**[Education & EQ](https://www.dawn.com/news/1760691/education-eq)**

[Nazir A. Jogezai](https://www.dawn.com/authors/9945/nazir-a-jogezai) Published June 20, 2023

EMOTIONAL intelligence, or emotional quotient, is as significant as intelligence quotient. EQ, based on social intelligence, is the capacity to comprehend, utilise and regulate one’s emotions in constructive ways to reduce stress, communicate effectively, empathise with others, overcome problems, and diffuse disputes. Research also tells us about the ‘curse of emotion’, whereby individuals with a high EQ might arouse negative feelings. However, rational individuals with higher EQ fare better than those who are emotionally attached to an opinion or ideology.

Contemporary learning theories stress EQ-responsive curricula, instruction, assessment and learning environments to promote holistic development, including self-awareness, among the students. Self-awareness depends on the level of mental autonomy, objective self-analysis, and decision-making abilities, with teachers and parents as support. However, schools and homes tend to promote the memorisation of specific knowledge, without considering the students’ interests or potential. What can only be called ‘instructional policing’ demands obedience from the students and often results in physical or emotional abuse, if the young learners take no interest or resist. Meanwhile, parents want to fulfil their own dreams through their children’s education.

With such a narrow understanding of learning at home and in schools, students feel fear and anxiety, and are prone to negative emotions — in contrast to how it should be. Research tells us that a learner’s multiple intelligences, while possessing their own strengths and weaknesses, seldom function independently of one another. Musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences are examples. A creative, imaginative youngster, though possessing poor memorisation powers, may do very well in some areas but may not get good grades in an exam. Notwithstanding their skills, such children are deemed failures.

Standardised tests also largely function as an evaluation model, measuring students, with varying abilities, against fixed knowledge standards. There is nothing holistic about the teaching approach that supports such tests. In fact, assessments must go beyond merely quantifying what has been learnt; it must also highlight areas for development for both students and teachers. Regrettably, teachers rely on syllabus completion and memorised material to set exam questions. As a student, I recall having to rote learn many ‘answers’. So I had no idea what I was reciting in front of my teachers or why one student was praised while the other was punished.

Exams must go beyond quantifying what has been learnt.

We must prioritise learning keeping our youngsters’ EQ in mind. This could be done through an enabling atmosphere instead of being made to face pressure to deliver ‘A’ or ‘A’-plus grades. Schools must be made aware of their students’ talents and adapt their teaching methods accordingly, rather than subjecting them to homogenous teaching methodologies and rote learning-based assessments, which can never handle diverse intelligences and modes of learning. Intelligence denotes acting purposefully, thinking rationally and applying information rather than merely storing it. It is more about how to learn than what to learn.

Our curricula, textbooks, teachers, in fact the overall learning system, must consider diversity in terms of multiple intelligences as each child is different. The fear of failure must be reduced by sensitively addressing children’s learning requirements.

More important is the skill and co­­u­rage to ask quest­ions. Learn­ing rel­ies on asking logical questions as oppo­sed to just searching for accurate ans­wers. The rep­ression of inquiry in the name of obedience stifles the courage and curiosity of children and causes them emotional harm. The curricula, teachers and parents expect obedience, which essentially means executing an action on the orders of an authority to maintain a show of respect. Teachers and parents are the people closest to children, but they are also people from whom children hide a lot of things. Respect is a two-way street — between teachers and students, and between parents and children.

Updated scientific research tells us that the students’ reflective learning experiences indicate an increase in self-introspection, emotional awareness, emotional regulation and understanding others. Moving from homogeneous expectations to multiple intelligences is the most effective approach. We can achieve this by allowing adequate space for new modes of learning that stimulate our children’s intellectual capital rather than memory, therefore preparing pupils for life than just for exams. We need to raise our children with greater EQ, so that they remain productive for themselves and society.

*The writer is an educationist.*

*Published in Dawn, June 20th, 2023*