, this system of thought is gradually giving way to a new, evidently positive conception of emotion. Three key ideas are at the centre of this new perspective:

Human emotion is not entirely negative as it can fulfil an adaptive function.

Emotion is related to cognition, i.e. emotion is not divorced from cognition.

The role of emotion is not limited to causing dysfunction in reason.

This change has been facilitated by numerous studies conducted in the fields of psychology and neuroscience.

In the field of psychology, Edouard Thorndike (1874–1949) is notable for his assertion in the early 20th century that human beings possess multiple forms of intelligence, including social intelligence. The latter is defined as “the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls, and to act wisely in the context of human relationships”¹⁷.

This idea was later supported by David Wechsler (1896–1981), the creator of intelligence tests for children and adults, who stated that intelligence consists of ‘intellectual and non-intellectual elements’. The latter include affective, personal and social aspects, which Wechsler considered ‘essential for predicting a person’s ability to succeed in life’¹⁸.

He also argued that no intelligence test could be valid if emotional aspects were not taken into account, adding that ‘it is difficult to explain human adaptation to its environment solely through cognitive intelligence’¹⁹.

Another important figure in this field is Howard Gardner, an American psychologist who published a book in 1983 titled *Frames of Mind*, in which he highlighted nine forms of intelligence: logical or rational, spatial, linguistic, musical, bodily (or kinaesthetic), naturalistic, intrapersonal (self-intelligence), interpersonal (intelligence of others) and existential.

In this work, he clearly laid the groundwork for emotional intelligence, which encompasses the intelligence of others, self-intelligence, and existential intelligence²⁰.

3. The Algerian School and the Culture of Emotional Denial:

Despite several educational systems being open to emotional education, our school continues to manifestly deny emotions to this day. Our official texts and school curricula make no reference to educating students in emotional competence. Everything is structured, organised or oriented towards so-called rational intelligence, relating to the capacity for abstraction, logical reasoning, analytical thinking, synthesis, critical thinking, planning, anticipation and problem solving.

There is still a tendency to believe that these cognitive or rational skills can lead to personal fulfilment and social and professional success. However, our schools are flooded with both positive and negative emotions. These emotions are felt and expressed by students and are triggered by various factors. Notable among these are school subjects, educational tasks, the social climate of the classroom, examination situations, the personalities of teachers, the temperaments and psychological profiles of peers, teaching methods and experiences of success or failure²¹.

Since emotions are omitted from curricula entirely, with no dedicated learning space for developing emotional competencies, most children struggle to identify, understand, use, express or regulate them. This educational shortcoming regarding emotions, which is often not compensated for by families, has a serious impact on 'the health, well-being, and academic or professional success of children'²².

Xavier Roegiers (a Belgian Educational Sciences specialist) clearly highlighted this aspect, writing that a deficiency in emotional competence or intelligence contributes to exacerbating the difficulties young people face in integrating into economic and social life and in finding meaning in their actions. They become entrenched in a state of malaise and adopt strategies or diversions that provide temporary happiness, such as excessive materialism, addictions, or other illusions²³.

In order to enable our young students to achieve a general state of well-being and later live harmoniously within their social and professional environments,

we advocate the introduction of emotional intelligence education into our school curricula.

4. The Meaning of Emotional Intelligence:

The term 'emotional intelligence' was coined in the 1990s by two American psychologists, Peter Salovey and John Mayer. According to Salovey and Mayer, emotional intelligence encompasses the following four components: the ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions; the ability to access and/or feel sensations that facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual development²⁴.

These authors identify four essential components of emotional intelligence, as referenced in Caroline Letor's work published in the Research in Education and Training journals:²⁵

1. Perception and expression of emotions:

This includes the ability to:

- Identify emotions, feelings, and associated thoughts.

Recognise the emotions of others, identify artistic expressions, and grasp the meaning of language, sounds, and behaviours.

- Accurately express emotions and associate needs with feelings.
- Distinguish between expressions of feelings, such as identifying truthful and dishonest expressions.

2. Understanding and analysing emotions: This involves using emotional knowledge and includes the ability to:

- Name emotions and establish a direct relationship between words and emotions.

- uncover the meaning of emotions, interpret them appropriately and link them to internal and external events.

- Grasp the meaning of complex, simultaneous and combined feelings.

Situate and perceive transitions between emotions.

3. Reflective regulation of emotions:

This is demonstrated by the ability to:

- Welcome pleasant or unpleasant feelings openly.

- Engage with or remain detached from emotions, depending on their utility and relevance.

- Exercise reflective control over one's own emotions and the emotions of others depending on whether they are clear, typical, influenceable or reasonable.

Direct, channel and guide one's own emotions and those of others, moderating negative emotions and fostering positive ones without repressing or exaggerating information excessively.

4. Facilitation of thought: Emotions:

- Prioritise thought by directing attention to information.

- Aid judgment and memory concerning feelings, especially when they are clear and accessible.

- Consider events, people, objects and situations from multiple perspectives.

- Facilitate divergent, creative thinking. For example, happiness generates inductive reasoning and creativity²⁶.

Daniel Goleman later took up this concept in 1995 when he published a book titled Emotional Intelligence, which achieved extraordinary media success (selling over 400,000 copies)²⁷.

According to this author, emotional intelligence is “the ability to identify, interpret, and manage one’s own emotions and those of others”. Goleman also refers to ‘empathy, the ability to motivate oneself or persevere in adversity, the ability to control impulses and wait patiently for desires to be satisfied, the ability to maintain a stable mood and not be overwhelmed by grief to the point of being unable to think, and the capacity to hope’²⁸.

This emotional intelligence has two essential aspects:²⁹

1. Personal Aspect: This encompasses the following competencies:

- **Self-awareness:** This refers to the knowledge of one’s internal states (recognition of emotions and their positive and negative consequences), resources (strengths and weaknesses), preferences, intuitions, and self-confidence in one’s abilities.

- **Self-management:** This includes five cardinal components: self-control (the ability to manage one’s own emotions and inner impulses), reliability (the ability to be honest and maintain integrity in all contexts), professional awareness (the capacity to perform one’s professional tasks responsibly), adaptability (the tendency to demonstrate flexibility in the face of change), and innovation (the adoption of an open-minded approach toward new ideas, approaches, and information).

- **Motivation:** This is the internal energetic force that drives us to achieve our goals. It manifests through the pursuit of perfection (investing deeply in projects and the need to rise to challenges), commitment (engaging and sharing the group’s objectives), initiative (being ready to seize opportunities), and especially optimism (believing in one’s potential and success despite handicaps, obstacles, and sometimes failures).

2. Social Aspect: This encompasses the competencies mentioned below:

- **Empathy:** This profoundly human attitude was initially highlighted by Carl Rogers in 1975 and is evident through awareness of the feelings, needs, and concerns of others. It can be understood through the comprehension of others (the ability to grasp, identify, and perceive the feelings and viewpoints of others

while expressing genuine interest in their struggles and misfortunes), service orientation (the capacity to anticipate, recognize, and fulfill the aspirations of others), enriching others (discovering and sensing the needs and pain points of others and encouraging their potential), encouragement and leveraging diversity (utilizing differences to better understand and capitalize on opportunities), and finally, political awareness (identifying the emotional potential of the group and using it to serve the group's objectives).

- **Social Skills:** These consist of inducing favorable responses in others. According to David Goleman (1997, p. 43), they manifest in eight essential aspects:

Influence: Having persuasive arguments and strategies.

Communication ease: being willing to speak up and convey clear, convincing messages.

- **Seeking newness:** Initiating and managing change.

Managing others: influencing and managing others.

- **Conflict management:** Negotiating and resolving differences and conflicts.

- **Cooperation and Collaboration:** Building relationships with others.

- **Teamwork:** The ability to achieve common objectives.

Group mobilisation: Energising and managing group members³⁰.

5. The Components of Emotional Intelligence:

According to Moïra Mikolajczak (a researcher at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium), emotional intelligence comprises all of these essential competencies:³¹

5.1. Identification of Emotions in Oneself and Others: This involves accurately determining and naming the type of emotion experienced. Is it disappointment, sorrow, sadness, distress, or despair?

To access this skill, it is helpful to enrich one's emotional vocabulary and lexicon to distinguish between emotions, as there are many nuances in this area. For instance, the difference between love and passion; enthusiasm, joy, and ecstasy; dread, fear, and terror; annoyance, anger, and rage; and finally, guilt, humiliation, and shame.

Identifying one's own emotions occurs through analyzing the different components of the emotional experience (the triggering event, the cognitive evaluation of the event or the meaning attributed to the situation, and the reactions or behavioral responses, i.e., the action or tendency to act).

To identify the emotions of others, two main types of strategies are generally applied:

- Decoding and Verbalizing Nonverbal Messages: This includes facial expressions, gestures, postures, various vocal tones, etc.
- Adopting Active Communication Techniques: This involves unconditionally accepting the other person's feelings (i.e., adopting a deeply engaged empathetic attitude), exploring their emotional universe through targeted questions, and especially using the strategy of paraphrasing to encourage or facilitate emotional expression.

5.2 Understanding Personal and Others' Emotions: Understanding Personal and Others' Emotions: Recognising emotions involves identifying their internal and external triggers.

It is now widely accepted that anger is generally triggered by disrespect, injustice, intense frustration and humiliation. Similarly, it is well-established that fear arises from confronting physical danger or the presence of a psychological threat. Joy is often associated with completing a project or satisfying a particular need, while sadness is linked to the loss of something valuable.

Internally, ruminating on a thought, recalling an experience, or anticipating a threat can be enough to provoke an emotion. However, this level of understanding should be reinforced by an attitude that measures the impact of

emotions (ours and others') on well-being, life positions, performance and manner in family, school, social and professional contexts.

5.3. Expression of One's Own Emotions and Those of Others:

This involves being open, attentive and receptive to one's own emotions, and expressing them appropriately within family, school and social contexts. However, in order to verbalise, articulate and externalise both pleasant and unpleasant emotions, an individual must possess a sufficiently rich linguistic repertoire to enable them to link each emotional state to a specific meaning. Mastery of this skill provides two essential advantages:

On an individual level:

It has a positive impact on mental, psychological and physical health, protecting the individual from the somatisation of unpleasant feelings.

- On a social level, it enhances quality of life, contributes to understanding and makes rapprochement, seduction, calming, reconciliation and conflict resolution possible.

It is important to note that the ability to express one's own emotions easily remains incomplete if not reinforced by the capacity to listen attentively and compassionately to one's interlocutor.

Taking this empathetic stance in social interactions gives the other person a sense of acceptance, security and trust, and frees them from their defensive mechanisms, encouraging them to open up and express both positive and negative emotions.

5.4 Regulation of emotions: Regulation of emotions:

First, it is important to note that emotional regulation refers to the ability to intervene in or act upon one's personal emotions. This capacity includes the processes of triggering, inhibition, maintenance and modulation.

This mechanism is applied by an individual in the presence of so-called inappropriate or dysfunctional emotions, which may be harmful at a personal

level (e.g. prolonged sadness or despair), academic level (e.g. expressing anger and rage towards a teacher in class following a seemingly trivial remark), or professional level (e.g. yielding to excessive fear during a social competency appraisal interview).

In order to regulate emotions that do not align with our personal goals or the rules of expression in family, school, social and professional contexts, we tend to use a strategy known as cognitive reappraisal of the triggering event.

Consider the case of a colleague who passes us in the morning just as we are about to start work. They look directly at us, then suddenly turn away without saying a word or even smiling or greeting us.

In this situation, we instinctively interpret this behaviour as voluntary, deliberate and intentional, which triggers anger in us. However, to avoid confrontation and the deterioration of the work environment, we cognitively reappraise the behaviour, attributing it to potential family or social problems, existential difficulties or introversion.

After this cognitive reappraisal, anger gradually gives way to compassion.

5.5 Utilisation of emotions: Utilisation of emotions:

This refers to using personal and others' emotions to improve the quality of thought and social interactions. Positive emotions are likely to promote global, divergent and creative thinking. In contrast, analytical and convergent thinking is facilitated by negative emotions. A German study by Norbert Schwartz and Herbert Bless highlighted this aspect, focusing on the relationship between individuals' moods and their thought processes³².

Adopting a positive emotional tone in the workplace fosters acceptance, esteem and sharing, and enhances communication and cooperation with peers. Conversely, displaying negative emotions around others can lead to misunderstandings, rejection and confrontation, and sometimes cause serious professional difficulties³³.

Conclusion:

Emotions are omnipresent and diverse within the school context. They have long been considered to be negative or harmful to cognitive functioning, such as information processing, decision-making and performance in learning, and to an individual's adaptation to their environment. This has led school designers, families, educators, teachers and child professionals to seek content, methods, tools and strategies to develop young children's mental, cognitive and rational abilities, while expecting them to suppress the emotional aspects of their personalities — essentially learning to hide their anger, fear, sadness, love, joy and happiness.

However, this conception has recently been challenged by research in psychology and neuropsychology, which has highlighted the impact of emotional intelligence on individuals' physical, psychological, academic, social and professional health.

In order to equip our young students with this vital skill for the future, we believe it is crucial to incorporate emotional intelligence education into our school curricula from preschool age, and to ensure that teachers are adequately trained in emotional competence throughout their professional development, so they can identify and manage their own emotions and those of their students.

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