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## **ROLE OF LITERATURE IN IMPROVING THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*When students are connected physically, mentally, and emotionally they become clear-headed, confident, and eager to explore the unknown. They work better together, share stronger communications, and overcome obstacles to discovery with ease. Having emotional intelligence opens gateways to powerful learning. Emotional intelligence is our ability to “identify, evaluate, control, and express our emotions.” The benefits of having emotional intelligence include: self-awareness, self-regulation, higher motivation, ability to empathize, negotiate, cooperate and feel optimistic and hopeful about the future. The paper discusses the impact of literature in improving the emotional intelligence of students. How literature can provide motivating and low-anxiety context in the classrooms which can develop the language skills and nurture emotional intelligence.*

**KEYWORDS:** *emotional intelligence, literature, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Increasing complexities of modern life have placed new responsibilities on Students. They need skills and competencies which were not required in the relatively simple society of yesteryear. The skills and competencies they need relates to the mastering of information available and skills of seeking out adequate information needed to progress in their classes or chosen careers. As a result they experience pressure to meet the needs of the society. This often leads to behavior problems. Behaviour problems arise from external influences whose effects are not often noticed or understood by others. Often, emotional and psychological factors in apparently normal children are not readily seen or understood but are often labelled as depression, hostility, withdrawal

or day dreaming to combat the stress. Hence the importance of emotional intelligence has attracted significant concerns in recent decades. Experiments by bio-sociologists also confirm that it is sometimes not, intelligence but emotion that helps human beings face dangers, loss, pain and disappointment. Each emotion prepares people for actions and shows people how to conquer challenges to survive.

In contemporary society, for different reasons, children and teenagers are becoming more and more isolated, nervous, bored, stressed or hot-tempered, furious, stubborn and even aggressive. With regards to these things let us see what this emotional intelligence is? What is its role in students' lives? What is the impact of literature in improving the emotional intelligence of students.

### **What is Emotional Intelligence?**

Emotion is defined as an experience that has subjective feeling, cognitive interpretation, physiological reaction and behavioral expression. Emotional intelligence refers to the capability of a person to manage and control his or her emotions and possess the ability to control the emotions of others as well. In other words, they can influence the emotions of other people also.

It is said to have five main elements such as - self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

### **ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN STUDENTS' LIFE**

Children develop emotional intelligence during the early years of life, and according to some experts, emotional intelligence is a more reliable predictor of academic achievement than is IQ. However, today's children appear to be low on emotional well-being. This has potentially negative consequences, not only for academic achievement but also for personal relationships. Literature has the potential of fostering emotional intelligence by providing vicarious emotional experiences that will shape the brain circuits for empathy and help the child gain insight into human behavior. Literature will also promote language learning by enriching learners' vocabulary and modeling new linguistic structures. Moreover, literature can provide a motivating and low-anxiety context for language learning. Some successful literature-based strategies are offered to help teachers develop students' personal and emotional intelligence while also developing language skills, and demonstrate how these strategies can be adapted to different grade and proficiency levels.

Excerpts from the interview conducted with a Primary and Secondary School teachers. They were asked two questions: (1) Why is emotional intelligence important for students? (2) How literature can help in improving Emotional Intelligence of your students?

### **PRIMARY PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE WITH HER STUDENTS**

1. Emotional intelligence is important for students at primary level because at their young age, it has quite an effect on them. Students at this early age are highly affected by their emotions and their affiliation towards everything. In my opinion, their use of emotional intelligence at this stage determines their future stands towards everything else that is going to be in their future. For example, how they feel about their

interpersonal relationships determines how they are going to use and control it in the upcoming years and their stand on forming relationships with others. In other words, this age forms their experiences and shows how they would use these experiences as they grow older.

2. Literature could have a role in forming emotional intelligence among primary students. For instance, it could help them in shaping, forming and controlling these intelligences as students at this age are highly influenced by what they are exposed to from literature. Quality literature can help the child also gain insight into human behavior, and demonstrate that there is always hope and that one can overcome even seemingly undefeatable obstacles. It can also facilitate the recognition and expression of emphatic feelings.

### **SECONDARY PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHER SHARED FROM HER EXPERIENCE**

1. Emotional intelligence, adequately present and functional, in students of all ages can play a role that no other visible factor significantly can. The students particularly of secondary and higher secondary levels are in the phase of transition; physically, emotionally, academically, and psychologically. These transitions altogether mostly make them suffer and make them isolated in case they are misunderstood or not properly looked after. They can help themselves better if they have a higher proportion of emotional intelligence, through which they could become more able to cope with all the anticipated transitions.
2. However, in order to take this emotional intelligence quotient to an elevated level what adults can do is to communicate to them their own experiences and feelings of the same age, tell them this could be a scenario. In addition to those scenarios literature can help a lot by offering those wonderful stories where the protagonist had to deal with all kind of stuff and still maintain its dignity, e.g. for me Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre worked wonders. I could put myself in a communicable position and understand others better. That was the beginning and later with probing into more and more literature, it helped me to make myself an "Empath", that I proudly say about me.

## IMPACT OF LITERATURE IN IMPROVING THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF STUDENTS

Self-awareness is understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses. Readers do not merely decode the message. They make predictions and inferences – they anticipate based on what they read. They build assumptions about the overall content at the macro-level and predict what is likely to come next in the text at the micro-level. Readers may also impose their own organization on the information they extract from a text. When reading one becomes involved in the way people react to different experiences; they may react almost the same way, or completely different, than others would have done in a similar situation. At a more sophisticated level, they react to what they read, assessing the accuracy of the facts presented, the value of the opinions stated, or the quality and appropriateness of the style. Therefore, reading/studying literature is not only receiving but also experiencing, explaining various situations, facts and lives. The challenge for the teacher is to find a number of well-written texts and to present them to the students so they can reflect their own strengths, weakness, values, and objectives.

Research consistently shows that self-regulation skill is necessary for reliable emotional well-being. Self-regulation is controlling or redirecting one's emotions and impulses and adapt to the changing environment. Literature may not have an immediate effect on students as far as self-regulation is concerned. But it is a long-term process. Through literary works which they had read in their students life they will be able to recognize and discriminate between facts, beliefs, judgements, opinions, hypotheses, and expressions of bias, probability, uncertainty, tentativeness etc. Who else can be the best teacher than Shakespeare who had covered all the possible human characters in his plays?

Motivation is what pushes us to achieve our goals, feel more fulfilled and improve overall quality of life. Daniel Goleman, who developed the concept of Emotional Intelligence in the mid '90s, identified four elements that make up motivation: our personal drive to improve and achieve commitment to our goals, initiative, or readiness to act on opportunities, as well as optimism and resilience. Literature provides students with life-long motivation. Literature encourages us to be sensitive to the whole spectrum of human experience and to consider this when making decisions in our day-to-day lives. Characters in literature have some motivation for every action, as do people in real life. Therefore, the implicit or explicit

reference to a motivation of a character makes the piece of literature seem closer to life and reality. Great characters have great motivations. These characters teach some good moral lessons to the readers and the audiences. The readers and audiences get more interested in motivated characters and understand those motivations, and with that illuminated mind and soul they appraise the beauty and good with an optimistic mood. Literature serves as a way to enrich our minds, and presents a way to improve the world not only through the beauty of its presence but through the ideas and tangible possibilities it possesses.

Empathy is generally considered to be the ability to understand a situation from another person's point of view, or even to "feel their pain." Not to empathize with someone is equated with selfishness or ignoring the needs of those around one. Literature, on the other hand, allows the reader to actually experience the world from another person's point of view. How many times have we heard the phrases "getting lost in a good book," "fell in love with the characters," and even "cried buckets at the ending?" Such is the relationship between readers and their favorite books. There is a growing body of evidence that transportation, identification, and perception may actually be part of an integral process that allows these feelings to have lasting effects on the reader. It also develops as a result of experience and interaction with others. Literature has the potential of nurturing emotional intelligence by providing vicarious emotional experiences that may help shape the brain circuits for empathy.

Social Skills is a very broad term, but it is also used quite specifically in the context of Emotional Intelligence. In Emotional Intelligence the term 'social skills' refers to the skills needed to handle and influence other people's emotions effectively; the ability to cooperate with others and manage relationships in order to move people in the desired directions. It can be as simple as understanding that smiling at people makes them smile back, and can therefore make them feel much more positive. Literature is born from a community of lively voices with various characteristics. It not only represents to us our world but it also shows us ways in which we can change the world or adapt to changes which have already taken place without our realization. Literature's cognitive dimension helps us cope with the current as well as future challenges by changing the way we think about ourselves, our society and those who are excluded from or marginalized within our society. It is accepted that, throughout history and

in probably all cultures, stories and sagas are an important part of belief structures, for good or evil. Gulliver's Travels and Tristram Shandy -the satires of Jonathan Swift and Laurence Sterne made people think about the cultures they lived in. The works of Victorian authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell 'Mary Barton' and Charles Dickens 'Oliver Twist' called our peoples' attention to the sufferings many felt in the early industrial age. George Eliot, showed that women could want more than marriage and needed more than a husband to be satisfied. She also showed that the imperfect are capable of and needed love through her 'Middlemarch'. John Steinbeck showed us the pain of dislocation during the Great Depression in his 'Grapes of Wrath'. Sinclair exposed the ugliness of America's meat packing industry in 'The Jungle'.

It seems that in this day and age writers have the responsibility again to be the prophets of yore: those who have courage to unveil the hidden truths of our human condition, to reveal where we are going wrong and how we can put ourselves right. That is what literature can do: change the world by changing the people in it. It makes us more aware of how we deceive ourselves, our society and others and sometimes it can be so influential that it makes powerful people afraid. Books were banned in the past and books are banned now: they are banned because they break people out of their moulds, making them disobedient rather than unthinkingly obedient to whatever form of societal propaganda is currently in vogue.

The great works did this for their time and continue to do this for ours. In a world governed by Facebooks and twitters, where nobody really pauses, really listens or really understands: in this world we need a great wordsmith more than ever. A well-written book or play or poem makes the reader think and feel. Either or both can spark an idea that will grow into something new, different, and world-changing. Usually, such change is for improvement; sometimes not so much.

But as an example: A Handmaid's Tale not only grows out of the inequities of women's perceived role in society but encourages, by its telling, a desire to take action to prevent such a world from developing in real life. And another: Asimov's 'Three Laws of Robotics' actually have influenced the scientists and engineers working on artificial intelligence.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude the establishment of the science of emotional intelligence has opened up new horizons to the study of human's internal abilities. Emotional intelligence starts with understanding your own

emotions (self-awareness), then being able to manage them (self-regulation) and use them to achieve your goals (self-motivation). Once you are able to understand and manage yourself, then you start to understand the emotions and feelings of others (empathy) and finally to influence them (*social skills*). It is a cycle, with its core lying with and in the individual. Only those who understand and regulate themselves and their emotions are able to work well and effectively with others. Understanding this is crucial to developing the emotional intelligence. Literature has a lot of advantages in providing students with these skills. Literature puts fresh ideas in the world no matter whether it comes from Plato, Nietzsche, or Friedrich Engels. When an idea is put in the world, people debate that idea. They take inspiration from that idea, and they attempt to implement that idea. Socialism was first written about. Fascism was first written about. Democracy was written ages before it was implemented. Communism was an idea that was put into a book. There can be no doubt that these ideas changed the world. Hence literature has an impact in improving the Emotional Intelligence of the students to manage and maintain moral principles which have been socially accepted in order to exist and "live with others".

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