

Social and Emotional Competencies: Vital Attribute for Teacher Aspirants

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Abstract

Teacher competencies in curriculum transaction is a major factor of student achievement. The affective outcomes of learning are regulated through teacher interventions and interactions in the classroom. The social and emotional development of the learner need to be ensured through teaching learning process. Teacher aspirants get various training practices in college based and school based practicals but their social skills and emotional skills are to be fostered for effective teaching. Present study is an analysis of teacher aspirants' perception on the extent of social and emotional competencies possessed by them and to identify the challenges and concerns in practicing the social emotional skills. The study reveals that though the teacher candidates possess satisfactory level of understanding related to social and emotional competencies they fail in applying those skills in classroom contexts due to various personal and social barriers. The teacher education curriculum needs to be revamped with more tools and strategies that equip the prospective teachers to excel with social and emotional competencies.

Keywords: social emotional competencies, teacher aspirants, teacher education

DOI: 10.7176/JEP/14-14-06

Publication date: May 31st 2023

1. Introduction

Teacher has a significant role in educational system of a nation. Imparting and maintaining the standards of education is decided through the quality of teachers. Teachers are social engineers who modify, refine and redefine the society for social reconstruction. The influence of the teacher in enhancing the student outcomes is identified and emphasised by all educational policymakers. The role of the teacher as a knowledge resource is changed and teacher is to be a facilitator who supports the physical, social, emotional and mental development. This necessitates that teachers themselves are socially and emotionally competent to guide their students. But teachers are a particularly stressed professional group and are affected more than average by psychological and psychosomatic complaints (Scheuchet al,2015). Job-related stressors are the strongest predictor of poor job satisfaction for teachers. The social and emotional skills of teachers are not adequate to solve their stress related issues which indicates that teachers need more training and capacity building for enhancing their self-efficacy.

Teachers' social-emotional competence and wellbeing strongly influence the learning context and the infusion of social emotional learning skills into classrooms and schools. (Jones andKahn,2017). The conducive classroom atmosphere is created through the emotional support of a teacher. The prosocial behaviour demonstrated by a teacher generates cooperative and cordial interactions among learners. An optimal classroom climate is characterized by low levels of conflict and disruptive behaviour, smooth transitions from one type of activity to another, appropriate expressions of emotion, respectful communication and problem solving, strong interest and focus on task, and supportiveness and responsiveness to individual differences and students' needs (La Paro & Pianta, 2003). When teachers lack the skills to manage their social and emotional challenges within the particular context of their classroom, children show lower levels of performance. The social and emotional competencies of the teacher influences classroom civility, which is essential for effective teaching. (Philip,2023). Hence the future teachers are to be equipped with the essential social and emotional competencies to manage their classrooms positively.

2. Need and Significance

Daily events show that children and youth today are facing unprecedented challenges in their personal, professional and social life. The rates of depression, addiction, suicide and violence is rapidly increasing. Struggles related to social anxiety, self-worth, handling of social media and interpersonal conflicts endanger the future of humanity itself. Teachers need to prepare the young generation to face such challenges with wisdom and compassion for themselves and one another. Social and emotional changes are part of a child's development. The emotional wellbeing of learners is an important public health challenge throughout the world and an urgent issue for research. Social skills are critical for the ability to interact with, adapt to, and function within the environment. Ability to interact successfully with others is a key to experiences that enrich life, such as having friendships, participating in recreational activities, or joining groups. The acquisition of social skills is essential to become a contributing member of society. Teachers have the responsibility to develop all these skills among

the students. Thus, social emotional learning is to be integrated with curricular transaction and school routines. Social emotional skill development is essential for personal, academic, and social success for all ages, and is connected to healthy relationships, mental wellness, and career success. Schools that provide unique and plentiful opportunities to model, teach, practice, and reinforce these skills with all students every day contributes to the wellbeing of a society. These skills are best learned when all teachers and parents are teaching, inspiring to practice, modelling, and reinforcing the desirable behaviours. Social and emotional learning is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. broadly accepted definition of social and emotional competence developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL,2019). This definition involves emotional, cognitive, and behavioural competencies: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management and responsible decision making (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Social-emotional competence could be defined as “the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one’s life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development” (Elias et al., 1997). This definition emphasizes self-regulation and others’ relationships. The emotional aspect here refers to self-knowledge, mainly on emotion and feelings, but also includes thoughts and perception, which are linked to emotion. And, the social aspect relates to the various dimensions of interpersonal relationships (Hoang, 2016).

Teacher aspirants are those candidates who are preparing to pursue the teaching profession. The social and emotional competence is associated with psychological wellbeing of teachers. Those who master social and emotional challenges feel more efficacious, and teaching becomes more enjoyable and rewarding to them. Warm classroom environments and positive teacher-student relationships promote both academic learning and social emotional learning. (Kimberly,2016). Hence the prospective teachers need to develop social and emotional competencies to impart quality education. The social emotional learning become fruitful if the prospective teachers possess the capacity to skilfully demonstrate the desired social and emotional regulation. Hence the teacher aspirants should have the following qualities.

- Objective awareness about the self; strength, weakness, opportunities and challenges.
- Ability to identify own emotions, feelings and attitudes and to express it in the most appropriate mode with compassion and empathy.
- Realistic understanding of the social context, role of the self in the society and social consciousness in responses
- Ability to make cordial communication with mutual respect; maintaining stable and supportive relationships with others.
- Ability to analyse conflicting contexts and choosing wise decisions promoting self-growth and social welfare.

Thus, the teachers’ social emotional competencies are associated with five major areas; the self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management and decision-making. A teacher who possesses the above qualities and skills has the expertise to guide students towards successful social life. They demonstrate competency in managing the students’ emotions; understands the cognitive appraisals that may be associated with these emotions, and are likely to demonstrate more effective classroom management; they are more proactive, skilfully using their emotional expressions and support to promote enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning and manage student behaviours. Their social and emotional understanding supports students’ ability to apply extensive process-based activities in daily life. Thus, socially and emotionally skilled teacher creates a healthy classroom climate that directly contributes to students’ social, emotional, and academic outcomes. The positive learning outcomes of the class reinforces the self-efficacy and job satisfaction of teachers. When teachers experience mastery over these social and emotional challenges, teaching becomes more enjoyable, and they feel more efficacious (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). Present study explores the teacher aspirant’s perceptions regarding their socio-emotional competencies to enable learners to acquire those skills. It also highlights the challenges faced by teacher aspirants in practicing social emotional competencies.

3.Methodology

The study is aimed to find out whether the teacher aspirants possess necessary social and emotional competencies and to explore the challenges in practicing these skills. The sample for the study consists of 320 under graduates in Education who got opportunity to practice school internship for five months. All of them have completed teacher education course that insist teaching skill training and related practicum. The data was collected through a questionnaire that includes various aspects of the social emotional competencies in two dimensions: (i) level of understanding of relevant component of social emotional competency and (ii) extent of

applying the relevant component of social emotional competency. A specific question was used to record their challenges in practicing social emotional competencies. They were directed to respond in any of the three options; always concerned, often concerned and sometimes concerned based on their challenges. The questionnaires were reviewed by experts in teacher education and suggestions were included for making the tool valid. The data was analysed to get inferences.

4. Findings

The obtained data was analysed and summarised in the following tables.

Table1: Extent of understanding and application of social and emotional competencies of teacher aspirants.

SI No	Component	Level of understanding		Ability to apply in classrooms	
		I am Proficient (%)	I need improvement (%)	I am competent (%)	I need improvement (%)
1	Self-awareness	87.5	12.5	43.35	56.65
2	Self-Management	84.38	15.62	38.5	61.5
3	Social Awareness	97.4	2.6	72.44	27.56
4	Relationship management	89.54	10.46	53.65	46.35
5	Decision making	91.2	8.8	59.45	40.55

The above table shows that most of the teacher aspirants are proficient in understanding the concepts related social emotional competencies. But, most of them are not competent to apply their understanding in real life situations. Teacher aspirants have the feeling that they require improvement in self-management, self-awareness, relationship management and decision-making. Majority of them perceive themselves as competent in social awareness.

The challenges of teacher aspirants regarding the application of social emotional competencies are listed in the table. Various aspects that create personal barrier are categorized to three levels- always concerned, often concerned and sometimes concerned. Only those components that are reported by more than 90% of the sample are listed in the table. These are taken as the most important personal challenges in demonstrating the social emotional competency of teacher aspirants.

Table2: Challenges of teacher aspirants in practicing social and emotional competencies.

Always concerned	Often concerned	Sometimes concerned
(i) Lack of self confidence	(i) Distorted self-perception	(i) Maintaining relationships
(ii) Poor self-efficacy beliefs	(ii) Inability to identify the strengths	(ii) Fear of teamwork
(iii) Low impulse control	(iii) Inadequate self-discipline	(iii) No respect from others
(iv) Poor time management	(iv) Improper decisions	(iv) Poor perception of social situations
(v) No stress coping skills		
(vi) Lack of intrinsic motivation		
(vii) Lack of communication skills		
(viii) Inability to solve conflicts		
(ix) Trouble for timely decisions		

Table 2 indicates that the teacher aspirants have issues in the domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building and decision-making. Most of them have low self-confidence, poor self-efficacy beliefs, low impulse control, poor time management and lack of stress coping skills. They feel that their intrinsic motivation and communication skills are not adequate. They are unable to solve conflicts and face trouble in taking timely decisions. Most of them are often concerned about their distorted self-perception, inability to identify the strengths, inadequate self-discipline and improper decisions. Maintaining relationships, fear of teamwork, no respect from others and poor perception of social situations sometimes creates concern among majority of the teacher aspirants. This indicates that theoretical understanding of teacher aspirants related to social emotional competencies do not ensure the demonstration of better behaviour in teaching contexts. Hence more powerful interventions are required to enable them to acquire the skills and to develop the social and emotional learning skills of school students.

5. Conclusion

Socially and emotionally competent teachers have high self-awareness and social awareness. They know how their emotional expressions affect their interactions with students. They are able to build strong and supportive relationships through mutual understanding and cooperation and can effectively negotiate solutions to conflict situations. Socially and emotionally competent teachers make wise decisions, understand that others may have different perspectives than they do, and take this into account in relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. Teachers who feel confident about their emotional skills will better recognize and understand students' emotions and their place in the students' behaviour (Elias, 2009) They can manage their behaviour

even when emotionally aroused by challenging situations. Thus, they facilitate positive classroom climate and ensure attainment of learning outcomes. Teacher education programmes are to be revamped with various policies and processes to enhance the transversal skills of prospective teachers. When teacher transacts the curricular components aiming at attainment of higher marks without attending the affective components that may affect the social and emotional development of learners. (Philip,2023)

The teacher aspirants are to be skilled in understanding that learning context encompasses such factors as communication styles, performance expectations, classroom structures and rules, school organizational climate, commitment to academic success for all students, parental and community involvement. The teacher interventions should occur in a safe, caring, supportive, participatory, and well-managed social and emotional learning atmosphere. Social and emotional competencies help us to navigate the world of relationships, whereas emotional competency guides us to regulate our feelings and behaviours evoked by social interactions, to obtain positive and desired outcomes (Hoang, 2016) and these competencies should be embedded in the curriculum. Curricular provisions are needed for the future teachers with feasible tools and strategies to build their own social and emotional competence. Equipping the teacher aspirants with proper skills would help to create a generation of students who have acquired the social and emotional competencies they need for their adult roles as citizens, employees, parents, and social reformers.

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