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Why Elementary School Teachers Need to be Emotionally-Spiritually Oriented? A Research Based Evidence

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ABSTRACT: The present education system rather than promoting the inquisitiveness and creativity is suppressing them more so in young children who are naturally gifted with these abilities. Universalisation of elementary education now puts demand on teachers teaching at this level for the development of this asset with the children. NCF for teacher education (2009) draft indicates that flexibility, sensitivity and psychological well being are of utmost importance in teachers for their optimum functioning. This paper explores association of these vital abilities with the dimensions of thinking with a view to establish the relative importance of the thinking abilities and identify the distinctness of factors amongst all variables of study. The study was conducted on 93 elementary school teachers selected through stratified random sampling teaching at schools of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The standardised tools were used to collect the data. Data were analysed with the help of Varimax Rotation in factor analysis and three factors were extracted for Elementary Teachers namely: Well Being Threat, Rational Thinking, and Creative Emotional Intelligence. The findings have been discussed in light of previous research results.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Change Proneness, Spiritual Intelligence, Psychological risk, Anxiety, Elementary Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Ironically, the education system from its initial stages is suppressing the creativity and inquisitiveness naturally present in each child. The concern on the creativity was that “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up” (attributed to Pablo Picasso). The children are found to be most novel and flexible in their thought. As they grow up to be an adolescent and then to an adult there is a sharp decline in the creative-imaginative thinking but a rise in the I.Q. Gardner (1982) observed higher levels of artistic creativity and aesthetic expression among preschool children relative to older children. Zabelina and Robinson (2010) found that individuals in the mindset condition involving childlike thinking, childlike inclination for play and the childlike desire for recognition exhibited higher levels of creative originality than those who are not in such mindset condition. Covey (2006) quoting Buckminster Fuller says, “All children are born genius; 9,999 out of every 10,000 are swiftly, in advertently degeniusized by grownups.”

The fundamental reality is that human beings are four-dimensional beings with body, mind, heart and spirit, and corresponding to it are their needs. Intellect, emotion and spirit depend on one another for wholeness, they are interwoven in human self and in education at its best (Palmer 1998). Understanding this is the key to the path towards unlocking the true potential in human beings. This is a highly challenging job and can only be aided a bit by the psychologists in one to one sessions with a limited reach. It’s the education system that has to handle the responsibility as it has the largest reach to the widest group at different stages of unbolting the creative potential of children. The task has to be handled by the positive education in which the teachers embed the principles of well being and innovation into what they teach and how they teach, therefore teacher’s thinking abilities, well being and flexibility becomes vital for making them an efficient

medium and effective model for unleashing the optimum potential in students.

Recent major developments like political recognition of universalisation of elementary education and the state commitment towards it leading to the ‘Right to Education Act’, making it mandatory for state to provide free and compulsory education to children in 6-14 age group and NCF for school education (2005) places different demands and expectations on teachers, and more so for elementary school teachers who are contributing in the fundamental development of child in his most crucial years.

NCTE taking guideline from these developments, has prepared National Curriculum Framework (NCF) draft for teacher education (2009), in it envisioning the teacher preparation, has stated the competencies vital for a teacher in changed context. NCF quoting ‘The National Knowledge Commission’ (NKC) states that teachers are the single most important element of the school system and indicating the importance of **Emotional Intelligence** in a teacher states that “The idea that objectivity, which is a necessary constituent of knowledge, can be achieved only if knowledge is free from emotions (care, concern, and love) must be abandoned”. Teachers must develop the abilities for,

- ❖ Understanding the self and others (one’s beliefs, assumptions, emotions and aspirations),
- ❖ Self-directed learning and the ability to think, be self-critical and to work collaboratively in groups,
- ❖ Learning and to learn to listen to children with attention and empathy,
- ❖ Care for children and love to be with them, understand children within social, cultural and political context, develop sensitivity to their problems, and treat all children equally.

Today, the teacher is coping up with the perpetually updating technology that has entered the system of education as a medium of communication. The multifaceted roles they have to play in an academic atmosphere other than mere teaching, the radical changes in the student’s behaviour due to the cultural changes and increased

exposure at an early age, a world of academic and other information readily available with the students of elementary level at a key stroke are other major issues. NCF draft for teacher education (2009) indicating the importance of **Spiritual Intelligence** in teachers states, teachers need to

- ❖ develop social sensitivity and consciousness and finer human sensibilities.
- ❖ be responsible towards society and need to work to build a better world.
- ❖ be liberal, humanistic and responsive to the demands of inclusive, peace, environment education

Coping with the demanding atmosphere and mechanically following the prescribed syllabus, teachers stop growing and thriving professionally thus, are susceptible to many behavioural psychological problems. Research states teachers all over the world are feeling beleaguered, even passionate teachers are exhausted in face of apathy and resistance from around them (Hargraves and Fullan, 1998). NCF draft for teacher education (2009) speaking about the overall **well being** of teacher's states, teachers need to explore

- ❖ the meaning of ethics and values, observe and understand feelings of fear and trust and their influences in personal and social attitude;
- ❖ their attitudes towards competition and cooperation, analyze and observe the impact of competition in personal and social life.

The increased pressure on elementary teachers in this atmosphere has made them stagnant in process, dependent on the upper ladder in fraternity and hierarchy of authority to decide. The current dynamic, competitive and demanding atmosphere requires the teachers to be competent and contributing individuals, who are the harbingers of change. NCF draft for teacher education (2009) states, teachers need to have ability for

- ❖ Self-learning, reflection, assimilation and articulation of new ideas

❖ self-analysis, self-evaluation, adaptability, flexibility, creativity and innovation

Now how are these specified set of competencies vital for an elementary teacher and which thinking ability in teachers is more contextual in them when we talk about these needed competencies?

The teachers at different levels (categories) of teaching have students of different age, use different methods of teaching, have different educational objectives and thus their experiences vary, requiring focus on a different set of competencies and thinking abilities in teachers at different levels to successfully accomplish the job. There are different kinds of courses mandatory for teachers teaching at different levels (categories); Primary, Secondary and College level, that make them competent for the specified level (category).

Unlocking the creative potential in elementary school teachers, developing a reflective tendency, social sensitivity and consciousness and finer human sensibilities, making them take responsibility, to make them rise above self interest and have holistic thinking embracing the interest and benefits of a wider group other than personal and organizational, requires a step beyond expertise and effectiveness that is the magnanimity, which is conferred by emotional and spiritual Intelligence. Theoretically this brings in limelight the importance of the two dimensions of thinking abilities, Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence in elementary school teachers. The question arises – do emotional-spiritual thinking abilities / Intelligence on empirical grounds have any relevance to the above mentioned potentials of flexibility, innovation, and well being in elementary teachers?

With this backdrop it is important to explore the relative importance of the three dimensions of thinking abilities, Rational, Emotional and Spiritual, by finding their relevance with Change Proneness, Psychological Risk, and Anxiety in elementary school teachers. There has been no study so far to explore this relationship, hence due to the importance of the subject matter and paucity of studies on this subject, this area is being explored to get some vital answers for policy makers and its implementers.

OBJECTIVE

The following was the objective of the study:

To study the factor structure underlying Rational Intelligence (Verbal Intelligence and Non-Verbal Intelligence), Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Psychological Risk, Change Proneness, Anxiety of elementary school Teachers.

SAMPLE

This study was conducted on 93 Teachers teaching at elementary level in different schools situated at Bhopal, M.P. Stratified Random Sampling Technique was used for selecting the sample. The stratification was done on the basis of Discipline, and Gender. Arts, Science and Commerce were the three levels of Disciplines to which subjects belonged to. Males and Females were the two levels of Gender of sample belonging to either of each selected Discipline. The distribution of the sample on the basis of Discipline, and Gender is given in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Discipline wise, and Gender wise Distribution of the Sample

Discipline	Primary School Teachers		
	Male	Female	Total
Arts	10	22	32
Science	4	29	33
Commerce	3	25	28
Total	17	76	93

TOOLS

In the present study, data were collected in respect of Rational Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Psychological Risk, Change Proneness, and Anxiety of elementary school teachers by administering the appropriate standardized available tools. The tool to assess Spiritual Intelligence was developed and standardized by the investigator. The details of tools used in this study are given below.

Rational Intelligence

Rational Intelligence comprised of Verbal Intelligence and Non-Verbal Intelligence. The details of tools used for assessing each one of them are given below in separate captions.

Verbal Intelligence

The verbal aspect of Rational Intelligence was assessed with the help of Group Test of General Mental Ability developed by Jalota and Tandon. The Hindi Version of the test is named as ‘Samoohek Mansik Yogyata Pariksha (1/61)’ by Tandon. It is a verbal group test containing 100 items with three to five alternatives for each item in a reusable booklet to be responded by the subjects in an answer sheet. This test assessed nine aspects of Verbal Intelligence, namely, Number Series, Mathematical Instructions, Following Instructions, Vocabulary Similar, Vocabulary Opposites, Classifications, Best Answers, Analogies and Reasoning. The test could be administered on a group of 20-25 literate adults. In all forty-five minutes were required to administer the test. The response sheets were scored with the help of the stencil key containing digits showing correct answer. The Split-half Reliability coefficient ranged from 0.59 to 0.99 averaging to 0.91. The Kuder-Richardson Reliability coefficient for the test was 0.85. The validity of the test was computed by using Hindi version of the tool and Samoohek Mansik Yogyata Pariksha (4/51) and the coefficient was found to be 0.60, and when the validity was ascertained using the College Exam marks of I and II year students as the criterion, the coefficient was found to be 0.57.

Non-Verbal Intelligence

The Non-Verbal aspect of Rational Intelligence was assessed with the help of Raven’s Standard Progressive Matrices (RSPM). The Raven’s Standard Progressive Matrices (1996) represents an attempt to measure intellectual functioning within the context of Spearman’s concept of ‘g’. SPM contains 60 meaningless designs presented in 5 subsets (A-E), each subset with 12 designs arranged in sequence according to increasing difficulty in a test booklet. The matrices consist

of designs, which require completion. The subject chooses from multiple-choice options, the design or design part, which best fits. There is no time limit for this test. Numerous reliability coefficients quoted by Raven vary from 0.80 to 0.90. Reliability reported by other investigators using the Split-half Method and Test Retest method ranged from 0.70 to 0.90 with older children and adults. Validity of Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices test when the Stanford Binet Test of Intelligence was used as the criterion, coefficients varied from 0.50 to 0.86.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence was assessed by administering the tool developed by Pant and Prakash (2004). It was a self-report measure based on the Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence given by Mayer and Salovey (1997) with inputs from Indian understanding of Emotions. The dimensions assessed by the tool are: expression and regulation of emotion, analysis, relating and using emotions, empathy, and perception and identification of emotion. The tool comprised 40 items (29 positive and 11 negative) in a consumable sheet to be rated on five-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) by the respondent. There is no time limit to respond to the tool. However, 10-15 minutes were found sufficient for the respondents to give response. The dimension-wise reliability coefficient ranged from 0.37 to 0.79. The validity of the tool was computed on the basis of its' discriminative ability of the construct between the two genders (Schutte et al. 1998). The researcher established the Test-Retest Reliability on a sample of 92 teachers (23 male and 69 female) with a gap of 30 days and Test-Retest Reliability was found to be 0.39.

Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual Intelligence was assessed with the help of Spiritual Intelligence questionnaire developed by the researcher, having 34 situations / items related to behaviour in daily life with 4 options for each situation depicting different degrees of spiritual thinking. The tool assesses four components namely, higher critical thinking /purpose seeking, integration, transcendence, and will power. Corresponding to

each situation respondent has to select one option that best represents his/her behaviour in that given situation. The tool possesses content validity. The test-retest reliability at the gap of 25 days is reported to be 0.30.

Psychological Risk

Psychological Risk was assessed with the help of Psychological Risk Factors Questionnaire (PRFQ) developed by Sinha et al. (2008) under WHO sponsored multi center project of 'Behavioural Risk Factors Surveillance Study' in 2008. Mental health was conceptualized having two aspects – one is diagnosable mental disorders and second is psychological attributes in Cognitive and Affective domains independent of diagnosable mental disorders which determine general psychological well being. The Psychological Risk Factors covered in PRFQ are Personal Stress, Maladaptive Coping Style, Negative Affective Regulation, Temperamental/Personality Factors, Negative Cognitive Schemas and Lack of Emotional / Social Support. There were 30 items to be responded through writing the number 1 to 4 where 1 denotes Not at all / Occasionally; 2 denotes Somewhat / Sometimes; 3 denotes Much / Most of the time; and 4 denotes Very Much / Always . The tool is standardized on adults and represents five age groups, such as, 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 55-64 years. There is no time limit to respond to the tool but 10-12 minutes were found sufficient for responding. The internal consistency ranged from 0.43 to 0.72. The Test-retest reliability coefficient with an interval of one month was 0.88. The tool possessed Content Validity. The Test-Retest Reliability for the whole tool and its dimensions was established by the researcher on a group of 92 teachers (23 male and 69 female) with a gap of 30 days and the Test-Retest Reliability coefficient was 0.72.

Change Proneness

Change Proneness was assessed with the help of Mukhopadhyay's Change Proneness Inventory (MCPI) developed by Mukhopadhyay in 1980. Change Proneness in teachers was defined on the basis of presence of attributes like open mindedness, eagerness to know, readiness to make extra effort, review of own actions periodically, communicate ideas to others and have experimental attitude. The tool

contained 33 items common for teachers and Principals and 12 items only for Principals in a consumable booklet to respond on a five point rating scale - 'Never, Often, Occasionally, Seldom, Always' which is scored as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 respectively. There is no time limit to respond to the Inventory. The tool was standardized on 60 secondary school teachers and the split-half reliability coefficient of the tool was 0.82. The content validity of the tool was established due to absence of any external criteria. The researcher established the Test-Retest Reliability on a sample of 92 teachers (23 male and 69 female) with a gap of 30 days and the Reliability Coefficient was found to be 0.51

Anxiety

Anxiety was assessed by administering the Comprehensive Anxiety Test developed by Bhardwaj, Sharma, and Bhargava (2006). Anxiety was defined as an affective, stressful, palpable but transitory emotional state which happens to be a highly unpleasant condition that signals a danger to ego and is characterized by nervousness, pain and uneasiness of mind with feelings of tension, apprehension and heightened arousal of autonomic nervous system. The tool contained 90 statements to be responded in 'Yes' or 'No' in a consumable booklet. Each 'Yes' is scored as one mark and each 'No' as zero. The sum total is the anxiety score of the subject. This is a self-administering scale suitable for individual as well as group testing and there is no time limit to respond to the tool. However 10-15 minutes were found sufficient to respond to all the items. It can be administered on either sex individuals falling in the age group of 18-50 years. The Test-retest Reliability coefficient of the tool was reported to be 0.83, and the split-half reliability coefficient was 0.94. Concurrent validity of the tool was reported with different existing standardized tools of Anxiety, like Anxiety dimension of Eight State Questionnaire form – A, Anxiety dimension of Eight State Questionnaire form – B, and Sinha's Comprehensive Anxiety Test (Hindi) and the coefficient ranged from 0.68 to 0.82

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

Each Institute forming a part of this study was visited and the teachers fulfilling the requirement of the study were contacted in person

in their free time and rapport was established with them orienting them with the purpose of the study. All the tools were provided to the subjects in both Hindi and English to respond according to their convenience, and all the subjects conveniently comprehended the items. The tools were administered in the same sequence on the subjects adhering to the specified instructions in the respective manuals and scoring was done by following the given keys/Instructions.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed with the help of Varimax Rotation in factor analysis.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

For studying the factor structure underlying Rational Intelligence (Verbal Intelligence and Non-Verbal Intelligence), Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Psychological Risk, Change Proneness, Anxiety the data were analysed with the help of Varimax Rotation and the results are given in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Variable-wise Varimax Rotation Factor Loadings of Primary Teachers

Variables	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III
Verbal Intelligence	-0.118	0.652	-0.191
Non-verbal Intelligence	0.029	0.739	0.271
Emotional Intelligence	-0.193	0.214	0.696
Spiritual Intelligence	-0.637	-0.204	0.239
Psychological Risk	0.894	0.044	0.096
Change Proneness	0.004	0.004	0.795
Anxiety	0.843	0.169	-0.147

In case of Elementary School Teachers, the total variance explained by the three Factors is 31.88%. Factor-wise variances explained are 12.16%, 10.72%, and 9.0%. The First Factor comprised of variables, such as Psychological Risk, Anxiety and Spiritual Intelligence having maximum Factor Loading of 0.894, 0.843 and -0.637 respectively. In this case Spiritual Intelligence has negative Factor Loading while Psychological Risk and Anxiety variables have

positive Factor Loading. Thus, the First Factor can be named as **Well Being Threat**. In the second Factor, maximum Factor Loading of Non-verbal Intelligence, Verbal Intelligence, are 0.739, 0.652, respectively. Thus, the factor can be named as **Rational Thinking**. The third factor has maximum Factor Loading of 0.795 and 0.696 for Change Proneness and Emotional Intelligence respectively. It can be named as **Creative Emotional Intelligence**. Thus, the three factors extracted for Primary Teachers were: **Well Being Threat**, **Rational Thinking**, and **Creative Emotional Intelligence**.

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

As seen above in case of elementary school teachers, the three factors extracted are: Well Being Threat, Rational Thinking, and Creative Emotional Intelligence.

The Psychological Risk, Anxiety, and Spiritual Intelligence have together emerged as the first factor in elementary school teachers accounting for the highest variance in primary teachers. On this factor Spiritual Intelligence has negative Loading. Spiritual Intelligence represents the thinking ability which helps an individual to relate to all human beings beyond personal, social interest, helps rise above physical, emotional and material limitations, gives a critical philosophical thinking which is transcendental and unitizing in nature, which causes the mind to raise questions and persistently explore the unknown areas of existence. The Anxiety assesses apprehensive, tensed and stressed state of mind. It reflects nervousness and worry, which in extreme state interferes with effective physical and psychological functioning of an individual. While the Psychological Risk assesses uncontrolled negative emotions, perceived stress, low frustration tolerance, negative cognitive interpretations of events and lack of perceived social support. These may have neural, social, and environmental causes but have detrimental effects on the health of the individuals. This was apparently the **Well Being Threat Factor**. This result may have arisen due to seemingly easy but actually a tough job of elementary teachers dealing with the students of age group where attention sustenance is a problem and their job profile is such where they work more as care takers and guardians of children cementing their

years of fundamental development. The result may be attributed to low pay scales, low importance and status attached to primary level of teaching resulting in a high logical - low altruistic thinking that makes them strive to move up in the professional ladder for high scales and recognition.

Previous research states that ironically teachers all over the world are feeling beleaguered and even passionate teachers are exhausted in face of apathy and resistance from around them (Hargraves and Fullan, 1998). As evident from the result Spiritual intelligence has emerged to be strongly and inversely associated with mental well being threats in teachers. This indicates towards the probability that spiritual thinking invokes a certain serenity in teachers which helps to control their well being threats. Similar findings further support the results that Spiritual Intelligence has an inverse relationship with negative moods suggesting better well being (Fehring, Brenan, and Keller 1987). Spiritual experiences left people more cheerful and peaceful most of the time and rarely depressed (Mohan, 2001). Interesting observation is that Rational Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence have low loadings leading to emergence of Spiritual Intelligence as a distinct dimension of Intelligence but it can be noted that the direction of communality is same pointing towards the claim that all three, Rational (verbal), Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence, though distinct, are not mutually contradictory.

All other variables with low loadings on this factor do not assess the well being threats represented by the two variables. Moreover, Verbal Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence have emerged as having a low negative loading on the factor indicating well being threats don't lead to sound verbal-numerical- emotional abilities. Change Proneness has low loading on the factor indicating well being threat induces lack of innovativeness in elementary teachers.

Non-Verbal Intelligence, Verbal Intelligence have emerged as the second factor in elementary school teachers. Hence the factor was named as Rational Thinking. This result may have arisen due to the syllabus with which an elementary teacher deals is mostly comprised of developing the the logical, verbal, numerical aspects of thinking in a

child. The teacher unconsciously might be getting inclined towards rational aspect of thinking more as compared to critical-philosophical one; hence emotional and spiritual Intelligences have emerged with a significant low positive loading. This finding also indicates the Rational Intelligence to be a distinct Intelligence, but it can be noted that all three dimensions of thinking have emerged with positive loadings pointing towards the claim that all three Rational Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence though distinct are not mutually contradictory.

Change Proneness and Emotional Intelligence have emerged together forming the third factor in elementary school teachers. This factor was termed as Creative Emotional Intelligence. It's a fact that a Primary teacher is expected to be very intelligent emotionally, affectionate towards students and has to keep using different methods and techniques of teaching as the attention sustenance and concentration level of elementary level children is the lowest. The lecture method is least effective in their classrooms as children in this age group learn better through pictures, movies, field trips, play-way method etc. It seems that Emotional thinking of the primary teacher puts him in a psychological advantage to be more flexible to incorporate and adjust with such needed changes in teaching elementary children. It may even help him persuade others better for accepting the need for change in environment. The probable reason of this clubbing may be the reason that the interpersonal skills and the emotional balance conferred by emotional intelligence leads the teachers to transact, accept and appreciate change. The Anxiety and Verbal logical Intelligence have a low negative loading indicating that Anxiety and verbal logical ability do not support change and Emotional Intelligence in primary teachers. Similar findings by previous researches states that logical thinking has been has not been found to be the causal thinking behind creative / innovative behaviour, rather a rational being is more rigid doesn't allow risk involved in change (Sharma, 1989).

IMPLICATIONS

The results do provide sufficient evidence and cause for stressing the importance of nurturing the prospective elementary teachers and the

in-service elementary teachers in a mode that their affective and spiritual dimensions of thinking gets boost up. As evident from the Change Proneness- Emotional Intelligence link this potential would help them to be more open for changes. It would prompt them to use such methods that would lead to give a gateway to students to express their understanding in unusual and innovative ways. Emergence of Spiritual Intelligence as an antidote of Psychological Risk and Anxiety would enhance the needed well being in teachers and equip them with the capacities prescribed by the report of the document of national importance referred above. There is need of further research in this area with larger samples of elementary school teachers with different demographic details to ascertain the role of other factors involved.

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