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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ) AND REFLECTIVE CAPABILITIES OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGERS IN MANAGERIAL DECISION-MAKING

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Abstract. This thesis explores how emotional intelligence (EQ) and reflective capabilities jointly influence managerial decision-making in educational institutions. Drawing on foundational research in emotional intelligence, reflective practice and school leadership, it proposes a conceptual process for identifying emotional signals, evaluating alternatives, documenting decisions and learning from outcomes. The analysis suggests that combining emotional self-regulation, empathy and systematic reflection can strengthen deliberation, stakeholder trust and organizational learning; however, the strength of these relationships depends on institutional context and should be tested empirically.

Keywords: emotional intelligence; reflective practice; educational management; managerial decision-making; self-regulation; school leadership.

Annotatsiya. Mazkur tezisda ta’lim menejerlarining boshqaruv qarorlarini qabul qilish jarayonida hissiy intellekt (EQ) va reflektiv qobiliyatlarning o‘zaro bog‘liqligi tahlil qilinadi. Hissiyotlarni anglash, o‘zini boshqarish, empatiya hamda qaror natijalarini tizimli tahlil qilishning ahamiyati yoritiladi. Ta’lim tashkilotlari uchun reflektiv qaror qabul qilishning konseptual bosqichlari taklif etiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: hissiy intellekt; refleksiya; ta’lim menejmenti; boshqaruv qarorlari; o‘zini boshqa*rish; ta’lim rahbarligi.*

Аннотация. В тезисе рассматривается взаимосвязь эмоционального интеллекта (EQ) и рефлексивных способностей руководителей образования при принятии управленческих решений. Анализируется роль осознания эмоций, саморегуляции, эмпатии и систематической оценки результатов решений. Предложены концептуальные этапы рефлексивного принятия решений в образовательной организации.

Ключевые слова: эмоциональный интеллект; рефлексия; менеджмент образования; управленческие решения; саморегуляция; образовательное лидерство.

INTRODUCTION

Educational managers make decisions in environments shaped by competing demands: instructional quality, staff workload, parental expectations, inclusion, budgetary constraints and institutional accountability. Such choices are rarely purely technical. They require interpreting interpersonal signals, handling disagreement and revisiting assumptions when circumstances change. Emotional intelligence (EQ) refers to abilities involved in perceiving, using, understanding and regulating emotions; it offers one framework for explaining why otherwise comparable managers may navigate the interpersonal dimension of decisions differently (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer et al., 2004).

Reflection adds a complementary dimension. Dewey (1933) described reflective thinking as an active examination of beliefs in light of reasons and consequences, while Schön (1983) distinguished reflection during professional action from reflection after action. For educational managers, these ideas imply that sound judgment is not merely arriving at a decision but also recognizing the assumptions behind it, observing its effects and adapting subsequent practice. The purpose of this paper is to synthesize these theoretical perspectives and outline an actionable, non-empirical framework for educational decision-making.

MAIN PART

The emotional component of managerial judgment. A manager’s emotional state can affect the framing of a problem, the selection of information and the tone of communication. The four-branch

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ability model of emotional intelligence emphasizes perception, facilitation, understanding and management of emotions (Mayer et al., 2004). In a tense staff meeting, for example, perceiving frustration without immediately treating it as resistance may help a leader distinguish an implementation problem from a motivational issue. Emotion regulation should not be confused with suppressing disagreement: the objective is to make relevant feelings discussable while preserving attention to evidence, ethical obligations and institutional rules.

Emotional intelligence also matters for relationships. A principal who recognizes anxiety surrounding curriculum changes can adapt the timing and presentation of a decision without abandoning educational standards. Such relational sensitivity may encourage psychological safety and participation, though claims that higher EQ necessarily produces better decisions would be excessive. Ashkanasy and Daus (2005) argue that emotional intelligence research is relevant to organizational behavior, while also underscoring the need for conceptual clarity. Therefore, EQ should be considered alongside professional knowledge, resource availability and procedural safeguards rather than used as an independent substitute for them.

Reflective capabilities and decision quality. Reflective practice is the disciplined examination of one's own interpretations, actions and their consequences. Reflection-in-action allows the manager to adjust a meeting or negotiation as new information emerges; reflection-on-action examines what happened after the decision was implemented (Schön, 1983). In educational organizations, reflection can include reviewing attendance data, listening to students and teachers, comparing anticipated outcomes with observed outcomes and documenting lessons for future cycles. It reduces the risk of repeating familiar responses simply because they are convenient.

A particularly important function of reflection is recognizing cognitive bias. Decision-makers may overvalue vivid recent incidents, seek evidence supporting their initial position, or interpret opposition as personal criticism. Kahneman (2011) distinguishes intuitive from more deliberate modes of thinking, illustrating why structured review can be valuable under uncertainty. Reflective questions—"What evidence contradicts my preferred option?", "Whose views have been omitted?" and "What would make me revise this decision?"—turn abstract introspection into a replicable management routine.

Integrating EQ and reflection. The relationship is complementary rather than interchangeable. Emotional awareness can reveal when a decision discussion is becoming defensive; reflective reasoning can then test whether the defensiveness is distorting the evidence. Conversely, reflection may identify recurring emotional triggers that require better self-regulation. Educational leadership research emphasizes the influence of leadership practices and context on school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2020), suggesting that individual competencies become useful when embedded in collaborative structures, clear responsibilities and feedback loops.

Table 1. Conceptual integration of EQ and reflection across decision stages

Decision stage	EQ contribution	Reflective practice
Define the problem	Recognize stakeholder concerns and emotional cues	Separate observations from assumptions
Evaluate options	Regulate defensiveness; consider interpersonal effects	Compare evidence, trade-offs and alternative interpretations
Implement	Communicate respectfully and handle resistance	Record rationale, responsibilities and indicators
Review	Receive criticism without escalation	Evaluate outcomes and revise future decisions

Practical application. A feasible institutional routine is a short decision log recording the problem, consulted groups, evidence, emotional pressures, selected option, expected indicators and

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review date. After implementation, a brief retrospective meeting can compare anticipated and actual outcomes. Confidentiality is essential: interpersonal observations should not become labels about employees' personalities. EQ development may be supported through scenario-based leadership workshops, coaching and feedback, whereas reflection may be supported through peer consultation and structured journals. Goleman (1998) popularized the connection between emotional competencies and leadership effectiveness, but training claims should be evaluated against observable practices rather than assumed gains.

Limits and research implications. This paper is a conceptual synthesis, not a report of survey or experimental findings; therefore, it does not estimate the causal effect of EQ on administrative performance. Future investigations could assess managers' emotional abilities using validated measures, code reflective decision logs and compare decision processes across institution types. Controls for experience, workload, organizational climate and decision complexity would help distinguish emotional or reflective capability from contextual advantage. Ethical and methodological scrutiny is especially important when self-report EQ scores are used for personnel evaluation.

CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence and reflective capabilities can be viewed as mutually reinforcing resources for educational managers. EQ helps leaders notice and regulate affective processes and engage stakeholders constructively; reflection helps them question assumptions, examine evidence, evaluate consequences and adapt practice. Their integration is most defensible as a structured decision process rather than a guarantee of improved outcomes. Educational organizations can strengthen this process by combining respectful dialogue, transparent documentation and scheduled review of managerial decisions. Empirical studies are needed to establish which interventions work, for whom and under what institutional conditions.

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