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Yoga for Emotional Intelligence in Future Teachers

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Abstract

Teaching is a profession that requires not only subject knowledge but also emotional competence. Future teachers face academic pressures, classroom challenges, and interpersonal responsibilities that demand emotional stability and self-awareness. Emotional Intelligence (EI) enables teachers to recognize, understand, and regulate their own emotions while responding empathetically to students. Yoga, an ancient Indian discipline, promotes harmony between the body, mind, and spirit through physical postures, breathing techniques, meditation, and mindfulness. Research indicates that regular yoga practice improves emotional regulation, reduces stress, enhances concentration, and strengthens interpersonal relationships. Integrating yoga into teacher education can help prospective teachers develop resilience, patience, empathy, and effective communication skills. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also emphasizes holistic education, well-being, and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems, making yoga a valuable component of teacher preparation. This paper discusses the concepts of yoga and emotional intelligence, the role of yoga in developing emotionally intelligent teachers, practical yoga techniques, benefits for teacher trainees, implications for B.Ed. colleges, challenges, and recommendations for effective implementation.

Keywords: Yoga, Emotional Intelligence, Teacher Education, B.Ed. Students, Mindfulness, NEP 2020

Introduction

Teaching is both an intellectual and emotional profession that demands a combination of academic competence, interpersonal skills, and emotional maturity. In today's dynamic educational environment, teachers are expected not only to impart knowledge but also to act as facilitators, mentors, counsellors, and role models for their students. Future teachers must manage diverse classrooms, foster inclusive learning environments, address students' emotional and behavioural needs, resolve conflicts, collaborate with parents and colleagues, and motivate learners with varying abilities and backgrounds. These responsibilities require a high level of emotional intelligence in addition to sound pedagogical knowledge and subject expertise.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) enables teachers to recognize, understand, and regulate their own emotions while empathizing with others. Teachers with strong emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage classroom stress, make thoughtful decisions, communicate effectively, and build positive teacher-student relationships. As educational institutions increasingly emphasize holistic development and learner-centred pedagogy, emotional competence has become an essential attribute of effective teachers.

Yoga, one of India's ancient systems of holistic education and well-being, provides a practical and scientifically supported approach to enhancing emotional intelligence. Through the regular practice of **Asanas (physical postures), Pranayama (breathing techniques), Meditation, Mindfulness, and Relaxation**, yoga promotes self-awareness, emotional regulation, concentration, resilience, and inner peace. These practices help teacher trainees cope with academic pressure, reduce anxiety, improve mental clarity, and cultivate patience and empathy.

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** advocates holistic education, physical and mental well-being, and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), recognizing yoga as an important means of nurturing balanced and socially responsible individuals. Integrating yoga into teacher education programmes can therefore contribute significantly to the personal and professional development of future teachers. Emotionally intelligent teachers are more capable of creating positive classroom climates, supporting students' socio-emotional growth, and promoting meaningful learning experiences. Hence, incorporating yoga into B.Ed. programmes is a valuable strategy for preparing competent, compassionate, and emotionally resilient teachers who can effectively meet the challenges of twenty-first-century education.

Concept of Yoga

The word *Yoga* originates from the Sanskrit word *Yuj*, meaning "to unite." Yoga integrates the body, mind, and spirit through ethical living, physical postures (Asanas), breathing exercises (Pranayama), meditation, and relaxation. Beyond physical fitness, yoga promotes mental clarity, emotional stability, and inner peace.

Concept of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the capacity to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively express one's own emotions while also recognizing and responding appropriately to the emotions of others. It is considered one of the essential competencies for personal well-being, effective communication, and professional success. In the teaching profession, emotional intelligence enables teachers to create positive learning environments, manage classroom challenges, and establish meaningful relationships with students, colleagues, and parents.

According to **Salovey and Mayer (1990)**, Emotional Intelligence is *"the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions."* This definition emphasizes that emotions are valuable sources of information that influence reasoning, decision-making, and behaviour.

Daniel Goleman (1995) popularized the concept and defined Emotional Intelligence as a set of competencies that determine how individuals understand and manage themselves and their relationships with others. He identified **five major components of Emotional Intelligence**:

- **Self-awareness** – The ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and their impact on others.
- **Self-regulation** – The ability to control impulsive emotions, remain calm under pressure, and adapt positively to changing situations.
- **Motivation** – An inner drive to achieve goals with enthusiasm, perseverance, and commitment despite obstacles.
- **Empathy** – The ability to understand, appreciate, and respond sensitively to the emotions and perspectives of others.
- **Social Skills** – The ability to communicate effectively, build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, and work collaboratively.

Teachers with high emotional intelligence are patient, compassionate, resilient, and emotionally balanced. They can effectively manage classroom stress, encourage positive student behaviour, support learners' emotional needs, and foster an inclusive and motivating learning environment. Such teachers

are better equipped to handle diverse classrooms and contribute to students' academic, social, and emotional development.

Yoga plays a significant role in strengthening emotional intelligence by cultivating **mental clarity, emotional stability, and inner peace**, which are essential qualities for effective teaching.

- **Mental Clarity** refers to a state of clear, focused, and organized thinking. It enables teachers to concentrate on instructional tasks, make sound decisions, solve classroom problems effectively, and remain attentive during teaching-learning activities. Regular yoga practice improves cognitive functioning, attention, and mindfulness, thereby enhancing mental clarity.
- **Emotional Stability** is the ability to maintain emotional balance and respond calmly to stressful or challenging situations without becoming overwhelmed. Emotionally stable teachers demonstrate patience, self-control, resilience, and consistency in their behaviour, helping them create a supportive and positive classroom atmosphere.
- **Inner Peace** is a state of psychological calmness, harmony, and contentment, free from excessive stress, anxiety, and emotional disturbance. Through meditation, pranayama, and mindfulness practices, yoga nurtures inner peace, enabling future teachers to remain composed, optimistic, and emotionally resilient while fulfilling their professional responsibilities.

Characteristics of Emotionally Intelligent Teachers

Emotionally intelligent teachers:

- Demonstrate self-awareness and emotional control.
- Show empathy toward students.
- Communicate effectively.
- Resolve conflicts peacefully.
- Adapt to changing classroom situations.
- Motivate and inspire learners.
- Maintain positive interpersonal relationships.

Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Teacher Education

Teacher education should focus on developing emotional competencies alongside teaching skills. Emotionally intelligent teachers improve classroom climate, student engagement, decision-making, and professional ethics. Research highlights EI as an important factor in teacher effectiveness and professional success.

Role of Yoga in Developing Emotional Intelligence

Yoga strengthens emotional intelligence by improving self-awareness, reducing stress, increasing mindfulness, and promoting emotional regulation. Regular practice helps teacher trainees remain calm, focused, and compassionate. It also enhances patience, resilience, and positive thinking, which are essential for successful teaching. Recent studies among yoga trainees have reported significant improvements in emotional intelligence following yoga and pranayama practice.

Scientific Basis of Yoga and Emotional Regulation

Scientific research indicates that yoga reduces cortisol (the stress hormone), improves autonomic nervous system balance, enhances parasympathetic activity, and increases mindfulness. These physiological and psychological changes contribute to better emotional control, reduced anxiety, improved attention, and greater emotional well-being.

Yoga Practices for Future Teachers

Asanas: Tadasana, Vrikshasana, Bhujangasana, Vajrasana, and Surya Namaskar improve physical health, posture, and concentration.

Pranayama: Anulom Vilom, Nadi Shodhana, and Bhramari reduce stress, enhance emotional stability, and improve mental clarity.

Meditation: Daily meditation increases self-awareness, patience, and emotional balance.

Mindfulness: Mindful breathing and present-moment awareness improve focus, empathy, and classroom responsiveness.

Relaxation Techniques: Shavasana and Yoga Nidra relieve fatigue, reduce anxiety, and restore emotional calmness.

Benefits of Yoga for Teacher Trainees

Regular yoga practice helps future teachers:

- Improve emotional regulation.
- Reduce stress and anxiety.
- Enhance concentration and memory.
- Build confidence and resilience.
- Develop empathy and compassion.
- Strengthen communication and interpersonal skills.
- Promote physical and mental well-being.

NEP 2020 and Yoga in Teacher Education

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 advocates holistic development, experiential learning, health, wellness, and Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Integrating yoga into B.Ed. programmes aligns with these objectives by fostering physical fitness, emotional well-being, ethical values, and professional competence among future teachers.

Implications for B.Ed. Colleges

Teacher education institutions play a crucial role in preparing competent, emotionally balanced, and professionally responsible teachers. Therefore, B.Ed. colleges should adopt a holistic approach to teacher preparation by integrating yoga and emotional intelligence into both the curricular and co-curricular activities. Regular yoga sessions, including **Asanas, Pranayama, Meditation, Mindfulness, and Relaxation Techniques**, should be incorporated into the daily or weekly timetable to promote the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of teacher trainees.

B.Ed. colleges should also organize workshops, seminars, guest lectures, and orientation programmes on stress management, emotional intelligence, mental health, and holistic wellness. These programmes can help student teachers develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, resilience, empathy, and effective interpersonal communication, which are essential qualities for successful classroom teaching. Institutions may collaborate with certified yoga instructors, psychologists, and wellness experts to provide systematic training and practical learning experiences.

Faculty members and teacher educators should serve as role models by practising healthy lifestyles, demonstrating emotional competence, and encouraging students to adopt yoga as a lifelong habit. A positive institutional culture that values wellness, mutual respect, and emotional support will motivate teacher trainees to participate actively in yoga and mindfulness activities.

In alignment with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, B.Ed. colleges should integrate yoga into teacher education as part of holistic development and the promotion of **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)**. Colleges can establish dedicated yoga and meditation centres, celebrate the **International Day of Yoga**, conduct community outreach programmes, and encourage action research on yoga and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, emotional well-being and yoga participation may be incorporated into mentoring programmes, reflective journals, and school internship experiences. Such initiatives will help produce emotionally intelligent, physically healthy, ethically responsible, and professionally competent teachers who are capable of creating positive, inclusive, and learner-centred classroom environments.

Suggestions for Teacher Education Institutions

- Include yoga as a regular co-curricular activity.
- Organize certified yoga workshops and awareness programmes.
- Train teacher educators in yoga and emotional wellness.
- Establish yoga and meditation centres on campus.
- Conduct research on yoga and teacher effectiveness.
- Celebrate International Day of Yoga annually.

Challenges in Implementing Yoga Programmes

The implementation of yoga programmes may face challenges such as limited trained instructors, inadequate infrastructure, time constraints within the curriculum, lack of awareness, and varying levels of student interest. Institutional support and proper planning are essential for successful implementation.

Conclusion

Yoga is a valuable educational practice that enhances emotional intelligence among future teachers. By promoting self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, resilience, and mental well-being, yoga prepares teacher trainees to become competent and compassionate educators. Integrating yoga into teacher education is consistent with the vision of NEP 2020 and contributes to the holistic development of future teachers. B.Ed. colleges should therefore promote systematic yoga programmes to foster emotionally intelligent, healthy, and effective teaching professionals.

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