

# RESEARCHING AND DEVELOPING THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF HISTORY TEACHERS IN THE LEJWELEPUTSWA DISTRICT, FREE STATE (SOUTH AFRICA)

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## *Abstract*

This article reports on case-study research into the emotional intelligence of secondary school History teachers of the Lejweleputswa District of the Free State Province of South Africa. It reflects on how the emotional intelligence of these teachers can be understood through investigating their experiences and attitudes towards History teaching in the modern South African classroom and reveals why they regard History as particularly challenging to teach. The article also explores how emotional intelligence components such as interaction style, flexibility, assertiveness and listening skills influence both the classroom interaction of these teachers with their learners and their professional relations with colleagues. Moreover, it argues that improved emotional maturity can empower these teachers to manage their emotions effectively, cope with the demands of a stressful profession, handle conflict in the classroom, and teach History with greater creativity, effectiveness and confidence. It further shares the views of the participants in this first-phase emotional intelligence intervention on the value of the training for their professional and personal development, and conveys the passion with which these educators teach their subject in challenging circumstances. Finally, the article highlights the need for a more comprehensive programme which should ideally be extended to History teachers in the rural areas and educators teaching subjects other than History.

**Keywords:** Secondary school History teachers; History teaching; Emotional intelligence; Professional development; Lejweleputswa district; Free State province; Interaction style; Flexibility; Assertiveness; Listening skills.

## Introduction

It has been suggested that high levels of emotional intelligence — often referred to as EI or EQ — contribute between 80% and 90% of an individual's success in business, career and personal relationships.<sup>1</sup> Existing studies indicate that well-developed EQ is particularly important for educators<sup>2</sup> who are not only entrusted with shaping the lives of a new generation, but also have to manage themselves effectively in one of the high-risk professions in terms of emotional burnout caused by high levels of stress.<sup>3</sup> Educators therefore need to ask themselves whether or not they are able to create an emotionally safe atmosphere in which learners feel free to express potentially conflicting ideas and feelings; succeed in getting the best out of every student; and enjoy the attention and respect of their learners. Moreover, they need to check their ability to manage their emotions in conflict situations,<sup>4</sup> take good care of themselves and focus on finding solutions rather than continuously complain about problems. Teachers who meet these basic criteria, probably possess a high level of emotional intelligence; those who do not, need to improve certain emotional competencies through continuing professional development in the interest of effective classroom interaction and career satisfaction.

It can be argued that South African History teachers face even greater challenges than other teachers in that they have to teach culturally and politically sensitive historical content in a country which has not yet recovered from the painful legacy of apartheid, and in classrooms often characterised by

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1 D Goleman, *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ for character, health and lifelong achievement* (New York, Bantam Books, 1995), pp. 250-251.

2 In the United Kingdom, it is widely propagated as a basic requirement for the training and appointment of teachers. See R Williams, "Teachers need emotional intelligence as well as academic intelligence, says [Michael] Gove [Secretary of Education]", *The Guardian*, 19 November 2012 (available at: [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)); D Turner, "Hiring teachers: Emotional intelligence trumps a Doctorate", *Financial Times*, 19 March 2010 (available at: [www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b23afca8-321e-11df-b4e2-00144feabd0.html](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b23afca8-321e-11df-b4e2-00144feabd0.html), both accessed on 12 July 2012). These views are broadly supported by A McCluskey, "Emotional intelligence in schools", *Lifelong Learning Magazine* (available at: [www.connected.org/learn/school.html](http://www.connected.org/learn/school.html)); DB Nelson, GR Low & K Nelson, "The emotionally intelligent teacher: A transformative learning model" (available at: [www.tamuk.edu/kwei000/...emotionally\\_intelligent\\_teacher.pdf](http://www.tamuk.edu/kwei000/...emotionally_intelligent_teacher.pdf)); MA Brackett & NA Katulak, "Emotional intelligence in the classroom: Skill-based training for teachers and students" (available at: <http://heblab.research.yale.edu/heblab-yale/myweb.php?hls=10085>); G Claxton, "An intelligent look at emotional intelligence" (available at: [www.atl.org.uk/Images/Emotional%20intelligence.pdf](http://www.atl.org.uk/Images/Emotional%20intelligence.pdf)); S Singaravelu, "Emotional intelligence of student teachers (pre-service) at primary level in Puducherry region" (available at: [www.aiaer.net/ejournal/vol19207/12.\\_Singaravellu.htm](http://www.aiaer.net/ejournal/vol19207/12._Singaravellu.htm), all accessed on 12 July 2012).

3 See R Pishghadam & S Sahebjam, "Personality and emotional intelligence in Teacher Burnout", *Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 15(1), May 2012, pp. 227-236. For practical tips on stress management for teachers, see M Coetzee & CA Jansen, *Emotional intelligence in the classroom: The secret of happy teachers* (Cape Town, Juta, 2007), Chapter 4.

4 For practical tips on managing emotions in the classroom, see M Coetzee & CA Jansen, *Emotional intelligence in the classroom...*, Chapter 4.

great diversity<sup>5</sup> in terms of ethnicity, culture, class, gender and educational background. Yet — as would become apparent during the research project and is confirmed in the literature<sup>6</sup> — many do not have access to emotional intelligence training, are unaware of what EQ means and what value it can bring to their teaching, or simply lack the time to consult self-help books with valuable practical tips and articles available on the internet. On the other hand — and despite its unique challenges — History offers History teachers numerous opportunities to assist learners (and themselves) in learning about how emotions influence human interaction by studying historical events and the emotions of their role players.<sup>7</sup>

This article specifically explores the emotional intelligence of secondary school History teachers of the Lejweleputswa District in the north-eastern part of the Free State Province of South Africa (including Welkom and surrounding towns),<sup>8</sup> and indicates how the emotional intelligence of these teachers can be understood through researching various emotional competencies as well as teacher attitudes and experiences of teaching History in the modern South African classroom. The main research questions that guided the study were as follows: What do teachers understand by the concept “emotional intelligence”?; Do History teachers find their subject challenging to teach in the modern classroom and why?; What is the interaction style of the participants and what does this reveal about their flexibility and assertiveness?; How good are their listening skills and what is their listening style?; What is the potential value of emotional intelligence training for practising History teachers?

The article ultimately reflects on how emotional intelligence components such as interaction style, flexibility, assertiveness and listening skills influence the classroom interaction of the workshop participants with their learners and investigates how improved emotional competence can assist them in improving their classroom interaction, maintaining effective self-management and teaching History with greater creativity, effectiveness and confidence. Moreover, it shares the participants’ assessment of the value of a two-day,

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5 For reflections on the role of diversity in the classroom, see T Loreman, *Inclusive education: Supporting diversity in the classroom* (London & New York, Routledge, 2010).

6 See, for example, A McCluskey “Emotional intelligence in schools”, *Lifelong Learning Magazine* (available at: [www.connected.org/learn/school.html](http://www.connected.org/learn/school.html)); G Claxton, “An intelligent look at emotional intelligence” (available at: [www.atl.org.uk/Images/Emotional%20intelligence.pdf](http://www.atl.org.uk/Images/Emotional%20intelligence.pdf), both accessed on 12 July 2012), p. 3.

7 This was confirmed by Dee Gillespie from Jeppe High School for Girls (Johannesburg) in an informal conversation with the author at the South African Society for History Teaching Conference on 4-5 October 2012.

8 The Lejweleputswa District includes towns such as Bothaville, Brandvlei, Bronville, Motsethabong, Odendaalsrus, Riebeeckstad, Virginia, Welkom, Wesselsbron and Winburg.

first-phase emotional intelligence intervention for their teaching and other life situations, and commends the passion and commitment with which these educators teach their subject. Finally, it highlights the need for a more comprehensive programme which should ideally be extended to History teachers in the rural areas and teachers teaching subjects other than History.

### What is emotional intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is an emerging science of which the historical roots date back to Greco-Roman times.<sup>9</sup> It has been popularised in the 1990s by clinical psychologist Daniel Goleman<sup>10</sup> — author of the internationally best-selling book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ for Character, Health and Lifelong Achievement* that spent more than a year on *The New York Times* Best Seller list<sup>11</sup> — and has captured the imagination and critical reflection<sup>12</sup> of psychologists, educators, life coaches and other human dynamics facilitators ever since. Not surprisingly, the literature on the topic is vast, ranging from academic theses<sup>13</sup> and books with a strong research focus,<sup>14</sup> to more general works on emotional intelligence coaching

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9 G Claxton, “An intelligent look at emotional intelligence” (available at: [www.atl.org.uk/Images/Emotional%20intelligence.pdf](http://www.atl.org.uk/Images/Emotional%20intelligence.pdf), as accessed on 12 July 2012), p. 6.

10 D Goleman, *Emotional intelligence...* (New York, Bantam Books, 1995). He developed the argument that non-cognitive skills can matter as much as IQ for workplace success, *Working with emotional intelligence* (New York, Bantam Books, 1998), and for effective leadership, *Primal leadership: Learning to lead with emotional intelligence* (Watertown, Harvard Business School Press, 2003); see also D Goleman, RE Boyatzis & A McKee, *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence* (Watertown, Harvard Business School Press, 2002). Goleman’s most recent best-sellers are *Social intelligence: The new science of human relationships* (New York, Bantam Books, 2002), *The brain and emotional intelligence: New insights* (e-book, 2011), *Leadership: The power of emotional intelligence* (Florence, MA, More than Sound, 2011) and D Goleman, L Bennett & Z Barlow, *Ecoliterate: How educators are cultivating emotional, social and ecological intelligence* (Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons, 2012).

11 Available at: [www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/overview.html](http://www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/overview.html), as accessed on 6 November 2012.

12 For critical yet balanced commentary on various aspects of emotional intelligence, consult G Claxton, “An intelligent look at emotional intelligence” (available at: [www.atl.org.uk/Images/Emotional%20intelligence.pdf](http://www.atl.org.uk/Images/Emotional%20intelligence.pdf), as accessed 12 July 2012).

13 See, for example, T Burger, “Emotional intelligence and the well-being of teachers” (M Comm (Industrial Psychology), US, 2009).

14 See, for example, R Bar-On, K Maree & M Elias (eds), *Educating people to be emotionally intelligent* (Sandton, Heinemann, 2006); G Matthews, M Zeidner & R Roberts, *Emotional intelligence: Science and myth* (Cambridge, Bradford Books, 2002); J Ciarrocchi, J Forgas & J Mayer (eds), *Emotional intelligence in everyday life: A scientific enquiry* (Philadelphia, Psychology Press, 2001). For modern theories of the psychology of emotion, see K Oatley & J Jenkins, *Understanding emotion* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1996); R Plutchik & H Kellerman (eds), *Emotion: Theory, research and experience* (San Diego, Academic Press, 1980).

and leadership development,<sup>15</sup> and publications that focus specifically on emotional intelligence for educators.<sup>16</sup> There is also a substantial amount of information and practical self-help tips available on the internet,<sup>17</sup> but these are of uneven depth and quality.

Emotional intelligence can be defined as a whole range of emotional competencies which the individual needs to be effective in his or her career and interpersonal relationships. It is the ability to identify, understand, articulate and manage one's own emotions, and at the same time be sensitive (and respond appropriately) to the emotions of other people.<sup>18</sup> Extensive personal experience in the field of human dynamics training over a period of 12 years has indicated a correlation between the interaction or social style of the individual and emotional competencies such as listening style, assertiveness, decision-making ability and conflict management skills, to mention but a few. Broad interaction style categories such as "Socialiser/Expressive", "Carer/Supporter",

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- 15 See, for example, D Goleman, RE Boyatzis & A McKee, *Primal leadership...* (2003); D Goleman, *Leadership...* (2011); S Neale, L Spencer-Arnell & L Wilson, *Emotional intelligence coaching: Improving performance for leaders, coaches and the individual* (La Vergne, Kogan Page, 2011); M Hughes & JB Terrell, *Emotional intelligence in action: Training and coaching activities for leaders and managers* (West Sussex, John Wiley, 2012); MM Hughes & A Miller, *Developing emotional and social intelligence: Exercises for leaders, individuals, and teams* (Chichester, John Wiley, 2010); RS Nadler, *Leading with emotional intelligence: Hands-on strategies for building confident and collaborative star performers* (Berkshire, McGraw-Hill, 2010); SJ Allen, *The little book of leadership development: 50 ways to bring out the leader in every employee* (New York, American Management Association, 2011).
- 16 See, for example, M Coetzee & CA Jansen, *Emotional intelligence in the classroom...* (Cape Town, Juta, 2007); K Weare, *Developing the emotionally literate school* (London, Paul Chapman, 2004); A Mortiboys, *Teaching with emotional intelligence: A step-by-step guide for higher and further education professionals* (London & New York, Routledge, 2012); M Hughes, HL Thompson & JB Terrell (eds), *Handbook for developing emotional and social intelligence: Best practices, case studies, and strategies* (San Francisco, Pfeiffer, 2009), especially Part 4; R De Klerk, *Emotional intelligence for children and teens: A practical guide for parents and teachers* (Cape Town, Human & Rousseau, 2003); PD Eggen & D Kauchak, *Educational psychology: Windows on classrooms* (Harlow, Pearson Education, 2012); MD Svinicki, *McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research and Theory for College and University students* (Belmont, Wadsworth C Engage Learning, 2011); NA Glasgow, *What successful Teachers do: 101 Researched-based classroom strategies for new and veteran teachers* (Thousand Oaks, Corwin Press, 2009); JC Cassady & MA Eissa (eds), *Emotional intelligence: Perspectives on educational and positive psychology* (New York, Peter Lang, 2008); W Powell & O Kusuma-Powell, *Becoming an emotionally intelligent teacher* (Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2010); CR Snyder, *Positive psychology: The scientific and practical exploration of human strengths* (Thousand Oaks, SAGE, 2011); S Edannur, "Emotional intelligence of teacher educators", *International Journal of Education Science*, 2(2), 2010, pp. 115-121.
- 17 See, for example, "Promoting emotional health and well-being" (available at: [www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk); <http://www.eqi.org/steps.htm>, as accessed on 12 July 2012); "Emotional intelligence: What teachers can do" (available at: [www.edutopia.org/emotional-intelligence-teachers](http://www.edutopia.org/emotional-intelligence-teachers), as accessed on 12 July 2012).
- 18 This is my own understanding of the concept based on extensive reading and practical experience in the field of human dynamics training. There are many other, but in many ways similar, definitions in the literature. For a summary of definitions, see G Bharwaney, *Emotionally intelligent living: Strategies for increasing your EQ*, revised edition (Carmarthen, Crown House Publishing, 2006), Appendix 1, pp. 149-152.

“Analyst/Planner” and “Driver/Director” described in the literature,<sup>19</sup> have also been found to be both accurate indicators of such competencies and accessible to participants of all levels of society. This broad categorisation would therefore be used again in this case study to guide participants towards realistic self-awareness and personal development.

### The Lejweleputswa project

With the assistance of History Subject Advisor, Cecilia Khoabane, a two-day EQ Training Workshop was arranged at Leseding Technical School in Welkom on 10 and 11 August 2012. This intervention formed part of a community outreach initiative on the part of the Department of History at the University of South Africa (Unisa), but also fitted into a broader research-based project on EQ training for teachers, supported by *Call on the Professionals*,<sup>20</sup> a corporate company specialising in human dynamics and EQ training. In view of the lack of financial support for this initiative from the Free State Department of Education (DoE), the Municipal Manager of Welkom kindly financed the catering, while the Unisa Short Course in School History Enrichment covered the cost of travelling and accommodation for the two facilitators (one from the Unisa History Department and author of this article, and one from Call on the Professionals), who both provided their services free of charge. This team effort would be richly rewarded in terms of the emotional growth<sup>21</sup> of the 28 participants (n=28)<sup>22</sup> from 20 different secondary schools<sup>23</sup> and the Lejweleputswa DoE district office, bridging the gap between academic historians and school teachers, and narrowing the divide between the education and corporate sectors.

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19 Terminology that describes different interaction (social) styles varies in the literature. Probably the most accurate are those of “Expressive”, “Supporter”, “Driver” and “Analyst”, identified by Minnaar & Associates, “Emotional Intelligence: Module 1: Self-Awareness” (unpublished manual, revised 2003), p. 20. However, other variations also have merit. For example, Brian Jude differentiates between the “Amiable”, “Expressive”, “Analyst” and “Driver”, see B Jude, *Effective people skills* (Sandringham, BJ Books, 2006), pp. 10-11, while F Littauer, in a more humorous yet workable way, refers to personality types such as “Sanguine”, “Melancholy”, “Choleric” and “Phlegmatic”, *Personality plus* (Ada, Fleming H Revell, 1997), pp. 24-27.

20 Available at: <http://www.eqpro.co.za>, as accessed on 12 July 2012.

21 Department of History at Unisa (hereafter DH), Short Course File (hereafter SCF) 17 (Evaluation forms), Doc 1-21.

22 ‘n’ refers to sample size which tended to fluctuate during the workshop as some delegates were unable to participate in every activity as a result of other commitments.

23 Academia High, Diphetoho Secondary, Ithabeleng High, JC Motumi Secondary, Kheleng Secondary, LA Wesi Secondary, Lebogang Secondary, Lekgarietse Secondary, Mamellang-Thuto Secondary, Mamelolo Senior Secondary, Meloding Secondary, Mophate Secondary, Naledi Ya Botjhabela Senior Secondary, Phehello High, Reatlehile Secondary, Taiwe Secondary, Teto Secondary, Thotagauta Secondary, Welkom High and Welkom Secondary. See DH, SCF 11: Registration forms.

## **Methodology**

Research for this case-study was predominantly qualitative in nature following a historical research methodology. However, it also included some quantitative elements.<sup>24</sup> Participants in the workshop had their interaction style, level of assertiveness, listening skills and listening styles assessed through the completion of various questionnaires,<sup>25</sup> the findings of which are expressed in this article as percentages of a convenience sample which includes all the secondary schools in the Lejweleputswa District that currently still offer History as a subject. The delegates also participated in enjoyable pair work and group work activities (both indoors and outdoors) during which some of the verbal contributions were captured on video,<sup>26</sup> participant feedback recorded on flip chart and written evidence generated in which individuals shared personal ideas and feelings. This documentary (archival) evidence is preserved in the Short Course Archive housed in the Unisa History Department. Participants were also encouraged to start an EQ journal in which they could record personal reflections during and after the training and paste in hand-outs on all the core theoretical components of the workshop.

In terms of research ethics, participants were explicitly asked for their written permission to be quoted with acknowledgement, and the research results to be integrated into any conference paper or publication flowing from the workshop. Except for one person who failed to exercise a choice, all the other participants provided such permission<sup>27</sup> without any hesitation. In private discussions with the facilitators, several also expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to be part of a project which they believed would empower them and benefit History teaching in general.

Quality assurance was achieved by inviting participants to complete a workshop evaluation form,<sup>28</sup> motivating participants to practise what they had learnt in their working environment and family life, and encouraging the Subject Advisor to assist with the transfer of learning during cluster meetings.

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24 Qualitative data-collection methods included a document study (e.g. written comments, workshop evaluation forms, journal writing and video recording) and participant and facilitator observation, while data analysis employed inductive coding and other standard methods of historical analysis, interpretation and critique; quantitative techniques included questionnaires using scaled questioning that generated descriptive statistics for descriptive data analysis.

25 The questionnaires have been developed by psychologists in the Call on the Professionals team and were kindly made available for use in the workshop.

26 Conversations were recorded very selectively and as unobtrusively as possible in order to avoid making participants uncomfortable and hesitant to communicate freely.

27 DH, SCF 11.

28 DH, SCF 17, Doc 1-21.

Moreover, follow-up interventions are planned which will be used to monitor progress and build on the foundation that has been created during this first phase of emotional intelligence training.

## **Findings and discussion**

### ***Understanding of the concept of emotional intelligence***

When asked to define “emotional intelligence”, 19.1% of the group (n=21) had no idea what it meant,<sup>29</sup> while the majority (61.9%) had at least some idea<sup>30</sup> and 19.1% a fairly accurate understanding of the concept.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Challenges facing history teachers***

Participants were also invited to share their views on whether or not History was a particularly challenging subject to teach in the modern South African classroom and if so, why this was the case. Only one respondent answered in the negative, referring to wide media coverage of the celebration of historical events, the availability and accessibility of historical evidence on the internet, and exposure to diverse opinions in the media.<sup>32</sup> The other group members all agreed that History had indeed become more challenging to teach. They listed concerns over overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, lack of support from the DoE, lack of recognition of History as an important discipline, and apathetic learners whose world-view is affected by social problems.<sup>33</sup> Several emphasised teaching and learning History through the medium of English as a particularly prominent challenge.<sup>34</sup> More importantly, the need for History teachers to possess a very broad general knowledge; continuously connect the past with the present and the future; teach such a wide range of thinking and writing skills;<sup>35</sup> and handle sensitive historical content, were singled out by more than one participant as significantly adding to their stress levels. They reported that some learners struggle to interpret lifestyles that are far removed in time and place (for example the Ming Dynasty in China), while others

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29 DH, SCF 13 (What is EQ?), Doc 1, 4, 8 and 17.

30 DH, SCF 13, Doc 2, 3, 7, 9, 13, 15, 18-21.

31 DH, SCF 13, Doc 5, 10, 11 and 16.

32 DH, SCF 12 (Challenges facing History teachers), Doc 5.

33 DH, SCF 12, Doc 3, 12

34 DH, SCF 12, Doc 3, 8, 9, 12 and 14. This aspect also affects history teaching in other parts of the country. See, for example, JM Rapetsoa & RJ Singh, “Challenges experienced by History learners during assessment using the medium of English”, *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 26(1), 2012, pp. 10-23.

35 DH, SCF 12, Doc 2, 7, 9 and 11.



resist learning about global history (for example the history of Germany) and European leadership styles while their own histories and African approaches to leadership seem to be neglected. There are also those who find the teaching of the Difaqane (and Zulu history more generally) offensive, preferring greater focus on the history of the Basotho closer to home.<sup>36</sup> More importantly, many learners at these schools refuse to learn about apartheid because, according to them, it generates feelings of hatred and causes them to be ostracised by their communities.<sup>37</sup> This attitude resonates with that of black learners in other parts of South Africa who have lost interest in the country's traumatised past and, driven by pragmatic materialism, pursue career choices other than History.<sup>38</sup> Many white learners, on the other hand, have apparently not yet embraced South Africa's cultural diversity and seem to be in denial of the country's past. This makes it particularly challenging to teach sensitive historical themes in a multicultural classroom.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Interaction style***

Teachers who have to cope with the challenges outlined so far, ideally need a people-directed interaction style (either "Socialiser/Expressive" or "Carer/Supporter"<sup>40</sup>) and a sound balance between people- and task orientation. A balance between "Carer/Supporter" and "Planner/Analyst" competencies, for example, is particularly good for teaching as the "Planner/Analyst" component is characterised by an interest in academic reading and research, while the "Carer/Supporter" usually has the ability to convey content to the learner in a compassionate and learner-friendly manner.<sup>41</sup> At secondary school level, where adolescent learners can be particularly challenging, a fairly strong "Socialiser/Expressive" element is a distinct advantage and will assist the teacher in presenting lively and creative lessons that will keep learners interested and inspired. Here, historical themes offer wonderful opportunities for dramatisation and role play which can bring the discipline to life in the

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36 DH, SCF 12, Doc 1; Telephone conversation: C Khoabane (History Subject Advisor, Lejweleputswa District)/ HJ Lubbe (Researcher), 5 November 2012.

37 DH, SCF 12, Doc 1, 10, 13 and 15.

38 See DA Black, "Changing perceptions of History education in black secondary schools, with special reference to Mpumalanga, 1948-2008" (MA, Unisa, 2010), pp. 190-191; for more detail, see Chapter 7; G Mazabow, "The development of historical consciousness in the teaching of History in South African schools" (D. Ed, Unisa, 2003), p. 25.

39 DH, SCF 12, Doc 6.

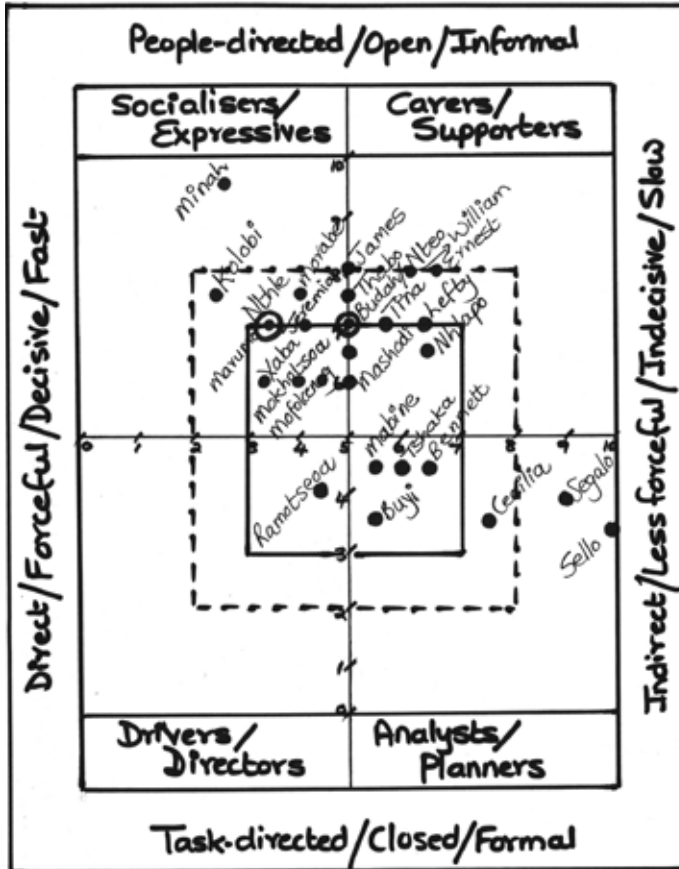
40 See Minnaar & Associates, "Emotional intelligence: Module 1: Self-Awareness" (unpublished manual, revised 2003), p. 20; B Jude, *Effective people skills* (Sandringham, BJ Books, 2006), pp. 10-11; F Littauer, *Personality plus* (Ada, Fleming H Revell, 1997), pp. 24-27.

41 F Littauer, *Personality plus*, p. 144.

classroom.

The various assessments that were conducted as part of the workshop highlighted several strengths in the group as can be seen on the following grid:

Image 1: Interaction Styles Group Grid



Source: Unisa History Department, Short Course File 14

The majority of participants are clearly situated in, and fairly evenly spread between, the “Socialiser/Expressive” and “Carer/Supporter” quadrants of the grid. This suggests an open and informal approach and a strong people-orientation, all of which suit a teaching environment.

Another very remarkable feature is the high percentage of participants (about 75% of the group) who are placed inside or very close to the “Flexibility Zone” in the centre of the grid. This percentage is higher than those of most government departments and corporate groups the facilitators have worked

with in the past. It is also significantly higher than the 56% generated by delegates to the South African Society of History Teaching (SASHT)-conference held in Somerset West, South Africa, on 4-5 October 2012.<sup>42</sup> The result produced by the Free State group implies that these teachers probably possess the ability to adapt their behaviour appropriately when necessary, for example in managing their emotions when faced with structural constraints, strict deadlines, a full syllabus, demanding parents and conflict situations in the classroom, to mention but a few stressors.<sup>43</sup> Although the reasons for the high level of flexibility in this group compared to the SASHT conference result still need to be researched, it is suspected that the flexible and supportive nature of the Subject Advisor and her commitment to continuing professional development of History educators in her care, plays an important role.<sup>44</sup> Secondly, the SASHT conference delegates consisted of proportionally fewer History teachers and more academics from mainly Education Departments at tertiary institutions. Based on the personal experience of the author as an academic and human dynamics facilitator, it can be argued that academics tend to be more individualistic, predominantly task-directed and often less flexible, which may have influenced the SASHT conference result. Last but not least, the emotional maturity and strong values instilled in teachers who teach their subject with commitment and perseverance in a relatively disadvantaged educational setting also need to be taken into consideration.

A third positive result, based on a second, more nuanced interaction styles assessment, was that 29.6% of the group (n=28) had their strongest scores in the “Supporter/Analyst” quadrants (which we have seen is good for teaching). The competencies of another 25.9% were fairly balanced in at least three of the quadrants, while one person displayed excellent overall balance in all four quadrants. However, the assessment indicated that 40.7% of the group tended to be predominantly task-directed which is understandable given the pressure on educators to produce good pass rates. However, being too task-directed may undermine healthy classroom interaction with personalities that need a more people-centred approach. These potential stumbling blocks were pointed out to each individual in personalised feedback after the workshop (see the example below).<sup>45</sup>

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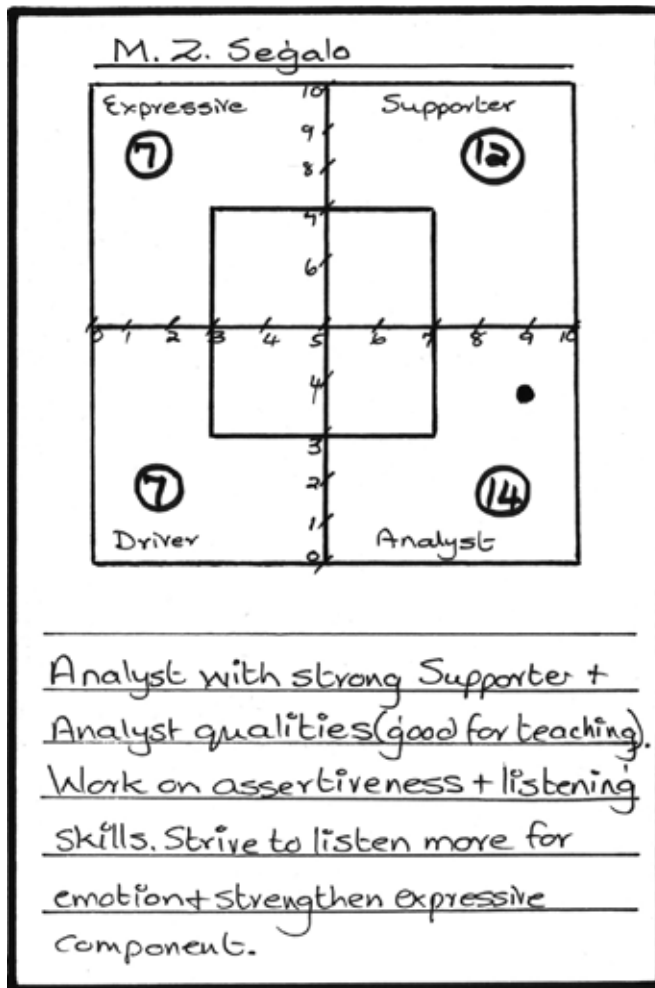
42 DH, SCF 18: Results of Interaction Styles Assessment, SASHT Conference, 4-5 October 2012.

43 DH, SCF 14: Interaction Styles Grid (Free State group).

44 This came up several times in discussions during the workshop and was subsequently confirmed in at least one grateful “WhatsApp” message to the History Subject Advisor which read as follows: “God bless you cos u inspire and motivate us History Educators...”

45 DH, SCF 14: Results of two complementary interaction styles assessments with personalised feedback.

Image 2: Interaction Styles Individualised Feedback



Source: Unisa History Department, Short Course File 14

### ***Assertiveness***

In assessing assertiveness levels in the group, the findings indicated that only 25.7% of the group (n=23) were very assertive, 43.5% usually assertive and 34.8% lacking in assertiveness.<sup>46</sup> Although it is difficult to determine the exact causes of this lack of assertiveness, the Subject Advisor confirmed that

<sup>46</sup> DH, SCF 15: Assertiveness. The findings are based on a self-assessment questionnaire compiled by psychologists in the Call on the Professionals team and supported by both the observations of the facilitators and verbal feedback from the participants during reviewing sessions.

lack of both content knowledge and skills cause some of her History teachers to feel insecure about how the main themes of the prescribed History syllabi should be approached.<sup>47</sup> Such insecurity — fuelled further by lack of DoE support for History teaching at secondary school level and feelings of being devalued<sup>48</sup> as teachers — would certainly undermine self-esteem and erode assertiveness. In the session that followed, participants learnt more about the difference between aggressiveness, submissiveness and authentic assertiveness; explored some general reasons for submissiveness and aggression; were guided towards identifying the value of truly assertive behaviour for stress, conflict and general classroom management as well as effective human relations; and were provided with guidelines for phrasing an assertive response to be practised within their families, in educator cluster meetings and in their respective classrooms.

### ***Listening style and listening skills***

Linked to the role of flexibility and patience that are associated with placement within or close to the “Flexibility Zone”, good listening — especially listening for emotion — was emphasised throughout the programme as critically important for effective classroom interaction. Research into the listening style of the participants pointed out that 69.6% of the group (n=23) listen predominantly for emotion which is excellent for a teaching environment. The second strongest focus was information listening (47.8%) and technical listening (43.5%),<sup>49</sup> all of which support effective teaching. An assessment of the group’s listening skills, however, painted a less positive picture. Only 39.1% of the group (n=23) displayed above average listening skills, while 56.5% had average or below average listening skills. This finding is in line with the results of many other groups the facilitators have worked with but clearly requires improvement.<sup>50</sup>

The delegates subsequently participated in an experiential pair work activity during which they experienced first-hand the destabilising effect of basic listening errors (for example interrupting the speaker, finishing his/her sentences, losing concentration while listening, etc.) as well as the affirming and emotionally supportive influence of attentive, active and empathic listening. They were also provided with basic guidelines for effective listening

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47 Telephone conversation: C Khoabane (History Subject Advisor)/HJ Lubbe (Researcher), 5 November 2012.

48 DH, SFC 12, Doc 10.

49 DH, SCF 16B: Listening styles.

50 DH, SCF 16A: Listening skills.

which, if implemented and actively practised, should assist them in building a positive and emotionally supportive learning environment in their classrooms.

### **Workshop evaluation**

The teachers who attended this workshop gave an overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the programme and advised that nothing should be changed.<sup>51</sup> On the contrary, 57.1% of the group (n=21) asked for the duration of the workshop to be extended, for follow-up sessions to be arranged, and for their life partners to be included as they could see the relevance of the training for both their working environment and their family life.<sup>52</sup> More than one participant made a strong plea for similar training to be extended to educators teaching subjects other than History, and to teachers in the rural areas who do not have similar access to professional and personal development that can enrich their history teaching.<sup>53</sup>

When asked which parts of the workshop they enjoyed most, 38.1% said everything,<sup>54</sup> while 28.6% singled out the session on effective listening as a must for every teacher,<sup>55</sup> and 23.8% the one on interaction style.<sup>56</sup> The sessions on effective listening (42.9%) and interaction style (33.3%) were also those that participants thought would be most beneficial to their history teaching. Commenting on the value of good listening, one participant (echoed by another) wrote:<sup>57</sup>

*The session on listening will help teachers to take their learners seriously... we tend not to listen to our learners.*

And on interaction style, the following comment sums up well what several participants wrote on their evaluation forms:<sup>58</sup>

*Understanding the importance of the flexibility zone and my own strengths and weaknesses will help me understand my learners better and therefore facilitate better History teaching and learning.*

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51 DH, SCF 17, Doc 5, 11, 13, 15, 17-19, 21.

52 DH, SCF 17, Doc 2, 4, 5, 8-11, 13-16, 19, 20.

53 DH, SCF 17, Doc 4, 5, 7, 10, 16.

54 DH, SCF 17, Doc 1, 2, 11, 12, 17-20.

55 DH, SCF 17, Doc 2, 4, 8, 13-15.

56 DH, SCF 17, Doc 1, 5-7, 20.

57 DH, SCF 17, Doc 6 and 10.

58 DH, SCF 17, Doc 3, 4 and 9.

## **Conclusion**

History educators in the Lejweleputswa District of the Free State clearly teach their subject under trying conditions. They nevertheless radiate a remarkable commitment to their job and a keen interest in continuing professional and personal development. How else can “sacrificing” a public holiday and precious family time on a Saturday be explained? Having answered all the research questions, this project suggests that the majority of the Lejweleputswa History teachers already possess very valuable emotional competencies such as flexibility and listening for emotion. This should enable them to mirror or model emotionally mature behaviour which has been shown to go a long way in developing emotional competencies in learners where formal EQ training programmes do not exist.<sup>59</sup>

The enhanced emotional awareness created during the workshop, and the practical guidelines for dealing with interaction styles other than their own, as well as the practical tips for self-improvement handed out during each session, ought to assist these teachers in conveying sensitive historical content with greater confidence, maintain effective classroom management and build healthy relationships, not only with learners and colleagues but also with friends, family members and life partners. However, it is recommended that more comprehensive EQ training be offered in the form of follow-up sessions in order to monitor personal growth and address aspects such as self-esteem, stress management and conflict management in greater depth.

Peter Charles Hoffer once said: “The way to handle history is simply to love it.”<sup>60</sup> Given the Lejweleputswa educators’ inspirational passion for History and their willingness to learn and grow, investment in their further development will certainly be successful.

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59 MA Brackett & NA Katulak, “Emotional intelligence in the classroom: Skill-based training for teachers and students” (available at: <http://heblab.research.yale.edu/heblab-yale/myweb.php?hls=10085>, as accessed on 28 September 2012), p. 4.

60 PC Hoffer, *The historian’s paradox: The study of History in our time* (New York & London, New York University Press, 2008), p. 182.