TUTOR EMOTIONAL COMPETENCES VALUED BY LEARNERS IN A BLENDED LEARNING CONTEXT

Abstract

This paper outlines research into the emotional competences that mature, higher education students, undertaking part-time blended learning degrees within a School of Education, value in their tutors. A mixed methods approach was adopted to conduct a detailed exploration of eight tutors' practice whilst teaching a module, with data gathered from three principal sources. Learners' perceptions of their experiences were assessed using a questionnaire; interviews with tutors explored their approaches to delivery and considered factors that impacted on quality; and, an analysis of the content and communications in the virtual learning environment provided insight into tutors' online practice. Goleman's (2001) Framework of Emotional Competences provided a lens through which to analyse blended tutors' practices in relation to learner perceptions. The paper proposes a framework of emotional competences that appeared to contribute to tutor effectiveness in this context. This research questions the value of some of Goleman's relationship management competences, with the proposed framework developed to add further self-management competences. This was due, in part, to the measures evident by some tutors to effectively support these particular learners at a distance. The proposed framework could support recruitment and selection within higher education, and provide a language for discussing further research into blended and online tutors' emotional competences.

Keywords: emotional competences, blended learning, online learning, tutor competences, tutor skills.

Introduction

This paper outlines research that explored tutor emotional competences valued by learners in a blended learning context. A group of emotional competences is proposed that appeared to contribute to the effectiveness of tutors within the context under investigation. Within this paper, emotional competence (EC) is defined as a learned capability based on emotional intelligence (EI) that leads to effective performance in blended learning contexts (see Emotional Competence: Theory and Definition section for discussion).

There is limited research into tutor emotional competences that are valued by learners within higher education (HE), blended learning contexts. Blended learning typically involves significant online teaching, learning and support, but includes some face-to-face contact (De George-Walker and Keeffe, 2010). Academic literature is growing that explores the roles and competences tutors in online contexts commonly demonstrate, however, these are frequently practical in nature (for example: see, Barker, 2002; Aydin, 2005; Guasch, Alvarez, and Espasa, 2010; Abdous, 2011; Setlhako, 2014). Social competence, commonly referred to as building and fostering tutor/learner and learner/learner relationships, has frequently being stated as desirable for online tutors (see Bawane and Spector, 2009; Berge, 2009; Guasch et al., 2010; Schichtel, 2010; Varvel, 2007; Wiesenberg and Hutton, 1996). Further competences, advisor/counselor (Goodyear et al., 2001; Denis et al., 2004) facilitator (Aydin; 2005; Goodyear et al., 2001; Williams, 2003) communication (Salmon, 2011; Schichtel, 2010) and management (commonly considering organisational and administrative functions) (Schichtel, 2010; Wiesenberg and Hutton, 1996), also support the building and fostering of relationships in online contexts. However, these studies do not allude to the range of emotional competences that underpin these online or blended tutor roles. Salmon (2011: 107) noted the importance of tutor personal qualities and competences beyond online communication skills, including adaptability, sensitivity and enthusiasm, but there was little

empirical evidence provided for their inclusion. Further stimulus for this research came from Salmon's (2011: 104) view that emotional intelligence (EI) and the ability to influence others are important attributes necessary when tutoring online. She particularly emphasised the importance of tutor self-awareness, interpersonal sensitivity and the ability to influence others. Again, there was limited supporting empirical evidence, although the position does appear to have face validity.

This exploration includes analysis of learners' perceptions of their tutors in blended contexts, a viewpoint infrequently considered in research within this area. Whilst there is empirical research of university students' perspectives on effective blended learning (for example, see Afacan, 2015; Waha and Davis, 2014), these studies have not explored tutor skills and competences contributing to the effectiveness. Further, learner perceptions of tutor skills and competences are commonly omitted from research in online contexts (Baran, Correia & Thompson, 2011: 428).

This paper proposes a group of emotional competences that appeared to contribute to the effectiveness of tutors and these may support the recruitment and selection of blended learning tutors. Salmon (2011: 104) also advocates considering potential candidates' emotional intelligence (EI) when recruiting online tutors. Commonly tutors move from traditional face-to-face contexts into blended and online environments (Bennett & Lockyer, 2004), and further understanding of emotional competences could aid the choice of the suitable candidates.

Research Context

Global HE is rapidly expanding (British Council, 2014) with universities offering increased opportunities for technology supported learning (Wheeler, 2015). There is a greater use of online and blended learning with universities developing delivery models to meet the needs of non-traditional learners (Beetham, 2012, MacDonald; 2006). University tutors' roles are changing to meet these challenges (Baran et al., 2011; Dykman and Davis, 2008), driving a growing literature considering training for online contexts (for example, see Kreber & Kanuka, 2006; Salmon & Wright, 2014). However, emotional competences can take time to develop (Goleman, 2001), often beyond the scope of University training and development programmes, and therefore selecting tutors with suitable qualities becomes increasingly important.

The teaching context influences the prioritisation of online tutors' roles and competences (Baran et al., 2011: 427), and this is significant in this research. The research is based at a university in the north of England which has approximately 500 full-time academic staff and 20,000 students. All the courses investigated as part of the research were located in the School of Education, and, therefore, focussed on this particular subject area. Courses included Education and Professional Development, Learning Support, Multimedia and Education, Education Management and Administration, and Early Years. These attract part-time (PT) learners, undertaking vocationally-relevant degrees whilst, usually, in full-time (FT) employment. Academic literature notes the difficulties when tutoring these learners, particularly regarding the influence of daily events within their lives, together with the pressures and time constraints of work (Creanor 2002; Holley and Oliver, 2010). However, adult learners tend to understand what they want to achieve from education and can have clearer goals in mind (Richardson et al., 2003).

Emotional Competence: Theory and Definition

This section firstly provides a brief background to the concept emotional intelligence, and outlines its relationship with the concept, emotional competence. The adopted definition of emotional competence within this paper is justified. Finally, Goleman's (2001) Framework of

Emotional Competences is selected as a useful template to explore tutor emotional competences, valued by learners, within a blended learning context.

Although the term 'emotional intelligence' was popularised by Goleman (1996) the concept emotional intelligence[1] was first proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990). By 1997, they defined emotional intelligence as follows:

> *Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and / or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. (Mayer and Salovey, 1997: 10).*

In this paper I consider Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Competence to be close concepts. Wakeman (2006: 72) argues that Mayer and Salovey's definition of EI embodies "the distinction between EI and EC", with emotional intelligence factors allowing the development of emotional competences. For example, the ability to perceive emotions in others would aid the development of EC in conflict management or empathy (Wakeman, 2006: 72). It is common for intelligence to be measured by tests of competence, Intelligence Quotient (IQ) being a relevant example. Goleman (2001: 1) similarly considers there to be a relationship between the two concepts when stating emotional competence is "a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work". Thus, the definition of emotional competence adopted for this paper is a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that leads to effective performance in blended learning environments.

Following this consideration, a review was undertaken of prominent conceptions of emotional competence to provide a lens through which to evaluate blended tutors' practices. Goleman's (2001) Framework of Emotional Competences (see Table 1) was chosen due to its prominence in EI discourses, broad scope, and development in work contexts (Zeidner, Matthews and Roberts, 2009). During the 1990s, three lines of research were established, Salovey and Mayer (1990), Goleman (1996) and Bar-On (1997) with Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts (2002: 175) highlighting these as "the major conceptualisations of EI appearing in the literature". More recently, Zeidner, Matthews and Roberts (2009) note Goleman's Framework as a prominent 'mixed' EI concept which includes twenty competences[2] in four clusters of traits, but under two main headings - Self (personal competence) and Other (social competence), with two clusters recognising and regulating competence. The Framework was derived from "internal research at hundreds of corporations and organisations as distinguishing outstanding performers". This four-domain version was refined from the previous five-domain framework (Goleman, 1998) but still with the vision of EI as a theory of organisational effectiveness, therefore, being pertinent for tutors in HE. Further, this Framework has pertinent overlaps with Holmberg's (2005: 38) Empathy Approach theory which regards 'empathy and personal relations between the parties involved in the teaching-learning process as central to distance education'. It is not the intention of this paper to critique Goleman's Framework, rather to use it as a template to evaluate competences for tutors in blended learning contexts.

Table 1 - Goleman's Framework of Emotional Competences (Adapted from Goleman, 2001: 2).

	Self - Personal Competence	Other - Social Competence

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[1] The term emotional intelligence was first used in 1985 by Wayne Payne in his doctoral dissertation - "A study of emotion: developing emotional intelligence; self-integration; relating to fear, pain and desire (theory, structure of reality, problem-solving, contraction/expansion, tuning in/coming out/letting go)."
[2] EI & EC literature generally classifies Goleman's Framework as 'mixed' or 'trait-based'. However, Goleman used the term 'competencies' to outline the components of the Framework.

Recognition	**Self-Awareness** • Emotional self-awareness • Accurate self-assessment • Self-confidence	**Social Awareness** • Empathy • Service orientation • Organisational awareness
Regulation	**Self-Management** • Self-control • Trustworthiness • Conscientiousness • Adaptability • Achievement drive • Initiative	**Relationship Management** • Developing others • Influence • Communication • Conflict management • Leadership • Change catalyst • Building bonds • Teamwork & Collaboration

Methods

A mixed methods approach (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007) was adopted to conduct a detailed exploration of eight tutors' practice on one module delivered as part of a blended learning course. Each course adopted a 'day school' model of delivery where learners typically attend classes one day per month with the remaining time spent studying independently, utilising resources held on the virtual learning environment (VLE). Modules are usually a term in length (approximately three to four months) from the first day school until learners submit summative assessments. Tutors then have three weeks in which to mark the work and provide feedback to students. Each module, therefore, has two or three day schools with the overall course structure and delivery models developed by module tutors and course leaders in conjunction with course approval committees. This includes both summative assessments and one opportunity for learners to receive formative feedback per module. Beyond this, tutors have autonomy in a number of aspects of teaching and learning. Day school content and teaching methods are solely within the control of the tutor who can structure delivery as they choose. Any further learning activities within a module, including online learning, are designed by module tutors and used at their discretion. The tutor sampling criteria applied were:

- they delivered the module on a 'day school' basis, that is, where learners attend university for a small number of days (typically two or three), with remaining teaching conducted via computer mediated communication (CMC);
- they were an experienced teacher/lecturer (over five years) and had delivered at least three previous modules in blended learning contexts;
- their learners were studying undergraduate or post-graduate courses on a part-time basis;
- their learners were studying qualifications relevant to their profession.

All staff within the School of Education, who contributed to blended learning courses, were contacted regarding participation in this research. Of those who responded, eight tutors were chosen who, firstly, met the above sampling criteria, secondly, represented a broad range of courses from the School, and, finally, provided an equal number of male and female respondents. Data collection for this paper occurred between March and July, 2011.

An explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007: 71-72) was adopted which is a two phase design where qualitative data builds upon initial quantitative results. In essence, the qualitative data helps to explain the quantitative data. In this research, this

firstly involved issuing a questionnaire to ascertain learners' perceptions of tutors, and the teaching, learning and assessment they experienced, whilst studying the module. Qualitative analysis followed, via tutor interviews and VLE content analysis, which explored emotional competences appearing to influence learner perceptions (identified from the questionnaire findings). The selected research questions were:

1. What are learner perceptions of their tutor's approach to teaching, learning and assessment on their modules?
2. How do tutors describe their emotional competences and exhibit them in practice?
3. How do tutor emotional competences operate synergistically throughout their modules?
4. How do tutor emotional competences influence learner perceptions of tutor effectiveness?

Research question one focuses on the quantitative analysis, with 2 and 3 having a greater focus on the qualitative aspect. Research question 4 explores convergence between the explanatory research design's two phases (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007: 105).

A random selection of students (n=72 covering the eight modules investigated) completed the questionnaire, which was designed to elicit general opinion about the quality of tutoring they experienced. To obtain this, a modified version of the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) was included (Ramsden, 1991). The scale items adopted were good teaching communication; good teaching feedback on, and concern for, student learning; clear goals and standards; appropriate workload; and appropriate assessment. Descriptive statistics generated from the questionnaire provided a broad overview of learner perceptions and a ranking of tutors, which then allowed the qualitative data to explain and build upon the initial quantitative results.

Qualitative data was gathered from interviews with tutors, which explored their approaches to delivery and considered factors that impacted quality on their modules, and an analysis of the content and communications in the VLE, which provided insight into their online practice. Template analysis was chosen to analyse both the tutor interview data and VLE communications (King, 2004). King (2004: 256) argues that template analysis is not a single method or research itself, or a methodological position, but a series of techniques for the inductive analysis of textual data. The first template had a mix of descriptive codes, such as tutor experience, and analytical codes, for example, tutor ability to work within available resources. Goleman's Framework (2001) identified a range of ECs to explore and were included in the initial template. However, some flexibility was required in template development and subsequent analysis, particularly as themes were developing around emotional competences appearing to influence learner perceptions. Themes were noted as the coding process was undertaken and were analysed using a framework approach to thematic analysis (Bryman, 2008: 550) which involved tabulating emerging ideas against tutors (who were ranked in descending order of learner perceptions, measured by CEQ scores). Through this process, themes emerged that were important in all modules; important in those of tutors receiving the highest CEQ scores; and those that were only observable in the tutors receiving lower scores.

Emotional Competences Associated with Effective Blended Tutoring

This section firstly provides a broad overview of the quantitative and qualitative findings before examining tutor emotional competences, using Goleman's Framework (2001), in greater depth.

Tutor's Course Experience Questionnaire results (see Table 2) revealed generally high scores across scales indicating learners felt their tutors were effective, and this set a positive

context for the analysis of ECs. Relatively small standard deviations for a five point scale Likert scale suggested a common perception from the learner groups. Overall, the research found the modules to be largely successful. Pass rates, whilst a crude measure of educational success, were found to be greater than 95% with some of the remaining 5% expected to complete in the near future. Learners were asked to rate their module achievement on a five-point scale (very disappointed to very good) and the resultant mean score was 3.83 indicating broad satisfaction with their results and academic development.

Table 2 - Tutor's Course Experience Questionnaire Results - Mean and (Standard Deviation).

Tutor (Pseudonym)	N	CEQ Total	Clear Goals and Standards	Good Teaching Communication	Good Teaching Feedback	Appropriate Workload
Ann	6	4.06 (0.36)	4.29 (0.40)	4.50 (0.35)	4.25 (0.45)	3.71 (0.68)
Bill	7	3.86 (0.64)	3.96 (1.09)	4.33 (0.69)	3.93 (0.72)	3.89 (0.66)
Claire	7	4.10 (0.35)	4.29 (0.57)	4.62 (0.36)	3.64 (0.35)	4.25 (0.64)
Daisy	4	3.23 (0.45)	3.69 (0.24)	3.58 (0.74)	2.87 (1.18)	2.94 (0.31)
Emily	15	3.99 (0.26)	4.42 (0.28)	4.15 (0.44)	4.12 (0.44)	3.48 (0.47)
Frank	5	3.43 (0.37)	3.45 (0.62)	4.00 (0.97)	3.30 (0.67)	2.90 (0.88)
George	14	3.55 (0.40)	3.59 (0.74)	4.31 (0.53)	3.68 (0.56)	2.99 (0.55)
Harry	14	3.42 (0.67)	3.42 (1.15)	3.55 (1.06)	3.13 (0.80)	3.46 (0.47)
Mean		3.72 (0.53)	3.89 (0.83)	4.12 (0.79)	3.73 (0.77)	3.38 (0.63)

The qualitative data suggested a common theme across all tutors was the positive comments and enthusiasm shown about teaching at day schools (face-to-face aspect of the blended learning), therefore, potentially a factor in the modules' success. Further, tutors were aware of areas of improvement, particularly around online delivery, as there were generally minimal interactions within the VLE with assessments appearing to drive learning on modules. Day schools commonly included activities which aided assignment preparation, with this continuing outside day schools via computer mediated communications (CMCs) (see Table 3 for a summary of tutors' interaction with learners via CMCs during their modules). In all modules, learners had autonomy to direct their learning and focus on assignment work with tutors available for support. Ann and Claire, who received the highest CEQ scores, were (to quote Ann) "*there on demand*" to facilitate learners' application and analysis within work contexts. This suggested the provision of more learner support than would be anticipated or expected, however, a number of tutor ECs were evident to manage student communications and expectations during the modules (see Self-Management Cluster section further discussion). Whilst being available to learners was common to all, other tutors tried to engage learners in a variety of online activities but with limited success. Claire used discussion boards to provide feedback on assignment plans. However, minimal peer interaction was occurring via this medium. Emily described regular synchronous web conferences which had predetermined topics to discuss. Whilst these were successful in engaging learners and allowing peer interaction, the tutor explained that more practical issues were discussed around assessment and use of wider university systems. She noted the use of such software was new to her and further work was required to appropriately structure sessions. Bill encouraged the use of wikis to allow collaboration with peers to validate assignment choices, but described limited learner engagement. Two other tutors, George and Harry, encouraged the submission of assignment plans on VLE discussion boards, which was generally carried out. However, there were minimal comments from peers, and VLE analysis revealed none from the tutors. During the interviews, George and Harry outlined that they asked students to e-mail plans directly to them, as well as submitting to the VLE. Feedback was provided via e-mail with both stating time saving as justification for this approach. From analysis of activities outside day schools, module assessments were the key driver of student learning with these undertaken independently from peers, but with support from tutors.

Table 3 - Summary of tutors' interaction with learners via CMCs during their modules.

Tutor	Summary of tutors' interaction with learners via CMCs during their modules
Ann	E-mail support.
Bill	E-mail support, wiki to validate learner assignment plans.
Claire	E-mail support, learner assignment plans discussed on VLE discussion boards.
Daisy	E-mail support.
Emily	E-mail support, online synchronous conferences, established a group on a social networking site to aid induction and learner socialisation.
Frank	E-mail support.
George	E-mail support, learner assignment plans added to VLE discussion boards.
Harry	E-mail support, learner assignment plans added to VLE discussion boards.

Goleman's Framework of Emotional Competence (2001) was used to provide a lens through which to consider blended tutors' practices influencing learner perceptions of their experiences on a module of study. The findings of this analysis are now presented. The Framework includes a range of emotional competences categorised into four clusters: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Relationship Management. Although there is theoretical significance in examining each cluster for emotional competence in that area (Goleman, 2001: 10), to demonstrate emotional intelligence, individuals must exhibit proficiency across all areas (Goleman, 2001: 1). As Goleman (2001: 10) summarises, "people exhibit these competencies in groupings, often across clusters, that allow competencies to support one another. Emotional competencies seem to operate most powerfully in synergistic groupings". In light of this, tutor emotional competences are now considered in relation to each cluster, followed by discussion of potential groupings. Further emotional competences evident are highlighted, which do not form part of Goleman's Framework. Some of Goleman's competences are rejected and, with the addition of further competences, this paper suggests a new group associated with effective tutoring in this context. Goleman's definitions have been adapted to suit the context under investigation and could help to promote a language for discussing future research in this area. Data supporting the proposed emotional competences was extensive with detailed evidence, in the form of quotes, provided for some, but given word limit constraints, this could not be done for all.

Self-Awareness Cluster

This cluster comprises three competences:

- Accurate Self-Assessment - tutors are aware of their abilities and limitations, seek feedback and learn from mistakes, aware of areas of improvement, and work with others who can support improvement;
- Self-Confidence - a belief and self-assurance about tutor's own abilities;
- Emotional Self-Awareness - tutors recognise own feelings and how they impact on performance.

Through analysis of this cluster, what appeared common to all tutors was the competence Accurate Self-Assessment, however, varying levels of Self-Confidence were apparent. There was sufficient evidence to support the inclusion of all three of these competences in the proposed Framework of ECs contributing to the effectiveness of tutors within this context. The remainder of this section explains this decision.

Tutors described examples that indicated competence at Accurate Self-Assessment - identifying their strengths, such as in face-to-face contexts, and weaknesses with regard to online practice on modules. All tutors would seek out and act on feedback and work with others to improve practice, again indicating Accurate Self-Assessment. They either regularly

met with colleagues to discuss educational technology and pedagogy or had informal mentors available if needed, and worked with others to improve their practice. All tutors described colleagues with whom they could discuss both pedagogical and technological practice. Harry noted:

> *But certainly I have got tutors from my Masters that I would talk to about various issues to do with technology. There are people from a formal team in teacher training that we do actually sit and talk about these things and support each other - that is on a very informal basis.*

Claire's comment was illustrative and demonstrated a culture of support within the School:

> *When it comes to the online stuff it's just literally been a case of using people around me who have done it before who know more about it, sharing their experiences, asking them for help, asking them to show me and it's really helped particularly in the previous office I was in, I could just ask for help and it was readily available.*

All tutors commented on a culture of support within their School with collaboration and sharing of good practice common.

All tutors described Self-Confidence in face-to-face environments with this appearing to be a factor in the generally high CEQ scores achieved, however, it was apparent that other competences were also influencing learner perceptions. A flavour of the comments included:

- *I think my teaching style is quite an enjoyable one. I enjoy it! (Ann);*
- *They do feel motivated, particularly at the day schools (Emily);*
- *You get them in a good mood and they're excited to be there (Harry);*
- *I think I am lucky in the sense that when I get into the classroom all my other woes disappear for that short time, because first and foremost I see myself as a teacher and it's what I enjoy doing. I enjoy being in the classroom (George).*

Three tutors (Ann, Claire and Frank) showed similar confidence whilst arguing online elements were focussed around learner support. However, three tutors used either wikis or discussion boards with mixed success, and comments mirrored this when analysed for Self-Confidence. George's comment was illustrative, "*there is probably less blended learning going on there for a number of reasons, some of which are down to me*". Daisy, however, made the most negative comments regarding her approach to the module which indicated limited confidence. Daisy, who received the lowest CEQ score and was the least experienced tutor, showed limited self-confidence with regard to both online and blended learning approaches. An early comment in the interview set the tone, "*it might be more in terms of what I intended to do rather what I actually do*". Her module, like three others investigated, had previously been delivered wholly face-to-face, and she found the adjustment to blended difficult, in particular, with regard to the time for delivery. "*I know that's the way it has to be done so I have to make it work*", was a comment that illustrated tensions the approach was causing. This was further compounded with a number of negative comments about delivery in between day schools, which included "*so there were a lot of those in-between activities that I would like to do better*". This could have had a negative influence on learner perceptions of quality during the module. Analysis of Harry's module was revealing, his interview comments revealed Self-Confidence, however, as stated earlier, the VLE analysis showed he did not contribute any comments. Therefore, Self-Confidence in both face-to-face and online contexts appears important for effective tutoring, however, other competences are necessary to influence learner perceptions, suggesting the importance of a synergistic grouping.

Analysis of interview data for Emotional Self-Awareness showed tutors were aware of feelings and how they impacted on their practice. The emotions described were commonly positive, often related to enthusiasm for face-to-face teaching (see above quotes) and the motivational effects this had on learners. Emily described a number of negative emotions when referring to practice both generally and within the module under investigation. However, Emily outlined emotionally intelligent competences by using these emotions to advise and inform practice when stating: "*that's why you worry when you're frustrated and tired and you have to manage your workload - sometimes you have to walk away so you're in the right mind to give the right feedback*". With regard to Emotional Self-Awareness, it appeared unimportant whether positive or negative emotions are exhibited as both could contribute to learner perceptions of effectiveness.

Self-Management Cluster

This cluster comprises six competences (Goleman, 2001):

- Self-control - the absence of distress and disruptive feelings;
- Trustworthiness - tutors letting others know own values and principles, intentions and feelings, and acting in ways consistent with them;
- Conscientiousness - tutors being careful, self-disciplined, and attending to responsibilities;
- Adaptability - tutors open to new information, let go of old assumptions and adapt practice;
- Achievement Drive - tutors having an optimistic striving to continually improve performance;
- Initiative - tutors act before being forced to by external events.

In this section I argue the importance of self-management ECs for tutors within blended contexts given the competing demands of lecturers' roles (teaching, research and course management and administration), and, within the context under investigation, the autonomy of working practices when delivering modules. A further significant finding from this research was the three most effective tutors, as indicated by CEQ scores, had course management responsibilities on learners' courses and two had taught earlier modules. A competence common to all tutors was Conscientiousness with those achieving the higher CEQ scores describing what may be understood as greater Trustworthiness, Adaptability and Initiative, with these included in the proposed Framework. It was difficult to evaluate Self-Control as, after the event, tutors outlined difficulties and resultant actions rationally, which may not have been a true reflection of events. There were aspects of Achievement Drive, indicated by past experiences and commitment to supporting learners, however, tutors did not describe actions that could be considered "optimistically striving to continually improve performance" (Goleman, 2001: 7). Therefore, both Self-Control and Achievement Drive were excluded from the proposed Framework. Further self-management competences, Coping Potential and Organisation, were evident beyond those included in Goleman's Framework. The remainder of this section explains these decisions.

Tutors' Conscientiousness was most apparent around formative and summative assessment, and their commitment to learner support. Each tutor highlighted quick turnaround of feedback and determination to achieve this even with competing pressures. Emily illustrated this when stating, "*the response times were really good this year, often in the morning that it arrived*". Further, this determination was apparent when supporting learners and meeting individual needs which was particularly evident from Ann and Claire, who achieved the highest CEQ scores. Ann stated:

> *I don't know if I am soft but when I tutor with blended [learning] I do regularly send students emails and try to keep regular contact.*

The use of the word 'soft' was interesting here and it appeared to suggest the provision of more learner support than would be anticipated or expected. Similarly, Claire spoke with feeling when discussing learner support and a key theme emerging was the focus of building relationships and trust. The motives behind tutor conscientiousness are unclear and could be influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Ann and Claire's conscientiousness could be due to a lack of tutor support experienced when they were students in blended learning contexts. They both had negative experiences whilst studying at a distance, particularly regarding the amount of support they received and the opportunities for dialogue with lecturers. Whatever the source, tutor conscientiousness could foster trust from learners and be a factor in the high CEQ scores generally received.

Goleman's definition of Conscientiousness includes 'being careful' and 'self-disciplined' and these are extended in this research by the effective tutors to include Coping Potential and being Organised. In this context, Coping Potential refers to competence in focusing on key tasks and not being influenced by less important demands of the role. This competence is supported by Organisation, the ability to plan work activities efficiently, and the ability to prioritise. Ann and Claire took care to plan support into their workload patterns, indicating organisation competence. Claire, when planning her teaching workload, ensured a minimum of one day a week where she does not teach, and this time is allocated for learner support and monitoring online activities. She states:

> What I tend to do is allocate a certain amount of time in a week and I do
> that in September so that if the pressure starts I have a day when I'm not in
> a classroom and I prioritise the online stuff and I can focus and catch up
> with it.

Further, Ann and Claire outlined commitment to learner support and focussed efforts where their strengths lie. They did not spend a great deal of time learning differing educational technologies and focussed on their strengths of learner support. Emily also displayed elements of Coping Potential when outlining supporting other colleagues; "*there's a danger that again it opens the flood gates to getting my own work done*". However, Emily was mindful of supporting learners and other key demands of her role. She added:

> So, I suppose, I could do with standing back and looking it afresh - I need
> another day in the week. But, it works, it's quite good so it stays as it is.
> It's not a problem.

All tutors described practices indicating the EC 'Trustworthiness', however, there were a greater number of significant examples demonstrated by those achieving the higher CEQ scores. As previously stated, trustworthiness could have developed from tutor conscientiousness around assessment and learner support. Further, adherence to standards, as demonstrated by the high CEQ score on the Clear Goals and Standards scale (mean = 3.89, on a 5 point Likert scale), is evidence of trustworthiness. This was exemplified by tutors Ann and Bill who spoke passionately about developing autonomous learners and the actions taken to achieve this, whilst maintaining a dialogue to support the process. Interview analysis highlighted the importance of tutors' previous relationships with learners. Tutors receiving the three highest CEQ scores (Ann, Claire and Emily) each had management responsibilities on learners' courses, and two had taught earlier modules. It is reasonable to assume, learners knew these tutors were available, and trust had emerged through positive exchanges.

The shift of practice from face-to-face to blended contexts allowed analysis and evaluation of tutor Adaptability. Tutors receiving higher CEQ scores (Ann, Bill, Claire and Emily) appeared open to a new delivery model, let go of old assumptions, and adapted their practice, therefore demonstrating competence in this area. These tutors outlined opportunities afforded by the delivery model with these including, learner support, synchronous web

conferencing to replicate face-to-face contact, and increased space for reflection and learning. Whereas, Daisy and George adopted a greater 'blame' response to changes, primarily around time affordances. Some tutors demonstrated a number of short-term adaptations to practice, such as Emily and George using alternative VLEs, and there was close overlap evident with the competence, Initiative.

A number of short-term examples of Initiative were evident from the analysis of the modules, however, a longer term picture was hard to accurately determine. Initiative was evident in Frank when the second day school was disrupted by snow. Learners were e-mailed all the day school materials, further resources were uploaded to the VLE, and tutorials arranged. The quality of student work was not affected and feedback received through module surveys indicated the tutor's initiative had a positive impact. As the research focuses on short-term cases rather than being a longitudinal study, it was difficult to get a longer-term view of tutors taking initiative, however, it appeared a valuable competence when unforeseen problems arose and is included in the proposed Framework.

Social Awareness Cluster

This cluster comprises three competences (Goleman, 2001):

- Empathy - tutors have an astute awareness of other's emotions, concerns and needs;
- Service Orientation - tutor's ability to identify learner's often unstated needs and concerns, and match them to HE provision;
- Organisational Awareness - tutor's ability to read currents of emotions and political realities in groups.

Empathy and Service Orientation were described and included in the proposed Framework of ECs contributing to the effectiveness of tutors within this context. However, Organisational Awareness was not a competence apparent from the data and therefore of less value for tutors in blended learning contexts as it refers to "behind-the-scenes networking and coalition building that allows individuals to wield influence" (Goleman, 2001: 8). This competence would appear more valuable for management issues and potentially important in tutors' broader roles.

Tutors appeared empathic, with the most effective describing awareness of adult learners' concerns and needs. Whilst the analysis of tutors' awareness of other's emotions was difficult to interpret, largely due to the general lack of interaction in online environments, there was awareness of learners' concerns and needs, particularly as adults with competing pressures. Needs were met with timely management of formative and summative assessments with tutors aware of the external pressures learners face. The most effective tutors created space for adult learning, focussed on assignment work outside of day schools, and were mindful of individual needs. Aligned with empathic tutoring were numerous examples of actions to meet needs whilst developing high achieving, autonomous learners. These actions may be understood as Service Orientation as tutors receiving higher CEQ scores were aware of learners' often unstated needs. This was demonstrated through proactive measures to support learners whilst taking measures to provide space for learning within modules.

Whilst tutors were empathic and exhibited a service orientation, these competences were likely supported by self-management competences, such as Conscientiousness, and were frequently demonstrated in actions which may be understood as relationship management, potentially providing evidence of a synergistic grouping.

Relationship Management Cluster

Goleman's (2001) Relationship Management cluster comprises eight competences with the following five being most relevant for this research:

- Developing Others - tutors sense learners' development needs and bolster their abilities;
- Influence - tutors handle and manage emotions effectively and are persuasive;
- Communication - tutors effectively give and take emotional information, deal with difficult issues straightforwardly, listen, and foster open communication;
- Conflict Management - tutors spot trouble as it is brewing and take steps to calm all involved;
- Leadership - tutors inspire others and arouse enthusiasm.

The three remaining competences in Goleman's Relationship Management cluster, Change Catalyst, Building Bonds, and Collaboration and Teamwork, were not as evident as those above. The discussion below provides evidence for the relationship management competences Communication, Developing Others, Influence and Leadership, and they are included in the proposed Framework of emotional competences contributing to the effectiveness of tutors within blended learning environments. However, analysis of Influence and Communication was challenging as it was difficult to consider 'manage emotions effectively' and 'give and take emotional information' from tutors' descriptions after the modules had occurred. There was insufficient evidence to include the competence Conflict Management in the proposed framework. The remainder of this section explains these decisions.

Tutors appeared adept at Relationship Management with the highest CEQ score achieved on the Good Teaching Communication scale (mean = 4.12) which includes questions about clear communication, motivational comments to improve work, and the tutor making the subject interesting. These questions provide evidence of Communication, Developing Others, Influence and Leadership competences with tutors further describing open communication and listening to learners. These actions were particularly evident in relation to the management of formative and summative assessments, but were also related to strategies for student support, which allowed a dialogue to foster. Five tutors were proactive in contacting learners, appearing available and visible, which acted as a prompt for open communication. All tutors described responding to feedback on formative assessments in a timely manner, again, allowing opportunity for dialogue. Further examples include Claire creating space each week to be available for learners and manage the module's online elements, with Emily providing web conferences at regular intervals. Ann, George and Daisy forwarded hyperlinks to access additional reading which, again, used e-mail as a means of promoting dialogue, thereby promoting open communication. Within all modules, however, the extent of communication was driven by formative assessments, through learners discussing comments made. All tutors described limited discussions beyond formative assessments, for example, around module content, and, as outlined earlier, there was little dialogue evident in online environments.

Evidence for the competences Developing Others, Influence and Leadership was rooted in tutor descriptions of strategies to motivate learners. Motivational comments were evident in face-to-face contexts as tutors aimed to keep learners engaged between day schools and on to summative assessment submission. Further, tutors maintained interest by using learner-centred activities at day schools, adopting a facilitative teaching style throughout modules, and using problem-based assessments linked to work contexts. A high score was evident on the CEQ scale Clear Goals and Standards (CEQ = 3.89) which could have been influenced by detailed assessment briefs and, in some cases, use of exemplar material on modules. All tutors drew on learner experience and knowledge at day schools to show the value and relevance of modules and, in their opinion, motivate learners. Bill stated "*I don't want to do anything they don't see value in, and so I think they need to understand, why am I*

doing this", which exemplified tutors' commitment to ensuring the relevance of taught elements. Tutors stated that assessment strategies were supported with timely and constructive feedback. These factors again highlight effective communication, but may also be understood as Developing Others, Influence and Leadership.

Examples of tutors developing individual learners were not evident. However, I argue an emotionally competent and effective blended tutor should sense learner development needs and bolster abilities. Tutors developing learners would most likely occur during formative and summative assessments as feedback was provided on plans of assignments and draft work. The effectiveness of these processes were not known beyond the high mean score achieved on the Good Teaching Feedback CEQ scale (3.73). This paper presents a framework that may help understanding of other instances of blended learning and developing learners and bolstering their abilities is integral to this, even without specific examples to support.

Emotional Competences Contributing to the Effectiveness of Tutors within Blended Learning Environments

Analysis of individual clusters revealed a group of competences contributing to the effectiveness of tutors within the context under investigation (see Table 4). Further, competences across clusters could be supporting one another, for example, Self-Awareness could support Conscientiousness, which in turn aids Service Orientation and Developing Others. Tutors receiving higher CEQ scores appear to be exhibiting proficiency across all four clusters, indicating emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2001: 1). However, whilst this paper has argued that these competences are influencing learner perceptions of quality, there is insufficient evidence to conclude they are operating in synergistic groupings.

Table 4 - A group of competences contributing to the effectiveness of tutors within the context under investigation. (Adapted from Goleman, 2001: 2).

Self-Awareness	Social Awareness
• Emotional self-awareness • Accurate self-assessment • Self-confidence	• Empathy • Service orientation
Self-Management	Relationship Management
• Trustworthiness • Conscientiousness • Adaptability • Organisation • Coping potential • Initiative	• Developing others • Influence • Communication • Leadership

Concluding Thoughts

This paper has identified a group of competences contributing to the effectiveness of tutors, as measured by learner perceptions of quality, within the context under investigation. These competences were identified using Goleman's Framework of Emotional Competences and the analysis indicates that there is a relationship between some tutor emotional competences and learner perceptions of effectiveness in blended learning environments. These competences have been extracted from the analysis of eight modules and, for some, a longer term view may be required before a valid, comprehensive framework of competences can be established. Emotional self-awareness, adaptability, initiative and

leadership competences require a longer term analysis to accurately determine their validity in this context.

Goleman's Framework has been developed within this paper to outline ECs, with associated definitions, for effective tutoring in blended learning contexts. This could support the recruitment and selection of tutors and form part of further empirical research into this area, particularly across differing subject disciplines. This paper questions the value of some of Goleman's Relationship Management competences, with the Framework developed to add further Self-Management competences. This is due, in part, to the greater autonomy over work practices the blended context affords over traditional teaching approaches. Previous relationships with learners appear to have a positive influence on learner perceptions of tutors. The three most effective tutors identified had course management responsibilities on learners' courses and two had taught earlier modules. It is reasonable to assume, learners knew these tutors were available and trust had emerged through positive exchanges, and this could be considered as online and blended courses are staffed.

Finally, the proposed Framework could provide a language for discussing further research into blended and online tutors' emotional competences. However, further exploration of the nature and influence of synergistic groups of tutor emotional competences is needed within blended and online contexts.

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