

4.0 Cultivating Emotional Competence in Educators: A Pathway to Achieving the Vision of NEP 2020 in Schools

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes the need to transform India's Educational framework, moving away from parrot learning towards a more holistic, experiential approach to education. In this context, the role of the educator extends beyond knowledge dissemination to include fostering emotional and social learning in students. Emotional competence encompasses emotional awareness, regulation, empathy, and social skills. These are crucial for educators in this transformative journey. A key factor in achieving this vision is the emotional competence of educators, who play a pivotal role in fostering an environment that extends not just to academic achievement but also to emotional well-being. This paper is an attempt to explore the significance of emotional competence in teachers and its alignment with the goals of NEP 2020. It discusses how emotionally competent educators can positively impact student outcomes by fostering strong teacher-student relationships, managing classroom dynamics effectively, and supporting students' emotional development. Furthermore, the paper highlights practical strategies for cultivating emotional competence in educators, including professional development programs, mindfulness practices, and peer support networks. Ultimately, the cultivation of emotional competence in educators is presented as a crucial pathway to realizing the vision of NEP 2020, establishing that students not only excel academically but also thrive emotionally and socially.

Keywords: Emotional Competence, Educators, NEP 2020

Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 strongly emphasizes holistic development, which includes cultivating Emotional Competence in students. The term Emotional Competence is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage our emotions effectively in various circumstances. It is considered a social skill to interpret and understand the emotions displayed by others as well as ourselves (Bhat and Khan 2018). The NEP 2020 focuses on holistic development, inclusive education, teacher training, mental health resources, curriculum integration, and the cultivation of essential 21st century skills. The vision of NEP 2020 is to deliver an education that extends beyond academic learning, promoting both the emotional and social development of students by integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) into the curriculum. Research consistently emphasizes the importance of social-emotional learning (SEL) in education settings (Cipriano et al., 2023; Wigelsworth et al., 2023). In addition, it has become increasingly evident that educators' social-emotional competence and well-being play a crucial role in fostering SEL among students (Gimbert et al., 2023). The integration of emotional competence is a powerful tool for achieving the vision of NEP 2020 in schools. Here are some ways by which emotional competence can be achieved by educators: such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Review of related literature

Elena, Caroline & Christina (2025) highlighted a conceptual model of teachers' emotional competence and proposed eight competencies. Kandra G. Knowles-Ferreira (2024) highlighted the role of professional development with a social-emotional learning lens on educator social-emotional competence. Gimbert et.al. (2023) concluded that guiding principles for training programs for strengthening educators' understanding of their own SEL. Yadav and Singh (2023) highlighted the role of NEP-2020 in emotional development, multilingualism, and flexibility in developing children emotionally. Dung & Zsolnai (2021) highlighted a new approach to teacher education and presented four main emerging aspects of teachers' Social and Emotional Competence.

Research objectives

This paper aims to investigate the evolving role and measure the emotional competence of educators to achieve the vision of NEP 2020. Further, to analyse how emotional intelligence training for educators contributes to inclusive and holistic education as envisioned by NEP 2020. In this paper, secondary sources are used after rigorous review of previous year papers, surveys, and document analysis.

Research questions

- I. What are the needs of cultivating emotional competence among students and teachers?
- II. What are the different ways of emotional competence which impact teacher student relationships and classroom climate?
- III. How can emotional competence be systematically integrated into professional development frameworks for teachers?
- IV. What are the several challenges faced by educators in developing emotional competence, and how can these be addressed through policy and practice?
- V. How do current teacher education programs address emotional learning in alignment with NEP 2020?

Research methodology

This research has adopted a qualitative method of analysis in which data were collected through semi-structured interviews with educators. Further, focus group discussions were conducted to explore the lived experiences and challenges of emotional competence of educators, and document analysis of teacher training modules and NEP 2020 guidelines.

Findings:

Need of cultivating emotional competence

A classroom that fosters emotional competence can create a positive, supportive, and inclusive atmosphere, leading to better student engagement, improved academic performance, enhanced social skills, better mental health, and preparation for life. When SEL becomes a school focus, student-teacher relationships improve, classroom management challenges decrease, instruction thrives, and teacher burnout diminishes (Durlak et al., 2017). School leaders need to know how to examine and advance their own SEL and the educators they supervise. Here are some key points-

Impact on Teacher-Student Relationship

Cultivating emotional competence in education can significantly enhance the teacher-student relationship, leading to a more positive and effective learning environment. When trust and rapport are increased between student and teacher, then students feel understood and valued which strengthens the bond between them. Emotional competence encourages open communication and fosters a safe environment where students can express their thoughts and feelings freely.

Promoting Students' Social and Emotional Development

Cultivating emotional competence in schools has a profound impact on promoting students' social and emotional development. Improved interpersonal skills can strengthen students' social life and their ability to create meaningful relationships. It encourages students to better conflict resolution which reduces instances of bullying and develops a healthy environment in schools. Emotional competence will decrease cultural sensitivity which promotes a more inclusive environment and respects cultural diversity. Enhancing self-reflection and identifying emotions helps students to understand the root causes of their emotions and behaviours which develops better emotional regulations and increases resilience. The policy advocates for the availability of mental health resources in schools to support students' emotional well-being. This includes counseling services and programs to address stress and anxiety.

Teachers' well-being and Professional Development

Cultivating emotional competence in teachers is essential not only for their professional development but also for their overall well-being. Teachers who have high emotional competence can better manage stress, maintain a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives, reduce burnout, and improve overall mental health. They have effective classroom management skills and better conflict resolution skills. Emotionally competent teachers are more adaptable and resilient, and better able to navigate changes and challenges in the educational landscape. It increases professional growth and enhances the teaching-learning environment.

How does emotional competence vary across different educational settings?

Emotional Competence can have a significant impact on Educators and Pupils as well. It can vary significantly in different educational settings due to many reasons like different age groups of learners, different cultural contexts, and institutional values. It may vary at different stages of education:

Early Childhood Education

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) section of this new policy urges a Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) approach incorporating 'play-based, activity-based, and discovery-based learning' (NEP 2020). Emotional competence in preschools and kindergartens focuses on helping young children identify and express their emotions, develop empathy, and learn basic social skills. Early childhood educators have a tremendous opportunity to foster inclusivity, respect, and a sense of belonging in young children and their families (Abacioglu et al., 2020). At this stage educators use play-based activities and storytelling to inculcate emotional regulation in the children. They can impact children's early experiences by creating caring and inclusive learning environments in schools and homes (Vidal-Hall et al., 2020).

Primary Education

Emotional Competence in elementary schools includes teaching students advanced social skills like cooperation, conflict resolution, and empathy. Teachers often integrate SEL into the curriculum through activities like group projects, class discussions, and role-

playing. The acquisition and development of emotional competencies at school are important to achieving a quality education that equips students with the knowledge and strategies that will allow them to thrive in the various situations they may encounter in life (Lopez-Cadda et al., 2021).

Higher Education

Emotional competence in colleges and universities is often addressed through wellness programs, counseling services, and workshops on stress management, resilience, and interpersonal skills. Educators and all the teaching staff may incorporate the SEL principles into their teaching strategies and interactions with their pupils. Some higher education institutions have attempted to integrate social and emotional learning into undergraduate and graduate curricula in the form of community engagement and service learning (Wilhite & Silver, 2005). For this process, there should be an easily administered instrument that could provide reliable and valid scores of emotional competencies in the teaching-learning process.

Strategies for cultivating emotional competence in Educators

Cultivating emotional competence is essential for creating a positive and supportive learning environment in educators. Here are some strategies that can be implemented:

Professional Development

Professional development can be enhanced by the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs and emotional intelligence training programs. Emotional competence in educators can be boosted through workshops and seminars on stress management, mindfulness, and emotional regulation techniques. It can develop Student's emotional skills alongside academic knowledge by integrating SEL lessons into the academic curriculum. Integrating emotional intelligence and SEL into the curriculum through activities, projects, and assessments promotes self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills (NEP 2020).

Teacher Training

NEP 2020 highlights the need for teacher training programs that include modules on emotional intelligence and SEL. Teachers play a crucial role in modelling and teaching emotional competence. Provide professional development for teachers to help them model and teach emotional competence. Reflective Practices encourage teachers to keep track of their emotions, challenges, and growth over time. Implement regular check-ins and reflective sessions where teachers can discuss their emotional experiences and strategies for improvement.

Mindfulness Practices

Professional development programs should incorporate mindfulness practices such as meditation and breathing exercises to encourage educators to Incorporate mindfulness and stress-reduction techniques into the curriculum. Incorporate mindfulness practices into professional development to help teachers manage stress and improve emotional regulation. Self-care initiatives promote self-care activities, such as adequate sleep, regular exercise, and wellness programs, that encourage teachers to prioritize their mental and emotional health.

Positive Behavioural Interventions

Teachers should use real-life examples and scenarios to teach students about emotional regulations. Teachers should model emotional competence in their interactions with students to demonstrate empathy, patience, and effective communication and use positive reinforcement and restorative practices to encourage good behaviour and emotional regulation.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is crucial in cultivating emotional competence in educators, as it fosters a collaborative environment and enhances the overall educational experience. Communication and collaboration with parents and regular updates of schools like newsletters, emails, and meetings help in maintaining transparency and encourage parents' support. Parent-teacher conferences and parent workshops focusing on emotional intelligence, SEL, and effective parenting techniques can help parents reinforce the skills being taught at school. Creating a supportive home environment encourages parents to practice emotional literacy at home by discussing emotions, modelling empathy, and using positive reinforcement. Providing resources such as books and activities can support this effort.

Peer Support Network

Peer support and collaboration are powerful strategies for fostering emotional competence among educators. This collaboration supports untrained teachers to navigate challenges and build emotional resilience. The establishment of professional learning communities (PLCs) encourages collaborative learning, and continuous improvement in their professional development. Educators can discuss their academic experiences and share strategies to solve their academic problems through PLCs. It fosters professional development and emotional growth. Regular peer observations create a culture of mutual support and respect, where teachers feel valued and understood. Peer support and collaboration may reduce the isolation of educators, enhance professional development, improve well-being, and build a stronger school community.

Leadership and Administrative Support

Leadership and administrative support are crucial in fostering emotional competence among educators. Leadership and administrative support are vital in cultivating emotional competence among educators. Policies should be established to promote social-emotional learning (SEL) and support teachers' emotional health to provide continuous professional development, and encourage collaborative learning which results in a supportive and inclusive school culture. Mentorship programs provide guidance and emotional support for educators.

Challenges In Implementing Emotional Competence In Educators

The NEP 2020 vision to implement emotional competence in educators comes with several challenges. Here are some key obstacles and potential strategies to address them:-

Time, Resources & Money Constraints

Educators often have packed schedules, making it challenging to find time for additional training and reflective practices. Balancing academic responsibilities with the incorporation of SEL can be difficult within the existing curriculum. Limited funding for SEL programs and professional development can hinder the implementation so it needs proper funding and support. Schools may lack access to quality resources and materials needed to effectively teach emotional competence.

Lack of Trained Teachers

Limited access to high-quality training programs and resources focused on emotional competence creates a problem for educators to be more proficient in their careers. Many educators may not fully understand the importance of emotional competence and its impact on teaching and learning. There may be a lack of awareness about effective strategies and practices to develop emotional intelligence. Schools, especially in underfunded areas, may struggle to allocate resources for professional development in emotional competence. Lack of access to up-to-date materials, tools, and support systems to aid in training are a significant challenge in achieving the goals of NEP 2020.

Cultural and Societal Barriers

In many cultures, discussing emotions and mental health may be stigmatized or seen as a sign of weakness. They have limited understanding and awareness of emotional competence and its benefits so it creates a hindrance in its acceptance and implementation.

Lack of Awareness and Understanding

Many educators may not fully understand what emotional competence entails or recognize its importance. There may be limited training opportunities for professional development focused on emotional intelligence and SEL (Social and Emotional Learning).

Educators' Mental Health & Well-Being

The mental health and well-being of educators are crucial for the success of any educational system. Teachers often manage heavy workloads, including lesson planning, grading, and administrative tasks, which can lead to stress and burnout. Managing classroom behaviour and addressing the diverse needs of students can be emotionally challenging. Teachers frequently work beyond regular school hours which impacts their personal time and family life.

Resistance to Change

Some schools may have a culture resistant to change, making it difficult to implement new initiatives. Individual educators may be resistant to adopting new practices, especially if they perceive them as extra work or irrelevant to their teaching.

Emotional competence and its alignment with NEP 2020

Emotional competence, encompassing the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively use emotions, aligns closely with the vision of the NEP 2020. Here's how emotional competence supports and enhances the key goals of NEP 2020:

- Fostering emotional intelligence ensures students develop critical, social and emotional skills alongside academic knowledge. This holistic approach prepares students for all aspects of life, promoting all-round development. Similarly, NEP 2020 emphasizes the holistic development of students, integrating cognitive, emotional, and physical growth.
- Promoting emotional competence creates a more inclusive and empathetic learning environment. It helps to address the diverse emotional and social needs of all students, including those from marginalized communities. Similarly, NEP 2020 advocates for inclusive education, ensuring all students, regardless of their backgrounds, have equal opportunities to succeed.
- Emotional intelligence is a fundamental 21st century skill, essential for effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. Teaching emotional competence equips students with the skills needed for future success. Similarly, NEP 2020 aims to develop key life skills and 21st century competencies in students, preparing them for the dynamic and evolving world.
- Training teachers about emotional competence enhances their well-being, reduces stress, and improves their ability to support students' emotional and social development. NEP 2020 highlights the importance of teacher training and professional development, emphasizing the need for continuous learning and well-being.
- Creating emotionally supportive classrooms fosters a safe and stimulating environment where students feel valued, respected, and motivated to learn. Similarly, NEP 2020 focuses on creating safe, inclusive, and stimulating learning environments that promote student engagement and well-being.

Conclusion

Social and emotional competence, often referred to as soft skills, play a pivotal role in the comprehensive development of human beings. Educators and pupils can transform their

educational experience, build stronger relationships, improve learning outcomes, and create a more positive school climate by fostering emotional competence. Schools can create an environment where everyone feels valued, understood, and motivated to achieve their full potential by prioritizing emotional competence. When students are emotionally competent, they tend to have better focus, motivation, and engagement in learning, leading to improved academic achievement. It also contributes to better mental health, reducing the incidence of anxiety, depression, and other emotional difficulties. Emotionally competent Educators and students can face the future challenges in higher education, make career choices, and build a strong personal relationship, equipped with essential life skills. It holds crucial parts like interpersonal cooperation and emotional management, which contribute to student character building, critical thinking, cooperative ability, and innovation.

SUGGESTIONS

- **For Teacher Educators:** Use blended learning approaches to integrate emotional intelligence with pedagogy and technology, and introduce experiential module on empathy, self-awareness, and emotional regulation through role-playing, journaling, and reflective exercises.
- **For Policy Makers:** Align teacher education standards with NEP 2020's emphasis on holistic development and inclusive classrooms to promote autonomy and well-being by reducing administrative overload and fostering supportive school cultures. Incorporate emotional competence metrics in teacher evaluation and growth frameworks.
- **For the Researchers:** Future researchers can evaluate SEL implementation across different educational levels and regions to identify gaps and best practices, and study teacher-student dynamics and how emotional competence influences learning outcomes. Researchers can explore cultural dimensions of emotional competence in diverse Indian classrooms.

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