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How can education professionals become emotionally intelligent?

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Abstract

As schools are social places and learning is an intrinsically social process, the social and emotional competencies of the teachers have great impact on the teaching-learning process. Therefore, the teachers should be well-equipped with the knowledge and practice of social and emotional skills in order to achieve a kind of balance that encourages all students to learn, work and contribute to their fullest potential. Therefore, in order to make more use of emotional intelligence in their teaching, the teachers should learn how to relate the details of emotional intelligence to the context in which they work, to assist themselves in developing their own emotional intelligence and using it with their students. In this paper, the data gathered by document analysis about the steps that should be taken by the teachers like how to relate to their students; shape the emotional environment; listen to the learners effectively; read and respond to the feelings of individuals; develop self-awareness as a teacher; recognize one's prejudices and preferences; improve non-verbal communication and acknowledge and handle one's own feelings will be discussed.

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1. Introduction

As Claxton (1999:15) stated “Learning itself is an intrinsically emotional business which involves struggle, frustration, thrill or excitement. In the public and formal context of the classroom, with all the dynamics between the teacher and the learners there is the prospect of success or failure and the potential for strong feelings”. So if the task of the teachers is to help their learners learn and meet the needs and expectations of the learners, the teacher needs to recognize the emotional dimension of learning and to work with it. Research also indicates that teacher who establishes firm boundaries, fosters warm relationships in the classroom, and enables students to have an impact on their environment strengthens students' attachment to school, their interest in learning, their ability to refrain from self-destructive behaviours, and their positive behaviours (Hawkins, Catalano,1992; Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps & Delucchi, 1992). Therefore the teachers who are responsible for the effectiveness of the system should be

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equipped with the detailed knowledge and practice of social emotional intelligence in order to fulfil their duties properly.

Reissman (2006:77) pointed out that the new teachers are one group of individuals in the school community who are tremendously in need of emotional intelligence training to deal with day-to-day stress. Although the teachers are the critical elements in creating positive learning environments, most frequently they receive little to no instruction in social and emotional development or exposure to social emotional learning programs until they are required to teach or implement them in their teaching (Fleming&Bay,2004). Currently, many teachers are unlikely even to recognize the role that emotional intelligence plays in their work (Mortiboys,2005:1). Although some of them are very competent in their teaching skills, they simply do not pay attention to the emotional dimension of the learning – teaching process. They might not address any student by name, or they never notice the look of boredom or confusion on the faces of their students. In fact conventionally a teacher brings two important competencies to the classroom, that are of value to the learners. The first one is the subject-matter expertise and the other is knowledge of learning and teaching methods. As Elias (1997:81) suggested, emotional intelligence is accepted as the missing point of the system that should be offered by the teacher to the learners. That is, if the teachers do not make use of emotional intelligence in their teaching process when they are with a group of learners, they indirectly don't share both the value of their knowledge of subject matter and their learning and teaching methods properly.

Using emotional intelligence during the teaching-learning process strongly affects many aspects of the teacher's profession. For instance, many discipline problems are attributed to the teachers' attitude and approach to their learners' feelings and students may be less likely to drop out from courses if they have a better relationship with the teacher. Likewise, it would be essential for effective reflective learning as well. Furthermore, a teacher who has been paying attention to the emotional aspect of the classroom situation would be successful in creating a conducive atmosphere for the learners. In addition, the learners will be more willing

to be engaged in the learning experiences, eager to take risks, creative in their endeavors, have a positive approach to learning and ready to cooperate with their peers and teachers.

In the 1970's the clinical psychologist Claude Steiner described 'emotional literacy' as 'the ability to understand one's emotions, the ability to listen to others and empathize with their emotions, and the ability to express emotions productively (Steiner & Perry 1997: 11). Later the term 'emotional intelligence' was used in 1990 by Jack Mayer and Peter Salovey (1990: 186) and they stated that it involves the ability to perceive

Accurately, appraise and express emotions; to access or generate feelings, when they facilitate thought; to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Finally, Daniel Goleman (1998:318) defined 'emotional intelligence' as the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships. He identified five social and emotional competencies which constitute emotional intelligence. These are self awareness which is described as being alert to one's feelings; self-regulation, managing one's feelings; motivation, using feelings to help achieve one's goals; empathy, tuning into how others feel and social-skills, handling feelings well in interactions with others.

2. The Qualities Of An Emotionally Intelligent Teacher

In general, putting a great deal of energy into creating a positive emotional climate; recognizing and working with the feelings of oneself and of the learners ; using listening skills with groups as well as with individuals; dealing with learners' expectations; and having a well-developed self-awareness are the most important qualities of an emotionally intelligent teacher. That is, the teacher not only needs to have confidence in the subject matter or the content of his lesson and displays a kind of flexibility and readiness to respond but also needs to fulfill the emotional expectations of his learners and see their self-development. When the situation is considered from the students' point of view, their perceptions about their teacher will also change as well. In other words, the students will start to see the teacher as someone who shows care, respects, takes time to understand their feelings and empathizes with them. That is as Carl Rogers stated in "Freedom to Learn" (1983), the teacher who exhibited the personal qualities of genuineness; empathy and acceptance with learners would bring about the expected change in their learners. Therefore the teachers need to discover how to listen to their learners effectively, relate to their

learners, shape the emotional environment, plan for physical experience of the learners, deal with the learners' expectations, acknowledge individual learners, read and respond to the feelings of individuals, respond to learners' comments and questions, develop self-awareness as a teacher, recognize one's prejudices and preferences, improve non-verbal communication, acknowledge and handle one's own feelings, reveal one's feelings to learners.

Teachers need to know how to listen and attend to others as listening is an integral part of emotional intelligence and a prerequisite for being effective in social skills (Goleman 1998: 318). Within the context of listening, what a teacher needs to achieve is to activate some of the active listening skills like paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, using open questions, managing silence and clarifying. Using these skills will help the learners feel satisfied because of being heard; and it will also help in building a good relationship between the teacher and the students and promote a learner - centered approach in the teaching-learning process. According to Rogers (1983), the attitude of the teacher is more important than the procedures and the techniques he uses during the listening process. On the other hand, if the teacher experiments with being a more effective listener through active listening skills and engaging in a structured process of reflection on his experiences, it will also help him give new information about himself and his view of others and pave the way for him to change that view. Therefore, by refining their abilities to interpret body language and hear the feelings between and beneath the words, teachers can become increasingly skilled at understanding the whole student.

Relating oneself to the learners will help the teacher to have an immediate idea on how they feel about being in the classroom; influence the learners' perception of how they should behave and also set the parameters for the teacher's own use of emotional intelligence (Mortiboys, 2005:15). What a teacher needs to do is to explore how far he can overcome such constraints and work towards an emotionally healthy relationship with his learners. In other words, if the teacher achieves a relationship of trust, it can affect all the activities in the classroom positively. That is, it will affect how the learners behave, how they view the teacher and how they respond to the material as well as allowing the teacher to be more flexible in his teaching approach.

By stating "All learning is state dependent" Eric Jensen (1998: 192) wanted to express the importance of the emotional environment in the learning process. State is characterized by the collection of emotions one is feeling. If the emotional environment of the learning experience is resourceful, it is easy for the learner to experience feelings which are more conducive to learning. In addition, the learner is ready to put all his energy into the learning process. There are many factors which shape the emotional environment including the behaviour of the teacher and the learners; the physical experience of the learners; the language which is used by the teacher; the teaching materials and how they are used; the activities that the learners engage in; prior experiences of each learner and the concerns and thoughts of the learners at that time.

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (2002) described the ideal learning state as "flow" in which one is completely absorbed by a task and there is a kind of balance between the learner's motivation, ability and the demands of the task in a structured context. Therefore, the role of the teacher in creating an emotional environment conducive to learning is very crucial, so it is the responsibility of the teacher to give enough energy in the planning stage to create a positive emotional environment as well as giving attention to the content and the methods which are used. It is the task of the teacher to plan, monitor and adjust the emotional environment whenever it is necessary, as the teacher needs to create an emotional environment in which the learners feel safe, trustful, challenged and motivated rather than threatened, suspicious, pressured or disengaged.

The teacher who wishes to create positive emotional state in their learners has to consider what is going to happen to those learners physically in the classroom. According to Candace Pert (1999:137) every change in the physiological state is accompanied by an appropriate change in the mental emotional state, conscious or unconscious. The physical, emotional and learning states are interlinked. That is, if a teacher wants to influence the learners' readiness to learn, he has to address the whole individual in all aspects.

Mortiboys (2005:44) mainly considered the physical experience of the learner from three perspectives: movement, physical environment and comfort. In an ordinary classroom situation, while the teacher is busy distributing handouts, moving to and from the laptop, overhead projector, talking and writing on the board, students are immobile and silent most of the time. Therefore the teacher at least needs to arrange the learning environment in such a way that the students also have the opportunity to stand at least for some time during the session so that enough oxygen will go to the learners brain and arouses the nervous system to lead further learning. Therefore the quality of seating, lighting and heating are some of the important physical conditions that should be taken care of by the teacher.

The teacher should not forget that each student comes to the classroom with different feelings like hopeful, fearful, anxious, vulnerable, impatient and they also have various expectations. The teacher needs to take some precautions to acknowledge and influence these kind of feelings of the learners. This is how the teacher in a way needs to display his emotional intelligence by dealing with his learner's expectations. They also should not forget that the learners will have expectations based on their previous experiences and if they are not fulfilled there is always the risk of frustration and disappointment on the part of the students. By dealing with the expectations of the students, the teacher can divert the energy of the student to be wasted; has the opportunity to make connections between his material and the interests of the learners; has a positive effect on how the learners feel; and lastly helps initiate a productive relationship between himself and his learners.

Each student needs to feel that he is acknowledged by his teacher. This situation is mainly based on Eric Berne's concept of recognition hunger (Stewart & Joines 1987: 72) That is, when one person acknowledges the existence of another, verbally or non-verbally, that person fulfills the hunger of being recognized by someone. Therefore in the learning process when learners feel fully acknowledged, valued and respected, it will be easier for the teacher to maintain the motivation and engagement of the students with their learning experience. Mortiboys (2005:65) suggested three levels of acknowledgement in an ordinary classroom situation which are: eye contact, using learners' names and referring back to the previous contributions of the learners. In order to make the learning experience more fruitful for the learners, the teacher needs to be ready to put his energy into practicing these beneficial classroom applications, consciously and deliberately.

Using emotional intelligence in teaching includes showing that the teacher can read, acknowledge and respond to the feelings of individual learners. In other words, listening fully to the students means to listen to the facts and the feelings alike. Through reading and responding to the feelings of the students, the teacher lets the learners express that they have feelings, have the potential to accept and respond to these feeling on an affective and cognitive level. It should not be forgotten that acknowledging or failing to acknowledge feelings will have a significant effect on the students' responsiveness and readiness to learn as well as the emotional environment in the classroom.

Responding to learners is a great opportunity for the teacher to reflect his emotional intelligence while replying to a comment or a question of a student. If it is handled skillfully, it will help the motivation of the students, affect the emotional environment, clarify what is an acceptable answer, show the learners that they are valued by the teacher and their teacher is listening to them attentively. Responding could be achieved on two levels – cognitive and affective. Informing about a specific topic, clarifying the situation, expanding the subject by giving details can be defined as "cognitive responding" whereas through "affective responding" the teacher pertains to the feelings of the questioner or the commander. In other words, the teacher has the potential to make the students feel respected, valued, belittled, dismissed or humiliated through the use of his affective responding skills.

Goleman (1998:318) defines self-awareness as "knowing what we are feeling in the moment, and using those preferences to guide our decision making, having a realistic assessment of our own abilities and a well-grounded sense of self-confidence". Mortiboys (2005:99) suggested three levels on which it is useful to develop self-awareness as a teacher. These are; awareness of one's feelings in relation to teaching; awareness of one's values and attitudes as a teacher and awareness of one's teacher behaviours and how others see them.

Firstly the teacher's awareness of one's feelings is not only necessary in using one's emotional intelligence in the classroom but also in one's own learning and development process. Secondly, the teacher needs to know more about himself because one cannot know others until one has enough knowledge about oneself. Palmer (1998: 5) explained the importance of self-knowledge by saying "the more familiar we become with our inner terrain, the more surefooted our teaching and living becomes". The mannerisms, habits, the way of talking and non-verbal communication are the third component of self-awareness. These are the behaviours that the students can easily see and hear. Therefore, if the teacher has the potential to perceive the learners' reactions to his attitudes, then it would be easier for the teacher to influence them. Developing self-awareness, that is, being able to recognize, label and accept one's feelings is not as easy as it is described because the teacher needs to be trustful of oneself; focus on expressing and recognizing one's feelings; find a suitable time and place for this exploration and accept what one discovers about oneself without judging specific behaviours.

One of the most difficult aspects of developing self-awareness is to confront one's prejudices. When asked, the teachers normally refuse the idea that they categorize their students according to their specific characteristics like age, gender, outlook, background, religion and so on. They do not consider the fact that prejudices mislead their understanding of others. The teacher's behaviour towards the students can also influence their assumptions about themselves. In other words, the teachers indirectly affect the prejudices and preferences of their learners.

Non-verbal communication is another important aspect of self-awareness which covers facial expressions, the movements of arms, hands and legs, the sound of the voice and the body posture. In the classroom the body language of the teacher greatly influences how the learners feel. The teacher's body language not only affects the feelings of the learners but it also influences their responses and behaviours as well. The teachers should not forget that the non-verbal message is usually perceived to be more reliable than the verbal message. Even if the teacher is well-equipped with professional knowledge, the unintentional body language may create a negative effect on his learners. In general, learners pick up the feelings that a teacher may not want to be known. Therefore, the teachers should be alert to their non-verbal communication while using them. In order to apply the necessary changes in his behaviours, a teacher needs to be aware of what he has been currently doing in the classroom and then modify his non-verbal communication habits accordingly.

As teaching-learning is a two-fold process, the feelings of the students as well as the feelings of the teachers should be treated with equal attention. The first step for the teacher should be to acknowledge the feelings one experiences as a teacher. The next step should be to respond by engaging in a kind of "self-regulation" process which was identified as one of the five social and emotional competencies by Goleman. As it was described by Geetu Orme (2001:16) self-regulation is the ability to face disruptive emotions like anger and fear and making choices when someone is in the middle of a crisis. What a teacher needs to do is firstly to be skilled at handling his feelings in that particular minute and secondly ensure himself that he should deal with those challenging situations in the due course. During the process of handling feelings a teacher should recognize his feelings, then, by considering the interests of both himself and his learners, he should manage his feelings in order to choose the best way to behave, and lastly he should take his time to talk through, reflect on and hopefully learn from the experience. Reissman (2006:79) also focused on the importance of handling one's own feelings and explained that the teacher's uncontrolled emotional response will model undesirable behaviour for the students and that the teacher should not allow his students to become his negative role models.

It is almost impossible for the teacher to be emotionally intelligent by hiding one's persona behind one's role. Showing the students that their teacher is human too with his feelings, affects the emotional climate of the classroom as well as helps create a healthy relationship with the students and excites students' interest in the lesson. Therefore, in order to create an emotional environment in the classroom, both the teachers' and the students' feelings and their true personalities should be recognized and accepted as this is one of the most important qualities of a successful teacher.

3. Conclusion

The development of emotional intelligence and its use in teaching is a continuous process. To be emotionally intelligent, one should be constantly developing, enquiring about the feelings one encounters in oneself and the others. Every encounter with learners should be considered as an opportunity for new experiences to handle the emotional component of the learning process.

Rising teachers' awareness through systematic teaching of social emotional learning, will depend on the teachers' and teacher candidates' understanding of the impact of social emotional learning on student success. Teachers, by attending comprehensive formal courses specially designed for this purpose or through structured reflection, which is about learning from the experience of another colleague, could develop their emotional intelligence skills in teaching. Also, teachers should have opportunities to develop their own emotional intelligence competencies by attending in-service training programs. Apart from attending formal courses on the development of emotional intelligence, courses like person-centred counselling or Transactional Analysis in education could also be suggested to the teachers.

Therefore, those people involved in educational policy making and professional preparation need to rethink the teacher's role and provide them with the social and emotional skill development they need to create better relationships that both they and the young people they teach need to be successful.

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