

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: DRIVING 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY LEARNING

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### ***Abstract***

*21<sup>st</sup> century learning, post pandemic, comes with its own challenges. Emotional Intelligence (EI), much discussed upon, is a major requirement to meet such issues. An individual possessing EI exhibits smarter way of responding to variety of emotional stimuli. Teaching is a profession that deals with interaction and handling of emotions and also requires a high level of EI for success. In this context, Plato has well said, “All learning has an emotional base”. Besides the cognitive skills, teachers need to possess the affective skills also. EI has been shown to be related to individual academic achievement and effective communication. Research on emotional intelligence is on the rise. Studies have shown that the teachers need to possess emotional intelligence to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. In the present study, effort has been made to assess the emotional intelligence components in teachers teaching engineering courses, i.e., to find out whether they lack or possess a particular component. Endeavour has also been made to see to what extent the presence of a particular ability helps in facilitating learning. It is also intended through this paper to inspire teachers to take care of their EI so as to act as effective role models.*

**Key Words:** Emotional intelligence, Life skill, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning

### **Introduction**

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is needed to be successful in any profession. Ramsden (1992) has stated, “the emotional aspect of the teacher-student relationship is much more important than the traditional advice on methods and techniques of lecturing would suggest.” With the affective revolution in place, people are now more interested towards the role of emotions and its effect in the workplace. People bring emotions to their workplace, hence, it is important that they are aware of their own emotions and can also appraise the emotion of others. Emotional intelligence refers to one’s ability to recognise and regulate emotions in oneself and others (Goleman, 2001).

Emotional intelligence leads to greater productivity in the workplace and better adjustment with colleagues (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It also helps to promote emotional knowledge, perception and regulation as well as general intelligence (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Forster (1997) stated that “All teachers must be educational leaders in order to optimize the teaching and learning experience for themselves and their students; and, as professionals, they are expected to do whatever it takes to make that happen”.

## **Emotional Intelligence – The Pressing Need**

Emotional intelligence is very much essential for effective learning. Studies have shown that the teachers need to possess emotional intelligence to meet the needs of the 21st century learners. In this context, Goleman, the pioneer of emotional intelligence mentioned it as a master aptitude affecting all other abilities. It is also needed to adjust with the cultural differences as emotional intelligence helps in understanding the cultural differences among people and respecting the dynamics of such differences. Salovey and Mayer (1990) opened up the study of the role of emotional abilities in student learning and social adaptation by proposing a theory of emotional intelligence.

Plato has aptly stated that all learning has an emotional base. Research has correlated emotional intelligence with academic achievement and college success (Stottlemire, 2002; Vela, 2003; Smith, 2004; Williams, 2004; and Potter, 2005). These studies have indicated the need to provide emotional intelligence instruction into the curricula to improve academic and career success. Further, the studies carried out by Vela (2003), Stottlemire (2003), Williams (2004), and Nelson and Low (2003) provide enough evidence of the fact that student achievement could be improved by learning and developing key emotional intelligence skills.

Goleman (1996) observed that the physiology of the brain suggests that learning and strong emotions compete for space in the working memory. Thus the emotions that arise due to confrontation inhibit the learning of those directly involved, as well as disrupting the environment of other learners.

Emotional intelligence affects the totality of behaviour of an individual. Studies by Greenstein (2001) established the fact that emotional intelligence was the distinguishing factor that affected leadership and even the most important leadership position in the world could be impacted by the individual's ability to use their emotional intelligence, and a higher level. Thus, emotional intelligence affects an individual through multifarious dimensions.

Goleman (1995) provided convincing evidence that emotional intelligence can be more important than IQ. We use the term emotional intelligence (EI) to refer to the mental processes involved in the recognition, use, understanding, and management of one's own and others' emotional states to solve problems and regulate behavior (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). An individual not performing well in his/her academics can still be intelligent. She/he can be bright in several ways. Accordingly, the individual learning can vary across a platform of human potentialities. Gardner's (2011) theory of multiple intelligence requires teachers and educators to rethink about the instructional methodologies suitable for the classroom of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **The Identified Gap in The Life Skills of Passouts**

Our students are entering into a rapidly changing world that offers lot of challenges and opportunities. It calls for building in them the ability to learn and a set of competencies that will be needed for life. The present-day employers seek social skills among their employees more than the subject knowledge. If students are to develop essential life skills and the ability to think constructively and act wisely, the emotional mind must be understood and considered central to education for the 21st century.

Employers, these days, are found to lay more emphasis on the softer qualities of their recruits. Many of these softer qualities lie in the domain of emotional intelligence. The recruiting organizations often have their in-house training programmes for the fresh recruits to orient them towards these softer aspects besides inducting them to the job. They do not want individuals who are job-hoppers rather people who can work collaboratively adding value to the organisation. In the recent times, industries have started giving more emphasis to human resource development through training and education.

It is found that the present system of education is examination-oriented and often the emphasis on life skills is lost. Though our students complete their courses (undergraduate or postgraduate) with attractive marks/grades, they are found to lack ability to work in teams inspite of being efficient individually. Critical thinking ability is also missing, thus, overall they are not found to be much capable of contributing meaningfully to the organisation. Industries demand people who are flexible and adaptable so that they are teamwork oriented. Relationship skills are given much importance along with problem-solving and decision making abilities.

## **The Study**

In this paper, an attempt has been made to assess the abilities of teachers of Management Education in terms of emotional intelligence and also their opinion as to what are the characteristics of teachers who are emotionally intelligent. The method of sampling used was purposive and responses from sixty respondents were collected. For this a tool was administered and teachers were also interviewed. The tool was a rating scale that consisted of three parts. Part I required the respondents to rate their ability to apply emotional intelligence, part II involved reviewing the responses, looking for strengths and areas that can be improved and part III required them to practice and observe their skills in applying emotional intelligence over the next few weeks. Part I comprised 44 items, each of which was to be rated on a 7-point rating scale, ranging from lower to higher abilities depending on how well they are able to display each of the abilities described.

Some of the items are stated here.

Low ability					High ability	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Identify changes in physiological arousal					_____	_____
2. Relax when under pressure in situations					_____	_____
3. Act productively when angry					_____	_____
4. Act productively in situations that arouse anxiety					_____	_____
5. Calm yourself quickly when angry					_____	_____

## Findings

About one-fourth of the respondents reported to have heard of emotional intelligence calling it a skill or ability that ‘helps to live a better life’ and ‘brings success by promoting well-being’ of an individual.

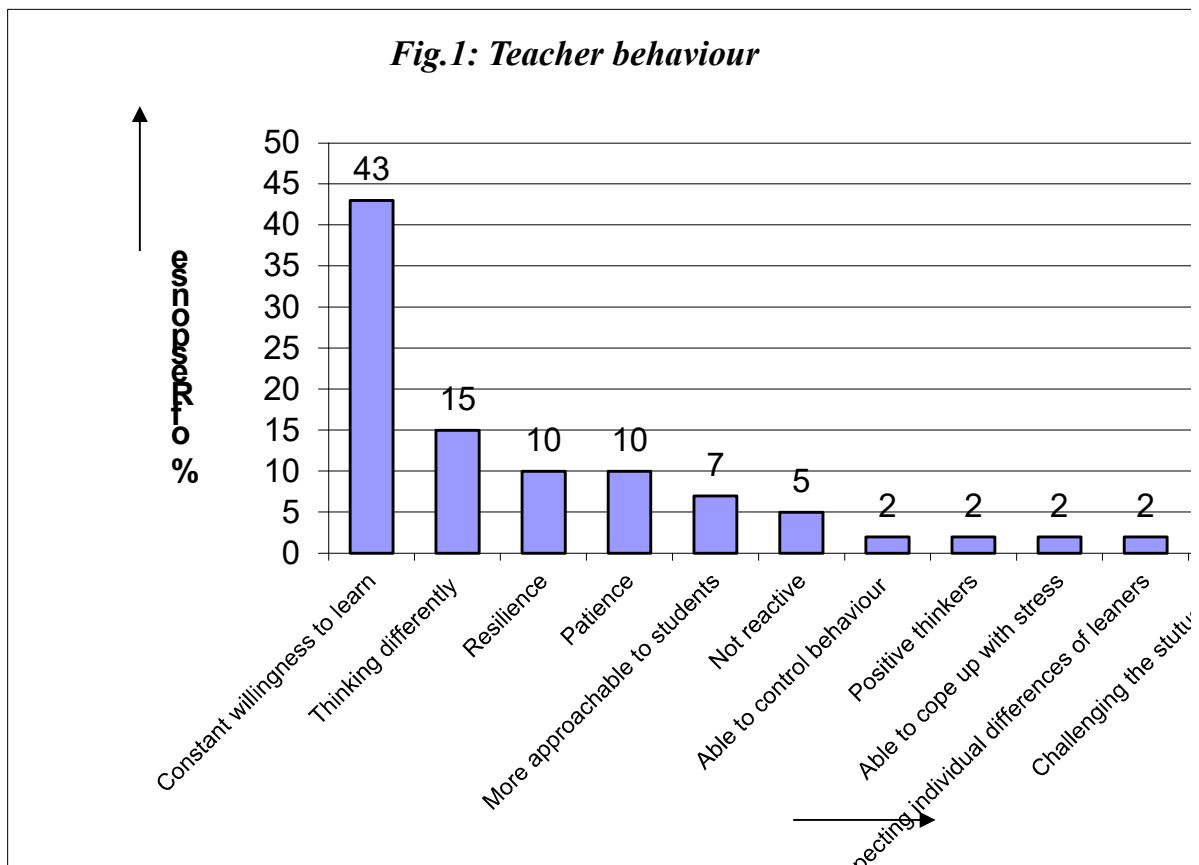
The teachers were asked to state their views on the characteristics of teachers displaying emotionally intelligent behaviour, following were the responses in the order of descending preference.

- Constant willingness to learn
- Thinking differently (out of box)
- Resilience
- Patience
- More approachable to students
- Not reactive
- Able to control behaviour (not short-tempered)
- Positive thinkers
- Able to cope up with stress
- Respect for individual differences of learners
- Challenging the status quo

The first four characteristics were rated as the most preferred with more than 70% responses as depicted in figure 1.

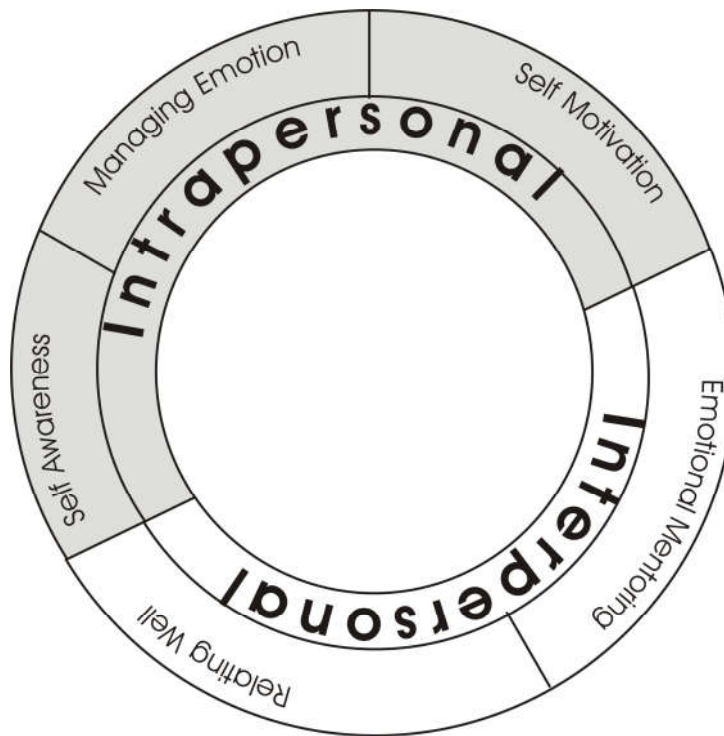
The 21<sup>st</sup> century learning requires students to be aware of their core values and emotions. Besides displaying critical thinking and analytical skills, they also need to possess leadership and communication skills. The teachers opined that though some of their students possess intellectual curiosity, it is discouraged by the system of evaluation being followed in higher

education. Students are encouraged to memorise as much as they can so as to fill their minds with loads of information. With such a system in hand, teachers also rush to complete the syllabus harping on the cognitive aspect of learning. In this context, teachers were honest enough to confess that were under constant pressure to finish the course. As a result, the affective part is quite often neglected by the prevailing system.



The teachers were found to score high on the area of motivating others. However, when self-motivation was observed, they were found to be low in this aspect. Interestingly, the teachers senior by teaching experience, scored lower than that of the teachers with five years of teaching experience on self-motivation.

Part II of the tool classified the responses broadly under intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences. The different components of emotional intelligence were further classified under personal competence and social competence (Goleman, Boyzatis, and McKee, (2002).



*Fig. 2: Components of emotional intelligence*

While reviewing the responses obtained by administering the tool, it was found that more than 80% of the teachers displayed higher ability in interpersonal intelligence rather than intrapersonal intelligence. This was mainly because of the fact that majority of them scored very low in self-motivation, a component of intrapersonal intelligence. As the profession of the respondents is teaching, all of them scored fairly well on the two competencies of interpersonal intelligence, namely, relating well and emotional mentoring. Of the two, emotional mentoring was found to be better possessed by the teachers.

With reference to part III of the tool, when teachers were asked to identify areas that they would like to work and improve upon, more than 60% of the respondents mentioned the competencies on managing emotion and self-motivation. From the study, it is quite obvious that the teachers scored better on social competence compared to personal competence.

The teachers unanimously opined that the present-day students are quite weak to withstand peer-group pressure or the pressure to meet parents' and teachers' expectations. Their resilience is unexpectedly low when they face a situation of crisis, especially while looking for a job. Therefore, such students are to be made more aware of emotional intelligence and mental health.

In order to be more approachable to students and for more effective classroom interaction, some of the teachers stated the use of discussion and seminar modes of teaching apart from lecturing. Such teachers opined that these methods led to the development of a better student-student and student-teacher relationship. The learners also developed a sense of sharing and we-feeling among themselves.

## **Discussion**

The findings clearly indicate that teachers are quite aware of the need to educate their students on emotional health. Students are to be mentored to develop some of the competencies comprising emotional intelligence. However, such competencies cannot be developed in isolation with the curricula being followed. The greater challenge lies in integrating these competencies into the curricula as an essential component. For this one has to relook into designing the curricula. Implementation of such a curriculum is another aspect because a teacher has to go far beyond the traditional mode of lecturing. Hence, a holistic approach is urgently required to address the issue and guide our students so that we produce individuals rather than information gatherers.

21<sup>st</sup> century learning also offers the students a wide range of technology. Students, therefore, have to be lifelong learners so that they can engage themselves with the new technologies. Creativity and innovation have become the mantra for survival. Every teacher has to be personally responsible to help students apply their learning to multiple and varied situations. Apart from equipping themselves with the core curricular areas, students have to travel much beyond focusing on the 'how to learn' aspect.

Lack of emotional intelligence often results in the development of negative behaviour like reduced task performance, lower level of job involvement and the like. When students can look into and understand themselves, they will be more aware of their environment. This will also result in better decision-making. It is noteworthy to mention that the scope of Management Education is broad enough to incorporate emotional intelligence together with cognitive development of an individual. What is needed is rethinking and reorientation of some of the elements of the learning-teaching system.

## **Recommendation**

Post- pandemic, particularly, students need more of patient listeners, who will listen to their needs, thoughts, feelings, emotions. Emotional intelligence is an ability that can be learnt, hence, teachers need to guide the students to identify, understand and express emotions in a healthy manner. Teachers need to reorient their teaching methodology to meet the needs of the 21st century learners. The experiential learning model of Kolb (1984) can be modified to

cater to these needs of the students. Learning is one of the major processes of human adaptation. When viewed holistically, it provides conceptual associations across life situations. It would mean a narrower view to observe learning as a very personal and internal process. Learning involves active transaction between the person and the environment.

It is seen in the academia that what gets graded is what gets valued, hence, students are found not to give any importance to the softer qualities as discussed earlier. This does not match with the industry needs. Therefore, the academia in collaboration with the industry needs to design management courses in such a way that these skills are embedded right from the beginning of the programme. This will result in the amalgamation of cognitive and affective domains, which is essentially required. An individual having undergone such a programme will automatically match the requirements of the industry.

It is encouraging to note that teachers were using discussion and seminar modes of teaching. However, the thinking skills can be developed using problem solving and project based learning. This will pave the way to contextual learning bridging the several disciplines.

Teachers are often found to contribute to developing an unhealthy competition among students. Some of them also set unrealistic goals leading to student stress. The pressure from parents and peer group further aggravates this. The 21<sup>st</sup> century learners are quite aware of their responsibilities, hence, undue stress may affect their emotional well-being leading to poor learning or even loss in learning. Since emotional intelligence promotes overall intelligence, it needs to be harnessed through the teaching-learning system.

Teachers need to be more sensitive towards the individual differences of learners. This will help both the teacher and the taught. Teachers who can focus on the strengths of students can engage them more actively through instruction that correlates with those strengths. Students, once aware of their strength, can harness them to enhance their learning by using different learning strategies. The teacher has to be emotionally intelligent to search for those strength in each of his or her students.

The evaluation system needs to be more precise with greater focus on the development of 4Cs- Communication, Critical thinking, Creativity & Collaboration. Use of open and thought provoking question and sharing learning objectives with the learners will help them identify their own areas for improvement and make them more responsible for learning. This will also take care of their learning style so that the students can take active role in learning. To encourage transfer of learning and to make the students adaptable to situations, the entire learning-teaching system has to be flexible.



## Conclusion

The good news is that Emotional intelligence can be learnt and developed. Though it is being widely researched upon at present, there remains enough scope for intensive research in the academics particularly in the context of learning teaching. Teachers need to be leaders, leading their students by examples rather than following only chalk & talk method of instruction. Let us not forget the golden words by John Dewey, “If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow”.

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