



Emotional and social intelligence education: Prerequisites for social changes in the 4th IR

Abstract

The world is gradually shifting towards another era where interaction between human and human is nearly going to be invisible and artificial intelligence substitutes for majority of human activities, with robot and automation activities forming the module of oparandi. While this transformation embraces high productivity as well as many benefits across all disciplines (education inclusive), and even human ideas, the negative outcomes should not be unheeded. Some of the negative effects include increased level of unemployment, deepened social inequalities/disintegration, high cyber terrorism, reduced human interaction leading to increased mental illness and increased suicide tendencies, depression and several other psychosocial problems. Thus, this paper proposes emotional and social intelligence education for social change in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4th IR). To meaningfully function in the new era, societies, industries and employers of labour require highly skilled individuals. Consequently, it becomes imperative for education providers as change agents to adequately equip learners with needed skills in emotional and social intelligence. Education stakeholders need to focus on curriculum upgrading so as to accommodate these skills, most especially in high institutions of learning, owing to the fact that the Fourth Industrial Revolution will be characterised by complex problems that require complex solutions with a lot of emphasis on emotional and social intelligence education which are required for social change.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence; social intelligence; social changes; fourth industrial revolution.*

Introduction

Gradually, the world is shifting towards an era where human interactions is going to be restricted, with most human activities, especially in the world of work powered by artificial intelligence, robot, cyber cloud and automation. Given that change is inevitable, social change is a fundamental transformation of socioeconomic and political structure of a given society, which has been witnessed in the past decades across social context (Trommsdorff, 2000). The new age, is more or less the continuation of third revolution where billions of people throughout the world are connected via mobile devices and the internet technologies which usher in rapid socioeconomic development and have improved some peoples' standard of living. In the same vain, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4th IR) will no doubt drive high economic and social productivities by creating new jobs and unlocking exceptional potentials. Majorly, the promising breakthroughs of this era will be more in industries, technologies,

medicals, transportation, communication and scientific discoveries. Other examples are; development of smart products, 3D printing, 5G data, biotechnology, photonics 5G data and nanotechnology. One unique characteristic of this era is the speed by which events will be taken place (Manda & Dhaou, 2019). That is, several activities will be comprehensively and exponentially transformed including human beings adaptive abilities.

As this transformation is gradually unfolding, each society, institution and individual would perceive, process and respond to its effects differently based on possessed skills and readiness. The complexity of 4th IR era will equally bring about social roles from person to person, society to society, industries to industries leading to more complex challenges such as economic hardship, hopelessness, worsen parents-child relationship and technological risks. Among other unimaginable changes of this 4th IR are but not limited to increased level of family disintegration, unemployment, deepened social inequalities/disintegration, high cyber terrorism, depression due to reduced human interaction hyping mental illness and increased suicide tendencies and several other psychosocial issues across all age groups, colour and race. To meaningfully function in the new era, societies, industries, institutions and government would require highly skilled individuals in the area of emotional and social intelligence. The educational sector and its stakeholders are pivotal in decolonizing the curriculum to focus on the demands of labour market, individual and the society. Thus, this study proposes emotional and social intelligence skills as prerequisites for social transformation in the Fourth Industrial revolution.

Theoretical concept

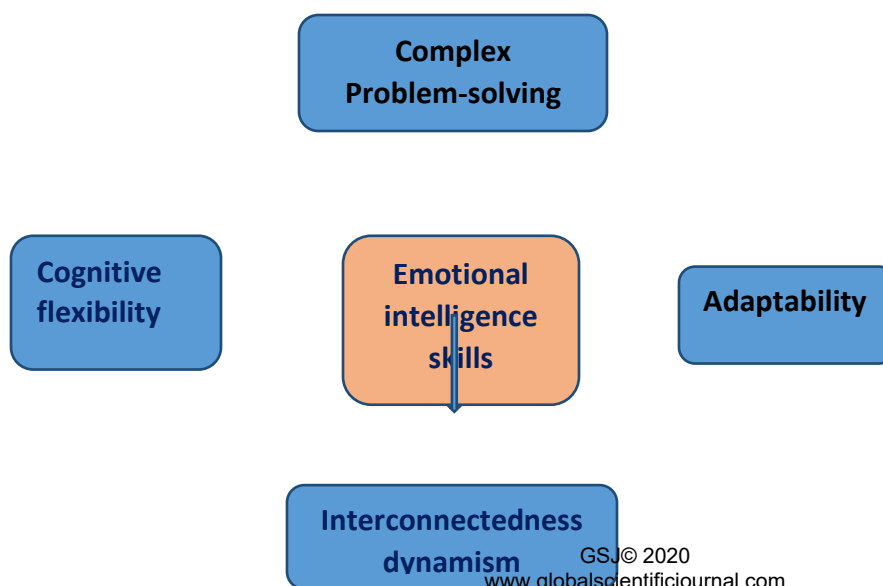
This study is anchored on evolutionary theory propounded by Charles Darwin (1859). The theory provides an understanding to social changes by focusing on different stages, steps, eras and social types that characterised the persistence of economic and social patterns of human life and environment. Evolutionary theory explains different lens by which one era passes to another. This could be applied to understand the current agenda of 4th IR to improve significantly quality of human lives and modernization of societies (Boyd & Richerson, 2006). William Graham noted in the United States during a speech titled “Only the strong survives” that evolution does not only influence social changes but also, human behaviours for economic and political agenda (Runciman, 2009; Hodgson & Knudsen, 2010). Thus, in the Fourth Industrial revolution, it is not debateable that only the strong will survive. Furthermore, evolutionary theory emphasises growth and complexity, in terms of technology advancements that enhance reproductive success by setting in motion a series of adaptive changes throughout the social system. Although there is always tension between the conservative societies and the possibilities of the new technology which makes social change dynamic, scholars have criticised the position of this theory proving that social change does not necessarily mean progress (Wallerstein, 1974; Baudrillard 1992). The critique notwithstanding, the theory is relevant to the present issue as it suggests that social change is a fundamental process that happens everywhere at different times which require adaptive mechanisms. It stresses social adjustment and acquisition of new skills to accommodate the new circumstances, hence, emotional and social intelligence skills are the adaptive mechanisms and strengths for surviving in the 4th IR.

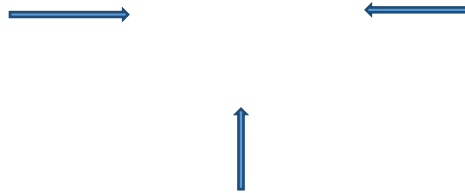
Emotional intelligence skills

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been identified as one of the Top-10 required skills when the Fourth Industrial Revolution eventually took off World Economic Forum (WEF) (2016). Conceptually, emotional intelligence is the capacity of an individual “to perceive, process and regulate emotional information accurately and effectively, both within oneself and in others and ability to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions and to influence other people” (Mayer & Salovey, 1990). That is, human capacity to transform and convert cognitive information such as innovative ideas into a tangible reality. Emotional intelligence is a juncture of cognitive processes and emotional expressions that are demonstrated as resilience, communication, empathy, stress management, motivation, reasoning and our ability to read and navigate a plethora of social situations. EI is an integral part of social change that forms meaningful human relationship and as a path way to happiness and fulfilled life. Schutte, Schuettpelez, and Malouff (2001), opined that emotional intelligence has significant link with successful interpersonal relations. Any individual that demonstrates high levels of emotional intelligence is adjudged to have a greater propensity for being empathic, problem solving ability, affectionate and more satisfying relationships with others.

Past emotional intelligence theorists; Goleman (1995); Mayer and Salovey (1997) and more recently, Bar-on (2013) have identified emotional intelligence skills that are relevant for social functioning as Perceiving Emotions, Understanding Emotions, Facilitating Thought Using Emotions and Managing Emotions (Mayer & Salovey 1997); Self-Awareness and Self-Expression; Social Awareness and Interpersonal Relationships Emotional Management and Regulation; Change Management; and Self-Motivation (Bar-on, 2013) and Emotional self-awareness, Self-regulation, Motivation empathy and social skills (Goleman 1995). Going by these skills, the understanding of the future gives direction to what kind of skills are required to function optimally in the new era of internet of thinking. In this study, all the identified emotional intelligence skills are subsumed into four which are interconnectedness, complex problem solving, cognitive flexibility and social and emotional adaptability skills. These are illustrated in figure 1

Figure 1:
Emotional intelligence skills in the 4th IR. Source; authors





Interconnectedness dynamism is being sensitive to others' emotions, dynamic, cooperative and collaborative. In other words, it is the ability to accurately identify emotions by detecting and decoding emotional signals of oneself and others. *Complex problem solving* is described as the higher level skill that can be used to facilitate thoughts-process, creative ideas and thinking about new things. It involves abilities to solve complex issues with analytical, critical-thinking and risk-tolerance and stress-management skills. *Cognitive flexibility skill* explains ability to be flexible, balanced, intrinsically motivated and focused. That is, thinking about multiple concepts simultaneously with an open mind, optimistic happiness and feel content with oneself, others and life in general. Also, *Social and emotional adaptability* involves being sociable, assertive, versatile, having positive self-regards and constantly being quick to learn from the environment. These skills are essential to connect technology and peoples' abilities in the 4th industrial era, without which the successful transition to the new world of internet of things may be vision unrealistic with, making social change challenging and difficult to serve.

Social intelligence skill

Another vital skill needed for survival in the 4th industrial epoch is social intelligence skill which refers to as intrapersonal and interpersonal capacities to function meaningfully in the society. Ebrahumpoor, Zahed and Elyasi (2013) perceive social intelligence as the ability to establish relationship with others, intrapersonal knowledge, social justice ability, temperaments, ability to sympathize, effective social functioning and being skilled in decoding nonverbal signs. This is to say that, no matter the type of transformation that is evolving, the place of human element cannot be ruled out, because human interaction is critical to drive social change. Social intelligence involves effective communication and social interaction that indicate social information processing, social awareness, and social desirability (Ebrahumpoor, Zahed & Elyasi, 2013). Four components of social intelligence skill that are critical for social functioning are: social skills, social information processing, social awareness, and social desirability.

Social skill: This is a socially acceptable learned behaviour that enables one to interact successfully with others. It is the ability to comprehend, predict feelings and behaviours of others, recognise others' points of strength and weakness as well as conflict management, leadership and negotiation abilities. *Social information* reflects a person's ability in regulating distressing emotions like anxiety or depression, nervousness, feeling of hopelessness that could lead to suicidal thoughts or attempts. *Social awareness* is being socially alert to social demands.

This is when an individual becomes aware of others' feelings, tastes, and needs, identifies the paradoxical situations, and makes use of the source of information to establish a good relationship with others by evaluating unwanted occurrences due to events in social condition. This ability enhances decision making process, social acceptance and value judgement of an individual (Aristu, 2008). *Social desirability* implies ability to provide care, equity, honesty, social justice, and ensuring healthy lifestyles; this may vary as a result of cultural diversity. Social desirability expresses spirit of *Ubuntu* that is characterized by harmony, dignity, reciprocity, compassion and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining a community with justice and mutual caring. It ensures warmth and respect, obedience to law and order, justified relationship, happiness, long life, friendliness, love and evaluation. Thus, with the projection of high social decadence, social inequalities/disintegration, family disintegration and other unimaginable social vices in the 4th industrial era, social intelligence skills cannot be downplayed.

Conclusion

Education industry remains a key player in the transition process to the new era. Bearing in mind that the new era will be technological driven with major benefits to the industries and governments, educational institutions should not stray away from its primary objectives of not only unlocking potentials in preparation for the world of work, but also inculcating personal and social values and ability to be self-reliant. Therefore, the connection between education and society is imperative for successful transition. As education is preparing to fix economic and political demands in the 4th industrial era, focus should also be on social and personal issues. Knowing full well that the new era will open up new opportunities in several areas and specialities, it is expected that education system should align with the agenda of the 4th industrial revolution by making the curriculum future ready to cater for social and personal demands of citizens. Hence, this paper suggests that curriculum decolonisation informed by social and emotional intelligence skills is imperative for education providers as change agents in sustaining the transition. To achieve the aforementioned, educational institutions should begin curriculum upgrading that will accommodate social and emotional intelligence abilities starting from grade 1 through institutions of higher learning. More importantly, teachers who are to impart the social emotional intelligence abilities in learners should be re-skilled for the crucial role in the 4th industrial educational system. Moreover, it is being projected that additional 26 million teachers will be needed by 2030 in order to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) on education (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Similarly, school career counselling services are important in bridging the gap between learners and world of work, by carrying out regular orientation about occupational opportunities in the 4th industrial era. Presently, several high schools do not have school career counsellors that could ensure learners gain accurate and up-to-date information about their choices based on available jobs, individuals' interest, personality traits and aptitudes. Just like teachers who require re-skilling, school career counsellors also need to be retrained on what type of jobs opportunities and skills would be needed in the 4th industrial era and how learners could

navigate in a changing world of work. These will help learners to make well-informed education choices (field of study and institutions), develop career skills, be well equipped to consciously reconstruct their thinking patterns, promote social participation, develop positive self-image; boost their self-esteem and emotional functioning. Hence, these responsibilities of training and re-skilling can only be executed by higher educators in higher institutions of learning with support from education agencies, industries and government.

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