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Preparing accountants for today's global business environment: the role of emotional intelligence in accounting education

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Abstract

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Keywords

emotional intelligence, accounting education, global business, accountants

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PREPARING ACCOUNTANTS FOR TODAY'S GLOBAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ACCOUNTING EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
The tasks and skills that are required of accounting practitioners in today's global business environment have changed significantly since the early 1990s. Accounting practitioners are no longer merely required to undertake the tasks necessary for information provision, such as bookkeeping, data analysis and tax preparation. Instead, their roles are now extended to encompass information facilitation, thus repositioning them as knowledge professionals rather than accounting technicians. This includes a greater emphasis on the components of emotional intelligence. However, accounting students are generally not aware of this expanded role. Thus students who are attracted into accounting courses may not possess the appropriate aptitude that would provide a good foundation for developing the skills currently required in today's global accounting environment. Therefore, it is important that the teaching of accounting should enable students to develop these necessary, but often missing, competencies. This paper reports on two independent studies conducted at an Australian university which have suggested that promoting emotional intelligence by providing a variety of learning environments and tasks may be beneficial to accounting graduates.

INTRODUCTION

The tasks and skills that are required of accounting practitioners in today's global business environment have changed significantly since the early 1990s. Accounting practitioners are no longer merely required to undertake the tasks necessary for information provision, such as bookkeeping, data analysis and tax preparation (Barbera 1996; Fleming 1999; Burns and Scapens 2000; Blewitt 2003; Kelman 2005; Spanyi 2006). Instead, their roles are now extended to encompass information facilitation, thus repositioning them as knowledge professionals rather than accounting technicians. This includes a greater emphasis on inter-personal communication and strategic analysis.

However, accounting students are generally not aware of this expanded role. Thus students who are attracted into accounting courses may not possess the appropriate aptitude that would provide a good foundation for developing the skills that are required in the professional accounting environment. Therefore, it is important that the teaching of accounting should enable students to develop these necessary, but often missing, competencies (Corrigan 1997; Albrecht and Sack 2000; Jackson and Lapsley 2003; Power 2003; Holtzman 2004; Prober 2004; Bailey 2005; Hunton, Stone and Wier 2005; Karr 2005; Yasin, Bayes and Czuchry 2005; Abraham 2006).

Consideration needs to be given to the implications for accounting education arising from these conflicting requirements and perceptions of the various interest groups. This was demonstrated by the two Australian professional accounting bodies, CPA Australia and The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia (ICAA), in their accreditation guidelines for Australian Universities (CPA & ICAA 2005). They listed a number of skills that are applied in practice and are valued by employers. These skills include report writing, computer literacy, identifying and organizing information, analysis and interpretation of data and ethical reasoning. In addition, behavioral skills such as flexibility, independence and creativity, and interpersonal skills that give the ability to listen, present views, transfer knowledge, negotiate and collaborate, were deemed of equal importance. Thus, while the traditional technical accounting skills are greatly valued by the profession, there is also recognition that interpersonal attributes are highly desired and need to be developed further.

Consequently, accounting education has become increasingly more complex to manage in the constantly evolving global business environment. While the accounting role was restricted to the provision of financial information and analysis, accounting education focused on the development and application of accounting and audit knowledge. Although the acquisition of technical accounting skills is still relevant, there is an increasing need for accountants to have business management knowledge and skills, a well developed knowledge of information technology and greater interpersonal skills (French and Coppage 2000). Educators have been perceived as placing too much emphasis on the financial and regulatory matters and failing to assist in the development of the necessary skills required by practicing accountants (Barbera 1996; Gammie, Gammie and Cargill 2002). This call for changes to education of accountants demonstrates that it is important to ensure that all interested parties are operating from the same underlying assumptions.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight how the role of accounting has adapted to changes in the global economy requiring a consequent shift in not only the way accounting is taught, but also the need to attract the types of students who are likely to flourish in the present working environment. It does this by reporting on two independent studies conducted at an Australian university which suggest that promoting emotional intelligence (EI) through provision of a variety of learning environments and tasks would be beneficial to accounting graduates.

The remainder of this paper is divided into two major sections, with the first addressing the expanded role of accountants, including a study of the perceptions of stakeholders in accounting education. The second major section explores the notion of EI in relationship to this expanded role, and reports on a study of how the importance of EI skills being imparted to students. Within each of these sections there is a brief literature review as well a description of the respective studies and their results. The relationship of these two sections is then discussed including the implications for accounting education. The paper concludes with directions in which the research could be expanded.

STUDY A: EXPANDING ROLE OF ACCOUNTANTS

Literature Review: The literature pertaining to the expanded role of accountants recognizes that there has been a shift in the accounting role, from merely information provision to extended information facilitation (Burns and Scapens 2000; Power 2003; Yasin, Bayes and Czuchry 2005), and that this has resulted in the need for accounting graduates to be forward thinkers, skilled strategists and team players. New graduates are being thrust into advisory roles often requiring them to engage in strategic decision making tasks (Corrigan 1997). This adaptation of the role of accounting practitioners highlights the need for changes to the education of accountants.

The role of an accountant has developed over time from the stereotypical number cruncher, with the role of bookkeeper, data analyst and tax preparer, into a role that encompasses a much wider range of duties, and additional ‘soft skills’ such as people management and

communication abilities (Blewitt 2003; Kelman 2005). Nevertheless, traditional accounting tasks are still seen as central to organizational operation (Jackson and Lapsley 2003) in terms of monitoring and improving efficiency (Yasin, Bayes and Czuchry 2005). However, the activities accountants must perform today include the traditional technical skills as well as these so called 'soft skills'. This evolution of the accounting role has also meant that new graduates are thrust into advisory positions and thus need to develop new proficiencies and become broader based business people (Corrigan 1997; Holtzman 2004). These skills and tasks that were not traditionally considered to be part of the accounting role, or necessary for accountants to be successful in the workplace (Siegel 2000; Stimpson 2000; Power 2003; Karr 2005) are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Additional roles required in today's global accounting environment

- Effectively communicating with a wide range of people including
  - clients and co-workers
  - government instrumentalities
  - legal and other professionals
- Undertaking advisory roles requiring strategic decision making including
  - proficiency in forward thinking
  - ability to weigh alternatives and potential outcomes
- Critically analyzing potential opportunities and projects including continually seeking improvement in both methods and effectiveness
- Managing, motivating and inspiring personnel
- Team building expertise including
  - demonstrating empathy by showing tolerance for people's differences and dealing with their issues fairly
  - acknowledging and recognizing people for their contributions and performance

Recent studies have been conducted relating to the perceptions of students about the activities they will be engaged in when working as an accounting professional (Jackling and Calero 2006; Jones and Abraham 2007). Jackling and Calero (2006, p 434) concluded that "experiences of accounting students of their first course in accounting affect students' perceptions of accounting" which therefore has an impact on the appropriate conduct of accounting education. If the early experiences of accounting students are principally involved with traditional accounting tasks such as data entry, debits and credits, and basic analysis of financial reports, then the perceptions of students are likely to be heavily influenced by these tasks and lead to students developing inaccurate conclusions about the roles undertaken by accounting practitioners. It has been suggested that students with higher exposure to accounting "appear to have a more broadly based view of the attributes required of accountants" (Jackling and Calero 2006, p 434). Thus providing students with experience in the accounting workplace would enhance the effectiveness of accounting education.

Thus, educators need to provide students with the opportunities to understand and develop the skills that they will require to succeed in the working environment. To this end, educators "have the responsibility to provide their graduates with a strong foundation in both technical and emotional training so that they will be well-rounded individuals, and hence worthy employees, effective managers and dynamic leaders" (Abraham 2006, p 74). One possible way in which students could be provided with the opportunity to develop these types of skills would be to enable the development of EI within the accounting cohort.

Cowdroy, Williams, De Graaff and Mauffette (2002, p 168) advocated that "a major challenge for higher education is to demonstrate relevance and educational quality to an increasingly wide range of stakeholders with conflicting expectations in the name of accountability". These stakeholders include accounting practitioners, academics and students, with each group having different views. In order to overcome this confusion, it is necessary to consider the perceptions of these three distinct groups. Studies of perceptions of the

stakeholders in accounting are not new. An American study by Usoff and Feldman (1998) considered the skills that are important for success in an accounting career, from a student's perspective. Their research addressed the relative importance of technical and non-technical accounting skills, as perceived by graduate and undergraduate accounting students. The results suggested that there were differences between the two groups of students, with undergraduates having a lower understanding of the importance of both non-technical and leadership skills.

From an Australian perspective there have been several studies about aspects of various perceptions of students, academics and practitioners of accounting over the last decade. Zaid and Abraham (1994) focused on the perception held by these groups regarding the importance of communication skills. De Lange, Jackling and Gut (2006) focused on the perceptions that accounting graduates have of the emphasis that should be placed on developing technical and generic skills. Watty (2005) considered the quality of accounting education from an academic perspective by conducting a survey of accounting academics, concentrating on the different views of quality they held. Her results suggested that the education currently being provided in universities does not address the issue of quality, but merely provides compliance with quality assurance and improvement programs.

Research Method: Study A surveyed accounting practitioners, academics and final year students to determine each group's perceptions of the roles of accountants in today's global environment. The practitioners were members of CPA Australia and represented a cross section of practicing accountants who were likely to be current in their knowledge and appreciation of the skills and roles required of accounting professionals. The academics consisted of all staff in the school of accounting and finance at an Australian university. The students were drawn from a third year management accounting class. These students were selected as it was anticipated that by the third year of their undergraduate degree they were likely to have developed a reasonable understanding of the roles undertaken by practicing accountants and the characteristics that would help them succeed in the workplace. Table 1 provides a summary of the response rates of the participant groups.

Table 1: Participant response rates

Participants	Number surveyed	Useable responses	
		n	%
Academics	31	18	58%
Students	82	69	84%
Practitioners	28	26	93%

The research instrument was a questionnaire developed from a review of the literature. It consisted of 32 questions that determined the importance survey participants placed on particular characteristics and roles undertaken by accounting graduates once they enter the workforce. Descriptive statistics in terms of mean responses are shown in Table 2.

The results were analyzed using both parametric statistics and non-parametric statistics. The parametric statistics provided an overall picture of the sample. The non-parametric statistics developed inferential measures (t-test and F-test) to discern differences in perceptions between the target groups about the current role of accountants. This allowed the following hypotheses to be tested.

- H_1: That there is a difference in the perceptions of academics, practitioners and students.
- H_2: That academics' perceptions vary depending on whether or not they have been employed as practicing accountants.
- H_3: That academics and students have different perceptions.
- H_4: That practitioners and students have different perceptions.
- H_5: That academics and practitioners have different perceptions.

Table 3 summarizes the results for the questions for which there were significant differences between the groups.

Table 2: Means of stakeholder perceptions

Accounting Characteristic or Role	Academic	Practitioner	Student
Q1 Self confidence	5.4	6.2	5.8
Q2 Intelligence	5.9	6.0	5.7
Q3 Academic results	4.7	4.7	4.8
Q4 Motivation	5.7	6.2	5.7
Q5 Leadership abilities	5.3	5.8	5.2
Q6 Involvement in community activities	3.8	4.5	4.6
Q7 Self belief	5.5	6.0	5.7
Q8 Variety of any type of work experience	5.1	5.6	5.4
Q9 Variety of accounting experience	5.1	5.9	5.4
Q10 Critical analysis skills	6.1	6.3	5.7
Q11 Managerial skills	5.0	5.6	5.2
Q12 Team work skills	5.5	5.7	5.6
Q13 Group work experience	5.2	5.5	5.3
Q14 Ability to learn	5.9	6.0	5.5
Q15 Respect in the community	4.9	5.2	5.4
Q16 High ethical standards	6.1	6.0	5.9
Q17 Organization skills	5.9	6.0	6.0
Q18 Data collection	5.0	5.3	5.3
Q19 Data analysis	6.0	5.9	5.6
Q20 Communication of financial information	6.4	6.2	5.6
Q21 Ability to manage staff	5.0	5.9	5.1
Q22 Time management skills	6.2	6.3	5.7
Q23 Ability to deal with clients	6.3	6.4	5.8
Q24 Ability to teach subordinates	5.2	6.0	5.3
Q25 IT knowledge	5.3	5.3	5.3
Q26 Budget preparation	5.6	5.7	5.6
Q27 Audit preparation	5.7	5.3	5.5
Q28 Knowledge of tax regulations	5.8	5.6	5.8
Q29 Managerial skills	4.7	5.8	5.3
Q30 University provides good basics	5.7	5.4	5.4
Q31 University teaches students to learn	5.4	5.5	5.2
Q32 University provides skills needed	5.1	4.9	5.3

Academics were then separated into two groups: those who had worked as practicing accountants and those who had not. Using independent sample testing H_2 was analyzed at a 90% confidence interval. The results are shown in Table 4. Assuming equal variances, the critical t value for 16 degrees of freedom, as demonstrated in the Table 4 was 1.7459 (t_{crit}= 1.7459). The results revealed that academics who had been employed as practicing accountants had higher perceptions of the importance of particular roles undertaken and skills needed by graduates, which included personal skills such as self-belief, self-confidence and management proficiency. They also had higher expectations of the importance of information technology, budgeting, auditing and taxation.

Factor analysis was conducted in order to further analyze the data. The items were formed into clusters or factors, with each factor denoting several different variables, thus allowing determination of areas of significance (Salkind 2004). A summary description of each of the eight identified factors is shown in Table 5. These eight factors explain 71.4 percent of the variances. The variances are presented in Table 6. Table 7 shows the means and standard deviations of the eight factors.

Table 3: ANOVA test of differences in perceptions

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Question 1	Between Groups	6.276	2	3.138	3.493	0.034
	Within Groups	98.822	110	0.898		
	Total	105.097	112			
Question 5	Between Groups	6.066	2	3.033	3.154	0.047
	Within Groups	105.775	110	0.962		
	Total	111.841	112			
Question 6	Between Groups	8.277	2	4.138	2.427	0.093
	Within Groups	187.599	110	1.705		
	Total	195.876	112			
Question 10	Between Groups	10.700	2	5.350	5.117	0.008
	Within Groups	115.016	110	1.046		
	Total	125.717	112			
Question 11	Between Groups	6.306	2	3.153	2.612	0.078
	Within Groups	132.792	110	1.207		
	Total	139.097	112			
Question 20	Between Groups	12.258	2	6.129	6.692	0.002
	Within Groups	100.751	110	0.916		
	Total	113.009	112			
Question 21	Between Groups	12.158	2	6.079	5.610	0.005
	Within Groups	119.205	110	1.084		
	Total	131.363	112			
Question 22	Between Groups	8.125	2	4.062	4.724	0.011
	Within Groups	94.601	110	0.860		
	Total	102.726	112			
Question 23	Between Groups	9.753	2	4.876	4.118	0.019
	Within Groups	130.247	110	1.184		
	Total	140.000	112			
Question 24	Between Groups	11.083	2	5.542	4.581	0.012
	Within Groups	133.058	110	1.210		
	Total	144.142	112			
Question 29	Between Groups	12.816	2	6.408	6.132	0.003
	Within Groups	114.954	110	1.045		
	Total	127.770	112			

Table 4: Independent samples test of academics with/without experience in practice

	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std. Error Diff	95% Conf Interval of Diff	
								Lower	Upper
Q1	0.938	0.347	-1.380	16	0.186	-0.636	0.461	-1.614	0.341
Q5	0.544	0.471	-2.121	16	0.050	-1.013	0.478	-2.025	-0.001
Q7	1.299	0.271	-1.957	16	0.068	-1.052	0.537	-2.191	0.087
Q8	0.285	0.601	1.757	16	0.098	0.987	0.562	-0.204	2.178
Q21	0.118	0.735	-3.034	16	0.008	-1.169	0.385	-1.985	-0.352
Q26	1.117	0.306	-1.596	16	0.130	-0.766	0.480	-1.784	0.251
Q27	0.012	0.913	-1.504	16	0.152	-0.714	0.475	-1.721	0.292
Q28	1.169	0.296	-1.270	16	0.222	-0.662	0.522	-1.768	0.443
Q29	2.033	0.173	-1.221	16	0.240	-0.714	0.585	-1.955	0.526
Q31	0.029	0.867	-2.167	16	0.046	-0.870	0.402	-1.721	-0.019
Q32	5.544	0.032	-2.234	16	0.040	-1.026	0.459	-2.000	-0.052

Table 5: Summary descriptions of factors

Factor	Description
1	Managerial and accounting functions
2	Personal skills such as intelligence, motivation and leadership
3	Academic results and education provided by universities
4	Group working skills
5	Analysis and ethical standards
6	Community attitudes
7	Data skills
8	Work experience

Table 6: Total variance explained using rotated component matrix

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cum %	Total	% of Variance	Cum %	Total	% of Variance	Cum %
1	11.500	35.938	35.938	11.500	35.938	35.938	4.589	14.341	14.341
2	2.601	8.129	44.068	2.601	8.129	44.068	3.483	10.884	25.225
3	2.231	6.971	51.038	2.231	6.971	51.038	2.953	9.227	34.452
4	1.704	5.324	56.362	1.704	5.324	56.362	2.816	8.800	43.251
5	1.389	4.340	60.702	1.389	4.340	60.702	2.723	8.508	51.760
6	1.234	3.855	64.557	1.234	3.855	64.557	2.273	7.104	58.864
7	1.150	3.593	68.149	1.150	3.593	68.149	2.216	6.926	65.790
8	1.048	3.277	71.426	1.048	3.277	71.426	1.804	5.636	71.426

Table 7: Factor(F) means and standard deviations

Factors		F 1	F 2	F 3	F 4	F 5	F 6	F 7	F 8
Academic	Mean	5.318	5.710	5.515	5.508	5.924	4.692	5.700	5.113
	N	66	69	68	61	66	52	60	53
	St Dev	1.192	0.941	0.985	0.977	1.238	1.462	1.266	1.281
Practitioner	Mean	5.570	5.909	5.271	5.641	6.035	5.165	5.605	5.682
	N	79	88	85	78	87	85	81	88
	St Dev	0.996	1.057	1.426	0.911	1.083	1.370	1.221	0.977
Student	Mean	5.216	5.716	5.324	5.480	5.565	5.172	5.492	5.463
	N	199	208	207	200	209	209	197	205
	St Dev	1.145	1.041	1.264	1.116	1.239	1.209	1.067	1.359
Total	Mean	5.317	5.762	5.347	5.522	5.743	5.098	5.556	5.465
	N	344	365	360	339	362	346	338	346
	St Dev	1.128	1.0275	1.257	1.047	1.217	1.297	1.142	1.270

Table 8 displays the results of the independent sample test (assuming equal variances) for

H_3: That academics and students have different perceptions.

Academics' and students' perceptions differed, with academics placing greater value on results, ethics community attitudes, data analysis and work experience while students expectations were higher in relation to the importance of experience and community attitudes.

Table 8: Independent samples test: academics and students

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std Error Diff	95% Conf Interval of Diff	
								Lower	Upper
Factor 3	2.859	0.092	1.137	273	0.256	0.191	0.168	-0.140	0.522
Factor 5	1.795	0.181	2.059	273	0.040	0.360	0.175	0.016	0.704
Factor 6	4.799	0.029	-2.453	259	0.015	-0.480	0.196	-0.865	-0.095
Factor 7	0.802	0.371	1.261	255	0.208	0.208	0.165	-0.117	0.532
Factor 8	2.148	0.144	-1.691	256	0.092	-0.350	0.207	-0.758	0.058

Table 9 summarizes the results (with all equal variances assumed) for

H_4: That practitioners and students have different perceptions.

The perceptions of practitioners and students differed in a number of ways. Practitioners had higher expectations of the ability of graduates to critically analyze data and also rated the importance of ethical standards more highly. However, students regarded experience and community attitudes to be of greater importance.

Table 9: Independent samples test: practitioners and students

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std Error Diff	95% Conf Interval of Diff	
								Lower	Upper
Factor 5	1.795	0.181	2.059	273	0.040	0.360	0.175	0.016	0.704
Factor 6	4.799	0.029	-2.453	259	0.015	-0.480	0.196	-0.865	-0.095
Factor 7	0.802	0.371	1.261	255	0.208	0.208	0.165	-0.117	0.532
Factor 8	2.148	0.144	-1.691	256	0.092	-0.350	0.208	-0.758	0.058

Table 10 gives the results of the test (with equal variances assumed) for

H_5: That academics and practitioners have different perceptions.

Practitioners had higher perceptions of the importance of discipline based components such as managerial and accounting functions. They also placed greater significance on personal skills, community attitudes and work experience. However, academics emphasized the value of results and university education.

Table 10: Independent samples test: academics and practitioners

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std Error Diff	95% Conf Interval of Diff	
								Lower	Upper
Factor 1	2.317	0.130	-1.384	143	0.168	-0.251	0.182	-0.611	0.108
Factor 2	0.002	0.964	-1.227	155	0.222	-0.199	0.162	-0.519	0.121
Factor 3	4.236	0.041	1.201	151	0.232	0.244	0.203	-0.158	0.646
Factor 6	0.482	0.489	-1.909	135	0.058	-0.472	0.248	-0.962	0.018
Factor 8	0.890	0.347	-2.971	139	0.003	-0.569	0.191	-0.947	-0.190

The results indicated that the perceptions vary greatly among the three groups. Accounting practitioners suggested that graduates required enhanced critical analysis and behavioral skills, and placed greater emphasis on personal skills, community attitudes and work experience, while academics placed greater emphasis on students' academic results and their ability to learn. Interestingly, those academics who had also worked as an accountant outside of academia demonstrated views more closely aligned to those of practitioners. However, students considered the attainment of the qualification and experience undertaking traditional accounting tasks as the most important. These results, therefore, propose questions about the types of students who are attracted into studying accounting and if there is a need to address their understanding of the roles they will be required to undertake. Additionally, consideration needs to be given as to how they can be provided opportunities within their education to enhance the skills and abilities that they will require in order to be more likely to succeed when they graduate and join the accounting profession.

Therefore this research has indicated that the students who are currently being attracted to the accounting major have false expectations of the roles they will be undertaking. This suggests that if first year accounting subjects could provide students with a more encompassing

perspective of the accounting tasks, then students who previously would not have considered accounting as a major may be more likely to reconsider their position. This would produce graduates who possess the basis qualities that the profession now values and enable easier development of appropriate skills. Similarly, enabling students who would not previously have considered accounting as a major to understand the likely roles that they would undertake in the profession may attract those with the skills and abilities congruent with the needs of the profession. Concern that there are substantial differences in the expectations of stakeholders about the skills required by accounting graduates are, likewise, being expressed (Albrecht and Sack 2000; French and Coppage 2000; Garraway 2006).

Thus, Study A revealed that there were deficiencies in students' perceptions of the roles and tasks of professional accountants. Study B evaluates if enhancement of EI could be useful for addressing their expanded skill needs.

STUDY B: THE LINK WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Literature Review: Emotional intelligence has been popularized in recent times by the books written by Daniel Goleman (1995, 1998 and 2007) who built on the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990). Mayer and Salovey (1993) described EI as the ability to

- perceive emotions accurately;
- appraise and express emotions;
- access and/or generate feelings when they generate thought;
- understand and express emotional knowledge, and
- regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Similarly, Goleman (1995) defined EI as a set of capacities that include individuals knowing what they are feeling, knowing what others are feeling, managing those feelings in relationships, and using those feelings to motivate themselves. As the result of interviews of a large group of ultra-high achievers, he discovered considerable differences in the level of their intelligence quotient (IQ), training, education and credentials. In addition, he found that there were high levels of consistency in their ability to get along with others, their levels of motivation, and their self-discipline.

Thus, Goleman proposed that while high levels of cognitive thinking enable individuals to get "into the game", and to secure employment in the first place, the possession of "emotional skills allow greater progress at a more rapid rate" (Goleman 1995, p 32). He highlighted this proposition by demonstrating that "people who are better in EI get more out of being better" because they can leverage other people's abilities very effectively and enhance performance and develop harmony and congruent goals within the working environment (Goleman 1995, p 42).

A number of researchers have mentioned the qualities that are required for graduates to be successful in their particular fields (Hassall, Joyce, Montano and Anes 1999; Austin, Saklofske, Huang and McKenney 2004; Bailey 2005; Daus and Ashkanasy 2005; Hunton, Stone *et al.* 2005; Myers and Tucker 2005; Yasin, Bayes *et al.* 2005; Donohue and Stevensen 2006). As each particular field favored different qualities it was expected that people possessing those qualities would be more likely to be attracted to those careers. This led to an expectation that the disciplines which traditionally require more interaction between the respective profession and the public would appeal to individuals who were comfortable in interpersonal relationships and, therefore, would be expected to score highest in tests for EI.

Research Method: The second study considered whether accounting students were provided with the opportunities to develop EI and if promoting EI development could improve student-learning outcomes and enable students to acquire the skills required in the professional environment. It also attempted to determine if there were any factors that may influence

development of EI. The research instrument used for the second study was an adaptation of the Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden and Dornheim (1998) tool. This survey tool was itself an adaptation of the Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS) developed by Mayer and Salovey (1993). A number of additional questions were also asked to determine the level of understanding participants had about EI. Surveys were distributed to one hundred and four academics at the University of Wollongong. Initially responses were received from thirty-two academics and after follow up this number was increased to thirty-seven, giving a response rate of 35.5%. This percentage is sufficient to provide statistically valid information (Black 2004; Salkind 2004) who recommend statistically valid results are achieved with a greater than 30% response rate. Academics surveyed came from five separate disciplines: accounting, economics, finance, management and marketing.

Analysis and Discussion: The results appear to be inconclusive with regard to the expectation that individuals within particular disciplines would have particular EI levels (Table 11). On the one hand, the premise is supported by the results from disciplines such as economics and finance which returned low EI scores. Conversely, it is not supported by the results for either the accounting discipline (traditionally not seen as requiring the skills associated with EI) ranking second and the management discipline (which would be expected to have a high level of interpersonal skills) ranking second lowest.

Table 11: Average EI score for each discipline

Discipline	Avg Score (out of 5)	% Score
Marketing	4.000	80.00
Accounting	3.812	76.24
Finance	3.651	73.02
Management	3.564	71.28
Economics	3.458	69.16

There is little research to indicate whether academics who have worked in the professional role are likely to have different EI levels to those who have not. However, Goleman (1998) does suggest that exposure to a variety of situations may increase an individual's capacity to empathize with others. Table 12 highlights the mean responses of those that have and have not worked in their profession outside of academia. In particular, it focuses on whether the respondents have only worked in academia, or also have worked in their particular professional fields.

The analysis of the survey data indicates that those respondents who had only worked in the area of academia, and not spent time in their respective professional 'real world' situations scored lower EI levels than their counterparts who had worked in the professional workplace at some time. This, therefore, suggests that exposure to the working environment may assist individuals to understand themselves and enhance their ability to appreciate the need for EI in a business setting. Alternatively, it may be the wider range of experience that is the influencing factor.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ACCOUNTING EDUCATION

This paper suggests that EI is of substantial value to accounting students in terms of their future success in today's global environment. However, because of the differing perceptions between students, academics and accountants regarding the role of accountants, students who are attracted to an accounting major may not be those who already possess strong EI attributes. Thus, the accounting profession may be missing out on potentially valuable recruits. This deficiency can be addressed in a number of ways.

Table 12: Mean responses for respondents that Have (Y) and have Not worked (N) in the accounting profession outside of academia

In profession		V12	V13	V14	V15	V16	V17	V18	V19	V20	V21	V22	V23	V24	V25	V26	V27	V28	V29	V30	V31	V32
N	Mean	3.30	3.70	3.20	3.60	3.30	3.20	3.10	3.40	3.60	3.00	3.30	3.20	3.60	3.70	3.20	3.60	4.00	3.40	3.70	3.70	3.10
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Std Dev	1.418	1.160	1.033	1.350	1.059	1.619	0.994	1.265	1.075	1.155	0.949	1.033	1.075	0.949	0.789	0.699	1.155	.843	1.160	1.160	1.287
Y	Mean	3.85	4.15	4.15	3.63	3.96	4.37	3.78	3.37	3.81	3.89	3.26	3.19	3.70	3.96	3.59	3.81	4.22	4.04	4.04	4.07	3.33
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27
	Std Dev	0.907	0.864	0.770	1.115	0.940	0.926	0.934	1.149	0.921	0.934	0.944	0.786	0.953	0.808	0.797	0.834	0.698	0.808	0.808	0.917	1.109
Total	Mean	3.70	4.03	3.89	3.62	3.78	4.05	3.59	3.38	3.76	3.65	3.27	3.19	3.68	3.89	3.49	3.76	4.16	3.86	3.95	3.97	3.27
	N	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37
	Std Dev	1.077	0.957	0.936	1.163	1.004	1.246	0.985	1.163	0.955	1.060	0.932	0.845	0.973	0.843	0.804	0.796	0.834	0.855	0.911	0.986	1.146

In profession		V33	V34	V35	V36	V37	V38	V39	V40	V41	V42	V43	V44	V45	V46	V47	V48	V49	V50	V51	V52
N	Mean	3.50	3.20	4.00	3.30	3.40	3.00	2.80	2.90	3.90	3.30	3.70	3.80	3.40	3.50	3.33	3.44	4.00	3.40	3.30	3.20
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	9	9	10	10	10
	Std Dev	1.179	1.317	1.247	0.823	0.966	1.054	1.549	0.738	0.876	0.675	0.823	1.033	1.350	1.354	1.658	1.424	1.225	1.174	1.252	0.919
Y	Mean	3.74	3.67	4.37	3.93	3.11	3.11	4.48	3.41	3.96	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.70	3.70	3.70	4.07	3.78	3.59	3.50
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	26
	Std Dev	0.859	0.832	0.688	0.781	0.974	0.751	0.893	1.010	0.808	0.818	0.718	0.864	0.534	0.869	0.912	0.823	0.781	1.050	0.971	0.812
Total	Mean	3.68	3.54	4.27	3.76	3.19	3.08	4.03	3.27	3.95	3.70	3.81	3.84	3.73	3.65	3.61	3.64	4.06	3.68	3.51	3.42
	N	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	36	36	36	37	37	36
	Std Dev	0.944	0.989	0.871	0.830	0.967	0.829	1.323	0.962	0.815	0.812	0.739	0.898	0.838	1.006	1.128	0.990	0.893	1.082	1.044	0.841

First, the marketing of university accounting programs should ensure that the role of the accountant in today's global environment is clearly articulated and communicated to potential entrants. This would contribute to an alignment of student expectations and professional realities. Secondly, students should be provided with the opportunity, early in their accounting education, to develop a clear understanding of the tasks and skills required by practicing accountants, and to appreciate the value of diversified experience.

In terms of encouraging EI development, the research has also highlighted other factors that may be relevant to enhancing EI skills in individuals. Since academics who have worked in a professional practice environment at some time exhibited higher EI levels, more emphasis should be given to providing students with a range of experiences during their accounting education. To this end, it may be relevant to consider adopting the concept of work experience within the accounting degree or including other methods which incorporate and replicate the situations that students are likely to encounter once they leave university.

In relation to 'teaching' EI skills, it is probable that academics with higher levels of EI are more likely to be able to encourage EI development in their students, as they themselves possess the types of skills that they would be trying to impart. Thus, by demonstrating these skills to their students they act as role models. Therefore, universities should provide professional development courses which both improve academics' understanding of EI and promote opportunities to develop their EI skills. In this way the EI levels of both academics and their students will be enhanced.

CONCLUSION

Promoting enhanced EI level in accounting students appears to be one way that educators can provide graduates with the skill set needed in the working environment, and this paper has indicated that diversity and variety of experience is an integral part of that process.

There are a number of other issues that are still to be resolved, particularly in respect to the to the validity of the current measurement tools that exist for evaluating the EI levels of individuals. There are problems with the use of self-assessment measurement tools because of potential of bias and variations in individual levels of self esteem. Resolution of this measurement problem would enable greater acceptance of EI, and help to create valid and reliable training tools for EI development. It would also provide a method for evaluating changes in EI levels. This suggests that there is also a need for additional research to enhance the current acceptance of EI as an appropriate tool for measuring intelligence.

Additionally, there is a lack of research into the value of experience as a component in enhancing EI. While this research has suggested that experience in a variety of areas may have a positive impact on EI levels, it has only considered the situation at one university. There is a need to further evaluate how important this factor may be in a number of institutions in different locations.

The literature from the profession has suggested that possessing EI skills is important for workplace success. Thus, evaluating the EI levels of students prior to admission into an accounting degree would indicate the types of skills that the students currently possess. It would also highlight the opportunities that would need to be provided for them to enhance their skills. Since those with higher EI levels may enjoy more success in the working environment, providing students with the chance to develop and enhance their EI may directly impact on their future performance.

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