

Role of Emotions in Education And Its need for Educators

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Abstract: *Emotion free workplace is a motto of today's world. Emotional sterility is encouraged in public life as a counter measure to emotional excesses. However nothing can be far from the truth, as emotional excesses are merely improper and inefficient handling of emotions, or emotional incompetence. Emotions are primordial part of an individual's psyche, and it is impossible to separate man from his emotion. Denial or rejection of emotions leads to their suppression, resulting in harmful negative consequences. Yet people are not trained formally in emotional competence, but are expected to pick up the skill during the course of their lives. Education is one such field where not only the need for training in emotional competence is high, but it is a good place to begin the work. Educational institutions are extremely stressful and emotionally charged places where students and teachers both have to deal with great amount of stress on daily basis. Present paper focuses on the role, emotional competence plays in academic achievement of students, its need for educators, and some of the challenges faced in training the educators in emotional competence.*

Keywords: Emotions, Emotional Competence, Education, Educators

1. Introduction

(Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, Sloka 15)

Emotions are often viewed with mistrust and suspicion. Their expression is not only actively discouraged, but seen as a weakness on one's part. However emotions are fundamental to human psyche and it is impossible to separate them. Emotions are viewed with suspicion because of their strong negative sides. Emotions such as anger, jealousy, envy, and revenge pollute professional relationships, work environment, and reduce work performance. The logical countering to the destructive force of emotions has been, forbidding their public expressions in order to maintain the environment of emotional neutrality and optimize the work performance. Rational and logical thinking thus has come to be associated with and objectivity, and absence of emotions. However destructive and negative emotions occur because of ignorance or inept handling of them at primary level, which in actuality is, emotional incompetence. Emotional incompetence leads to stress, frustration and generation of more negative emotions. A lot of research in this area has proved that a certain set of skills are common in successful people, which improves the quality of one's personal and professional relationships, and overall life. These skills are called emotional competence. They have a wide-ranging advantage in terms of learning, career, relationships, and wellness. Individuals possessing these skills neither deny nor reject emotions, but handle them intelligently, so as to bring the benefit to themselves as well as others.

Translation: The person, who is not affected by happiness as well as distress, and remains steady in both, becomes eligible for liberation.

Modern term for this ancient wisdom is emotional competence. Emotional competence is one's ability to detect, process and to manage emotional cues and information successfully. According to Daniel Goleman, Emotional Competence is a learned ability grounded in Emotional Intelligence. (Goleman 2005) Emotional competence helps to build constructive use of emotions. Awareness and identification of one's own emotion is a primary step followed by recognizing and understanding them in others. It helps one to intelligently express the inwardly felt emotional experience externally, through the accurate use of vocabulary and feelings. The action is genuine and controlled at the same time. Empathy is central to the cluster of skills forming emotional competence. It helps one to face, openly antagonizing people and/ or stressful situations with compassion and self-reliability. Emotional competence cover a range of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, helping one to develop and be adept at listening and communication skills, self-management, adaptability, team working, leadership skills, conflict management, negotiation skill, decision making and many more. Most importantly, it is the individual's emotional competency that is responsible for his seemingly logical decisions, making the role of emotional competence pivotal in attainment of wholesome success and quality life.

Many research studies indicate that these skills and strategies can be learned by anyone at any age the opening a window for opportunity for better life for everyone.

2. Emotional Competence: A Concept

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International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)

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3. Emotional competence in Education

“All learning has an emotional base.” -Plato

Success in academic learning is often correlated solely with learner’s cognitive and analytical abilities and in negation to emotional and social environment. However according to neuroscience, the emotional centers of the brain are intricately interwoven with the neurocortical areas involved in cognitive learning. When a learner is caught up in a distressing emotion, the centers for learning are temporarily hindered. Since attention in itself has a limited span, it further reduces the learner’s ability to hear, understand, or remember the instructions, in emotionally unstable situations. This proves that there is a strong connection between emotions and learning.

In “A Case for Emotional Intelligence in Our Schools”, authors Joshua Freedman and Anabel Jensen cites a 2004 study of 667 high school students, conducted by James Parker and team. Students were given an emotional intelligence assessment and their scores were compared to their yearend grades. Students were divided into three groups based on their grade point percentiles: highest achievement (80th percentile and above); lowest achievement (20th percentile and below); and middle (between the 80th and 20th grade point percentiles). The following results were observed.

1. Students in the highest achievement group also demonstrated greater interpersonal competency, adaptability, and stress management than students in the other groups.

2. Students in the middle percentile group scored significantly higher than the 20th percentile group for interpersonal competency, adaptability, and stress management.

Joshua Freedman and Anabel Jensen also cite Petrides, Frederickson, and Furnham, who suggest that specific features of emotional intelligence may be particularly relevant for students struggling academically, since they face greater pressures and challenges than their peers, and that development of emotional competence may serve to reduce, the effects of associated stressors making all the difference between acceptable and unacceptable academic performance. Focusing attention thus on feelings and helping students to identify and accept the emotional impact of their choices on their life may also foster a positive atmosphere, conducive to studies.

Studies also suggest that students with emotional competence tend to demonstrate a better classroom attendance as compared to their classmates with no emotional skills. They are less likely to be drop outs. Emotional competence cultivates motivation in learners which further drives attention, improves memory, and facilitates learning. It reduces negative behaviors such as use of tobacco, alcohol, and drug, violence, vandalism, and risky behavior of any other kind while promoting pro-social conduct such as exercise, connectedness, positive peer relationships, leadership, social responsibilities and better family relations.

4. Need of Emotional Competency for Educators

It has been often noticed that while educators with amazing

amount of subject knowledge fail to impart it successfully, those with much less academic knowledge turn out to be outstanding teachers. The skill or art of teaching translates into emotional competence.

An educator needs to facilitate moral, ethical and psychological growth of students, and develop positive work attitude in them, while imparting sound academic knowledge. A teacher is expected to inspire the students, act as their friend, philosopher and guide, motivate them continuously, and lead through example. A teacher therefore should possess a pleasant personality, optimistic outlook, calm nature, and friendly and open demeanor towards students.

In a classroom, the learning methods of learners, the elements that motivate them to study and the reasons that bring them to classroom vary greatly. The teacher therefore must be deft at understanding these differences, and being able to connect with students across this diversity, so as to bring out the desirable learning outcomes. He should also be able to handle problems beyond academic nature, such as peer relations, and personal problems of students.

Teaching as profession is packed with emotion at every level, namely, teacher –learner communication in classrooms, professional interactions with colleagues, deadline managements at institutional level, and need for professional and academic growth. They have to deal with constant deadlines such as syllabus completion, exam paper setting, and exam paper evaluations to name a few. Apart from this they handle classroom challenges regarding learners’ co-operation in the teaching learning process, classroom disruptions, low attendance, insubordination, special cases, and many more such things. Thus teachers face a lot of stress at their workplace. Lack of emotional competence in self and/or colleagues leads to more negative behaviours, gossip, manipulations, complaints, and overall atmosphere of insecurity and mistrust at the workplace. This not only affects one’s work performance negatively, but also increases stress, which when coupled with the challenges in personal life, sometimes lead to burnout.

SEL Consultant Lorea Martinez, mentions in her article, “Developing Teachers’ Social and Emotional Skills” that according to latest survey of MetLife, of the American Teacher, more than half of the teachers report tremendous amount of stress, during a week.

Also intentionally or unintentionally, teachers’ behavior is observed and emulated by students. Negative emotional behavior in teachers affects them adversely. Teachers with positive outlook, and calm demeanor command more respect from the students, influence the students positively, and also do better in learning outcomes.

5. Challenges in Educating the Educators

In training the teachers in emotional competence, the primary hurdle is age. Although it is possible to improve the emotional competence at any age, the complexity in practical application of the task makes it challenging to do so. In their article, “Bringing Emotional Intelligence to the Workplace: A Technical Report Issued by the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations”, Cary Cherniss,

Daniel Goleman, ET all suggest that, emotional competence, requires emotional learning as well as cognitive learning. While cognitive learning requires adding new information, to the existing database, through logical understanding of the information; emotional learning involves all that and more. For instance, emotional responses in adults result from learned habits, which are formed through experiences over a period of time, and are set in brain. These responses are automatic and habitual and follow the patterns of thought, feeling, and action. They get strengthened through neural activities, with each use. Repeated patterns or habits therefore become brain's automatic response often with little or no awareness of choice. Developing emotional competence hence requires unlearning of old habits or patterns and development of new ones. Replacing old habits by new ones is more difficult than simply adding new information to old data, which is a cognitive function. Developing emotional competence also takes into consideration, the factor of an individual's mental makeup. In people with no or very little emotional competence, the process is therefore much more likely to generate resistance to change. The process of unlearning the old habits and developing the new ones is a long and difficult one involving practice and commitment. The individual needs not only the mental preparation for initiating change, but constant adherence to those learned principles after the actual training, followed by the honest self-analysis on regular basis. All this requires a very high level of motivation, continuous efforts, commitment and practice, closely supervised at every level. It is difficult to generate motivation of such levels in every individual wanting to develop emotional competence, and provide personal assistance in development of emotional competence through regular evaluation because of the practical constraints of time involved in training modules. However all is not lost. The present educational situation needs a complete makeover of the prevalent thinking and reworking of educational systems with the need of development of emotional competence in students and educators as a cohesive aspect of educational objectives.

6. Conclusion

In today's technology dominated era, growing dissociation between self and society is further being complicated by forced emotional neutrality, in the name of rationality, creating increasing amount of stress and frustration. Handling of emotions is becoming increasingly important in every field of life. It is more so necessary in the field of education, for both, students and educators. Studies suggest that students with emotional competence demonstrate better academic performance, lesser probability of negative and/or risky behavior, positive peer relationship, and ethical conduct and healthy psychological profile as compared to their emotionally incompetent peers. It is also evident that educators with emotional competence can be better at imparting academic knowledge with a wholesome development of the learner in terms of moral ethical and psychological growth. However teaching profession is greatly stressful and teachers themselves are in need of formal training in emotional competence. It is a challenging task, given the perpetually hectic schedule in education

system, but a few essential changes need to be brought about in the field of education, considering the vital need of training in emotional competence, in this field, and its long lasting impact in the creation of an emotionally healthy society.

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Priya Pawaskar received the B.A., M.A., and MPhil degrees in English Literature from University of Mumbai in 2005, 2008, and 2014 respectively. She also passed SET (State Eligibility Test for Assistant Professorship) from University of Pune, in 2014. During the period of 2010 to 2016 worked as visiting faculty in various colleges, and handled a variety of subjects ranging from creative writing, translation skills, to professional communication Techniques, communication Skills and business communications. She has taught English Literature to Postgraduate level at IDOL, University of Mumbai. She has been the member of Course Writing Committee for F. Y. B.A and T.Y.B.A, at IDOL, University of Mumbai. She has worked as Exam paper evaluator for F.Y.B.A at IDOL, University of Mumbai. She now works with Thakur college of Engineering and Technology. Presently she is pursuing her PhD in English at University of Mumbai.

