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# A critical approach to Emotional Intelligence as a dominant discourse in the field of education

## *Aproximación crítica a la Inteligencia Emocional como discurso dominante en el ámbito educativo*

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### **Abstract:**

This article offers a critical analysis of emotional intelligence (EI) as a dominant discourse that establishes ways of understanding, managing, and learning about emotions in the field of education. The first section gives an overview of the recent interest in the emotional along with how the popularity of ideas associated with emotional intelligence derives from its ability to associate itself with other influential discourses that emerge from the brain sciences (neurology, cognitive psychology etc.). As part of this discussion, some of EI's main qualities are questioned, for example, its neutrality, its potential to go beyond the dualist approaches that dominate traditional conceptions, and its proposal for a paradigm shift. The second part of the article examines the presence and impact of the discourse of emotional intelligence in the field of education in the form of mechanisms for measuring emotional intelligence and programmes of emotional intelligence or emotional literacy. The importance of educators' emotional involvement is discussed, as is the problem

of the subjectivating power of this discourse. It concludes with arguments that invite us to reflect and explore alternative ways of understanding and framing the emotional and emotional education.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, discourse, emotional education, emotional literacy subjectivation, educators' emotional involvement, emotionality.

### **Resumen:**

Este artículo presenta un análisis crítico de la Inteligencia Emocional como discurso dominante, a través del cual se concretan formas de entender, gestionar y aprender sobre las emociones en el ámbito educativo. En la primera parte se discute el reciente interés por lo emocional y cómo la popularidad de las ideas asociadas a la Inteligencia Emocional viene dada por su capacidad para asociarse con otros discursos de gran influencia que emergen desde las ciencias del cerebro (neurología, psicología cognitiva etc.). Como parte de esta discusión se cues-

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tionan algunas de sus cualidades principales como son su neutralidad, su potencial para trascender planteamientos dualistas que imperan en las concepciones tradicionales, así como su propuesta de cambio de paradigma. La segunda parte del artículo examina la presencia e implicaciones del discurso de Inteligencia Emocional en el contexto educativo a través de los mecanismos de medición de inteligencia emocional y los programas de educación o alfabetización emocional. También se discute la importancia de las impli-

caciones emocionales para los educadores, a la vez que se trata la problemática asociada al poder subjetivador de dicho discurso. Para concluir, se exponen argumentos que invitan a reflexionar y explorar formas alternativas de entender y plantear lo emocional y la educación emocional.

**Descriptor:** inteligencia emocional, discurso, educación emocional, alfabetización emocional, subjetivación, implicación emocional de educadores, emocionalidad.

## 1. Introduction

Recent events like the bombings on the Madrid Metro in 2004, the Twin Towers of New York in 2001, or the attack on the Bataclan theatre in Paris in 2015; natural disasters like the Haiti earthquake of 2010, the Japanese tsunami of 2011, or Hurricane Katrina in 2005; political upheaval such as that experienced in the Arab Spring between 2010 and 2013, Brexit in 2016, or the recent election of Donald Trump as president of the USA. Despite happening at different times, these all received very extensive media coverage that reached a broad audience and featured intense and polarised emotional aspects. The way they were presented to the public and handled is associated with the constant display and manipulation of emotional aspects that transmit multiple messages (Yell, 2012). On top of this, there is also affective (and sexual) saturation in films, TV series, and novels, magazines and newspapers that are packed with sensationalist journalism, and the emer-

gence of a television line-up dominated by sensationalist programmes that explore social dramas in a superficial manner, reality-shows where the main characters expose themselves emotionally, and melodramatic documentaries that are presented as educational. Faced with this prospect, it is no surprise that television is presented to us as «the kingdom of emotions and appearances» (Ferrés, 1996, p. 23) and as a medium that promotes an egotistic and consumerist culture that particularly targets the young (Gordo López and Burman, 2004). The use and abuse of emotions is characteristic of a society that Mestrovicic (1997, p. xi), like Schlaeger and Stedman (1999, p. 20), defines as *post-emotional*, thanks to the frivolous and relativistic way it treats affective matters. This exercise in emotional extremism responds to symbolic and material interests that involve the appearance of forms of individual, social, and cultural manipulation and control (Mestrovicic, 1997) and have the ultimate aim of colonising, domesticat-

ing, and instrumentalising a part of our being that was still evasive. They agree with Denzin (2007), who sees this treatment as a constituent element of the postmodern moment in which we live.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, authors such as MacIntyre (1984) stated their concerns on noting that the emotional realm disregarded the complexity of moral judgements, politics, and social proclamations. Over the last two decades we have seen how interest in studying the emotional realm and its implications for the field of education have become a central topic of research and debate.

A search for scientific publications containing the term emotion<sup>1</sup> in the Thomson Reuters' Web of Science database for the twenty years up to 1996 returns 7,175 publications; the figure for the following twenty years increases to 92,483 publications. Consequently, there is talk of an emotional revolution with multidisciplinary implications that transcend the field of psychology, philosophy, or education (Rosenthal, 2002; Reddy, 2001; Squire, 2001).

Interest in the world of emotions is nothing new. It has always been an attractive topic for thinkers such as philosophers and theologians who wished to understand the transcendence of the emotional experience, for writers who made emotional outbursts into the central topic of their stories, and for scientists who wished to escape from what prevented objective perception. What really stands out is the appearance in the modern academic and educational

world of a topic that had traditionally been on the margins of knowledge, but has now come to be seen as being of particular interest. This requires in-depth reflection to understand what it is happening in the behind the scenes of this situation.

This interest in the emotional can be associated with the success of the publication in 1996 of a book by Daniel Goleman originally called *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*<sup>2</sup>. This work presents emotional intelligence (EI) as a set of skills that are partly determined by our genetic-evolutionary baggage, but that can also be changed through learning processes. The ability to control, adapt, and modify our emotions is the backbone of Goleman's project and is especially appealing in the field of education where it has been enthusiastically received. Much of this work's popularity can be explained by the author's ability to spread the idea of EI using a journalistic and anecdotal style that simultaneously seeks legitimation by aligning itself with the scientific work of authors such as Salovey and Mayers (1990), Gardner (1993), and Le-Doux (1993, 1998). However, for some authors the concept of EI is nothing new; instead it is the revision and revitalisation of a set of ideas that had gone unnoticed within the fields of psychology, neuroscience, and education (Damasio, 1996; Landy and Mayer, 2005).

All of these ideas grouped around the concept of EI share a common theoretical underpinning, centred on cognitivist and constructivist focuses influenced by the latest discoveries from the field of neuro-

science. This alliance is one of the focal points on which some criticisms of EI are based. For example, Edwards, Gillies, and Horsley (2016) invite us to consider this relationship as *brain porn*, as it can be accused of making superficial and decorative use of the neuroscience and psychological discourse. It is therefore a relationship that places more emphasis on its seductive capacity than on its explanatory capacity or its content. Could this partly explain the success of EI discourse?

This article questions how EI discourse relates to other dominant discourses, examining how these are interwoven, interact, and emerge in the field of education, in order to explain its presence. To this end, a discursive focus is proposed in which EI is presented as a dominant discourse within the current educational framework (Boler, 1999; Hartley, 2003; Zembylas, 2006; Fernandez-Berrocal and Ruiz Aranda, 2008). To understand EI as a discourse, the socio-cultural, historical, and political context in which it occurs is considered, starting from the idea that discourses are practices that produce meanings, shape subjects, and regulate conduct within societies and institutions (MacLure, 2003).

Next, the problem associated with the neutrality and harmony of EI discourse is presented and analysed. EI's supporters portray it as universal and capable of overcoming the Western dualist tradition that separates: body/mind; internal/external; personal/social. In other words, it is represented as capable of resolving the epistemological conflict between reason and emotion.

## 2. Emotional intelligence as discourse

EI is based around 5 domains or skills: knowing one's own emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognising emotions in others, and handling relationships (Goleman, 1996, pp. 43-44). These are in turn grouped into two categories or competences:

- a) Personal, to which the first three domains correspond.
- b) Social, to which the last two belong.

Examining them in more depth, therefore reveals two traditionally antagonistic categories presented as though they were in a harmonious and complementary relationship. The problem this approach presents us with is none other than the reproduction of a dualist approach applied to understanding emotions. The personal category represents the inner realm, the private and purely emotional, while the social category is associated with what is public and less emotional. This heritage is inscribed in Western thinking where truth and reason are privileged, while the emotional, physical, and subjective are relegated to a secondary position (Boler, 1997; Game and Metcalfe, 1996; Greenspan, 2003). As in an antagonistic dialectic, in the case of the discourse of EI this is not presented as an arbitrary break where one extreme prevails over the other, but as a balanced and neutral relationship between both poles. Therefore, EI discourse requires an even more exhaustive and in-depth analysis, as the relationships between its terms are not neutral, and attempts to represent it as neutral might mask dynamics and practices that eventually perpetuate a prob-

lematic distribution of power that privileges a hierarchical situation (Burman and MacLure, 2005).

EI discourse, despite its efforts to seek a new order between reason and emotion, is not a break with dualist thinking, but instead feeds it. Knowledge of emotions through the studying of cognitive and neuro-physiological processes is prioritised over any other ways of understanding the phenomenon of emotions. This form of knowledge shapes and delimits the discursive framework on which any educational practice associated with EI is constructed. Similarly, we find that cognitive structures and possibilities are presented as natural, internal, and primary and are given priority over existential anthropological approaches that are seen as artificial, external, and secondary. Therefore, other more independent and transformative educational forms for which teaching starts from the infinite human possibilities before considering the cognitive nature of the individual are restricted (Penalva, 2009). The body/mind, emotion/reason dichotomy and its derivatives are reconfigured to remain present.

The starting point for the debate about emotions from the approaches associated with EI is the body, more specifically the brain, its processes, and its nature. The ideas about the brain's functioning, its development, and the processes that occur in it appear not just in Goleman's work, but in the prior and subsequent ideas of other authors that comprise the IE universe<sup>3</sup>. It is not an isolated idea that is gaining momentum in the field of education thanks to

its ability to cause a paradigm shift. Therefore, putting into practice the thought of postmodern authors such as Foucault (1997) or Lyotard (1984) it is possible to question the breakthrough of EI discourse and its approval, arguing that it is not part of a neutral scientific process – which underpins rationalist and empiricist historiography – but rather the power dynamics that govern knowledge, define positions, and manage possibilities.

This explains how EI has gained acceptance as it can be positioned alongside other dominant discourses within the field of education. To illustrate this argument, the way in which the relationship between EI discourse and constructivist and cognitivist ideas, which are implemented in the field of education, goes beyond scientific logic and does not represent a real break with dualist thinking is set out below.

Constructivist ideas have a strong presence and influence on the modern field of education. This is a theoretical-epistemological approach that aims to give knowledge and learning a trans-disciplinary and individualised presence, encouraging critical scrutiny. Originally it sought to break with traditional models and promote an alternative approach. Constructivism is not a homogeneous idea, since, as Coll notes, «in the field of education we usually find a wide range of differing proposals and approaches under the label of 'constructivism'» (1996, p. 153). Despite their differences, the ways of presenting constructivist teaching theories all feature the confluence of a range of psychological focuses

that combine contributions from cognitivism, neurophysiology, and developmental and social psychology. They are therefore the same sources EI draws on to present itself as a scientific discourse and so gain a privileged position in relation to other ways of representing and understanding the emotional realm within the field of education. This association simultaneously counterbalances epistemological and ontological deficiencies associated with the idea of social construct<sup>4</sup> and EI. However, this also involves relegating more exhaustive exploration of anthropological, axiological, and especially political questions to a subsidiary position. The big dilemma raised here is that if these latter aspects are not questioned, the discourse of EI will struggle to overcome the problems associated with a dualist system and so will continue to be suspected of helping to perpetuate it.

EI legitimises its universality in its relationship with cognitivist ideas which are used to justify universal psychological processes and basic biological structures. However, authors such as Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002) present evidence that calls into question the cognitivist approaches set out by Goleman, such as the existence of neuronal processes that comprise emotional control. For these authors, EI is no more than a construct that reflects personal competences and abilities to interact and adapt to the demands of the context in which one moves. EI's status as a science is also questioned by Manrique Solana (2015) who sees it as a development of new age theory that situates it between

positivism and innatism. Its way of regarding certain biological elements as natural and universal is especially questioned by the more pioneering perspectives, such as the poststructuralist and feminist focuses of new materialism (see: Harding, 1986; Haraway, 1991; Ahmed, 2004; Grosz, 2005). This is not a question of denying the corporeality or materiality of certain phenomena, but rather the way EI is presented as a discourse that derives its historicity, ideological charge, and politicisation of bodies and objects from emotional experience. Nevertheless, the ability to erase these traces does not mean that the conflicts associated with them are eliminated; instead they are perpetuated as they continue to support themselves on the same immovable base.

The alliance between EI and the so-called brain sciences can be understood in a more profound way through Nikolas Rose's genealogical study of psychology (1998) in conjunction with his analysis of the use of neuroscience to colonise the social and human sciences (Rose and Abi-Rached, 2013). From this perspective, this alliance is understood as part of a project for constructing and managing the self that has a strong presence in contemporary societies. The result of this project, which is led by the psy disciplines<sup>5</sup>, is the emergence of a promise that is hard to keep. This is the promise of a coherent, enclosed, individualised self that comprises our internal universe and unites it with our body. Its ultimate goal is the possibility of self-discovery and finding our «authentic» self. EI is what Rose (1998) would call a «psychology of everyday life»,

or, in educational terms, a «pedagogy of self-realisation» (p. 17) that enables us to satisfy our longing for knowledge of the human aspects that have historically been presented to us as determinants of our deepest self. As its culmination, and considering the current concern with the employment situation, EI presents a springboard towards professional success. All of this is exhibited through an accessible and up-to-date explanation, accompanied by the techniques needed to make it possible to work on EI. So, the emotional realm opens up to new possibilities that go beyond the personal, social, or educational fields to be redirected towards productive, business, and/or corporatists interests.

The ways EI discourse is formalised in the field of education are examined below.

### 3. Presence and implications of the discourse of emotional intelligence in the field of education

For Hartley (2003), the spread of EI discourse in the field of education is essentially instrumental; its purpose is to serve the economic system by creating emotionally malleable workers and consumers. This means that educators and students accept the idea that they are primarily responsible for their professional, social, or educational successes or failures. This discourse leads them to see the cause of their problems in their ability to handle their emotions and so creates a need and subsequent demand for tools and strategies that enable them to work on them. In response to this, EI is pack-

aged in different ways to make it accessible and easily consumed. It reacts to the demand for educational tools that make it possible to develop EI through this commodification process. In the field of education, pedagogical material is appearing that is consumed by educational institutions and professionals. They are offered guidebooks and manuals, educational programmes for different levels, talks and symposia, evaluation tools, training courses, etc. All of these come under the «umbrella of emotional intelligence» (Boler, 1999, p. 85), the approval of different authorities, its scientific justification, and its great commercial success. It is worth emphasising two products: emotional quotient tests and the emotional literacy programmes.

#### 3.1. EI measurement tests

While there is no evidence to suggest that emotion measurement tests have a significant presence in the field of education, analysing them enables us to understand different aspects of EI discourse.

These are standardised tools<sup>6</sup> that follow the same scientific patterns as traditional intelligence tests. They aim to measure the individual's capacity to develop in the five domains that define the construct of EI. It is a marketable social engineering tool that requires the participation of a type of expert for its implementation (scientists) and distribution (principally psychologists who use these tools for diagnostic purposes, HR professionals in staff selection, and educational counsellors seeking answers to



the demands of parents and educators). Furthermore, less refined and more popular tools can be found in magazines and on websites that people can use on themselves.

The result of the test is an emotional quotient (EQ) that is presented as an even more precise predictor of social and professional success than the traditional intelligence quotient (IQ). In a world shaped by a neoliberal ideology in which education is just another element of the global market, it is not surprising that there is little resistance to a tool with great commercial potential. Furthermore, this type of measuring tool makes it possible to rationalise and compare, allowing the creation of new organisation and classification parameters. This interest in measuring how people feel is not exclusive to the educational world, and, as Davies explains (2015), over the last decade we have seen how governments and corporations have shown a growing interest in emotional and well-being indicators that has led to the emergence of a *happiness industry*. This form of emotional measurement entails a new idea of normality and classification that involves the possibility of identifying an emotional elite, but also of identifying and being able to pathologise an inferior emotional class. Like IQ, EQ is a subjectivating and regulatory technique or tool with governmental ends that can operate at an individual and social level. For Foucault (1990), this would be a form of exercising power that does not need to resort to discipline or to legal containment. It is the evolution of the sovereign power that now needs group complicity and

a discourse that not only focuses on the body, but also moves on to organise other aspects of social and productive lives. Individuals en masse become accomplices in the exercise of this form of power: a continuous, scientific power that manages different aspects of our lives at the individual and population levels. Consequently, it is worth considering moments and situations where this type of power goes beyond different educational stakeholders. This question should also be accompanied by others that focus on examining forms of resistance that make it possible to explore new spaces in which EI discourse blurs and opens up to new forms. The innovation of the concept of EQ compared with IQ is that the former is plastic and so can be taught. Consequently, another type of product has emerged to accompany the measurement and classification technology: educational programmes, most notably, emotional literacy programmes and social-emotional learning.

### 3.2. Emotional education and literacy programmes

Emotional education programmes are put forward as an educational tool for developing EI skills. These programmes have been developed and are available in multiple formats adapted to different contexts. For example, some take the form of courses that are offered to businesses to develop emotional skills to improve the labour relations with their workers or even so that managers can learn to manage human and emotional capital «more efficiently»<sup>7</sup>. Nonetheless, we should ask ourselves how much of the

enthusiastic welcome these programmes receive within the world of direction and management is humanist or seeks personal development and how much of it is instrumental. Above all, as discussed in the next section of this article, it is necessary to consider these programmes' implications for the subjectivation process of the people exposed to these practices, as this process is what explains the emergence and the possibility of building and manifesting different identities or ways of constructing one's identity and being recognised.

In the educational setting, these programmes are usually presented in centres as interdisciplinary or even extra-curricular activities for students (e.g. Netlibrary, 2003; Humphrey et al., 2008; Cornwell and Bundy, 2009), becoming an indicator of educational quality and effectiveness (Hartley, 2003). Consequently, we find that the latest Spanish educational reforms through the Organic Law to Improve Educational Quality of 2013 (LOMCE), while not mentioning specific focuses, do state that the educational administration should try to encourage emotional development. This is not new since, as Buey notes (2002), this interest was already manifest in earlier laws. However,

in other settings such as England, while there is an interest in providing education in these areas, through initiatives such as Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning, various reforms have led to this interest fading (for more information see: Wigelsworth, Humphrey and Lendrum, 2012).

As for teachers, emotional education programmes are offered to them as training courses or manuals and have a dual function. On the one hand, they aim to train teachers to improve their labour relations and how they perform their job. On the other hand, they aim to prepare them to perpetuate their students' emotional education by applying the EI philosophy. We even find that some universities have developed their own courses and masters programmes in EI. We could, therefore, state that this is an expanding market with great commercial appeal.

Taking as a reference point the arguments developed by Burman (2009), Zembylas (2005a, 2005b), and Boler (1999), Table 1 reviews and summarises the main problems associated with the fundamental objectives that make up emotional education and literacy programmes.

TABLE 1. Problems associated with the fundamental objectives of emotional education and literacy programmes.

Fundamental objectives of emotional education and literacy programmes	Associated problem
Teaching emotions as competences or skills.	Emotion is reduced to a set of predefined, quantifiable, and normalised skills that can be developed in the classroom.
Learning to communicate through standardised forms of emotional expression.	A space is established for regulating and standardising expressive emotional potential.
Showing how EI is based on scientific theories including psychology, biology, and neurology.	Historical, cultural, political, and above all biographical variables, associated with emotions, are ignored. EI's status as a science and the possibilities other disciplines offer are not questioned.
Accepting EI's relationship with social, academic, and professional success. Promoting EI helps resolve major educational and social conflicts.	Simplification of the social world that places all responsibility for her future on the individual at the same time as disregarding and not helping to question the influence of social and political structures that condition people socially.
Understanding that social harmony comes about through controlling negative emotions and promoting positive ones.	The moral and ethical problem is transformed into an emotional problem.
Recognising the existence of universal emotional structures and rules.	This raises the following questions: How are emotional rules negotiated? How are they questioned? Who can question the pre-established regulations and structures?

Source: Own elaboration.

Emotional literacy programmes along with the techniques for measuring EQ are one of the ways in which EI discourse is implemented in the field of education. It is through these that EI discourse acquires its capacity to operate on subjects, disseminating and establishing a framework of emotional knowledge that involves normalising some forms of expression, while excluding others that do not fit within these margins. A fundamental

part of this process occurs through regulation of the communicative and associative capacity that happens partly through training (emotional programmes) and partly through evaluating (EQ) normalised expressive-emotional protocols. It takes shape in the form of a language that is not without pre-established values and hierarchies (e.g. names of emotions, classifications, evaluations, etc.) and includes specific jargon (e.g. emotional

hijacking, state of flow, emotional contagion, etc.) and which creates a discursive space governed by emotional rules that are recognised and internalised by the people who inhabit that space.

### 3.3. Subjectivation through EI

The set of emotional rules or regulations has the potential to influence pedagogical processes, decisions about school organisation, and interactions in the classroom, as well as how the different participants in the educational process conceive how they should or should not experience, understand, and express their emotions (Zembylas, 2005a, 2005b). These become a constitutive element on which teachers and students articulate their identity, based on a discourse that is presented to them as emancipatory and that seeks to give education back its humanist character within a dehumanising context.

This way of operating at an emotional level had previously been examined by authors such as the Marxist-feminist sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1979, 2003), who made visible a form of worker exploitation some workers suffer as they manipulate emotional expressions to expose themselves emotionally in their work. The problem is not emotional exposure in itself, but rather the fact that it ends up being manipulated for corporatist and productive ends (Colley, 2006). The author uses as examples the work of flight attendants, debt collectors, and salespeople whose everyday work requires a close and public-facing demeanour. This involves an emotional discipline and ex-

posure that in many cases is feigned, it being a fundamental aspect of their labour interactions. The author's main thesis maintains that the end product is the commodification and commercialisation of emotions with the subsequent emergence of a group of «emotionally exploited workers» who are predominantly female and suffer precarious conditions and high risks to their mental health. While it might be tempting to put teachers and educators into this category, this would be an over-simplification. There are studies that try to explain the negative consequences associated with this emotional exposure which manifest themselves as occupational stress or in the form of specific depression, technically defined as burnout (Lens and Neves de Jesus, 1999; Lasky, 2000; Troman, 2000) but there are also arguments that lead us to understand that educators' emotional involvement is vital for understanding educational work and the development of their identities (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989, 1996; Dinham and Scott, 1997; Hargreaves, 1998). For example, Hargreaves' research (2000) presents a series of teachers who very positively value close work with the student. The suffering that might be associated with this is partially accepted as it is regarded as an identifying element that is a characteristic of educational work (Zembylas, 2004). Emotional aspects cease to be exclusively private and become a cross-cutting element that allows flow from the private to the public and vice versa, to the point that their differences blur. The problem then is not the work or emotional exposure educational professionals might be exposed to, but the way in which emotionality and its

subjectivating potential are manipulated externally. In this way, EI discourse as a dominant emotional discourse is complicit in contributing to the promotion of subjects who can be adapted to a liberal, commercial, and competitive system on which educational and social life are based. Therefore, it is important to examine in-depth how education professionals, especially teachers, challenge and disturb the hegemony of this discourse.

#### 4. Conclusion

Finally, we should note that the arguments presented in this article should not be seen as incompatible with the idea of the emotional realm playing an important role in the field of education. Quite the contrary. It is a call to action to ensure that a topic this complex and multifaceted is considered in a more exhaustive, thorough, and above all critical way. The educational domain of emotions already existed with more discretion before EI appeared (Dixon, 2012; Newberry, Gallant and Riley, 2013), although EI is what enables affective issues to be regarded as public and important in various areas such as work or education, without considering its contingency. Critical study of its negative implications is usually relegated to a secondary level, and so is excluded from the dominant narrative that then circulates in the field of education.

Based on the ideas presented above, one can infer that to overcome the problems associated with EI discourse, we must propose alternatives and ways of understanding emotionality that enable us to

recognise its social and political character. Based on these, it will be possible to reconsider how to approach emotional education and the different subjectivation processes associated with it. We cannot continue ignoring the fact that the emotional is affective, and that the affective contains elements of power (Deleuze, 2006). Consequently, and starting from this point, it is worth suggesting a way of understanding emotionality that not just aims to be compatible with the latest scientific trends associated with the brain sciences, but that in turn evaluates and examines the profoundly contradictory and power relationships through which emotional experiences and ways of being are determined and managed. In this way, emotional rules can become the product of a situated negotiation that makes it possible to question and appropriate new forms of emotional management. Although the ability to act will continue to be limited, educational initiatives will be able to move from consuming EI to deconstructing it and recovering the affective realm. It is vital to note the need to promote practices that emerge in specific settings (e.g. classroom, educational centre, educational level, etc.) and that concentrate on the particular features of these spaces (e.g. social, cultural, etc.) and their inhabitants (e.g. social educators, teachers, etc.). By exploring what is objective, universal, and scientific in EI discourse, it is possible to reach a point from which the main problem associated with this discourse can be discussed: the type of educator, teacher, student, citizen that it conceives and represses.

Therefore, a more critical and exhaustive focus when facing the postmodern use

of emotionality should show that there is an opportunity to theorise certain cultural elements that would unleash an exploration of the ideological, constitutive, and provocative potential of emotional aspects (Squire, 2001). The arguments emerging from this critical exercise could and should create educational practices that make it possible to equip students and educators with intellectual tools to help them understand emotional complexity, not just as cognitive or neurobiological processes that derive from axiomatic emotional practices and regulations, but also as a space open to multiple as yet undefined possibilities that can be approached from many perspectives. Similarly, we must stop suggesting that unhappiness and failure are caused by poor management of emotions. After more than 20 years of EI, it is worth asking how far it has contributed to introducing a humanist educational vision, or has it instead become something that participates in the dehumanising machinery on which other educational visions are built.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The search term was the word *emotion* in English.
- <sup>2</sup> *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* translates as *Inteligencia Emocional: Por qué importa más que el coeficiente intelectual* in Spanish, but it was published in the Spanish-speaking world as *Inteligencia Emocional (Emotional intelligence)*, omitting the subtitle. This is the first of many works in which Goleman develops his thesis of emotional intelligence (e.g.: Goleman 1999, 2003, 2011).
- <sup>3</sup> Both Buey (2002) and Bisquerra (2006) present clear explanations in their work of the concept of *emotion* and the different sources and elements that comprise the concept of EI within the field of education.

- <sup>4</sup> To understand some of the criticisms associated with constructivism in general, see Hacking (2001) and for a more specific analysis within the sphere of education, see Penalva (2008a, 2008b).
- <sup>5</sup> Rose describes the *psy* disciplines as a group of disciplines or sciences (psychosciences: psychology, psychiatry, psy) that emerged at the end of the 19th century, making «visible and intelligible certain features of persons, their conducts and their relationships» (1998, p. 1). The *psy* disciplines assert their capacity to understand the inner world of people and explain how this shapes their conduct. All of this is through the creation of a body of knowledge and practices that create a specific relationship between power and subjectivity. Its appeal lies in its capacity to control, govern, discipline, and normalise through the ideas of happiness, liberty, and personal realisation-encounter.
- <sup>6</sup> The most widely-used EI measurement tests are: ECI (Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee, 2000), MEIS/MSCEIT (Mayer et al., 2003), and EQ-i (Bar-On, 1997, 2000). A detailed list of these tools can be found in Gowing (2001) while Conte (2005) provides a more technical discussion of their validity.
- <sup>7</sup> The idea of *emotional capital* can be understood through the work of Reay (2004), who develops this concept from a feminist perspective, taking Bourdieu's ideas as a theoretical framework. Emotional capital is created through a form of work that generates devotion, generosity, and solidarity and is generally performed by women.

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