



Student Engagement through Emotional and Social Intelligence – An Approach

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Abstract

Grabbing and retaining students' engagement has become the latest focus of attention for those aiming to maintain and enhance learning and teaching in higher education. Engagement is more than involvement or participation. Being involved in higher education, we face many problems in class, especially concerning student 'engagement'. We, the teachers, struggle to increase students' participation in the class. Students hardly pay attention, are least interested in the discussion process, and are busy using their mobile phones in class. Also, most of the students are willing to be the backbenchers. They just show their physical presence, and the only reason is that 75% of attendance is made compulsory to be eligible to appear for the university exams. Rather, they are interested in the activities in the class. This paper focuses on how the engagement of the students can be improved. The paper will cover two aspects: Emotional intelligence and Social intelligence. Apart from that, suggestions are taken from the students about how to improve their engagement while in the class to better clarify the topic. Therefore, the paper's analysis will be based on personal views and the valuable feedback given by the students. I have collected the feedback of 50 students in the BBA 2nd semester through structured and close-ended questionnaires.

Keywords: Student Engagement, Emotional Intelligence, Social Intelligence, Higher Education

1. Introduction

To strengthen the relationship between any two parties, you need to establish a common motto, understand the expectations and then design and develop a fool-proof plan to meet expectations through your execution. As Kelly (2001) points out, people with a lesser need may be satisfied by few contacts, while those with a greater need may strive hard to develop many contacts. Kuh (2009, p. 683) has defined student engagement as an investment of time and efforts made by the students in different curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities to reach their set goals, which are empirically linked to the institution's vision and mission. There is a general problem faced by all the faculty members involved in higher education- students not paying attention in class, addiction to mobile phones, constant distractions during lectures and the mindset that going on lectures has no practical implications and is not of their use. These are all the challenges faced by the faculty, and they struggle to increase the participation level of students. The students can sense engagement gaps based on race, gender, and ethnicity. Female students' engagement ratio is higher

than that of male students [1].

2. Objectives

- i. To understand the concept of student engagement.
- ii. To assess the concept of Emotional and Social Intelligence.
- iii. To analyze the role of faculty members in increasing students' engagement.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Student Engagement

The New Education Policy 2020 emphasizes and focuses on student engagement through regular interaction, simulations, case studies and other activities that can be combined with regular teaching pedagogy [2]. Faculty members need to be thoughtful while spending time in assigned classes and bring innovative ways of teaching and learning so that relevant resources can reach out to the students, intending to optimize the student's experience and enhance the learning outcomes. This helps in the development of students, as well as the performance and reputation of the institution. To meet this, the students should show curiosity, interest and passion



when learning or being taught. Motivation to learn and to progress is the key element that every faculty member must imbibe as a teacher. Generally speaking, learning is improved when the learners show their interest, are inspired and are inspired to explore and learn more [3]. Otherwise, boredom will surround the students, leading to disinterest, discomfort and indiscipline. A common instructional objective expressed by educators is to strengthen stronger student engagement or improve student engagement.

3.2. Emotional and Social Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence & Social Intelligence is essential for managing self and connecting with others. It can be defined as “the ability to adapt one’s behaviour based on awareness of one’s own emotions and attunement with others’ emotions”. It is the foundation skill of all interpersonal & intrapersonal competencies [4]. For a good connection with students, we must understand their thoughts and emotions because they shape a person’s attitude, behaviour and actions. Most people react based on emotions, and even those who don’t find their emotions continuously play an intervening role in their choices. Thus, if we can understand pupil’s emotions, we can relate to them far more meaningfully. It is important to observe nonverbal behaviour (Gestures, postures, vocal cues, and expressions) for these authentic emotions because if we get cues about someone’s emotional state, we can better predict their choices. Thus can be more prepared with the most appropriate response to meet their expectations based on their thoughts. This knowledge can be used for our benefit as well as for the benefit of others [5]. For instance, if we can spot the early stage of anger in someone’s behaviour, then we can do something to offset a potentially unfavourable outcome. Or, in a classroom, if we can read cues of discomfort in a student who cannot express it, you may extend a helping hand as a teacher. There are micro-expressions, which can be spotted with observation and practice and can also be controlled in the initial stage of emotional stimulation. Putting together the works of Charles Darwin, Duchenne, Ernst Huber, Robert Plutchik, and Silvan Tomkins, two famous researchers, Paul

Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen, found that there are seven emotions that the human face can convey. These are (i) surprise, (ii) fear, (iii) disgust, (iv) contempt, (v) anger, (vi) happiness and (vii) sadness. By observing someone’s bodily signals, we can pick signs of discomfort, interest, or enthusiasm; only by identifying the exact emotion can one choose the most apt and purposeful response [6]. That is the difference between a commonsensical layman and a person with emotional and social intelligence. For instance, if a teacher is discussing disagreement with students, it is important to spot whether the student is feeling contempt, disgust or anger; in each case, what is required to be done on the teacher’s part would differ. This ability to fine-tune or refine one’s responses in behavioural situations is at the heart of emotional and social intelligence.

3.3. Analysis and Interpretation

All 50 students were present in the class, and they responded to the question [7]. The questionnaire was close-ended and well-structured, based on a five-point Likert scale. All the questionnaires were returned because they were distributed in the class and collected before leaving the class. Almost all questions were answered. The students' ages were between 18 and 20. The questionnaire was divided into two sections:

- Personal information
- Variants of student engagement.

The results of the survey in a tabular form are shown in Appendix I.

4. Findings of the Survey

Results suggest that 'student engagement' can be improved through the involvement of teachers and the supportive nature of management. This encourages the engagement of students [8].

- 100 per cent of students agreed that they pay attention in class, but sometimes, tiring and lengthy sessions and back-to-back classes were the main concerns for their disengagement.
- 80 per cent of students pointed out that there must be a bifurcation between slow and fast learners because the slow learners need more explanation, which becomes boring for the



rest of the students and leads to disengagement [9].

- 100 per cent agreed that teaching must be employment-focused. Also, 90 per cent of students showed concern about the subject matter's relevancy and focused on application-based learning.
- 90 per cent of students agreed that teaching must be in a participative style. This means that there must be an open discussion on the topic so that all the students can provide their suggestions, which leads to developing creativity among the students, but 10 per cent of students were neutral on the issue.
- 50 per cent of students agreed that mobile phones should not be allowed during the sessions until and unless required because that distracts the students' minds, whereas 30 per cent disagreed, and 20 per cent could not give their opinion on this issue.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Millennial students need to be told at every stage what needs to be done or not. The best way for a faculty member to increase student engagement is to increase their self-belief. Students need to be assessed on their strengths and weaknesses. Some of the suggestions to ensure student involvement are discussed below. The whole analysis is based on the above points discussed and also on the students' collected feedback [10-12].

- **Executing the concept of Emotional and Social Intelligence:** Through this concept, we can easily connect with the students and develop a sense of responsibility and belongingness. In the classroom, while delivering the topic, the faculty member needs to keep an eye on all the students' understanding of their levels, and accordingly, necessary actions can be taken.
- **Enhance students' self-belief and allow them to work autonomously:** What students believe about themselves as learners is very important. They should remain positive and believe that they can learn. In learning, they will overcome their weaknesses and work on grey areas. Learn from failures, as it shows

that you can learn. Let students have some control over learning processes. This boosts their confidence and commitment to learning. It is important for institutions to understand the changing needs of the students and to provide opportunities for students to learn both autonomously and with the support of a prescribed syllabus under the mentorship of their faculty members; it develops in them a sense of responsibility and competency to handle situations; students are more likely to be motivated to engage and success.

- **Mentor-mentee session:** An attempt can be made to improve the student's engagement with the help of this kind of session. Slow learners can be motivated or trained wherever it is required. However, for that purpose, proper mentoring should be done to increase the participation of students in these sessions. Through proper mentoring, students' queries and grievances can be collected, whether related to the non-engagement of students in the class or certain other issues related to management, and solutions must be provided accordingly. But again, the session should be well planned and executed accordingly for maximum success. Students must feel that their queries and suggestions are being accepted and entertained, motivating them to be vocal.
- **Extracurricular activities:** Apart from academic activities, students must also be involved in other activities to refresh their minds. Apart from these activities, sessions for students' self-growth must be initiated. Students must have a belief in themselves that they can learn and also can overcome failure. Faculty members can improve students by creating and providing opportunities for them to develop their self-confidence. Also, if there is a need to increase students' engagement, the best way is to provide them the opportunity for self-assessment through which they can assess their personality, strengths and weaknesses and have a better career enhancement.



- **Enabling simulation techniques:** Role-play, case study techniques, and brainstorming sessions can be used to make the session interactive and interesting. Several management games can also be introduced to increase students' engagement. Effective teaching should be linked with activities like team-building skills, communication skills, and decision-making skills, which will definitely increase students' engagement.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to only one institution (International School of Management Patna) and the analysis is done on the above discussed points as well as the feedback collected from the students based on the same. For further research, more educational institutions can be covered and the study can be analyzed more effectively by including some more relevant points.

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