

Social Inclusion in Education and Role of Emotional Intelligence from the Academic Library's Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Social inclusion and emotional intelligence are increasingly recognised as critical components in modern education systems. Social inclusion in education ensures that all learners regardless of their background, ability, and socio-economic status feel valued, respected, and supported in the educational environment. Emotional intelligence is vital for understanding and managing the needs and motivations of learners, educators, and other staff members involved in the educational activities. It also involves building strong relationships, resolving conflicts, and creating a collaborative and inclusive campus culture. As classrooms contain learners with diverse demographic characteristics, educators must cultivate emotionally intelligent responses to promote inclusivity in education for equitable and effective learning environment. Libraries emerge as crucial agents of inclusion, offering both emotional and information resources to marginalised learners.

The present paper discusses the effectiveness of academic library services in the context of social inclusion in education in an emotionally intelligent environment. The paper, being a theoretical exploration, is based on primary sources of information like research papers published in this context.

Keywords: education, social inclusion in education, emotional intelligence, academic library services

I. INTRODUCTION

ज्ञानं कामधेनुवत् उत्तमम्। स्वसमयात् पूर्वं फलं ददाति।
परदेशे मातृवत्। ज्ञानं गुप्तं निधिं मन्यते। ---- चाणक्य

[Knowledge is as good as Kamdhenu. It gives fruit before its time. It is like a mother in a foreign land. Knowledge is considered a hidden treasure. ---- Chanakya (375 BC - 283 BC)]

In India, the concept of social inclusion in education gained popularity starting in the 1990s. Social inclusion in education is the need of hour; due to the British colonial rule and other indigenous social barriers all fellow citizens have not been accommodated within the periphery of educational gambit. It happened due to the lack of inherent urge for learning from the learners' end or it happened due to the absence of law-of-land's indifference towards making an environment of universal learning. This is in regard to at least learning the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic). In later stages the legislature, however, passed laws and allowed its citizens to have the umbrella of Sarvashiksha Abhijaan. Still, a portion of our fellow citizens are outside the learning environment. We have to include them in the realm of formal as well as non-formal education systems. Social inclusion in education refers to the practice of ensuring that all learners regardless of their background, ability, and socio-economic status feel valued, respected, and supported in the educational environment. This involves creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment that promotes diversity, addresses barriers to learning, and provides opportunities for all learners to succeed. In this context, we can introduce the practice of inculcating emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is vital for understanding and managing the needs and motivations of students, faculty, and staff in the educational activities. It also involves building strong relationships, resolving conflicts, and creating a collaborative and inclusive campus culture to have greater coverage in pushing the frontiers of the educational environment in India. Academic library services satisfy the needs of diverse groups of learners for the growth and development of study, teaching, and research endeavour. This paper is based on research papers published in this context. However, a dearth is noticed in the literature on the said topic, specifically the role of academic libraries on social inclusion in education when emotional intelligence technique is followed. The present paper discusses the effectiveness of academic library services in the context of social inclusion in education in an emotionally intelligent environment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

P. Rajendran, B. Athira and D. Elavarasi (2020) showed that emotional intelligence is crucial for teachers to effectively practice inclusive education. Emotional intelligence positively impacts adapted behaviour, higher quality social relationships, and meeting diverse learners' needs. C. Elmi (2020) opined that integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) strategies in higher education can promote student interest in science, build stress resilience, and create more positive engagement in the classroom. K. Katsora, S. Kaprinis and A. Strigas (2022) found that special educators with higher emotional intelligence and experience are more effective in empowering and socializing students with disabilities. A. Heyder, A. Sudkamp and R. Steinmayr (2020) pointed out that positive teacher attitudes in respect of social inclusion in education can partially reduce the social integration gap between learners with and without special educational needs. F. Polat (2011) opined that inclusion in education has made progress in Tanzania, but there are still barriers at national, community, and school levels, highlighting the need for further progress towards inclusive, just, and quality education. S. Jan and M. Anwar (2019) found that higher emotional intelligence in university students is positively associated with increased library use and improved academic achievement. S. Jan, M. Anwar and N. Warraich (2018) showed that higher emotional intelligence and reduced library anxiety significantly improve academic performance among university students.

There is a research gap in respect of social inclusion in education and role of emotional intelligence from academic libraries' perspective. The present paper discusses the concept in the following sections.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The present paper aims:

- 1) to create awareness about social inclusion in education
- 2) to explore the idea of emotional intelligence in respect of social inclusion in education
- 3) to deal with the effectiveness of academic library services on social inclusion in education in an emotionally intelligent environment.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on primary sources of information like research papers published in this context. It is a theoretical exploration where the effectiveness of academic library services is discussed in the context of social inclusion in education in an emotionally intelligent environment.

V. SOCIAL INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

Social inclusion means creating a learning environment where disadvantaged, marginalised, or differently-abled learners are fully integrated into the academic and social life of the school. Equity (everyone is provided with what they need to succeed), not just equality (everyone is treated the same exact way, regardless of need for any other individual difference) is emphasized here. The prevalent discrimination based on socio-economic status, gender, disability, language, or culture are not counted for active participation of learners in educational journey. For example, representation of diverse cultures in teaching material, flexible assessment systems to accommodate varied learning needs, etc.

The concept of social inclusion in education in India gained popularity starting in the 1990s. This period witnessed the integration of inclusive education philosophies into key educational initiatives and policies with a notable shift from segregated education models.

Building blocks for social inclusion in education include the following:

- 1) Understanding diversity: By embracing diversity educational institutions can foster a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Promoting diversity is essential for creating a well- rounded and socially aware student body.
- 2) Prioritizing equity and access: It ensures that all learners have equal access to educational resources, opportunities, and support.
- 3) Inclusive pedagogy: Inclusive pedagogy is a teaching approach. Under this approach all learners irrespective of their social background, abilities, or social identity have equitable opportunities to participate and learn. Key aspects include valuing diversity, differentiated instruction to meet diverse learning needs, collaborative learning to encourage peer support and empathy and removing barriers in respect of curriculum, language, technology, and classroom culture.
- 4) Support systems: Social inclusion in education specially when infused with emotional intelligence requires some support systems to get desired result in this respect. Introducing support systems improves academic performance of the learners, enhances their overall well-being, and provides effective learning spaces. Support systems include mentorship programs, counselling services, social emotional learning program (aimed at developing among learners the skills like empathy, self-regulation, and responsible decision making), teachers' training, etc. Infrastructural accessibility and other facilities like libraries, laboratories, playground, special types of study materials etc. are to be considered in respect of support services.

5) Community engagement: Teachers can play a positive role for community engagement and social change. Organising local awareness campaigns and cultural festivals can help to create inclusive learning environment by bringing the community together and promoting social responsibility and empathy.

6) Introducing universal education: Universal education can bridge gaps in respect of caste, creed, gender, economic disparity, and regional dispersion among citizens.

Benefits of Social Inclusion in Education

1) Reduced inequality: Social inclusion in education reduces systematic inequalities and discrimination based on disability, gender, and/or socio-economic status.

2) Increased empathy: It helps to nurture empathy, tolerance, and acceptance among diverse societal sections.

3) Improved social skills: It helps to improve social skills like communication, cooperation, etc.

4) It helps to push forward the frontiers of academic environment for a nation.

5) Overall national progress: Education fetches knowledge and 'knowledge is as good as Kamdhenu. It gives fruit before its time. It is like a mother in a foreign land. knowledge is considered a hidden treasure' (Chanakya).

Strategies for promoting social inclusion in education include the following:

1) Innovative teaching methods to meet the needs of diverse range of learners to suit their socio-cultural identity.

2) Thrust on support services to fulfil varied learning environment related aspects.

3) Community partnerships to bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements. e.g. the National Skill Development Corporation in India.

4) Inclusive curriculum in this context gives emphasis on social justice and emotional understanding. While designing inclusive curriculum broader diverse perspectives should be taken into consideration. For social inclusion in education, it needs a collaborative curriculum design where teachers, learners, and librarians can play a vital role. Inclusive curriculum should reflect varied identities and experiences. It should foster critical thinking which challenges stereotypes.

5) Inculcating emotional intelligence plays a significant role and can be regarded as one of the best strategies towards promoting social inclusion in education.

Government of India initiatives in this direction in recent times include the following (not exhaustive in nature):

1. Constitutional and legal frameworks:

Education is treated as fundamental right under article 21 A of the Indian constitution (86th Amendment, 2002).

i) The Right to Education Act, 2009

ii) The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

iii) The National Education Policy, 2020

2. Flagship programs and schemes:

i) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in 2001

ii) Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) launched in 2009

iii) Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan launched in 2018 - this integrated scheme combines SSA, RMSA, and Teachers Education schemes to provide a holistic and inclusive approach to school education.

iv) NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement)

v) PM e-Vidya (launched in 2020): A technology driven initiative to provide educational resources and access.

Emotional Intelligence

This term emotional intelligence was coined in 1990 by John Mayer and Peter Salovey. It was popularized by psychologist Daniel Goleman. It is defined as the ability to recognise, understand, manage, and influence one's own emotion as well as the emotion of others who are there in the work place concerned.

The five core components of emotional intelligence include the following:

1. Self-awareness: Understanding one's emotions, weaknesses, strengths and values.

2. Self-regulation: Managing one's emotions effectively

3. Motivation: Streamlining emotions towards fulfilment of objectives.

4. Empathy: Recognising emotions in others and responding appropriately.

5. Social skills: Managing relationships to move people in desired directions.

When the above components of emotional intelligence are followed, it fetches positive relationships, resolves conflicts and creates emotionally supportive learning environment. Emotional intelligence contributes to interpersonal communication, stress management and fine-tunes leadership style in accordance with the emotions of the entities involved in an educational setup to make the educational needs satisfied. Educators with high emotional intelligence are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviour, demonstrate resilience, and maintain better mental health. Teachers with high emotional intelligence can manage classrooms more effectively, recognise and respond to learners' emotional cues. Case studies from programs such as RULER (recognising, understanding, labelling, expressing and regulating emotions) show that educators who adopt emotional intelligence frameworks enhance both academic outcomes and students' well-being. Students with developed emotional intelligence are, on the other hand, more likely to succeed academically, form positive peer

relationships, and navigate social challenges in schools. Bracket et al. (2012) found that students who participated in SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) programs scored significantly higher on emotional skills and academic achievement metrics than their peers who did not.

High emotional intelligence helps in building interpersonal skills to resolve conflict in management area and communication, thus, forming a holistic personality development in respect of the educators as well as the learners.

Social Inclusion in Education and Emotional Intelligence

Social inclusion in education ensures that every individual regardless of his or her background has access to quality education. Following this concept an environment is created where everyone feels motivated and thinks himself or herself valued in the educational systems of a country. By emphasizing social inclusion in education educators and policy makers can create a more just, equitable and compassionate society where every individual has the opportunity to be included in the education systems.

According to Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) "Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and those of others." Following emotional intelligence is essential for both teachers and learners in an inclusive educational setup. For teachers or educators' self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and relationship management are essential to build an atmosphere where social inclusion and emotional intelligence will go side by side. On the other hand, for learners the role of emotional intelligence in social inclusion encourages respect, cooperation, and empathy among peers, reduces exclusion, and enforces resilience in disadvantaged and marginalised learners.

Inclusive pedagogy coupled with emotional intelligence leads to an atmosphere of deeper social inclusion in educational setup. Emotional intelligence empowers teachers for implementation of inclusive pedagogy with sensitivity. Inclusive pedagogy provides the structural framework, whereas emotional intelligence reinforces interpersonal and emotional dimensions for addressing the exclusion. Emotional intelligence with inclusive pedagogy creates a learning space for every learner who feels valued, motivated, and capable of getting success.

Academic Libraries' Catalytic Role

Education is greatly supported by the services from the library sector. In India libraries are of various types like public libraries, academic libraries, etc. For formal education systems academic libraries play vital role in accelerating the wheel of education. In respect of social inclusion in education academic libraries can play significant role in the society. Through the ages various management concepts have been evolving resulting the growth and development of education systems in scientific way to get the desired result of education. The development of emotional intelligence in education sector has been contributing greatly. Social inclusion in education and the development of emotional intelligence is increasingly recognised as essential for learner's success and well-being. Academic libraries play a significant role in supporting these goals by fostering inclusive environment, promoting social and emotional learning, and providing resources and activities that enhance both academic and personal growth.

Inclusive spaces and activities: Academic libraries serve as "third places" to offer inclusion activities for diverse learners including learners with special needs and those at risk of social exclusion. These provide accessible environment, support social cohesion, and offer programs such as book clubs, art exhibitions, and language courses to promote belonging and reduce isolation.

Support for under-represented sections: Academic libraries can accelerate participation in higher education. These are working to improve access for marginalized sections and supporting social justice initiatives.

Introducing user friendly environments and library resources: Academic libraries remain open at convenient hours of the user community with special needs. Accessibility to library premises, resources, and other amenities should be user friendly depending on the nature of the learners.

For the learners with disabilities social inclusion in education needs empathy. Inculcating emotional intelligence among teachers fetches more effective result in inclusion process where academic libraries give support in synchronising the process. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to support learners' social and emotional needs (Skura & Swiderska, 2021).

Students with higher emotional intelligence are associated with more frequent library use, lower academic anxiety, and better academic achievement (Jan & Anwar, 2019).

Academic libraries facilitate social connections that are important for psychological well-being and academic engagement. However, balancing quiet study spaces with opportunities for social interaction remains a challenge.

Providing online resources 24x7 to help academic activities for remote learners is also needed for social inclusion in education. Indira Gandhi National Open University is an example in this context.

Challenges include staff training and awareness among academic library staff and educators about the libraries' potential in promoting inclusion and emotional intelligence. Training and interdisciplinary collaboration are helpful to maximize impact of social inclusion in education with a flavour of emotional intelligence.

Finally, resource constraints are always there in coping with social inclusion in education related issues.

VI. CONCLUSION

Social inclusion in education is an urgent need for India. Inculcating emotional intelligence in education for embracing social inclusion is a tool. Academic libraries and their important services will play a greater role in advancing social inclusion in education by following emotional intelligence which is going to be a very powerful management technique in education horizon. Academic libraries provide inclusive spaces, support diverse learners, and offer programs that enhance both academic and emotional well-being. Continued investment in staff training, interdisciplinary collaboration, acquisition of library materials befitting the diverse needs of learners, providing makerspace and other user-friendly library resource development will further strengthen their role in fostering inclusive and supportive educational environment.

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