

Emotional Education : A Innovative Trend in Formal Schools

*Dr. Amit Kumar

What is Emotional Education?

“Emotional education is a continuous learning which every human being makes throughout his lifetime, starting from his earliest moments, and which encompasses the development of appropriate skills and intelligence for dealing with his inner as well as outer environment. On the inner level, emotional education aims at dealing appropriately with the emotional and mental aspects of our being, strengthening self-esteem and confidence, on the outer level it aims at developing appropriate and creative skills.”

Why Emotional Education in Schools?

On the one hand, schools are designed to keep kids’ busy learning about the outer world and not about themselves. On the other hand, families are not helping. They are either disintegrating, they can’t afford to waste time listening to ‘teenage issues’, or they just don’t know how to handle the complexity of issues involved. When adults are gone, kids spend time with technology i.e. video games, online forum, e-mail, etc. However, most of these technologies do not support children’s introspection and communication about their insights to others. Recent events like school shooting, involvement of school children in criminal activities etc. continue to open the eyes of the public to the problems that can accompany an underdeveloped emotional intelligence. It is unfortunate that it takes a tragedy for people to want to make a change in the current educational system.

Learning in schools is a progressive, planned activity cast in the light of the firmly held belief that children are different from adults and that they need to be prepared for the adult world that at the same time as they need to be protected from it. This conception of learning and the very idea of childhood are recent inventions. These are reasons to believe that, with the advent of an electronically networked society, the clear distinction between childhood and adulthood is disappearing. One thing is certain whether it be via the media or directly in their lives, children are increasingly subjected to the whole range of emotions known to adults, not to

mention a wide variety of relationships spreading from best to the worst. If the education of the emotions were merely a matter of development, it would proceed under its own momentum, and not require the help or intervention of teacher. In the case of human beings as essential part of this environment is the presence of other human beings who not only attend them, meeting their physical needs, but interact with them. The aims of the 'education of the emotions' are to provide a suitable environment for the unfolding of the affective aspects of the person. It is studied that children who gained more insight into their emotional lives, were better able to cope with distress and anxiety, to the extent that they gained insight into the causes of those emotions. The most disturbing data comes from the massive survey of parents and teachers and shows a world wide trend for the present generation of children to be more troubled emotionally than the last: more lonely and depressed, more angry and unruly, more nervous and prone to worry, more impulsive and aggressive. Emotional development is taken as for granted. For the most part, people regard it as something that just happens... Thus, retard emotional development, emotional immaturity, poor emotional control, and so forth are used to explain a person's inappropriate social behaviour and many other kinds of pathological behaviour. But perhaps one should look at... emotional maturity as a desirable educational and social objective. To do this we must give the idea that our emotions are innate and just transferred from one object to another. It must be kept in mind that emotional development is a product of emotional education. It is not just something that occurs naturally but it is the manifestation of parental and caretaker values.

The preschool years are crucial ones for laying foundation skills, especially kindergarten years marks a peak ripening of the 'social emotions'- feelings such as insecurity and humility, jealousy and envy, pride and confidence. Children in youngest grades get lessons in self-awareness, relationships, and decision-making. Some of the most effective programs in emotional literacy were developed as a response to a specific problem, notably violence. As a society we have not bothered to make sure every child is taught the essentials of handling anger, love or resolving conflicts positively-nor have we bothered to teach empathy, impulse control, or any of the other fundamentals of emotional competence. By leaving the emotional lessons, children learn to chance, we risk largely wasting the window of opportunity presented by the slow maturation of the brain to help children to cultivate a healthy emotional repertoire.

As Aristotle says, the problem is not with emotionality, but with the appropriateness of emotions and its expression. Abilities such as being able to

motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustration; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to emphasize and to hope; to recognize emotions in our selves and other can indeed be learned and improved upon by children-if we bother to teach them.

How to Introduce Emotional Education in Schools?

Introducing emotions in schools would be a radical change! Yet schools do not change so readily. Those well-meaning people who have tried to introduce innovations in schools have come up against considerable resistance from teachers, students, and parents' alike. Yet without their active participation, no such far-reaching change is possible.

What would be the consequences of introducing emotional intelligence in schools? Are schools the right place for it? Is it even possible? Scientific research, in particular on how the brain works, indicates that the formation of emotional skills is easier in the "formative" years from birth to late teens. Looking at existing structures, school is the major activity in that age group. However, emotions rarely have a place in schools. Beyond infants' school and early primary school, almost all efforts are concentrated on cognitive schools (reading, writing, mathematics...). What's more; there is little or nothing in the standard training of teachers that prepares them from such a task.

Introducing emotions in schools would be a radical change! Yet schools do not change so readily. Those well-meaning people who have tried to introduce innovations in schools have come up against considerable resistance from teachers, students and parents alike. Yet without their active participation, no such far reaching change is possible. Many teachers and parents alike might insist that such learning is not a question for schools, but rather the responsibility of parents. But the family is no longer the ideal place for it. In India, the majority of families have shrunk from an extended community to its strict minimum (one or two parents and one or two children) and much less time is spent in the family than in school. What's more, parents are not always in a position to cope with or dispense emotional skills. Following emotional skills can be developed in students in school:

- **Self awareness**

One of the basic emotional skills involves being able to recognize feelings and put a name on them. It is also important to be aware of relationship between thoughts, feelings and actions. What thought sparked off that feeling? What feeling was behind that action?

- **Communicating**
Developing quality relationships has a very positive effect on all involved. What feelings are being communicated to others? Enthusiasm and optimism are contagious as are pessimism and negativity. Being able to express personal concerns without anger or passivity is a key asset.
- **Resolving conflicts**
In resolving conflicts there is a need to understand the mechanism at work. People in conflict is generally locked in to a self-perpetuating emotional spiral in which the declared subject of conflict is rarely the key issue. Much of the resolution of conflicts calls on using the other emotional skills.
- **Empathy**
Getting the measure of a situation and being able to act appropriately requires understanding the feeling of the others involved and being able to take their perspective. It is important to be able to listen to them without being carried away by personal emotions. There is a need to be able to distinguish between what others do or say and personal reactions and judgments.
- **Co-operation**
Knowing how and when to take the lead and when to follow is essential for effective co-operation. Effective leadership is not built on domination but the art of helping people work together on common goals. Recognizing the value of the contribution of others and encouraging their participation can often do more good than giving orders or complaining. At the same time, there is a need to take responsibilities and recognize the consequences of decisions and acts and follow through on commitments.
- **Managing emotions**
It is important to realize what is behind feelings. Beliefs have a fundamental effect on the ability to act and on how things are done. Many people continually give themselves negative messages. Hope can be a useful asset. In addition, finding ways to deal with anger ,anxiety and sadness is essential: for example, learning how to soothe oneself when upset?, understanding what happens when emotions get the upper hand and how to gain time to judge if what is about to be said or done in the heat of the moment is really the best thing to do? Being able to channel emotions to a positive end is a key aptitude.

Thus emotional education relies on skills that can be taught. However, more than any other teaching, they require direct experience, which is why group dynamics, games and fun are a fundamental part of it.

Strategies Leading to Failure Emotional Stability

- ? What I see is true
 - ? What I know is true
 - ? What I feel is true
 - ? What I think is true
 - ? Things are as I see them
 - ? If you don't see things the way I see them, take my glasses!
- These useless thought disrupts the emotions.

Strategies Leading to Emotional Balance

- ? There is no such thing as objectivity
- ? We look at life through our colored filters
- ? What ever I see reflects the meaning it has for me
- ? What is true for me is not necessary true for others
- ? We tend to act from certainty where in reality we don't know
- ? Looking at things from a standpoint of not-knowing opens up new doors
- ? It is easier to change our perception of others than to change them
- ? How we perceive people(and life) tells us more about ourselves than about them
- ? Stepping outside of myself helps me look at myself

Conclusion

Unlike IQ, emotional competence can be nurtured and developed, and is a key factor in physical and mental health, social competence, academic achievement and other aspects in the personal and social development of children and young people.

Promoting Emotional Education connects with the contemporary shift from an exclusively academic focus towards a more balanced and broader approach to education, with an emphasis on both academic and emotional literacy. The concept of emotional education suggests adopting educational practices which encourage feelings of emotional security, promote trusting and supportive relationships and reflect students' views and feelings; essential qualities for healthy personal and social development in children and young people.

