

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL: A HUMANISTIC AND INDIAN PERSPECTIVE ON HOLISTIC LEARNING

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Abstract

In the increasingly complex ecosystem of higher education, students and educators grapple not only with cognitive demands but also emotional and social challenges. Emotional Intelligence (EI)—the ability to perceive, regulate, and manage emotions—is emerging as a cornerstone of educational success and personal growth. This research article investigates the role and relevance of emotional intelligence in higher education, with a particular emphasis on Indian philosophical traditions and the humanistic vision of learning.

While Western scholars such as Mayer & Salovey and Daniel Goleman have extensively theorized EI in psychological terms, Indian traditions have long embedded emotional self-awareness and regulation into holistic education through frameworks like the Panchkosha model, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, and the Upanishadic understanding of the Self. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the need for emotional, ethical, and intellectual integration in education, promoting social-emotional learning (SEL) as a key priority.

Using both empirical and philosophical literature, this article examines how EI can enhance learning outcomes, reduce stress, improve student–teacher relationships, and create inclusive, empathetic academic environments. It also discusses how emotionally intelligent teachers contribute to value-based education and how curricula can be restructured to include reflective practices, emotional literacy modules, and mindfulness.

Ultimately, the article argues that emotional intelligence must be treated not as an extracurricular trait, but as a foundational competency in India’s higher education landscape. EI supports the humanistic ideal of “education as the development of the whole being”, ensuring students not only become successful professionals but also emotionally resilient, ethical, and socially responsible citizens.

KEYWORDS : *Emotional Intelligence, Higher Education, Holistic Learning*

1. Introduction

In contemporary India, higher education institutions face growing concerns over student stress, academic burnout, poor peer relationships, and lack of ethical engagement. These issues point to a deeper emotional disconnect in the

teaching–learning process. Despite India’s ancient educational heritage emphasizing harmony between mind, body, and spirit, current models often focus narrowly on cognitive achievements.



The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI), first formally introduced by Mayer and Salovey (1990), and popularized by Daniel Goleman (1995), has found resonance in education globally. In India, however, its application in higher education remains limited, despite its compatibility with Indian epistemologies and moral philosophies.

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) articulates a much-needed shift towards holistic and value-based education, incorporating emotional, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. In this light, emotional intelligence becomes both timely and necessary.

2. Emotional Intelligence: A Conceptual Overview

2.1 Mayer and Salovey's Four-Branch Model

- Perceiving emotions in self and others
- Using emotions to facilitate thinking
- Understanding emotions
- Managing emotions

2.2 Goleman's Five Components:

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-regulation
3. Motivation
4. Empathy
5. Social skills

These models remain the foundation for academic studies on EI and its application in educational leadership, conflict resolution, classroom management, and student development.

3. Emotional Intelligence in Indian Philosophical and Educational Traditions

3.1 Panchkosha Model (Taittiriya Upanishad)

The Indian concept of human personality comprises five sheaths:

1. AnnamayaKosha (Physical)
2. PranamayaKosha (Energy)
3. ManomayaKosha (Mental/Emotional)
4. VijnanamayaKosha (Wisdom)
5. AnandamayaKosha (Bliss)

Here, emotional development (Manomaya) is a necessary step toward attaining self-knowledge (Vijnanamaya) and ultimate fulfillment (Anandamaya). Emotional intelligence, therefore, is not a skill but a pathway to self-realization.

3.2 Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

The practice of Pratyahara (withdrawal) and Dharana (concentration) enhances emotional control and mindfulness. Emotional disturbances (chittavrittis) are to be stilled for clarity of perception.

3.3 Swami Vivekananda

He emphasized education as the manifestation of perfection already in man, integrating character, empathy, and emotional balance as the essence of real learning.

4. Emotional Intelligence in Higher Education: Current Relevance

4.1 The Stress Crisis

Studies (Kumar & Bhukar, 2013) show that nearly 50% of Indian university students report high levels of stress,



anxiety, and depression. Emotional intelligence helps students manage internal emotional turmoil, adapt to social environments, and resist peer pressure.

4.2 Student-Teacher Relationships

According to Narula (2020), emotionally intelligent educators create non-threatening, inclusive, and empowering classroom spaces. This is especially important in India's diverse classrooms, which often deal with linguistic, cultural, and caste-based sensitivities.

4.3 Classroom Engagement and Leadership

Students high in EI exhibit:

- Better classroom engagement
- Greater self-confidence
- Effective communication skills
- Leadership potential in academic and extracurricular settings

This aligns with the NEP 2020 vision of nurturing leaders with compassion and integrity.

5. Case Studies and Empirical Evidence

5.1 Indian Studies:

- Gautam & Naga (2016): Found a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance in Indian engineering colleges.
- Malhotra & Singh (2020): Highlighted that EI training reduced drop-out rates and improved peer collaboration.
- Chopra & Kanji (2010): Proposed integrating EI into teacher training programs in

Indian universities for better pedagogy.

5.2 Global Studies:

- Petrides & Furnham (2001): Proposed the Trait Emotional Intelligence framework, correlating high EI with reduced stress and increased performance.
- Brackett & Salovey (2006): Demonstrated the role of EI in classroom harmony and reduced bullying.

6. Challenges in Implementing EI in Indian Higher Education

1. Cultural Stigma around emotional discussion—seen as weakness.
2. Rigid Curriculum leaving little room for reflective or emotional practices.
3. Lack of trained faculty in emotional education.
4. Exam-focused education system ignoring life skills.

7. Humanistic Strategies for Cultivating EI

7.1 Integrating Emotional Literacy into Curriculum

- Reflective Journaling
- Group Dialogue & Listening Circles
- Narrative Pedagogy (stories to teach empathy)
- Drama and Expressive Arts

7.2 Faculty Development in Emotional Pedagogy



- Workshops on nonviolent communication, empathy building, and conflict resolution.
- Training in Indian meditative practices, like Anapanasati (mindfulness of breathing) and Yoga Nidra.

7.3 Mindfulness and Yoga-Based Interventions

- Institutions like SVYASA (Bangalore) and IIT Delhi's Centre for Wellness have integrated Yoga and meditation to promote emotional stability.
- A 2021 study by Sharma & Mehta demonstrated significant improvement in students' self-regulation and emotional management through 10-week Yoga modules.

8. Emotional Intelligence and NEP 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 strongly advocates:

- Socio-emotional learning (SEL)
- Ethical and moral reasoning
- Art integration and experiential learning

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- Value-based education aligned with Bharatiya knowledge systems

This provides a fertile policy framework to integrate EI systematically.

9. Conclusion: A Humanistic Call for Reform

Emotional Intelligence, far from being a soft skill, is central to human well-being and academic success. In the Indian context—rich with spiritual, ethical, and philosophical wisdom—EI finds both modern relevance and ancient resonance. By embedding EI into higher education through curriculum innovation, teacher training, and Indian ethical traditions, we can rehumanize education. The emotionally intelligent student is not just a high achiever but a balanced, compassionate, and ethically grounded individual—the ideal envisaged in Tagore's and Gandhi's visions of education.

Let India's universities become temples of wisdom and well-being, not just information. Let us educate the heart, not just the mind.



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