

The development of emotional literacy and social competence in SEN learners.

Frances Sutherland (2007 Fellow)

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Introduction

During my Winston Churchill travelling fellowship I aimed to understand more about how the social and emotional skills of adolescent learners with Special Educational Needs can be developed. There is no common language for the broad area of developing children's social and emotional competence. It appears to include a combination of personal social skills and emotional literacy. In order to explore a range of approaches to teaching emotional literacy to learners with special educational needs (SEN) I focused on two areas. Firstly, meeting with the people who develop and co-ordinate social skills / emotional literacy programmes in order to understand how they selected what to teach, to whom and when. Within that I also needed to understand how we might recognise success, so my second areas of interest were to examine appropriate methods for assessing pupils' progress. In this study I deliberately did not single out learners with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) because the condition is known to cause impairments of social interaction, communication and imagination. The means that ASD learners may have a specific range of social skill deficits which may or may not occur in the wider SEN community. By including ASD learners as part of the wider human spectrum I hoped to keep my learning as open as possible.

Through visiting Australia I was able to meet SEN teachers in Sydney, Canberra, Cairns and Darwin. In New Zealand I spoke to experts in emotional literacy in Wellington and Nelson. Visiting Charter schools in Prescott, Arizona and Orlando, Florida gave me insight into how social and emotional skills are taught to adolescent learners with Special Educational Needs in those two American states.

At the time of this study I was employed as a class teacher at Furze Down School, Winslow, a small town in North Buckinghamshire. The school has approximately 120 pupils on roll aged between 4 and 18. Children are accepted with a wide range of learning difficulties, including mild (MLD), specific learning difficulties (SpLD) autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). At the start of 2004 it was decided that all the BESD pupils aged between 11 and 14 would be placed in one class. They would be taught the key skills by their class teacher, and a program of emotional literacy would be implemented. At the time I was delighted to have a class of pupils who had MLD, some with ASD and none with the extremely emotionally demanding BESD conditions. I watched the management of the BESD with interest and awe. Over the next term two things became clear. Firstly, the class was extremely difficult to teach, because their attitude to learning was negative. Secondly, emotional literacy is not an easy subject to 'teach'. It is based on learnt behaviour. From the 2006 Ofsted inspection it was found that the behaviour management system throughout the school was exemplary.

There is an outstanding commitment to giving pupils equal opportunities for learning and for achieving as much as possible. Staff know pupils very well and monitor their personal development, behaviour and achievement rigorously. Each pupil is considered as an individual and appropriate educational and personal support and plans are put into place to help them achieve as well as possible..

There is a well-established system for monitoring behaviour in class plus individual commitment to learning during each lesson. This enables teachers to manage classroom behaviour consistently throughout the whole school, and is of great value since the school caters for pupils aged from 4 to 19 years. Each lesson is 'graded' with pupil's earning an A grade for outstanding behaviour, B for acceptable and C for unacceptable. Then a 1, 2 or 3 for actual work produced in relation to the pupil's ability. An A1 gains a reward, a C3 earns a detention.

During any one term it becomes apparent that detentions appear to be reserved for certain pupils. By the end of the first six weeks we have usually identified the core pupils who need to improve their attitude to learning, because they most frequently earn C3 grade in lessons. Why is this? One can 'blame' the parents for not supporting their children's learning; maybe the teacher should take more responsibility for making the lessons more relevant, interesting and engaging; could there be a personality clash between the teacher and that pupil,

but if that is so why does a specific pupil clash with different teachers every year? Perhaps the pupil is simply resistant to learning having experienced failure for many years. These and many more reasons can be offered, however they do not help the teacher in the classroom unless we can offer a way of helping the child to learn despite the hidden causes for failure.

A colleague, Rob Kenney completed his Master of Education in 2003 with a research dissertation on the self-esteem of Year 9 pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The following year he tested the level of self-esteem of pupils aged between 11 and 14 and found that many of the pupils who earned detentions also had low self-esteem. Might detentions compound that condition, lowering self-esteem still further? Also, if detentions were intended as a deterrent to help the pupil to improve their behaviour, why did the unacceptable behaviour persist despite the detentions? How long does it take for an SEN learner to understand the cause and effect of unacceptable behaviour? These questions led to my interest in understanding more about how people develop social competence, how we acquire emotional literacy and whether it is possible to change the behaviour through explicitly teaching social and emotional skills.

Social behaviour and cognitive theories.

Developing Social Interaction

Observation shows us that many special educational needs (SEN) learners have difficulties in developing appropriate social and emotional responses. To some extent these difficulties relate to problems with using language effectively, however there are also cognitive and emotional causes. Social problems in childhood are given a range of labels including theory of mind deficits, disorders of pragmatic language and effects of trauma. Although educators, remedial experts and health care professionals have learned a great deal about linguistic disabilities, we know very little about how to develop alternative strategies for children who lack the emotional competence to develop social relationships.

Vygotsky argued that all basic cognitive activities are shaped by social history (Luria 1976). This suggests that cognitive skills and patterns of thinking are not determined by innate factors, but are mainly developed by the social activities practiced by the culture in which the individual grows up. In this process of cognitive development, language is a vital tool for determining how the child will learn how to think because advanced modes of thought are transmitted to the child by means of words (Murray 1993). It was also suggested by Vygotsky that an individual's potential for cognitive development depends upon their ability to engage in culturally acceptable social behaviour. This interaction between cognitive development and social interaction is called "the zone of proximal development" (ZPD) and it suggests that full cognitive development depends upon full social interaction. This has a profound impact on SEN learners. If we accept that:

1. *Cognitive development results from a dialectical process whereby a child learns through problem-solving experiences shared with someone else.* The SEN learner with language and communication problems is often unable to engage in the dialectical process or in problem-solving experiences, so that pathway to cognitive development through learning social skills is effectively blocked.
2. *As learning progresses, the child's own language comes to serve as their primary tool of intellectual adaptation. Eventually, children can use internal language to direct their own behaviour.* Again, for the SEN learner will have less access to language as a primary tool of intellectual adaptation and will later be unable to internalise language to direct their own behaviour.

One sub-set of social skills is termed 'emotional literacy' which relates to understanding and managing both our own emotional states and being aware of the emotional states of others. The aim of teaching emotional literacy is to develop confident children with the ability to relate to and communicate with others. There is considerable evidence to suggest that emotional literacy is best developed within a whole school by creating a positive ethos cultivating an emotional awareness amongst both staff and pupils (Weare 2004).

Social Learning

The social learning theory of Bandura emphasizes the importance of observing and modelling the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Human behaviour is seen as a continuous interaction between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental influences. The highest level of observational learning is achieved by organizing and rehearsing the modelled behaviour symbolically and then enacting it overtly. The modelling process consists of the following three steps:

1. *Attention*, in order to learn anything, we have to be paying attention.
2. *Retention*, we must be able to retain what we have seen modelled in order to reproduce it in our own behaviour.
3. *Reproduction*, we then have to translate the images or descriptions into actual behaviour.

We regulate our behaviour firstly through self-observation, we observe and monitor our own behaviour. Secondly we judge ourselves by comparing what we see with a standard. Then we apply an internal response. If we have done well in comparison with our standard, we give ourselves rewarding self-responses but if we have done poorly then we give ourselves punishing self-responses.

For SEN learners this process presents many challenges. Their ability to pay attention may be impaired through poor auditory and short term memory abilities. These lead to difficulty in retaining the information, so reproducing it will be sketchy at best. In my experience the majority of SEN learners have an over-developed and often negative self-image, they are excessively harsh in their judgement of their own behaviour and achievements when compared to that of their neuro-typical peers and frequently give themselves punishing self-responses.

As part of the Healthy School initiative in the UK the Social and Emotional Attitudes to Learning (SEAL) program has been developed to assist children aged between 4 and 10 to develop aspects of emotional literacy. The underpinning format of SEAL is based on five broad social and emotional aspects of learning:

1. Self-awareness
2. Managing feelings
3. Motivation
4. Empathy
5. Social skills

There are aspects which relate to Bandura's thinking however, as will be shown in this report, these five categories are extremely broad and they need to be broken down into smaller steps if they are to be accessed by SEN learners.

Planning the itinerary

One of the most exciting challenges of gaining a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship is undoubtedly planning the itinerary. There was no single place where I could find answers to the questions raised above. If anyone had suggested that they had the definitive answers to them I would have been most suspicious. Due to the complexity of human beings I was not expecting to find the answers in a single program, or one simple approach. Thanks to the internet I was able to search for places where relevant work was being conducted. In this way I found:

- The Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) which aims to advocate on behalf of people with special education needs to ensure provision of and access to quality education services.
- The National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) in North America, sponsors a comprehensive program of special education research designed to expand the knowledge and understanding of infants, toddlers and children with disabilities

Through responses from people within AASE I was introduced to SEN schools in Sydney, Canberra and Darwin where exciting work in the area of social skills / emotional literacy was being conducted. A contact in Sydney recommended that I should visit a high school in Cairns with a special centre operating from within a large mainstream school which caters for SEN learners.

In New Zealand I met Tim Maples who the Director of Inova Group which, amongst other things, specialises in leadership and executive coaching. Two of Inova Group's aims seemed relevant. They believe firstly that everyone has untapped potential and truly wants to succeed, and secondly that values and principles are the basis of effective action. Tim Maples is trained to assess adult emotional literacy, his work was therefore of interest to me. Note: these meetings are summarized in Appendix B. there is as yet no Emotional Intelligence test available for minors although I believe that such an assessment would be valuable.

Contact with schools in America was more difficult because our school holiday dates are similar. State schools do open until the last week in August. Nancy Devlin, an Australian Churchill Fellow (2000) had investigated school programmes for children with high support needs in the USA. She suggested that I contact Charter Schools. According to www.charterschoolsusa.com:

Charter schools are part of a sweeping educational reform that offers alternatives for parents and students and places the highest priority on providing a better education. Charter schools are funded much like a public school, but each charter school is governed privately. Unlike traditional public schools, every charter school must demonstrate success, or it will lose its charter. Charter schools can be managed by municipalities, private companies or individuals.

Apparently parents feel that such schools will provide an individualised program. Many SEN pupils are now enrolled in Charter Schools; however such schools rarely specifically offer SEN in their charter. I identified two Charter Schools.

1. Prescott Valley Charter School in Arizona has a particular instructional focus on accelerated learning, with very low student to teacher ratio. They prescribe curriculum to fill in any gaps in the pupils' learning and to lay a strong foundation for development.
2. United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Central Florida teach children with all types of special needs, including cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, speech delays, developmental delays, and vision and hearing impairments. Their holistic approach to support, education, and therapy is accessed by over 2,300 children who receive all the services they need in one place. They operate six centres located throughout Central Florida and accept a diverse assortment of funding.

Case Studies.

Prescott Valley Charter School.

The aim of Prescott Valley Charter School in Arizona is for students, parents, staff and community members to work together to provide equal opportunity for students to attain their highest level of academic achievement, personal growth and intellectual development in a safe and caring environment. Staff are proud of the behaviour of their students who are expected to demonstrate respect for their peers and teachers. The students are set a high academic standard and they are expected to assume responsibility for their education. Parents, teachers, administrators, and students work as a united group. Because family involvement is regarded as a key ingredient in a successful learning process, parents are encouraged to give input in the education of their child.

The school seemed appropriate for my study because students are guided to experience academic success at their diagnosed personal level of learning. Students with Special Educational Needs Students work both independently and 1:1 with their teachers. They also attend group sessions in the core academic subject areas of

literacy and mathematics. In the High School section of the school classrooms are sectioned off areas of a long virtually windowless rectangular structure. The classes are separated by wall-sized boards which hang from girders in the roof. All students are separated from one another by the type of cubicle shown below.



It was surprising to see cubicles used for all students as I had only seen them used to support easily distracted autistic spectrum disorder students in the past. If a student requires academic assistance they place a small flag of the United States in a slot above their cubicle. A chequered flag means they wish to be excused. The lack of social interaction was immediately evident. Recent studies have noted the disadvantages that the cubicle desk has brought to American corporate culture. They may reduce noise and distractions in the working environment, but cubicles have a negative effect by reducing person-to-person communication. This leads to declines in sharing organisational culture and lowered morale. Clearly this was not an environment which encouraged the development of social and emotional skills.

The Principal, Betty-Anne Campbell has adopted a skills development program by Fred Jones entitled Tools for Teaching. This is an approach to classroom management which is based on skills displayed by ‘natural’ teachers. It includes issues such as relating to large groups of students in ways which ensure positive reactions if the student(s) are moving off task; arranging the classroom in ways which enable the teacher to control the learning environment most effectively and developing teaching routines which support pupils. For teachers of pupils with special educational needs these ideas can all be valuable including his suggestion that the supportive adults should never do anything for a pupil that they can do for themselves.

Like most ‘natural’ teacher approaches, this advice might seem too simple to be of great value, however many adults who work with or care for children who have special educational needs are tempted to do things ‘for’ the child rather than watch them struggle and often fail to accomplish the task on their own. This leads to learned helplessness, and lowers self-esteem. Jones suggests that when a child asks for support corrective feedback is provided by praising their effort, prompting them to recognise the next step and then leaving them to attempt it. If the child is seeking attention then this process offers a simple and repeatable approach to providing them with the attention and then moving on to support others.

In the school there was clear evidence of students behaving acceptably and demonstrating a positive attitude to learning. Only one student told me that she preferred to be taught directly, the others appeared to enjoy being left in their cubicles to work at their own pace. They worked through set modules within units of subject-specific workbooks, marked their own work on completion and then handed their revised work to the teacher for assessment. The few SEN pupils I met there had extra literacy and numeracy lessons, and their work was at a lower level than that of their peers.



Youth Chamber Awards won by Prescott Valley Charter School

The above pictures show a senior teacher who works with the older students, and has had success in developing their citizenship and social skills through community activities. They take understandable pride in these achievements.

Responsible Thinking Process

I spoke to Erin Powell, an SEN teacher from St Augustine, Florida who uses Ed Ford's approach to the development of social skills called the Responsible Thinking Process (RTP). For this approach the teacher asks the student questions to develop awareness of their choices. This approach is based on Perceptual Control Theory, or PCT, which asserts that the function of behaviour is the control of perception. At the heart of perceptual control theory is the idea that human beings are essentially intricate control mechanisms that function to keep certain essential, variables within survivable limits.

The RTP questioning process gives parents and teachers a powerful teaching tool for children who are willing to take responsibility for their own behaviour. By asking the right questions, we can teach children how to reflect and think in ways that will help them satisfy their own internal goals. Regardless of understanding why a child acted in a particular way, the key to helping children take responsibility is to focus on the critical elements:

1. What they did
2. The rules
3. Where they want to be
4. What will happen the next time they disrupt.

The only time 'why' questions might be used is when one is trying to help the pupil to think of better ways to resolve their conflicts. Asking 'why' questions can lead to what they wanted; then one could ask if there is a better way of getting what they wanted that does not violate the rules or the rights of others. The focus must remain on the violations of rules or of others' rights. That is where responsibility begins.

It is important to try not to be judgmental, which is seen as an attempt to control them. This breaks down the mutual respect which the RTP approach is trying to build. Rather, focus only on the key questions and stay focused. Excuses are an attempt to avoid the issue, which is breaking the rules. The RTP questioning process gets the teacher past excuses. Above all, we need to accept that for children to succeed, they must believe we care about them, that we have confidence in their ability to solve problems, and they must experience respect. The stronger the relationship before the problems arise the more likely they will accept the process, thus the easier it becomes to resolve the differences.

These strategies have been implemented by anyone working with such children in a classroom, a special education resource room, at home with a parent, in the dinner hall, or on the playground. The strategies can be implemented in a group or with an individual child. A parent, special education teacher, paraprofessional, administrator, or any other adult working with children who have mild disabilities can implement these strategies.

Since students with mild disabilities tend to have memory, organizational, and learning difficulties, these strategies aid their learning to be responsible for their own behaviours. Providing frequent opportunities for students to understand the rules and practice their plans for changed behaviour can greatly reduce the number of upsets, while providing a respectful environment for everyone. As adults, we become their facilitators by helping them to develop their own skills to change their own environment.

Erin is an inspirational special education teacher and a trainer for paraprofessionals, teachers, parents, and other staff members working with children with various disabilities. The RTP approach will be of value to me when working with children who experience difficulty in developing appropriate skills.

UCP of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida



This specialist charter school provides expertise for children with special needs. By providing support, education and therapy, they work with children with a wide range of special needs, including cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, speech delays, developmental delays, and vision and hearing impairments. They operate six centres located throughout Central Florida and accept a diverse assortment of funding.

Joanne Solomon kindly invited me to visit one of these centres. Classes are small with high levels of support. The pupils have individual education plans which are implemented in a 1:1 learning environment. The school caters for children aged from 4 to 12 after which they are transferred to an appropriate high school. Due to the high levels of support the social skills are not specifically taught. The children demonstrated no behavioural difficulties in the learning environment.

Fisher Road School, Dee Why, Sydney.



The Principal, Susan Barisic kindly showed me round the school and allowed me to observe a class being held by two experienced Teacher Aide's trained in working in Special Education. In the past it had been found that incidents and accidents often occurred during break times. At Fisher Road School this has been managed by reducing the breaks to 15 minutes at morning recess and 30 minutes at lunch time. This has resulted in an 80% reduction in incidents. As this increases instruction time by 45 minutes every day additional Teaching Assistants have been hired to rebalance the work load.

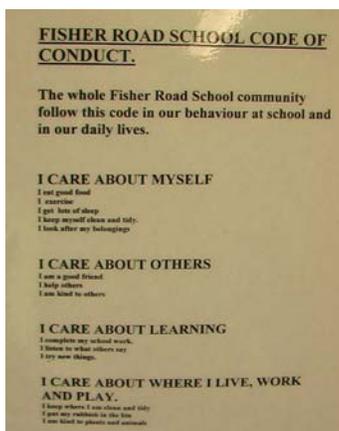
Students from three of the five classes in the junior school interact with students at the local Primary school, spending one morning each week with them. The students take turns in visiting one another's schools. The local High School is similarly involved in working with students in the senior section of the school.

All students are encouraged to develop their skills in:

- Physical management
- Behaviour management
- Communication
- Health Care

Due to the nature of disabilities most behavioural management issues can be directly related to the student's condition. Students need support in developing appropriate communication methods. This need to develop communication skills for all students both individually and across the school is ongoing. Current strategies to

achieve this include, training all staff on the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS); implementing a communication plan for each student and ensuring the availability of adequate communications options across the school. Success is measured by staff being confident in using PECS; all students being assessed on their ability to access appropriate communication systems and improved achievement rate of success in communication outcomes for students.



Fisher Road School code of conduct



Achievements awards

The pupils all agree to the basic code of conduct, and awards are given to those pupils who demonstrate their support of the code through appropriate behaviour.

Cairns State High School



I visited the State High School in Cairns, which has a Special Education unit for pupils who require extra learning support. The development of social skills is regarded as a basic element of schooling, and no special programs are implemented to support SEN pupils, however they are entitled to take their breaks in a separate area of the school. This is of value because it allows the pupils time to relax and often talk through any social adaptation issues they may have experienced in the classroom. Unsurprisingly the pupils do not like to be visibly attached to the SEN unit because pupils of High school age usually prefer to blend in with their peers.

Henbury School, Darwin

Coleen Davidge, Assistant Principal and Michael Jones, the Principal of Henbury School in Darwin kindly supported my Fellowship study. Coleen is a *Tribes* trainer. *Tribes* is grounded in the human development theories of Dewey (1916) and more recently Bronfenbrenner (1979). The *Tribes* process is based on the following tenets:

- *Human development is a resilient process, motivated by a self-righting, intrinsic human drive and developmental wisdom.*
- *Human development is a life-long, wisdom-based process, occurring over time and in overlapping stages.*
- *Being student-centred involves focusing on the whole child's development which includes their cognitive, social, emotional, physical and spiritual progress.*

- *Cognitive development and academic learning are facilitated by focusing on the other aspects of development: emotional, physical and spiritual.*
- *The concept of multiple intelligences provides a strengths-based schema for supporting holistic human development.*

Benard 2005

I met teachers and Principals from the following schools, all of whom has adopted *Tribes*:



Girraween



Howard Springs



Wanguri

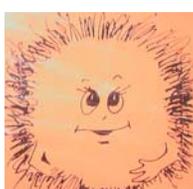


Woodroffe

Tribes was developed by Jeanne Gibbs, the aim is to ensure the healthy development of every child so that each has the knowledge, competency and resilience to be successful in today's rapidly changing world. The goal is to engage all teachers, school administrators, students and families in working together as a learning community that is dedicated to caring and support, active participation and positive expectations for all students.

Henbury School focuses on the 4 major values of *Tribes* mutual respect, attentive listening, appreciation/no put downs and the right to pass. The *Tribes* process is used to help students feel part of and become involved in their community and make a commitment to contribute to creating a caring culture. Teachers believe the *Tribes* process underpins the climate/culture of their school and is a way to establish a positive culture for learning and human development. They have adopted the philosophy and process of *Tribes* to restructure the whole school as a learning community, develop teacher collegiality, increase reflective practices and collaborative planning, focus on the socialization of students and their rights to make meaningful decisions. The *Tribes* agreements are an explicit component of behaviour management, classroom organization, and professional development for teachers. Discussion with Coleen regarding implementation of *Tribes* indicates that it is important to have at least one '*Tribes* Trainer' on staff and to have key coordinators trained in *Tribes* to support staff. The *Tribes* Trail includes inclusion, influence and community and components of each are evident in the structure of the school. Coleen provides support to teachers in order to facilitate the teaching of the 'Community Agreements', such as universal collaborative skills and human values.

The teachers I observed applied the four core values of *Tribes* into their classroom management. Posters displaying the core values of; mutual respect, attentive listening, appreciation/no put downs and the right to pass were evident in rooms visited. Upon discussion with teachers I found that they used the *Tribes* strategies of community circles and building *Tribes* groups and that young children responded well to the use of *Tribes*, pictured below:



All right



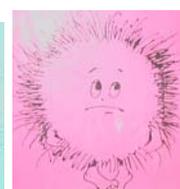
Angry



Excited



Happy



Sad

Every pupil puts their name card on the Tribble which corresponds most closely to their feelings; they may change it during the day. Coleen was concerned that the background colours might influence the pupils' decisions, but generally their choices seemed to relate to the feeling rather than a colour preference. Through the use of the *Tribes* process schools in a variety of locations are using inclusion and cooperative strategies. The four agreements are honoured in classrooms and school communities. Energizers light up smiles every day. The developmental process of *Tribes* is based on 4 concepts or beliefs;

1. The goal of education is to develop greatness in young human beings therefore to educate all aspects of intellectual, social, emotional, physical and spiritual.
2. Intellectual, social, emotional learning is an interdependent growth process.
3. Schools of excellence are student centred, caring cultures and pedagogy that responds to stages of development.
4. School reform depends upon the whole system working together as a learning community with a commitment to reflective practice.

Highly effective *Tribes* schools have the following attributes:

- The Principal participates in training;
- A core planning team meets regularly with the Principal.
- Teachers meet in ongoing collaborative groups.
- Reflective practice is used throughout the school.

As the *Tribes* process becomes established teachers use it as part of their everyday teaching style. Children enjoy the 'fun' energizers and games, whilst teachers see the benefits of using interactive and cooperative strategies. Many teachers monitor their class as they progress the *Tribes* Trail using strategies of 'inclusion', where all children are valued and appreciated in a classroom environment. As the teacher feels the children are working together more cooperatively begin to transfer responsibilities and engage students in setting goals, managing conflict, making decisions, solving problems and celebrating diversity in trial tribe groups. Depending upon the class dynamics some classes reach the stage of 'community' more readily than others. This is where the Tribes groups support each other, working to share responsibilities and bring out their own personal strengths.

The process provides a supportive environment which creates equal opportunities for all styles of learning and all learners, leads students along a trail of inclusion, influence and community, and respects individual differences in an environment free of prejudice. The inclusive community represents an extended family a place where students feel valued.

The primary focus of a Tribes school is not computer literacy, not a reading program or preparation for year-end tests. The focus is on the students. All policy, structures, decisions, curriculum and pedagogy in a Tribes school depend upon the response to one question. "How and to what extent will 'this' support the learning and development needs of these students?"

Gibbs 2003

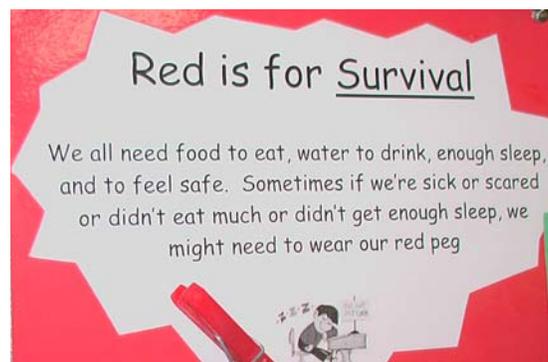
From talking to a number of Principals, teachers and Education Department specialists it is clear that success with *Tribes* requires all stakeholders to have a shared vision and understanding of the basic framework. If this is in place then all students can progress in emotional, social and academic learning.

It is widely acknowledged that the majority of SEN pupils learn kinaesthetically, by seeing and touching. At Henbury School a wide range of different ways of learning are acknowledged as the following display shows:

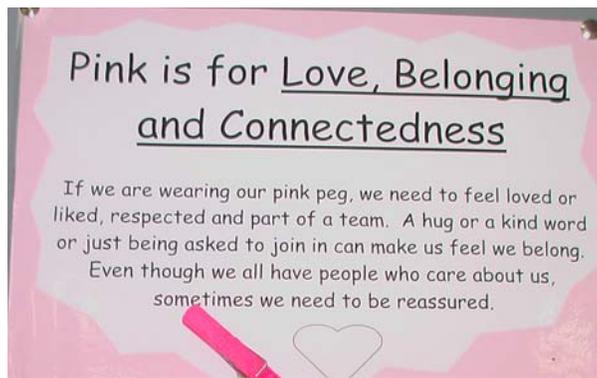


Senior staff have also adopted William Glasser's Choice Theory which contends that behaviour is central to our existence and is driven by five genetically driven needs. These needs are survival (food, clothing, shelter), belonging (connecting with others, love), power (a sense of personal significance), freedom (including personal interpretations of responsibility) and fun which includes learning. Behaviour is made up of four parts; acting, thinking, feeling and physiology. Glasser suggests that we have considerable control or choice over the first two of these, and little ability to directly choose the latter two. Because these four components are closely intertwined, the choices we make in our thinking and acting affect our feeling and physiology. Choice Theory also suggests that we all have a "Quality World" in which we place the things that we highly value. This includes the people who are important to us, things we prize, and our belief systems such as religion and cultural values. Some people may place greater value on survival whilst others may value freedom, power, belonging or fun above all else. Knowing our primary need is fundamental to self-awareness and managing our own behaviour. We simultaneously develop a "Comparing Place" in which we can compare the world we experience with our Quality World. We then behave in ways which help us to achieve a real world experience which supports our Quality World.

To simplify this for children, some classrooms in the Darwin schools that I visited displayed coloured pegs relating to choice theory. A child will select an appropriately coloured peg to explain how they are feeling at a given time. A red peg denotes a concern about survival. We all need food to eat, water to drink, enough sleep and to feel safe. Sometimes if we are sick or scared, or didn't eat much or get enough sleep we might need to wear our red peg. A child would use this peg to show that they need support in feeling safe, maybe time to rest, food or a drink of water.



Pink is for love, belonging and connectedness. If a child is wearing a pink peg they are saying that they need to feel loved or liked, respected and part of a team. As the poster states, a hug or a kind word or just being asked to join in can make us feel we belong. Even though we all have people who care about us, sometimes we need to be reassured.



The yellow peg is for freedom. Wearing a yellow peg means that the pupil needs to have a little bit of freedom. This could either be freedom *from* following rules or being told what to do, or freedom *to* do something of their own choice. The poster clearly states that freedom comes with a few rules because sometimes we need to be told what to do to keep us safe and also to make sure we learn things that maybe we wouldn't choose to learn otherwise.

A purple peg is for fun and enjoyment. Sometimes everything seems very dull and boring. Wearing a purple peg means that the child needs to have a little bit of fun today. Maybe tell a joke, or listen to a story. Sometimes it just means we need to be doing something they enjoy like singing, dancing or quiet reading.

A green peg is for recognition. The pupil wearing this needs to feel that they are doing their personal best in their work and in their daily lives. As the poster below states, we might need an encouraging word or we might need help to solve a sticky problem, or need to get something exactly right before we feel we have done our best.



During my visit to Darwin I learnt a great deal about how social and emotional skills can be developed in SEN children, and I came away convinced that the commitment of the School Leadership Team is a pre-requisite for success. My sincere thanks go to Coleen Davidge and Michael Jones for the time they gave to my study, and for their commitment to developing effective social skills in the SEN pupils at Henbury School.

The Woden School, Canberra

Sian Zeising-Clark is an ex-President of AASE who currently manages an exciting project to develop social and emotional skill development at an SEN school in Canberra. She explained that their behaviour management process used to be rules-based with incident reporting. If a pupil did something wrong they were given a formal warning. The incident was written up and it was reported. This automatically invoked the following five step process:

1. *A warning that their poor behaviour had been noticed. If they broke that step one, within a period of school 10 days, they went on:-*
2. *The student was off the playground for recess time, for three days.*

3. *The student phoned his / her parents and told them that they were on step 3 and they were off the playground for both recess and lunch.*
4. *The student was on after school detentions*
5. *The student was out of the school for three days and could only return with an agreement to change his / her behaviour.*

All this was recorded on the student’s record and a chart was kept. At the assembly following ten ‘good’ school days those students knew that they would come up to the front, tear up their cards and start afresh. Sian commented:

But I noticed that, on their way to tear up the card in the assembly these kids were already assaulting somebody! So there they were, tearing up their card when they had already started on the whole cycle again! Although we were teaching the social skills, the responsibility for behaviour was still with the teachers. Teachers had to monitor and manage inappropriate behaviours. We needed to find a way to get the students to take over that responsibility for themselves.

They have moved from the ‘old’ punitive model towards restorative practice and building social capital. The old system focuses on rules, reprimands and penalties; however it does not seem to work. As I had found at Furze Down School, the same students kept on re-offending and there was no evidence that their social skills were developing. Restorative practice is based on relationships and welfare. Pupils learn to adopt ‘values’ in place of the rules. At the Woden School they have changed the four old school rules, however their guidelines on handling bullying and harassment remain clear and firm. At the beginning of each school year parents and their children are required to read, discuss and sign a student behaviour commitment. This keeps everyone aware of the school values shown below:

Respect	Endeavour	Integrity	Belonging
<u>I care</u>	<u>I have a go</u>	<u>I am true</u>	<u>I am a team member</u>
I care for myself	I do my best	I am honest	I get along with others
I care about others	I have courage	I make responsible choices	I am fair
I care for the environment	I can change	I am valuable	I accept others
I do no harm	I persist	I am confident	I belong
I care for property	I am organised	I am positive	I participate

Figure 4

Each year the pupils are introduced to the idea of woms and their journey. A wom is a legless wombat, the hero of a story written by Sian to explore the need for persistence and resilience. The wom has to roll up a hill, sometimes it rests and sometimes it rolls backwards. This is likened to the pupils, when they have a bad day and get called to the training room in the three step process. All pupils are taught:

1. The school values
2. What is a Wom?
3. Why do we use them?
4. What happens if you get called to the training room?
5. What happens when you get out of the training room?
6. We are very much about having safe fun
7. We only use the flowchart (see Appendix A) when there is a problem.
8. Why the student needs to make a behaviour commitment.



A wom resting on a students' growth diary

Woms on the trail

If a pupil contravenes a school value they engage in a three day process of reparation in the training room. On day 1 they spend 20 minutes in the quiet room listening to classical music. On day 2 they work on a concept sheet which relates to the incident, while listening to classical music. On day 3 they complete the concept sheet and it goes into their Growth Diary. Then there is a discussion on what they need to work on, how they can change their behaviour / make different choices, to help themselves progress along the track. The student signs a restorative agreement. Everything is reported and kept in the training room. According to Sian:

The more we have taught the social skills, the more incidents have gone down. Then they gap in our process moved to 'how do we fix it?' A student might say 'I will be good' and we can ask 'What will that look like? What will I see?' Going through this process gets us to the crux of the issues they need to resolve.

Corridor Conferencing is a powerful tool. It is immediate, staff deal with incidents so that they do not develop further. Everyone in the school can do this, in administrative meetings they do a scenario e.g. *He called my Mum a *expletive deleted* and I pushed him.* This helps staff to ensure that everyone is familiar with typical activities and reassure them that they are not throwing the baby out with the bath water. The scenario provides a role play or discussion asking what went wrong, how it was dealt and so on through the agreed stages.

There is a circle speak set seating arrangement and a set script on restorative justice. They have had two restorative justice circles in the past year. They include external people, parents, teachers and the students who were all affected by a stone throwing incident. It was very powerful and the students learnt a lot. They often need to wait for a response from the students because they need time to think and to respond. Sian, as the authority figure, then takes over their choice. She may offer them the chance to discuss it later but now the pupils are usually sufficiently skilled to shake hands, say they are sorry and move on.

Their 30 staff including Board Members were trained in Circle Speak. Restorative Practice is based on relationships – respect and inclusion, build ups not put downs, debriefs and energizers. Initially the relationship needs to be restored because no one can respect if their relationships have not been restored. Through behaviour the school values are lived. They teach all the emotions using labelled writing symbol faces for non-verbal children to understand the feelings of innocent, blissful, cautious, pleading, hit, disapproving, vain, arrogant, love struck, ecstatic, confused, puzzled, loyal, friendly, kind, care, belong, stubborn, frightened, afraid, disbelieving, guilty, optimistic, ill, and mischievous.

Social skills teaching has evolved from having rules to working with school values. Using ideas from Michael Bernard of Monache University in Melbourne's social skills program called 'You Can Do It', they have put in place the fundamental skills for that to be successful and listed the key skills of getting along, organisation, persistence, confidence and resilience. These are discussed in rotation throughout the school year.



Sian explains:

We know what we need to do, why we are doing it and what positive social behaviour will look like, feel like, and sound like. Staff are all familiar with circuit breakers which are used whenever our values are being abused. Incidents of non-compliance are still recorded but through the use of a growth diary, students are able to record their development of appropriate social skills.

During fortnightly assemblies positive role play is used to help students spot the difference between acceptable social responses to a situation, and unacceptable ones. It's like a film vignette, they introduce the topic, explain the social situation, act it out one way, act it out the other way, then go with the positive one inviting the students to say why it is better. So they leave with a positive image. They know the difference. They also can work to the over arching four goals (organisation, persistence, confidence and resilience) but often they are responding to real incidents that have been dealt with during the school days between assemblies. For example after seeing harassment using mobile phones outside school they contacted the police who visited the school to explain the law to the students. The community officer spoke to the students which was very effective, and a follow-up assembly reinforced the lesson.

There are certain taboos, one of ours is swearing directly at a teacher. That is taboo within the whole school. It became an issue when taxi drivers and members of the public had to speak to us because there had been a general escalation in swearing. We have now developed a poster with NO Swearing message. We role played it in an assembly, wearing the cap on backwards, rushing on stage and saying 'Have you heard?' and share how terrible it was, that the off stage person was caught swearing – you see the main offenders scrunching down in their seats! If necessary we would re-enact the negative behaviour using swear words. They get one warning, then it's a known major consequence. We have the restorative part, and the taboo part. We are still exploring ways to put things right.

The approach continues to be responsive to the needs of the moment but also have the fundamental structure and for students to understand.

OLD PARADIGM – RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE		NEW PARADIAM – RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
Misdemeanour defined as violation of school rules	1	Misdemeanour defined as violation of one person/group by another
Focus on establishing blame or guilt; on the past (did he/she do it?)	2	Focus on problem-solving by expressing feelings and needs and how to meet them in the future
Adversarial relationship and process	3	Dialogue and negotiation – everyone involved in communicating and co-operating with each other
Imposition of pain or unpleasant to punish and deter/prevent	4	Restitution as a means of restoring both parties, the goal being reconciliation
Attention to right rules, and adherence to due process	5	Attention to right relationships and achievement to the desired outcome
Conflict represented as impersonal and abstract: individual versus school	6	Misdemeanours recognised as interpersonal conflicts with some value for learning
One social injury replaced by another	7	Focus on repair of social injury/damage

School community as spectators, represented by member of staff dealing with the situation	8	School community involved in facilitating restoration
People affected by misdemeanour not necessarily involved	9	Encouragement of all concerned to be involved - empowerment
Miscreant accountability defined in terms of receiving punishment	10	Miscreant accountability defined as understanding the impact of the action, seeing it as a consequence of choices and helping to decide how to put things right

Restorative justice in schools

The above table summarises how far the Woden School has moved from retributive to restorative practice.

Main Lessons Learned

1. Special Educational Needs children need special social skill development programs.
2. Restorative Practice offers an approach to tailoring social skill development to individual needs.
3. Whole school is far more than school-wide.

Special Educational Needs children need special social skill development programs.

For two years before this study I had taught the SEAL program which:

... is a curriculum resource to help primary schools develop children's social, emotional and behavioural skills. It includes assemblies and follow-up ideas for work in class. It will be used by schools that have identified the social and emotional aspects of learning as a key focus for their work with the children. These will be schools who know that the factors holding back learning in their setting include children's difficulties in understanding and managing their feelings, working co-operatively in groups, motivating themselves and demonstrating resilience in the face of setbacks. This curriculum resource aims to develop the underpinning qualities and skills that help promote positive behaviour and effective learning. It focuses on five social and emotional aspects of learning: self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills.

The materials help children develop skills such as understanding another's point of view, working in a group, sticking at things when they get difficult, resolving conflict and managing worries. They build on effective work already in place in the many primary schools who pay systematic attention to the social and emotional aspects of learning through whole-school ethos, initiatives such as circle time or buddy schemes, and the taught PSHE and Citizenship curriculum.

Although we knew that the factors holding back learning in our educational setting included children's difficulties in understanding and managing their feelings, working co-operatively in groups, motivating themselves and demonstrating resilience in the face of setbacks, the SEAL whole-school resource pack was too high-level for most of our children. It was not possible to develop sufficient skills in self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills using this approach. Our special learners needed an approach which had more meaning for them as individuals.

From the schools that I visited during the Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship, it was evident that the most successful programs are a unique mixture of methods. Any school which successfully develops the pupils' social skills has developed techniques and resources which reflect the culture of the school, and which build on the social and emotional skills of the staff. Once the staff are aware of the school culture, and their own values in relation to social skills and emotional literacy, then they are able to develop a workable programme for delivery to the children. This will never come out of a single book, or box.

Restorative Practice offers an approach to tailoring social skill development to individual needs.

It has been argued that to enjoy childhood children need three skills; listening, following directions, and waiting one's turn. Children with learning disabilities struggle with these three skills because of processing disorders, memory deficits, and impulsivity. These all put them at an extreme disadvantage for social success. There must be a direct link between learning disabilities and social skills problems, (Lavoie 2006) however, there are many techniques and strategies to ease social interactions and build the social skills of children with learning difficulties. Because Restorative Practice is based on relationships, respect and inclusion, a restorative approach puts social skills development at the top of the schools' agenda.

In education, circles and groups provide opportunities for students to share their feelings, build relationships and solve problems, and when there is wrongdoing, to play an active role in addressing the wrong and making things right (Riestenberg, 2002). This is of great benefit to SEN learners as it enables them to adjust the *attention, retention, reproduction* cycle mentioned in the section on Bandura above, and further have support in developing more accurate self-observation, judgment and self-response procedures.

Whole school is more than school-wide.

For many educators, the term 'whole-school' aims to identify the good practice that already exists and then extend that expertise throughout all departments. This effectively takes good practice and spreads it school-wide. The SEAL program offers a *whole school box containing assemblies and teaching ideas for six whole-school 'themes', each theme providing up to six weeks' work*. Again, this means that the six themes will be worked on throughout the whole school, each year group completing age-appropriate activities.

However, whole school means considerably more at the Woden School, and at Henbury School. There it means that the whole school, from the Head Teacher, through academic and administrative staff, right through to the latest and youngest new pupils, all work to promote the value system of the school. This is done through, amongst other things, shared agreement on appropriate social skills. The process has to be driven by the leadership team, and regular work-groups need to meet to monitor, influence and control the development of whole school social and emotional literacy. Staff as well as students may need to attend workshops in order to develop their social skills if the initiative is to be successful.

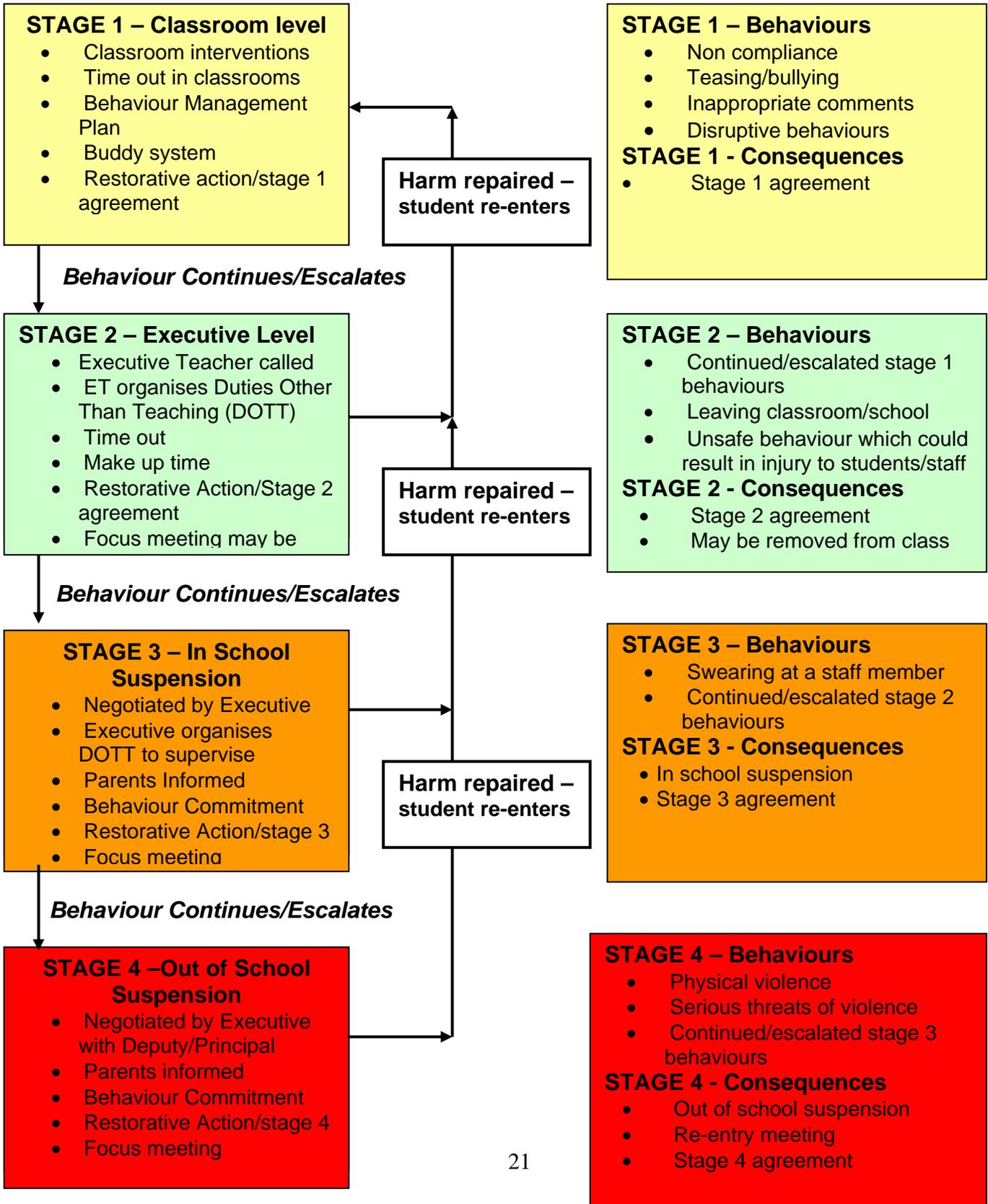
In answer to my original question, it is possible to develop the social and emotional skills of adolescent learners with Special Educational Needs; however individual social plans need to be in place for many pupils, and to be successful the whole process must become fundamental to the culture of the school.

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Appendix A Student Management Flowchart

Draft (July 2007)



Appendix B Measuring Emotional Intelligence

In New Zealand I met Tim Mayer who uses MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test 1997) which is based on a four-branch model.

Branch 1 tests Perceiving Emotions

The ability to perceive emotions in oneself and others, as well as in objects, art, stories, music and other stimuli.

This is tested through:

Faces task: respondents are asked to identify how a person feels based upon their facial expression.

Pictures task: emotional perception also involves determining the emotions that are being expressed in music, art and the environment around the respondent. This aspect of Perceiving Emotions is measured by a task in which the respondent indicates the extent to which certain images or landscapes express various emotions.

Branch 2 tests Facilitating Thought

The ability to generate, use and feel emotion as necessary to communicate feelings, or employ them in other cognitive processes.

This is tested through:

Sensations task: compare different emotions to different sensations such as light, colour and temperature. A high score requires the respondent to generate a certain emotion in order to then compare and contrast its sensations with that of other sensory modalities.

Facilitation task: different moods assist certain kinds of cognitive activity. The Facilitation task measures the respondent's knowledge of how moods interact and support thinking and reasoning.

Branch 3 tests Understanding Emotions

The ability to understand emotional information, how emotions combine and progress through relationship transitions, and to appreciate such emotional meanings.

This is tested through:

Blends task: the Blends task assesses the respondent's ability to analyse blends of emotions into their parts and, conversely, to assemble simple emotions together into complex feelings.

Changes task: measures the respondent's knowledge of emotional 'chains' or how emotions can change from one to another e.g. anger to rage.

Branch 4 tests Managing Emotions

The ability to be open to feelings, and to modulate them in oneself and others so as to promote personal understanding and growth.

This is tested through:

Emotion management task: measures the ability to incorporate one's emotions into decision making.

The respondent is asked to rate the effectiveness of alternative actions in achieving a certain result in situations where a person must regulate their own emotions.

Emotional relations task: measures the ability to incorporate emotions into decision making that involves other people. This task asks respondents to evaluate how effective different actions would be in achieving an outcome involving other people.

Note: the respondent helps to interpret the results.