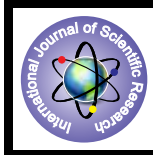


## Emotional Intelligence for Children with Special Needs



### Education

**KEYWORDS :** Emotional Intelligence; Children with Special Needs; Emotional Intelligence Strategy

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper highlights on emotional intelligence of children with special needs. The author lay out the concept of emotional intelligence and its effects among children with special needs. Children with sensory impairment, cognitive impairment and physical impairment are emotionally unstable at some point or other. Educational plan of all kinds of children with special needs - hearing impairment, visual impairment physical impairment, autism, pervasive developmental disorder, language and speech problems, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and attention deficit disorder— should offer an understanding nature of these challenges and also specific ways of helping children to extend their intellectual and emotional potential. Emotional intelligence can be nurtured, developed and augmented. It is not a trait that we either we have or don't have. Successful schools include emotional intelligence in their curriculum. It is possible to influence learner's Emotional intelligence skills. Children can be taught to become more emotionally intelligent, which enables them to be more successful in life. Children with special needs too can develop emotional intelligence to be emotionally aware, insightful regarding understanding other's emotions, more able to cope with emotional dilemmas in life, to be empathetic towards peers and to develop effective inter and intra personal skills.*

### Introduction

Emotions' role in each and every individual's life is as important as life itself. Life would be a drab without emotions. The term emotions refer to a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states and range of propensities to act (Goleman, 1995). Emotional Stability means firmly established or fixed, not easily upset or disturbed, well balanced and capable to remain in same status. On the other hand, emotional instability is a tendency to display rapid and unpredictable changes in emotionality. It differs from emotional immaturity which is a tendency to display emotional reactions inappropriate to one's age. In the public and formal context of the classroom, with all of the dynamics between teacher & learner and between learner's there is a potential for heightened strong feeling. In the process of learning, any context can involve struggle, frustration, thrill or excitement. Emotions play a quite significant role in guiding and directing the behavior. Emotions have traditionally been identified as a category different from cognition or reasoning. Combination of cognitive, affective and conative domains opens a new area of intelligence called emotional intelligence.

### Concept of Emotional Intelligence

Intelligence is defined as the capacity to acquire and apply knowledge. In order to solve a problem, knowledge should be applied in a right manner. Intelligence is the mental ability which helps the individual to think about minute, complex and abstract matters, to adjust with changing situations by solving various problems as quickly as possible. "The aggregate or global capacity of the individual, to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment" (Wechsler 1944) is termed as intelligence. The importance of emotions has been emphasized in the functionally viewed domains of rational thought. Emotions are such as organizing processes that enable individuals to think and behave adaptively. It is held that the adaptive processing of emotionally relevant information is a part of intelligence. Emotional intelligence enlarges and enlightens the mind of the individual to be effective and successful profession and in personal life. Emotional intelligence has been a source of concern and research towards the end of the 20th century. It refers to the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in our selves and in our relationships. (Daniel Goleman, 1998). According to the proponents of emotional intelligence (EI), a person's emotional make-up largely determines his or her professional success. They believe that EI is the most important determinant of the extent of professional and personal success in life. According to Goleman, (1998), 80% of a person's success in life depends on a person's emotional intelligence, and only about 20% depends on IQ.

Mowrer (1960) considered emotion themselves as a higher order of intelligence. In his early writings Piaget talked about affect and intelligence. Learning is emotion based. Cognitive intel-

ligence refers to the ability to concentrate and plan, to organize material, to use words and to understand, assimilate and interpret facts. Emotional intelligence is the set of socio-emotional skills that enable the intellect to turn into action and accomplishment. Nurturing emotional intelligence creates not only academic achievement in individual, but also increased on-task behaviours and reduction in discipline problems. Hence, students have to be trained to recognize and equip themselves to face the realities of the world. Emotionally intelligent students are trained to make better decisions, to live with integrity, to use their emotions as a source of energy and direction, more effective at solving problems, to collaborate better, to be effective leaders. All students often come to school lacking the capacity to handle their upsets, to listen or focus, or to feel responsible for their work and care about learning. Schools that do not address emotional intelligence find it challenging to handle such children and they end up being excluded from mainstream schooling. Children with special needs also face lot of emotional problems in the inclusive set up.

### Emotional Intelligence and Children with Special Needs

All students are unique and hence 'special'. Their ways of adapting and adjusting to the environment in which they are living warrant emotional intelligence training. Teachers who once dealt with mischievous, untruly learners and occasional temper tantrums now have to deal with violence and disorder to crisis proportions. Emotional intelligence is one of the tools that can help inclusion of difficult learners a smoother process. Among all the categories of students, there comes a large group - students with disabilities. They seem to be different from normal students only for the reason that they perceive the situations in their life in somewhat a different because of their unusual needs. They observe and receive things and situations using senses other than deprived ones. All the apparent differences are very natural if one is lacking important senses. Their dealings and adjustment with the whole world are different from the others. Many children are unable to sit still, finish tasks, plan ahead, or even be aware what is going on around them. Some time children with learning disability and attention deficit hyperactive disorder students experience negative views of themselves. The feelings within themselves and the response from the outside mold a concept of an insecure and threatening world and a view of themselves as inept. Myklebust (1975) reported that children with dyscalculia had social withdrawal. McGee et al (1988) noted that children with reading disability showed anxious-withdrawn behaviour. Stein and Hoover (1989) compared manifested anxiety in children with LD and without LD. They concluded that compared with non LD children, children with LD had higher total anxiety scores. Kids with learning disabilities may have trouble expressing their feelings, calming themselves down, and reading nonverbal cues from others. This can lead to difficulty in the classroom and with their peers. During the last twenty five years, there has been considerable growth

in the amount and variety of resources for educating children with special needs. Special schools are provided for a greater variety of handicaps; some schools provide selective secondary education and others cater for children with additional handicaps. Teaching has been expended in hospital schools and home teaching has become an established service. Special classes and units and other means of giving special teaching in ordinary schools have developed and it is recognized that this is a field advisory services have grown up as a means of helping children who have difficulties in learning academic skills. But it should also focus on the emotional intelligence of children with special needs where they have to be trained to recognize their own feelings and those of others, for motivating themselves and for intrapersonal & interpersonal relationships. These children face lot of aggressive behaviours, frustrated with their disability, low self esteem, lack relationship skills, doesn't show motivation and so on. They have to be encouraged and motivated to face the life with their disabilities. Developing emotional intelligence among children with special needs is important for the promotion of quality to outer life and to the inner life as well. Children with special needs who are emotionally intelligent will certainly demonstrate: a) Higher academic motivation and achievement scores, b) Better planning and problem solving skills, c) A strong sense of friendship d) Can understand consequences and resolve conflict and behavioural problems and e) A positive attitude to school and learning.

#### Emotional intelligence empowers Children with special needs to . . .

1. Understand their own emotions
2. Take responsibility for the excellence of their life.
3. Respect others' emotions and to see both pleasant and unpleasant emotions as important feedback for keeping them on course.
4. To accept the reality and face the life with positive attitude
5. Consciously choose the content of their consciousness, thinking and speaking more positively about themselves, others, and their world, thus creating an experience of greater optimism, joy, and happiness.
6. Avoid emotional hijackings, thus persisting in the face of challenges and setbacks due to their disabilities.
7. Learn how to create more "flow" or peak experiences in their lives.
8. Improve relationships through empathy for and an understanding of the emotions of others.t

Instilling emotional and academic learning within the learners should be ultimate aim of a teacher. Seven successful strategies - ELEVATE promote emotional intelligence which can be effectively incorporated in the education of children with special needs to excel in an inclusive set up.

E – Environment for Learning  
L – Language of Emotions  
E- Establishing relationships  
V – Validating feelings  
A – Active Engagement  
T – Thinking Skills  
E – Empower through feedback

These seven strategies given by Marziyah Panju (2008) can also be effective in fostering emotional intelligence among children with special needs. These strategies in the classroom will enable the teacher to gently switch his/her role from spending time with behavior management issues to actually having time to spend with the learners and learning. The role of the teacher in the emotionally intelligent classroom is to

- Spot pressure, keep an eye and intervene when necessary
- Make time for the learners
- Have clear aims and objectives which will be shared with the learners
- Encourage personal development and creativity
- Make time to laugh and have fun with the class

The teaching community must be concerned with emotional wellbeing of students. Emotional intelligence is a factor which either developed or destroyed depending upon the environmental experiences provided by the parents, teacher and society. An emotionally intelligent teacher is:

- Infectiously optimistic
- A good listener
- Demonstrates commitment
- Validates other's feelings
- Emotionally resilient

Teachers have to teach their students how to handle anxiety, frustration, depression, emotional outburst, hyperactivity, and other emotional hijacks to make sure that they are included and tune the social dynamics between the learners' lives.

#### Conclusion

Being emotionally intelligent is really a dynamic process. It involves give and take, learning and understanding, listening and communicating both thoughts and actions. It enables us to meet our own needs while at the same time meeting the needs of others. All children with special needs certainly benefit from the emotional intelligence training which prepares them to be adaptable in the inclusive set up and get along with normal students. It is in the hands of the teachers to develop emotional intelligence among children with special needs. An effective and successful teacher is largely one who can handle emotions of the students in an authentic and positive way.

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