

Emotional Intelligence: A Key to Students' Academic, Personal and Professional Excellence

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Abstract: *The most important goal of every institution of higher education is academic development. However, in today's diversified society, students need much more to lead healthy and productive lives concerning academic, career and personal goals. Therefore, it is crucial for institutions of higher education to develop academics applying student learning models that embodies both the academic (cognitive) and emotional (affective) development of students. Students with a strong academic and emotional foundation will model and demonstrate behaviors that are conducive to goal attainment and overall success in life.*

Emotional intelligence is the buzz word in the current educational scenario. A lot of research is done to dig deeper into the educational implications of Emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence is the most prominent one being discussed and subjected to research. Emotional intelligence includes self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy and social skills. A lot of research has been done to incorporate Emotional intelligence into teaching and learning process from kindergarten to higher education.

This expository paper is an attempt to explore the some of practices of educational institutions in developing EI thereby addressing the journey of students' academic, personal and professional excellence. Some of the practices discussed in this paper are self-directed learning, healthy learning environment, transition programme, transformative learning, and intervention programme. All these programmes are supported by strong research base, which clearly pinpoints the significance of Emotional Intelligence as an apt approach for students' overall development.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, Self-directed learning, transformative learning, transition programme, intervention programme.*

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I. Introduction

Academic development is the most important goal of every institution of higher education. However, in today's diversified society, students need much more to lead healthy and productive lives concerning academic, career and personal goals. Therefore, it is crucial for institutions of higher education to develop academics applying student learning models that embodies both the academic (cognitive) and emotional (affective) development of students. Students with a strong academic and emotional foundation will model and demonstrate behaviors that are conducive to goal attainment and overall success in life. A lot of research is done to address this issue and multiple approaches are suggested to tackle the problems faced by the students of higher education. Some of the approaches include teaching Emotional Intelligence, 21 century skills, life skills, soft skills, employability skills etc. to the college students.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has attracted great interest in the field of education as a vehicle to improve socio-emotional development of students. The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) was first developed in 1990 in an article published by Peter Mayer and John Salovey. EI became a buzz word after Daniel Goleman, a psychologist published the book 'Emotional Intelligence'. Goleman states EI is more important than academic intelligence for achieving better and greater personal, academic and social welfare. For thirty year there has been consistent research base that points to the need and value of incorporating personal skills and emotional intelligence into academic and student development programmes (Nelson & Low, 2006).

The young people of the world are the most important resource in the global economy. The overall development of students encompasses both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. The main reasons for college dropout other than low academic grades are loneliness, peer pressure, violence, aggression, bullying, fear, substance abuse etc. For most students, the major problems and stress they face from day to day life originates with their emotional reactions to their feelings about specific situations in their life. The current education system addresses only the intellectual growth of students. Growing research base stresses, the need to include

EI-centric assessment and instructional programs to develop emotional intelligence. The most important finding and message of this growing research and application base is that improving emotional intelligence is a key factor in achievement, college success, personal health, career performance, and leadership. This expository paper is an attempt to explore the some of the best practices of educational institutions in developing EI thereby addressing the journey of students' academic, personal and professional excellence.

Nature of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions of oneself, of others, and of groups. It can be divided into ability EI and trait EI. Ability EI is related to the performance, whereas trait EI is related to the personality. Table no. 1 shows that there are many elements of emotional intelligence, explained in various manners by different researchers. According to Howard Gardner EI is about intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence. The terms used by Stephen Covey are personal victory and public victory.

Table no 1. Elements of EI

| Emotional Intelligence | Howard Gardner | Stephen Covey |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Self -Emotion Appraisal Self- Emotion control | Intra-personal skills | Private victory |
| Others Emotion Appraisal Use /regulation of Emotion | Inter-personal skills | Public victory |

Intelligence quotient is constant throughout the persons' life but emotional quotient can be developed throughout the life time (Goleman 2003). The comprehensive incorporation of components into learning system and periodic assessment of EI is said to develop Emotional Intelligence. As per a survey the most desirable trait of the top performing managers were not necessarily those with the highest IQ's; they were good collaborators and popular in getting cooperation. Professional success depends on 20% of IQ and 80 % of EQ.



Figure 1. Role of IQ &EQ in Professional Success

Practices to develop Emotional Intelligence in Higher Education

1. The Emotional Learning System

Emotional learning system is different from traditional academic content learning. The Emotional Learning System involves the student in a discovery process of emotional intelligence skills through step by step skill development process as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Emotional Learning System

| Step | Activity | EI Component | Method |
|--------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Step 1 | Explore | Self-Assessment | Questioning, discovering |
| Step 2 | Identify | Self -Awareness | Reflection not reaction |
| Step 3 | Understand | Self -Knowledge | How to behave and make choices |
| Step 4 | Learn | Self -Development | Ways to improve behaviour |
| Step 5 | Apply and Model | Self-Improvement | Academic and career goals |

The development of emotional intelligence is learner centered, experience based, intentional, active, and engaging learning process rich with personal meaning.

2. Emotional Skill Assessment Package

The foundation of the emotional skill assessment package (ESAP) is a positive assessment of thirteen emotional skills organized around four key competencies (Nelson and Nelson; 2003) as in Table .3

Table 3. Emotional Skills Assessment Process

| Key Emotional Competencies | | Key Emotional Skills | |
|----------------------------|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| I. | Interpersonal Development and Healthy Relationships | 1. | Assertion |
| | | 2. | Anger Management |
| | | 3. | Anxiety Management |
| II. | Personal Leadership | 4. | Social Awareness |
| | | 5. | Empathy |
| | | 6. | Decision Making |
| | | 7. | Positive Influence |
| III. | Self-Management: Career & Life | 8. | Drive Strength |
| | | 9. | Time Management |
| | | 10. | Commitment Ethic |
| | | 11. | Positive Change |
| IV. | Intrapersonal Development | 12. | Self Esteem |
| | | 13. | Stress Management |

Emotional Intelligence research indicates that people with high EI are happier, healthier and more successful in their relationships. EI can resolve past issues and both external as well as internal conflicts help them attain emotional power and accomplish their goals at all levels-physical, mental, and emotional and spiritual and improve psychological abilities such as memory, clarity of thinking and decision making.

2. Self-directed learning (SDL)

SDL is rated as one of the best methods to inculcate emotional intelligence thereby improving the quality of the product of higher education i.e. students. The occasional introduction of SDL activities into courses or programs those are otherwise teacher-directed. Courses or programs that emphasize the personal pursuit of meaning through exploration, inquiry, problem solving and creative activity e.g. debates, case studies, investigations, trials, dramatizations, fieldwork, individual projects etc. Ways to implement SDL:

Table no 4. Self Directed Learning

| Sl.no | Methods | Examples |
|-------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Incidental Self -Directed Learning | Individual projects |
| 2 | Teaching students to think independently | Personal pursuit. |
| 3 | Self-managed Learning | Independently completing the course. |
| 4 | Self-planned Learning | Activities designed by students |

Karl David Radnitzer's study demonstrated a strong correlation between self-directed learning readiness and eight of the sixteen subcategories of emotional intelligence such as service orientation, self-confidence, optimism, achievement orientation, building bonds, adaptability, communication, and change catalyst.

3. Transformative Learning

Transformative learning changes or transforms the person into a more effective teacher and student. Transformative learning is an empowering educational process that helps teachers and students to: (1) develop positive, healthy, productive relationships; (2) solve problems and make good choices/decisions; (3) stay attuned to healthy and successful outcomes; (4) manage self in achieving goals; (5) plan and make changes when needed; (6) behave wisely and responsibly (Low and Nelson, 2005).

Transformative learning provides a focus on the development of knowledge, behaviors, and skills that student can use to improve themselves academically and career wise throughout their life. A major factor in transformative learning is effective relationship between the student and teacher.

4. Healthy Learning Environment

Healthy learning environment(HLE) can be achieved by making Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) an essential part of education (Brehm,K 2005) A safe environment that is emotionally healthy and academically challenging should be provided by colleges. It is required for critical thinking, problem solving, goal setting, achievement and leadership behavior. A healthy learning environment is characterized by trust, respect and engaging dialogue in the classroom. HLE is fundamental not only to students' emotional and social development but also to their health, ethical development, citizenship, motivation to achieve and academic learning as well. The socially and emotionally competent youth have five core competencies. They are self - aware, socially aware, regulate their emotion, have good relationship skills and demonstrate responsible decision-making skills.

5. Transition programs

Research suggests to design and implement the transition programs in high school to help bridge the gap between high school graduation and enrollment in the first semester of college (Low and Nelson, 2004). College retention rates are not likely to improve unless specific skill development programs are initiated before and during this critical transition period. Research indicates that assertive communication, time management, goal achievement, commitment ethic, and stress management skills are essential to academic achievement and college success (Vela, 2003; Elkins and Low)

6. Intervention Programmes:

By providing interventions that are appropriate to the learning needs of the student, colleges can create a comprehensive learning support program to enable early identification of students at academic risk. Parker, Summer Feldt, Hogan, and Majewki (2004) examined the relationship between the emotional intelligence and academic achievement of College students. The intervention programmes empower students with the skills that will help learners to achieve academic, career and personal success. The Emotional Intelligence Program developed at Texas is one such programme designed to provide the positive and practical model of human emotional behavior that students can learn and apply to stay healthy, increase productivity, and improve personal, academic, and career performance.

7. Educating the right mind.

Traditional education system focuses mainly on learning skills that work on left analytical side of the brain neglecting right brains. The right brain focuses on creativity, imagination and perceptiveness. Epstein (1998) has argued that training the right brain helps to promote a balanced brain growth and stability. The emotional mind plays an important role in the development of constructive thinking and the students need to learn how to develop positive thinking patterns. Epstein has demonstrated function and process of both cognitive and emotional mind as given in table 3

Table 5. Epstein’s Emotional mind and Cognitive mind functions

| Emotional Mind | Cognitive Mind |
|--|--|
| 1. Learns Directly | 1. learns from abstract |
| 2. Thinks Quickly | 2. thinks slowly |
| 3. Is Holistic | 3. Is analytic |
| 4. Thinks in terms of association | 4. separates logic from emotions |
| 5. Behavior guided by Emotions | 5. Cause & effect |
| 7. Sees world in Concrete | 6. Sees world in abstract |
| 8. Experiences Passively | 7. Experienced actively |
| 9. Experiencing is believing | 8. Believes in logic & evidence |
| 10. Attention to outcome | 9. attention to process |
| 11. Thinks in broad categories | 10. Thinks in terms of finer distinction & gradation |
| 12. Operates in different modes | 11. Highly integrated internally consistent |
| 13. Changes with repetitive experience | 12. Changes rapidly |

II. Conclusion

Emotional Intelligence is the answer not only for creating happy, resilient and successful college students but also happy, resilient and successful human beings of all ages! A blending of academic (cognitive), behavioral (action), and affective (emotional) dimensions are needed to address the complex issues facing education. Research evidence has demonstrated that EI skills are critical factors in students achievement, retention, and personal wellbeing (Goleman, 1995; Low & Nelson, 2004; Nelson & Low, 2003; Nelson & Nelson, 2003; Vela, 2003) Among university students, EI has been found to impact on quality of social interaction, adjustment, and academic success (Elkins & Low, 2004) To meet the issues and challenges of higher education, there is a need to develop responsible and emotionally healthy students and teachers.

Quality education should provide a total experience for the total child who is going to experience the totality of life. Families, schools, and communities must continue to work together as a beautiful rainbow to pool their local resources to provide every student in their care the best comprehensive education possible. The challenges of the 21st century are going to require students to know more about emotional problem-solving and not just academic problem-solving.

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