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Empowering Employability in Higher Education through Emphasis on Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract:

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to manage the emotions of self and others, to achieve fulfillment, success and happiness. In recent years a lot of research has been done to study the importance of EI in the both personal and professional life. Though the field is new, the concept has been ingrained in some of the ancient texts of the world. Now that it is an established fact that EI is more important than IQ in determining success, does the current system of education cater to the skills and competencies needs of industry and society? What are these skills and competencies that the industries look for? And what are the attributes and human values that the society is in need of? Is it possible to incorporate and implement these skills and competencies in the current education system? What strategies can be employed to develop EI in students? These are some of the questions that this paper explores. The paper also suggests some very practical, useful and effective strategies to develop Emotional Intelligence among students. This paper affirms the fact that EI can be honed and this ability to manage emotions can decide the future path.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, education, innovation, awareness, creativity

“Emotional aptitude is a “meta-ability,” determining how well we can use whatever other skills we have, including raw intellect.”
— Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*

1. What In The World Is Emotional Intelligence?

If we liken the mind to a high-performance engine, then emotional intelligence would be the oil that enables us to maintain and manage ourselves to perform to our full potential. Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to perceive, control and evaluate emotions of self and others. In other words Emotional Intelligence is the intelligent use of emotions.

2. What Do The World Religions Say About Emotional Intelligence?

2.1. Bagavad Gita

²The Bhagavad-Gita refers to an emotionally intelligent person as a ‘Sthithapragnya’ (the emotionally stable person). As Arjuna asks Krishna who a sthithapragnya is, Krishna describes the nature and qualities of a sthithapragnya as the one who remains unperturbed in the face of calamity, and takes good or evil with equanimity. He is neither happy when something good happens, nor is he affected when things go against him. This does not mean that he lacks sensitivity. He has the ability to keep his emotions in check and the skill of withdrawing his feelings away from the object of pleasure or pain.

*“Duhkhesvanudvignamanah sukhese vigatasprah
vitaragabhayakrodhah sthithadhirmunirucyate”³*

- *Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. II, Slokas 56, 57 & 58, Swami Swarupananda, 1996³*

He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after happiness, who has become free from affection, fear, and wrath, is indeed the Muni of steady wisdom.

When the mind is free from negative emotions, it calms down and a calm, tranquil mind is the fountain head of all positive outcomes

*“Prasade sarvadhukhanam hanirasyopajayate
prasannacetaso hyasu buddhih paryavatisthate”
-Bhagavad-Gita, Ch.II, Sloka 65, Swami swarupananda, 1996*

In tranquility, all sorrow is destroyed. For the intellect in him, who is tranquil minded is soon established in firmness.

2.2. Bible

Jesus, the most emotionally intelligent person, preached and practiced the great virtue of forgiveness.

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” – Romans: 12:20

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.” – Proverbs 16:32

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:21

“To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, “The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit...” – 1 Peter 3-10

Jesus gave the golden rule of *“Do unto others what you want them to do unto you.” – Luke 6:31*

2.3. Quran

⁴Islam teaches moderation in everything, aiming to create equilibrium so that one is always at peace with one's self, the universe, and Allah.

⁵*“But forgive them and overlook (their misdeeds): for Allah loveth those who are kind.” (V: 13) (Rauf, 1988)*

2.3.1. Islamic Parable

⁶A slave girl of Imam Hussain breaks a bowl while bringing water for him. This bowl had immense emotional love for Imam, for it was the bowl used by the Prophet Muhammad for drinking water. Imam's face turns red with rage. The poor little girl is terrified. But suddenly, the Imam's rage disappears, when the girl recites verse form the Holy Quran,

“And those who control their anger” (3:134) (Ali, A. Y.)

Imam says, *“I have overcome my anger.”*

The girl recites the next verse, *“And those who forgive people.” (3:134) (Ali, A. Y.)*

Imam says, *“I have forgiven you”*

She then recites the third verse, *“Allah loves those who are benevolent.” (3:134). (Ali, A. Y.)*

Imam says, *“I have freed you.”*

At the core of all world religions is Emotional Intelligence.

3. How is EI different from IQ?

Intelligent Quotient	Emotional Intelligence
Analytical, mathematical and logical reasoning capabilities	Emotional, intuition, empathy, stress management capacities, resilience and integrity
IQ ensures your success in school	EI ensures your success in life
Knowing the facts and the reason behind the failure	Using this data to motivate
IQ is something you are born with	EI can be improved upon and learned

Table 1

4. What Are The Components Of Emotional Intelligence?

The concept of emotional intelligence was popularized by psychologist and New York Times science writer Daniel Goleman in his 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*.

The five components of emotional intelligence, as defined by Goleman, are *self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills and empathy*.

5. What Are The Skills And Competency Needs Of The Industry?

- **Adaptability:** Responding positively to change, adapting to new situations quickly, taking on a diverse range of tasks
- **Leadership:** Leading a team, delegating and motivating, encouraging input from others, placing the group's or organization's needs ahead of your own
- **Team work:** Prioritizing team goals over individual goals, encouraging co-operation, having an awareness of the needs of others and responding flexibly sharing information and ideas, and supporting team members to achieve goals, assigning or taking on clear roles, and responsibility within the team and doing what you say you will.
- **Interpersonal Relations:** Building rapport, adapting your behaviour to build relationships with a wide range of people, influencing others through persuasion and encouragement.

- **Commercial awareness:** Knowing how to talk to clients, establish their needs and spot opportunities, understanding how an organization works and what internal/external elements have an influence on its business, taking time to understand what is going on in your chosen industry.
- **Planning and organizing:** Prioritizing and planning the efficient use of resources, Monitoring progress against objectives and responding to unforeseen events.
- **Creativity:** Innovation, imagination and intuition
- **Problem solving:** To be able to work under pressure, come up with solutions to problems, conflict resolution.

6. What Are The Skills And Competency Needs Of The Society?

- **Contribution:** Contributing to the society in a positive way through an idea or innovation.
- **Altruism:** Selfless concern for the welfare of others.
- **Empathy:** Being able to feel the other person's emotions.
- **Organic leadership:** Developing others
- **Value Creation:** Adding value

On top of the list of skills and competencies of industry and society is Emotional Intelligence, the ultimate success determining factor. Emotional Intelligence encompasses all other positive traits.

7. What Is The Scope Of Emotional Intelligence In The Current System Of Education?

Traditional education system mostly concentrates on developing logical, mathematical and linguistic intelligences. The current semester scheme leaves little or no space for incorporating and imparting these skills and competencies required by the industry and the society. However, the recent introduction of soft skills paper at undergraduate level is a significant step towards this effort.

8. How Can We Incorporate and Impart EI in Our Class Rooms Every Day?

With much thought and research on the subject, while employing most of these strategies in my class room, I have put forward some of the strategies which if effectively employed could develop the student's EI.

9. What Are The Strategies To Develop Emotional Intelligence Among Students?

9.1. Decision Making

In the management, commerce and Psychology classes the students could be thought Game theory. What economists call game theory, psychologists call the theory of social situations. Game theory is about how people make decisions, knowing that other people's decisions will have an impact on what happens in the end. It's like chess: you have to anticipate how your opponent will react to your actions when you make a move. It finds the best response or best strategy for a situation.⁷In psychology, it has provided a means for understanding rigorously the nature of cooperation and competition, trust and trustworthiness, risk taking and caution, altruism and spite, threats, promises and commitments, among other things. Some of these things cannot even be clearly defined without the conceptual framework of game theory.

9.2. Social Responsibility

While teaching a chapter on Natural Resources or pollution in Environmental Studies class, the teacher could appeal to their EI by encouraging and instructing them to

- Conserve water at home and in their work place by following the 3R principle of Reduce, Recycle and Reuse.
- Implement "Smart Paper Project" to conserve trees by using both sides of the paper, using emails instead of paper for communication.
- Control air pollution by implementing car pooling or using public transport

9.3. Equanimity, Gratitude, Creativity, Leadership

Teaching Indian Constitution can be made really interesting by

- **Gratitude:** Taking the students back to an era where freedom was restricted, education denied, and man struggled to survive the hard blows of oppression and discrimination; and bringing them back to the present era of liberty, fraternity and equality for all. This can be achieved through a drama/skit which the students themselves conceptualize. This should create in them a sense of appreciation and gratitude for the freedom struggle of our national leaders.
- **Equanimity:** Teaching the students the Gandhian principles of truth and non violence and the role he played in our national freedom movement. Gandhi was a great emotionally intelligent person who gave the world the matra of personal transformation, "Be the change you wish to see in the world."
- **Creativity:** The students can observe truth day & truth week, where they would speak only the truth no matter what and then they could be asked to record their experience as "My experiment with truth." Likewise they could observe kindness day – doing small acts of kindness like helping their mother do the chores, appreciation day – just appreciating everyone around, no

criticism day – refraining from all criticizing, Thanks giving day – expressing gratitude for all the blessings, and other such days. This would make the days interesting and it will boost their self worth.

- **Leadership:** They could have a costume party where each one is dressed like a political leader whom he/she admires. They could be asked to briefly state the qualities they admire the most in their leaders. They could also be assigned the task of formulating policies to improve education and economy of the nation.

9.4. Personal Security and Human Dignity

A lesson in human rights should make them feel more secure being aware of their rights, and to value human life.

The students can debate on topics like suicide, euthanasia, moral policing, death sentence and other relevant and thought provoking topics.

9.5. Innovation and Imagination

In science classes the students could be asked to read the biographies of renowned scientists like

- **Patience & Perception:** Thomas Alva Edison, who was labeled “stupid” by his teacher but who went on to invent the light bulb. These are the words of the man who refused to give up -“I’ve not failed, but have discovered 1000 ways of how not to make a light bulb.”
- **Imagination:** Albert Einstein, the absent minded genius behind the theory of relativity, was slow in learning to speak and was expelled from school by the headmaster who said he would never amount to much. His slow verbal development made him curious about space and time. He thought in pictures rather than words.
- **Perseverance:** Madame Marie Curie who’s strong determination and perseverance gave her the rare distinction of being the only woman to have won the Nobel Prize twice, once for Physics and the second time for Chemistry.

This exercise will inspire them to imagine and innovate, think out of the box.

9.6. Awareness, Assessment

Language classes can be a great learning ground for EI skills. For instance after reading a novel like Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare who had an amazing knowledge of the human mind, students could be asked to

Rank characters according to their EI

Analyze Mark Anthony’s Emotionally Intelligent and brilliant speech and cull out EI attributes of his speech. For example – without any direct disregard or verbal attack, addressing Brutus as “an honourable man” he succeeds in instigating the people against Brutus. He uses pathos to appeal to the emotion of the audience.

Read Caesar and Cleopatra by George Bernard Shaw and study the different ways in which the two authors have treated the subject.

Read/ recall the tales of Panchatantra, Tenali Rama and Mullah Nasruddin which they would’ve heard/read as children. These stories will build a repository of knowledge in their memories which will help them in later years to apply some of these principles of wit and wisdom in similar life situations.

9.7. Empathy, Positive Attitude, and Interpersonal Skills

Movies have a strong impact on the human mind. Movies are the most effective means of communicating a thought or a revolutionary idea. Some of the most Emotionally Intelligent movies, that could be used in class rooms to advocate and develop EI, are

9.7.1. Empathy: Munna Bhai MBBS

The cleaning scene in the hospital where the irate and grumpy janitor is instantly changed into a cheery chap, who doesn’t anymore mind the floor being dirtied by the foot prints of visitors and doctors walking across the hall way, just by few words of sincere appreciation from the protagonist of the movie. This is an excellent example of empathy and what a kind word at the right time can do.

9.7.2. The Way of the Peaceful Warrior

Dan Millman’s book made into a movie. The movie is full of philosophical wisdom. A few EI lines from the movie –

Socrates: “A warrior does not give up what he loves, he finds the love in what he does.”

Socrates: “This moment is the only thing that matters.”

Socrates: “I call myself a Peaceful Warrior ... because the battles we fight are on the inside.”

Socrates: “Those who are the hardest to love, need it the most.”

Socrates: “There’s no greater purpose than service to others.”

Dan Millman: “Life has just three rules?”

Socrates: “And you already know them...”

Dan Millman: “Paradox, humour, and change.”

Socrates: “Paradox...”

Dan Millman: “Life is a mystery. Don’t waste time trying to figure it out.”

Socrates: “Humour...”

Dan Millman: “Keep a sense of humour, especially about yourself. It is a strength beyond all measure.”

Socrates: “*Change...*”

Dan Millman: “*Know that nothing stays the same.*”

Dan Millman: “*The journey is what brings us happiness not the destination.*”

9.7.3. Positive Attitude: Life Is Beautiful

This beautiful movie is all about perception and positive attitude. This is the perfect example of the adage “We can’t control the situations that life brings us, but we can control the way we handle them.”

Students could be asked to enact such emotionally intelligent scenes from the movies.

9.8. Conflict Resolution

Give them situations and scenarios and ask them the best possible way to handle stressful situations.

Office gossip: Ask the students to enact a scene of office gossip and how they would react and handle the situation if it were them who were being slandered.

9.9. Stress Management

Give them a task and a deadline and ask them to document how well they manage the stress, what methods they employ to beat the stress. They can have an open discussion after the completion of the task and share the best practices.

9.10. Team Work

This is one of the most important attribute of Emotional Intelligence that companies look for in a candidate. The ability to work as a team to a great extent defines success in an organization. Students could be given a task and be asked to work in teams. The students could be asked to

Write a report on some interesting topic, as a team.

Write book reviews as team, each one taking up a different chapter.

Make a collage, poster or chart.

Each team could conduct activities and games for the entire class on a rotational basis.

9.11. Guided Imagery

Ask the students to close their eyes and visualize the happiest moments of their lives so far. Tell them to imagine anything that makes them happy like winning an award, or a space walk, or a walk through the daffodils, or being a millionaire, or being the author of the world’s best seller. They can practice this on a regular basis and attract more positive thoughts and feel happier.

9.12. Resilience

This is the most important survival trait in today’s competitive ruthless world. Students should be made aware of the unpleasant problems that they might encounter in their work places and must be prepared well in advance to handle such problems. Believing in self, making positive thinking a habit and breaking out of negative thought patterns will help them bounce back to positive action.

9.13. Auto Suggestion

When ever faced with a difficult situation, the students could be taught to memorize and say to themselves a few positive affirmations like

“*I can handle this with grace and dignity.*”

“*God is with me. The whole universe will help me achieve what I want.*”

Last but not the least - *Smile Please!* That’s the simplest, the most effective, the shortest and the most emotionally intelligent way to success and happiness!

10. Conclusion

10.1. Will Emotional Intelligence Empower Employability?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to effectively manage one’s emotions and stay on course even when navigating through life’s most challenging storms. Cognitive psychologists suggest that we can only perceive what is going on outside of us through the lens of what is going on inside of us. Our inner conversations create our interpretation of the events going on around us, and in this way, our thoughts actually create our “reality.” People who are emotionally intelligent are skilled at controlling the content of their consciousness. This skill allows them to make wise choices, while others struggle merely to survive their emotional storms. When we assist students to gain greater emotional intelligence, we empower them not only to be more effective in the pursuit of their dreams, increase their chances of employability, but also help them embark on a journey of sustained success and happiness.

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