

Teaching with Emotional Intelligence: Repositioning Teacher Education for Holistic and Future-Ready Learning

Davendra Sharma 

Lecturer and PhD Scholar, University of Fiji, Fiji Islands

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, educational discourse has increasingly emphasized the development of cognitive skills, technological competence, and labour market readiness among students. However, comparatively less attention has been given to the emotional and relational dimensions of teaching and learning, particularly in the preparation of teachers themselves. This paper examines the critical role of emotional intelligence (EI) in transforming teacher education to support holistic, inclusive, and future-oriented learning environments. Emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively, has emerged as a key competency for educators navigating complex classroom dynamics, diverse student populations, and rapidly changing educational contexts. Drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship from educational psychology, teacher education, and socio-emotional learning research, the paper argues that emotionally intelligent teachers are better equipped to foster positive classroom climates, support student wellbeing, enhance engagement, and promote meaningful learning outcomes.

The study critically reviews contemporary literature on emotional intelligence in education and highlights how EI competencies, such as self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and relationship management—are fundamental to effective pedagogy and leadership in modern classrooms. Despite the growing recognition of socio-emotional learning within school curricula, the integration of emotional intelligence into teacher preparation programs remains limited in many contexts. This paper therefore proposes a conceptual framework that positions emotional intelligence as a core component of teacher education, alongside pedagogical knowledge, digital competence, and critical thinking skills. By embedding EI within teacher training curricula, practicum experiences, and professional development programs, teacher education institutions can cultivate educators who are capable of responding to the complex emotional, cultural, and social realities of contemporary schooling.

The discussion further considers the implications of emotionally intelligent teaching for student development, particularly in relation to wellbeing, resilience, collaboration, and ethical citizenship—qualities increasingly recognized as essential for navigating the uncertainties of the twenty-first century. In addition, the paper reflects on the relevance of emotional intelligence for educational contexts in the Global South, including Pacific Island nations such as Fiji, where culturally responsive, relational, and community-oriented approaches to education are particularly significant.

Ultimately, this paper argues that repositioning teacher education to prioritize emotional intelligence is essential for preparing educators who can teach not only with knowledge and skill but also with empathy, compassion, and cultural awareness. Integrating emotional intelligence into teacher education frameworks has the potential to strengthen teaching effectiveness, enhance student learning experiences, and contribute to more humane, inclusive, and future-ready education systems.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Teacher Education; Holistic Education; Social and Emotional Learning; Future-Ready Learning; Teacher Competencies; Student Wellbeing; Educational Transformation; 21st-Century Education; Culturally Responsive Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Education systems across the world are undergoing profound transformations in response to rapid technological change, globalization, and evolving social expectations. In the twenty-

first century, schools and universities are increasingly expected to prepare learners not only with academic knowledge but also with a diverse range of competencies that enable them to navigate complex social, emotional, and professional environments. These competencies include critical thinking, creativity, collaboration,

communication, adaptability, and ethical decision-making. Consequently, contemporary educational discourse has placed significant emphasis on preparing students for the demands of the modern labour market and the broader challenges of a knowledge-based global economy (Trilling & Fadel, 2009; OECD, 2019). While this emphasis on future-oriented skills has led to important reforms in curriculum design and pedagogy, comparatively less attention has been devoted to the emotional and relational dimensions of teaching and learning, particularly within teacher education programs.

In recent years, scholars and policymakers have increasingly recognized that effective education cannot rely solely on cognitive development or technical skills. Instead, learning is deeply influenced by emotional processes, interpersonal relationships, and the social environment in which education occurs. Teachers play a central role in shaping these learning environments, as they are responsible not only for delivering curriculum content but also for fostering supportive classroom climates that promote student engagement, motivation, and wellbeing (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). As a result, the emotional competencies of teachers have become an important area of research and policy interest. Among these competencies, emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a key construct for understanding how educators can effectively manage classroom relationships, respond to diverse student needs, and support holistic student development.

The concept of emotional intelligence gained prominence through the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990), who defined it as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions in oneself and others. Later popularized by Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence has been widely recognized as a crucial factor in personal and professional success. In educational contexts, emotional intelligence refers to the capacity of teachers and learners to recognize emotions, regulate emotional responses, empathize with others, and develop constructive interpersonal relationships. These competencies are essential for creating positive learning environments, resolving conflicts, promoting collaboration, and supporting the socio-emotional development of students (Brackett et al., 2019).

A growing body of research suggests that teachers with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more effective in managing classroom dynamics and fostering student engagement. Emotional intelligence enables educators to remain calm under pressure, respond empathetically to students' needs, and build trusting relationships that enhance learning outcomes. Studies have shown that emotionally intelligent teachers are better able to support students' social and emotional learning (SEL), which has been linked to improved academic achievement, increased resilience, and stronger interpersonal skills among learners (Jennings & Greenberg,

2009; Brackett et al., 2019). In addition, emotionally supportive classrooms contribute to reduced behavioral problems and increased student motivation, highlighting the important role of teachers' emotional competencies in shaping positive educational experiences.

Despite the growing recognition of emotional intelligence as a critical component of effective teaching, its integration into teacher education programs remains uneven and limited in many contexts. Traditional teacher preparation programs have historically focused on subject knowledge, instructional strategies, and classroom management techniques, often overlooking the emotional and relational aspects of teaching. As a result, many teachers enter the profession without adequate preparation to manage the emotional complexities of classroom life, including student stress, conflict, diversity, and the challenges associated with inclusive education (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This gap between theoretical recognition and practical implementation highlights the need to reconsider how teacher education programs prepare educators for the realities of modern classrooms. Furthermore, the increasing diversity of student populations and the growing emphasis on inclusive education have made emotional competencies even more critical for teachers. Classrooms today often include students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds, as well as learners with varying abilities and emotional needs. In such environments, teachers must demonstrate empathy, cultural sensitivity, and strong interpersonal skills to ensure that all students feel valued and supported. Emotional intelligence can therefore serve as a foundational competency that enables teachers to respond effectively to the diverse needs of learners while fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments (Gay, 2018).

The importance of emotional intelligence in education is also closely linked to the growing global focus on social and emotional learning (SEL). International organizations and educational institutions increasingly recognize that socio-emotional competencies are essential for both personal wellbeing and academic success. The development of SEL frameworks has highlighted the importance of self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and relationship skills as fundamental components of holistic education (OECD, 2021). Teachers play a central role in implementing these frameworks, as they model emotional competencies and guide students in developing their own socio-emotional skills. Consequently, preparing teachers with strong emotional intelligence is essential for the effective implementation of SEL initiatives in schools.

The relevance of emotional intelligence is particularly significant in educational contexts characterized by strong

communal values and relational learning traditions, such as those found in many Pacific Island societies. In countries like Fiji, education is deeply embedded within cultural, social, and community relationships. Teaching often involves not only the transmission of knowledge but also the nurturing of respectful relationships, cultural identity, and collective wellbeing. Within such contexts, emotionally intelligent teaching practices that emphasize empathy, respect, and relational engagement align closely with traditional educational values and community expectations (Nabobo-Baba, 2013; Thaman, 2009). Integrating emotional intelligence into teacher education can therefore contribute to culturally responsive pedagogies that support both academic achievement and social cohesion.

Given these considerations, it is increasingly evident that teacher education must move beyond a narrow focus on cognitive and technical competencies. Instead, teacher preparation programs need to adopt a more holistic approach that recognizes the importance of emotional, social, and relational dimensions of teaching. Emotional intelligence should be viewed as a core professional competency that complements pedagogical knowledge, subject expertise, and digital literacy in preparing teachers for the challenges of contemporary education.

This paper therefore explores the role of emotional intelligence in transforming teacher education for holistic and future-ready learning. It argues that integrating emotional intelligence into teacher preparation programs can enhance teaching effectiveness, strengthen classroom relationships, and support the socio-emotional development of students. By examining existing literature and theoretical perspectives on emotional intelligence and education, the paper seeks to highlight the importance of emotionally intelligent teaching in contemporary educational systems. Furthermore, it proposes a conceptual framework for embedding emotional intelligence within teacher education programs in order to prepare educators who are capable of responding to the complex emotional, social, and cultural realities of modern classrooms. Ultimately, repositioning teacher education to prioritize emotional intelligence represents a critical step toward developing more compassionate, inclusive, and effective education systems. In an era characterized by rapid change, uncertainty, and increasing social complexity, emotionally intelligent educators are essential for nurturing learners who are not only knowledgeable but also empathetic, resilient, and capable of contributing positively to their communities and societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence: Conceptual Foundations

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as an

important framework for understanding human behaviour, interpersonal relationships, and professional effectiveness. Emotional intelligence was first conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. Their model emphasized that emotional intelligence is a form of social intelligence that enables individuals to navigate complex social environments and respond effectively to emotional stimuli. Later, Goleman (1995) expanded the concept and popularized it within organizational and educational contexts by arguing that emotional competencies such as empathy, self-regulation, and motivation play a critical role in leadership and professional success.

Subsequent research has further refined the theoretical foundations of emotional intelligence. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004) proposed an ability-based model that conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a set of cognitive abilities related to emotional perception, emotional facilitation of thinking, emotional understanding, and emotional regulation. Meanwhile, other scholars have adopted a mixed model that integrates emotional competencies with personality traits and social skills (Bar-On, 2006). Despite these conceptual variations, there is broad consensus that emotional intelligence is a multidimensional construct that encompasses self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, social skills, and relationship management.

In educational contexts, emotional intelligence is particularly relevant because teaching involves continuous interaction with students, colleagues, parents, and communities. Teachers must manage not only academic instruction but also classroom relationships, student behaviour, and emotional dynamics that influence learning outcomes. Consequently, emotional intelligence has been increasingly recognized as an essential competency for educators in contemporary education systems (Brackett et al., 2019).

Emotional Intelligence and Teaching Effectiveness

A growing body of research suggests that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in teacher effectiveness. Teaching is an emotionally demanding profession that requires educators to manage diverse classroom situations, respond to student needs, and maintain positive learning environments. Teachers who possess strong emotional intelligence are better equipped to recognize students' emotional states, respond empathetically, and create supportive classroom climates that facilitate learning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The concept of the "prosocial classroom", introduced by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), highlights the importance

of teachers' social and emotional competence in promoting positive classroom environments. According to this framework, teachers with high emotional intelligence demonstrate greater emotional awareness, effective emotion regulation, and stronger relationship-building skills. These competencies contribute to improved classroom management, stronger teacher-student relationships, and enhanced student engagement.

Research has also demonstrated that emotionally intelligent teachers are more effective in addressing student behavioural challenges and promoting collaborative learning. By understanding the emotional needs of students, teachers can create inclusive environments that support both academic achievement and emotional wellbeing. Studies have shown that emotionally supportive classrooms are associated with improved academic outcomes, reduced student anxiety, and increased motivation (Brackett et al., 2019).

Furthermore, emotional intelligence has been linked to teacher resilience and professional wellbeing. Teaching often involves significant emotional labour, including managing stress, addressing student difficulties, and balancing professional responsibilities. Teachers with strong emotional intelligence are better able to cope with these challenges and maintain positive professional identities (Hargreaves, 2000). As a result, emotional intelligence can contribute to improved teacher retention and job satisfaction.

Emotional Intelligence and Social and Emotional Learning

The increasing global emphasis on social and emotional learning (SEL) has further strengthened the relevance of emotional intelligence in education. Social and emotional learning refers to the process through which individuals develop the ability to understand and manage emotions, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020). SEL frameworks emphasize competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating social and emotional learning within classrooms. Research indicates that educators who possess strong emotional competencies are more effective in implementing SEL programs and modeling positive emotional behaviours for students (Brackett et al., 2019). When teachers demonstrate empathy, emotional regulation, and effective communication, students are more likely to develop similar competencies.

In addition, SEL programs have been shown to improve both academic and socio-emotional outcomes for students. Meta-analyses of SEL interventions indicate that students who participate in SEL programs demonstrate higher academic performance, improved emotional regulation, and stronger interpersonal skills compared to those who do not receive

such instruction (Durlak et al., 2011). These findings highlight the importance of emotionally competent teachers who can effectively integrate socio-emotional learning into classroom practice.

Emotional Intelligence in Teacher Education

Despite the growing recognition of emotional intelligence in educational research, its integration into teacher education programs remains limited in many contexts. Traditional teacher preparation programs have historically emphasized subject knowledge, curriculum design, and instructional methods while paying less attention to emotional competencies and relational skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). As a result, many teachers enter the profession without adequate preparation to manage the emotional complexities of classroom environments.

Recent scholarship has begun to highlight the importance of incorporating emotional intelligence training into teacher education. Programs that integrate emotional awareness, reflective practice, and interpersonal skills development have shown promising results in enhancing teacher preparedness. For example, teacher education programs that emphasize reflective practice encourage pre-service teachers to examine their emotional responses, teaching beliefs, and interactions with students (Schön, 1987).

Additionally, experiential learning opportunities such as teaching practicum, mentorship, and collaborative learning communities can help pre-service teachers develop emotional competencies through real-world classroom experiences. These approaches enable future teachers to practice empathy, communication, and conflict resolution in authentic educational settings (Zeichner, 2010).

Another important dimension of emotional intelligence in teacher education is cultural responsiveness. In increasingly diverse classrooms, teachers must demonstrate sensitivity to cultural differences and develop inclusive pedagogical practices. Emotional intelligence can support culturally responsive teaching by enabling educators to understand students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and emotional needs (Gay, 2018).

Emotional Intelligence and Holistic Education

The integration of emotional intelligence into education aligns closely with the broader concept of holistic education, which emphasizes the development of the whole person, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and ethically. Holistic education recognizes that learning is not

purely a cognitive process but also involves emotional engagement, interpersonal relationships, and personal growth (Miller, 2007).

Holistic approaches to education aim to foster students' sense of purpose, wellbeing, and social responsibility while supporting academic achievement. Within this framework, emotional intelligence becomes a critical component of effective teaching and learning. Teachers who demonstrate emotional awareness and empathy are better able to create learning environments that support student wellbeing and encourage meaningful engagement with knowledge.

Moreover, holistic education is particularly relevant in contexts where communal values, relational learning, and cultural identity play a central role in education. In Pacific Island societies such as Fiji, education is closely linked to community relationships, cultural traditions, and collective wellbeing. Scholars have argued that culturally responsive and relational approaches to teaching are essential for promoting meaningful learning experiences in these contexts (Nabobo-Baba, 2013; Thaman, 2009). Emotional intelligence therefore provides an important bridge between modern educational reforms and traditional cultural values.

Literature Gaps

Despite the growing body of research on emotional intelligence and education, several important gaps remain in the literature. These gaps highlight the need for further research and provide a strong justification for the present study.

First, much of the existing research on emotional intelligence in education focuses primarily on student outcomes rather than teacher preparation. While studies have examined the impact of social and emotional learning programs on student development, relatively few have explored how teacher education programs can systematically develop emotional intelligence among pre-service teachers. This imbalance suggests that teacher preparation remains an underexplored area within the broader emotional intelligence literature.

Second, many teacher education programs continue to prioritize cognitive and technical competencies over emotional and relational skills. Although emotional intelligence is widely acknowledged as important for effective teaching, it is often treated as an implicit or secondary aspect of teacher development rather than a core professional competency. There is therefore a need for research that explicitly examines how emotional intelligence can be integrated into teacher education curricula, pedagogical training, and professional development programs.

Third, the majority of empirical studies on emotional intelligence in education have been conducted in Western contexts, particularly in North America and Europe. As a result, there is limited research examining how emotional

intelligence operates within different cultural and educational contexts. This lack of geographical and cultural diversity in the literature creates a significant gap in understanding the role of emotional intelligence in education systems within the Global South, including Pacific Island nations.

Fourth, there is limited research examining the relationship between emotional intelligence, culturally responsive pedagogy, and holistic education. While these concepts are often discussed independently, few studies have explored how emotional intelligence can support culturally grounded and community-oriented approaches to teaching. This gap is particularly relevant in contexts such as Fiji, where education is deeply connected to cultural identity, social relationships, and community values.

Finally, there is a need for stronger conceptual frameworks that link emotional intelligence with contemporary educational challenges such as digital learning, inclusive education, and future-ready skills. As education systems increasingly emphasize competencies such as collaboration, adaptability, and resilience, emotional intelligence may play a crucial role in supporting these capabilities. However, existing literature has not sufficiently explored how emotional intelligence can contribute to preparing teachers and students for rapidly changing social and technological environments.

Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing research on emotional intelligence and education. By examining how emotional intelligence can be integrated into teacher education programs and exploring its relevance within diverse cultural contexts, this study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of emotionally intelligent teaching. In doing so, the paper aims to highlight the importance of repositioning teacher education to prepare educators who are capable of fostering both academic excellence and emotional wellbeing in contemporary education systems.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the premise that emotional intelligence (EI) is a critical professional competency for teachers and should be systematically integrated into teacher education in order to foster holistic and future-ready learning environments. While traditional teacher preparation programs have historically emphasized content knowledge, pedagogy, and classroom management, contemporary educational challenges require educators who are capable of addressing not only cognitive learning needs but also the emotional, social, and relational dimensions of teaching. This framework therefore positions emotional intelligence

as a foundational component that connects teacher preparation, classroom practice, and holistic student development.

At its core, the framework draws upon the ability model of emotional intelligence proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and later expanded by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004). This model conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a set of interrelated abilities that include emotional perception, emotional understanding, emotional facilitation of thinking, and emotional regulation. Within educational contexts, these abilities translate into competencies such as self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and interpersonal communication—qualities that are essential for effective teaching and learning.

Building on these theoretical foundations, the framework integrates insights from teacher education research, social and emotional learning (SEL), and holistic education theory. The integration of these perspectives reflects the understanding that teaching is a relational profession that requires both intellectual and emotional capabilities. Emotional intelligence enables teachers to create positive learning environments, support diverse learners, and model socio-emotional competencies that students themselves can develop (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Within the context of teacher education, the conceptual framework identifies three interconnected dimensions: teacher emotional competencies, pedagogical practices, and student learning outcomes. These dimensions operate within broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts that influence educational processes.

Emotional Intelligence Competencies in Teacher

Development

The first dimension of the framework focuses on the development of emotional intelligence competencies among teachers. These competencies include self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social awareness, and relationship management. Self-awareness enables teachers to recognize their own emotional states and understand how these emotions influence their teaching behaviours. Self-regulation allows educators to manage stress, maintain professionalism, and respond constructively to challenging classroom situations.

Empathy and social awareness are equally important components of emotional intelligence, as they allow teachers to understand the emotional and cultural contexts of their students. In diverse classrooms, empathy helps teachers recognize students' perspectives, cultural backgrounds, and individual learning needs. Relationship management, which involves communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution skills, enables teachers to build positive relationships with students, colleagues, and parents (Goleman, 1995).

These emotional competencies contribute significantly to teachers' professional effectiveness. Research suggests that emotionally intelligent teachers are better able to create supportive classroom climates, promote student engagement, and address behavioural challenges in constructive ways (Brackett et al., 2019). Therefore, the integration of emotional intelligence training within teacher education programs can enhance both teacher wellbeing and teaching effectiveness.

Table 1: Key Emotional Intelligence Competencies for Teachers

Competency	Description	Relevance to Teaching Practice	Source
Self-Awareness	Recognizing one's own emotions, strengths, and limitations	Helps teachers reflect on their teaching practice and identify areas for professional growth	Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995
Self-Regulation	Ability to manage emotions, impulses, and stress	Supports classroom management, reduces burnout, and enhances professional resilience	Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Brackett et al., 2019
Motivation	Commitment to goals and intrinsic drive	Promotes sustained engagement with professional	Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 2004

		development and student learning	
Empathy	Understanding and responding to the emotions of students	Critical for fostering inclusive classrooms, addressing student needs, and culturally responsive teaching	Gay, 2018; Nabobo-Baba, 2013
Social Skills	Building relationships, communication, and conflict management	Enhances collaboration with students, colleagues, and parents	Brackett et al., 2019; Hattie, 2009

Source justification: This table synthesizes widely recognized EI models in educational research (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995), adapted for teacher preparation contexts and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Pedagogical Practices and Emotionally Responsive Teaching

The second dimension of the framework focuses on pedagogical practices that reflect emotionally intelligent teaching. Teaching is not merely a technical process of delivering curriculum content; it is a relational and interactive practice that involves continuous emotional engagement with students. Teachers who demonstrate emotional intelligence are able to implement pedagogical strategies that foster inclusive, supportive, and collaborative learning environments.

Emotionally responsive pedagogy includes practices such as active listening, supportive feedback, collaborative learning activities, and culturally responsive teaching approaches. These strategies help students feel respected, valued, and emotionally safe within the classroom environment. When students experience positive emotional connections with their teachers, they are more likely to participate actively in learning and develop confidence in their academic abilities (Gay, 2018).

Moreover, emotionally intelligent teaching practices align closely with the principles of social and emotional learning (SEL). Teachers who possess strong emotional competencies can effectively model emotional regulation, empathy, and ethical decision-making. Through these interactions, students learn important socio-emotional skills that support both academic success and personal development (Durlak et al., 2011).

Student Outcomes and Holistic Development

The third dimension of the conceptual framework focuses on student outcomes, particularly those related to holistic development. Holistic education emphasizes the development of the whole learner, including intellectual, emotional, social, and ethical dimensions. Emotional intelligence among

teachers contributes to this holistic approach by creating learning environments that support student wellbeing and personal growth.

When teachers demonstrate empathy, respect, and emotional awareness, students are more likely to feel supported and motivated to learn. Research has shown that emotionally supportive classrooms are associated with higher levels of student engagement, improved academic performance, and stronger interpersonal skills (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Additionally, students who learn in emotionally positive environments are more likely to develop resilience, self-confidence, and collaborative abilities—qualities that are increasingly recognized as essential for success in the twenty-first century.

The framework therefore suggests that emotional intelligence within teacher education has a cascading effect. By preparing emotionally competent teachers, teacher education institutions contribute to more effective classroom practices, which in turn promote positive student learning experiences and holistic development.

Contextual and Cultural Dimensions

An important aspect of the conceptual framework is the recognition that emotional intelligence and teaching practices are influenced by broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Educational systems do not operate in isolation; they are shaped by cultural values, community expectations, and policy environments. In culturally diverse societies, teachers must navigate complex social dynamics and respond to students from different cultural backgrounds.

In Pacific Island contexts such as Fiji, education is deeply embedded in communal relationships, cultural identity, and respect for collective values. Indigenous educational perspectives emphasize relational learning, community engagement, and the importance of nurturing social

harmony (Nabobo-Baba, 2013). Emotional intelligence therefore aligns closely with culturally responsive teaching approaches that emphasize empathy, respect, and meaningful relationships between teachers and students.

Recognizing these contextual factors is essential for developing teacher education programs that are both culturally relevant and pedagogically effective. Emotional intelligence can serve as a bridge between global educational frameworks and local cultural traditions, enabling teachers to integrate modern pedagogical practices with culturally grounded approaches to learning.

Integrating Emotional Intelligence into Teacher Education

The conceptual framework ultimately highlights the importance of integrating emotional intelligence into teacher education programs in systematic and intentional ways. Teacher education institutions can incorporate emotional intelligence training through coursework on socio-emotional learning, reflective teaching practices, mentorship programs, and experiential learning opportunities. These initiatives can help pre-service teachers develop the emotional competencies required to manage classroom relationships, support student wellbeing, and foster inclusive learning environments.

Furthermore, professional development programs for in-service teachers can reinforce emotional intelligence competencies through workshops, peer learning communities, and reflective practice sessions. Such initiatives contribute to the development of emotionally resilient educators who are capable of navigating the complexities of modern educational environments.

Conceptual Model Description

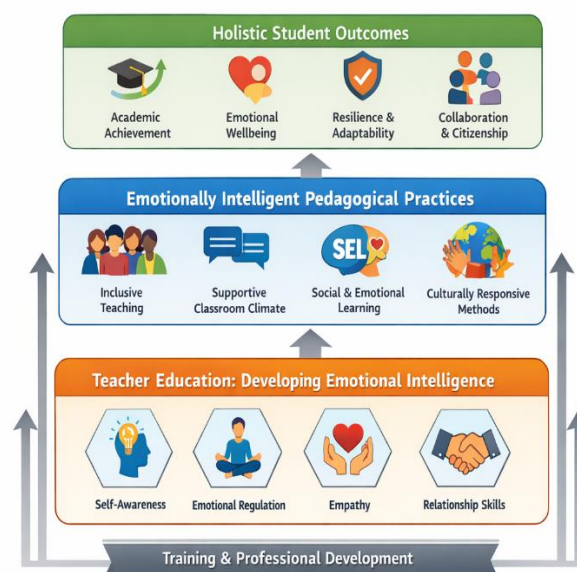
The conceptual model underpinning this study can be visualized as a three-tier framework. At the foundation lies teacher education, which provides training and professional development that cultivates emotional intelligence competencies among educators. These competencies, including self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and relationship management—form the core of the framework.

The second level represents emotionally intelligent pedagogical practices, which include inclusive teaching strategies, supportive classroom interactions, and the integration of social and emotional learning within educational settings. These practices shape the quality of classroom environments and influence the nature of teacher–student relationships.

The final level represents student outcomes, which include improved academic achievement, emotional wellbeing, resilience, collaboration, and holistic personal development. These outcomes contribute to the broader goal of preparing learners who are capable of thriving in complex social, cultural, and professional environments.

The framework therefore illustrates a dynamic relationship between teacher preparation, emotionally intelligent teaching practices, and holistic student development. By repositioning teacher education to prioritize emotional intelligence, education systems can cultivate teachers who are not only knowledgeable and skilled but also empathetic, reflective, and capable of supporting the diverse needs of learners in the twenty-first century.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Emotionally Intelligent Teacher Education



Discussion and Analysis

Emotional Intelligence as a Foundational Competency in 21st-Century Education

The findings from the literature reviewed in this study strongly indicate that emotional intelligence (EI) has become an essential competency in contemporary education systems. In the context of rapidly changing social, technological, and educational environments, teachers are no longer expected to function solely as transmitters of knowledge but as facilitators of learning, mentors, and emotional guides who support students' holistic development. Emotional intelligence, defined broadly as the capacity to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), plays a critical role in enabling teachers to fulfil these expanded responsibilities.

Research consistently demonstrates that emotionally intelligent teachers create more positive classroom environments, enhance student engagement, and improve learning outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more capable of managing classroom stress, responding empathetically to students' needs, and fostering inclusive learning environments. These attributes are particularly important in contemporary education systems where classrooms are increasingly diverse and where students face complex socio-emotional challenges.

In many educational systems, including those in developing contexts such as Fiji and the broader Pacific region, teachers frequently work in classrooms characterized by cultural diversity, socio-economic inequalities, and varying levels of student preparedness. In such contexts, emotional intelligence becomes a critical pedagogical asset that enables teachers to navigate interpersonal dynamics effectively and respond to students' emotional and psychological needs (Brackett et al., 2019).

However, despite growing recognition of the importance of emotional intelligence in education, teacher preparation programs in many parts of the world continue to focus primarily on subject knowledge and pedagogical techniques. As a result, the emotional and relational dimensions of teaching remain underdeveloped in teacher education curricula.

Emotional Intelligence and Teacher Effectiveness

A central theme emerging from the literature is the strong relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher effectiveness. Teachers who demonstrate high emotional intelligence tend to exhibit stronger classroom management skills, improved communication with students, and greater professional resilience (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2016).

Emotionally intelligent teachers are better able to recognize students' emotional states and adapt their teaching strategies accordingly. For example, students experiencing anxiety or frustration may require supportive instructional approaches that emphasize encouragement and understanding rather than strict disciplinary measures. Teachers who lack emotional awareness may misinterpret such emotional responses as disobedience or disengagement, which can negatively affect classroom relationships.

Moreover, emotional intelligence contributes significantly to teachers' ability to manage professional stress and prevent burnout. Teaching is widely recognized as one of the most emotionally demanding professions, involving constant interpersonal interactions, high expectations, and significant workload pressures. Teachers with strong emotional regulation skills are better equipped to cope with these challenges and maintain professional well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Teacher burnout has become a growing concern globally, particularly in contexts where teachers face increasing administrative responsibilities, curriculum reforms, and accountability pressures. Emotional intelligence can serve as a protective factor that enhances teachers' resilience and job satisfaction (Brackett et al., 2019). Therefore, integrating emotional intelligence into teacher education programs may contribute not only to improved teaching quality but also to greater sustainability in the teaching profession.

Emotional Intelligence and Student Development

The impact of teachers' emotional intelligence extends beyond instructional effectiveness to influence students' social, emotional, and academic development. Emotional intelligence in teaching supports the development of positive teacher-student relationships, which are widely recognized as a key predictor of student success (Hattie, 2009).

Students are more likely to engage actively in learning when they feel respected, supported, and understood by their teachers. Emotionally intelligent teachers create classroom climates characterized by trust, empathy, and mutual respect, which encourage students to participate more confidently in the learning process. These supportive learning environments contribute to improved academic performance and stronger social-emotional competencies among students.

Furthermore, teachers serve as powerful role models for students' emotional behavior. Through their interactions with students and colleagues, teachers demonstrate how emotions can be managed constructively in challenging situations. Students who observe emotionally intelligent

behaviours in their teachers are more likely to develop similar skills themselves.

In the context of 21st-century education, where skills such as collaboration, communication, empathy, and adaptability are increasingly valued, emotional intelligence plays a critical role in preparing students for future workplaces and social environments. Schools that prioritize social and emotional

learning (SEL) often report improvements in students' academic outcomes, behaviour, and overall well-being (Durlak et al., 2011).

Consequently, teacher education programs that emphasize emotional intelligence may indirectly contribute to the development of emotionally competent and socially responsible future citizens.

Table 2: Emotional Intelligence Competencies and Classroom Outcomes

EI Competency	Student Outcomes	Classroom Outcomes	Teacher Outcomes	Source
Self-Awareness	Improved self-regulation and goal setting in students	More reflective classroom climate	Enhanced professional growth	Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Durlak et al., 2011
Self-Regulation	Reduced student behavioral issues	Fewer classroom disruptions	Lower teacher burnout, higher job satisfaction	Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Brackett et al., 2019
Motivation	Increased student engagement and persistence	Higher participation and task completion	Greater teaching commitment	Goleman, 1998; Fullan, 2016
Empathy	Greater student well-being and inclusion	Positive classroom culture, trust	Stronger teacher-student relationships	Gay, 2018; Nabobo-Baba, 2013
Social Skills	Improved peer collaboration and communication	Cooperative and respectful classroom interactions	Strong professional networks and collaboration	Brackett et al., 2019; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012

Source justification: This table integrates empirical evidence linking teacher EI to student, classroom, and teacher outcomes, drawing from meta-analyses (Durlak et al., 2011) and contextual studies on teacher effectiveness and relational pedagogy.

Emotional Intelligence and Holistic Education

Another important dimension emerging from this analysis is the role of emotional intelligence in promoting holistic education. Holistic education seeks to develop the intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of learners, recognizing that education should address the whole person rather than focusing solely on cognitive achievement (Noddings, 2013).

Emotionally intelligent teaching aligns closely with this holistic philosophy. Teachers who possess emotional awareness and empathy are better able to nurture students' confidence, self-esteem, and sense of belonging. These emotional aspects of learning are fundamental to student motivation and long-term educational success.

In many education systems, including those in the Pacific region, cultural values emphasize community, respect, empathy, and collective well-being. Integrating emotional intelligence into teacher education therefore resonates strongly with these cultural traditions and supports culturally responsive pedagogy (Thaman, 2009).

Holistic education approaches that integrate emotional intelligence also encourage collaborative learning, reflective thinking, and ethical decision-making. Such approaches prepare students not only for employment but also for responsible participation in society.

Implications for Teacher Education

The discussion above highlights a significant disconnect

between the growing importance of emotional intelligence in education and the limited emphasis placed on this competency in teacher preparation programs. Many teacher education institutions continue to prioritize content knowledge and pedagogical techniques, while emotional competencies remain largely implicit or underdeveloped.

To address this gap, teacher education programs must undergo substantial transformation. Emotional intelligence should be integrated systematically into teacher training curricula rather than treated as an optional or supplementary component. This integration could involve courses on emotional awareness, interpersonal communication, reflective practice, and stress management.

Experiential learning approaches may also be particularly effective in developing emotional intelligence among teacher trainees. Activities such as role-playing, reflective journaling, mentorship programs, and collaborative learning experiences can help future teachers develop the emotional competencies required for effective teaching.

Furthermore, teacher educators themselves must model emotionally intelligent behavior in their interactions with students. By demonstrating empathy, active listening, and respectful communication, teacher educators can create learning environments that cultivate emotional intelligence among teacher trainees.

Educational institutions should also incorporate emotional intelligence assessment and development into teacher evaluation frameworks. This may involve the use of reflective portfolios, peer feedback, and structured observation of interpersonal competencies during teaching practice.

Emotional Intelligence in the Pacific and Fiji Context

In the context of Fiji and the broader Pacific region, the integration of emotional intelligence into teacher education is particularly relevant. Pacific societies often emphasize communal values, social harmony, and mutual respect. These cultural values align closely with the principles of emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning.

Educational reforms in Fiji have increasingly emphasized the importance of developing 21st-century competencies, including communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. However, the emotional and relational dimensions of teaching have received relatively limited attention in policy discussions.

Teachers in Fiji frequently work in culturally diverse classrooms that include students from different ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Emotional intelligence can help teachers navigate these complex classroom dynamics and foster inclusive learning environments.

Moreover, many Pacific communities place strong emphasis on relational approaches to education, where learning occurs

through dialogue, storytelling, and shared experiences. Emotionally intelligent teachers are better equipped to facilitate such culturally responsive pedagogies.

Integrating emotional intelligence into teacher education in Fiji may therefore strengthen both educational quality and cultural relevance. It can also support national development goals by promoting inclusive, compassionate, and socially responsible education systems.

Emotional Intelligence in the Age of the Fifth Industrial Revolution

The emergence of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) marks a significant shift in how societies conceptualize the relationship between technology and human development. While the Fourth Industrial Revolution emphasized automation, artificial intelligence, and digital transformation, the Fifth Industrial Revolution places greater emphasis on human-centered innovation, ethical technologies, and the integration of human creativity with advanced technological systems (Nahavandi, 2019; Østergaard, 2021). In this evolving landscape, the role of emotional intelligence becomes increasingly important, particularly within education systems that are tasked with preparing learners for complex and uncertain futures.

Unlike previous industrial paradigms that primarily prioritized efficiency and productivity, the Fifth Industrial Revolution emphasizes collaboration between humans and intelligent machines. This shift underscores the value of uniquely human capabilities such as empathy, ethical judgment, creativity, and emotional awareness. These competencies cannot easily be replicated by artificial intelligence or automated systems and therefore represent critical skills for the future workforce (Breque et al., 2021). Emotional intelligence, which involves the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively, becomes a central capability that enables individuals to navigate increasingly complex social and technological environments (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Within this context, teachers play a vital role in cultivating the emotional and social competencies that students will require in the Fifth Industrial Revolution. As educational environments become increasingly technology-enhanced, teachers must go beyond transmitting knowledge to facilitating holistic learning experiences that integrate cognitive, emotional, and ethical dimensions. Emotionally intelligent teachers are better positioned to support learners in developing resilience, empathy, collaboration skills, and ethical awareness, competencies that are essential in human-machine collaborative societies.

Teacher education programs therefore face the critical

challenge of preparing educators who can effectively integrate emotional intelligence with digital literacy and advanced pedagogical practices. This requires a transformative approach to teacher preparation that balances technological proficiency with emotional competence, ethical reasoning, and reflective practice. Future teachers must not only understand how to use emerging technologies but also how to maintain meaningful human connections within increasingly digital learning environments.

Furthermore, emotionally intelligent educators are better equipped to manage the social and psychological dynamics associated with technology-enhanced education. Online learning platforms, digital collaboration tools, and virtual classrooms have become increasingly common in contemporary education systems. While these technologies expand access to learning, they also create new challenges related to communication, student engagement, digital well-being, and emotional isolation. Teachers with strong emotional intelligence are more capable of fostering supportive and inclusive learning environments in both physical and virtual classrooms.

In the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution, the integration of emotional intelligence into teacher education is therefore not merely an enhancement but a necessity. By cultivating emotionally intelligent educators, teacher training institutions can contribute to the development of education systems that remain fundamentally human-centred while embracing technological innovation. Such an approach ensures that future generations are prepared not only to operate advanced technologies but also to use them responsibly, ethically, and collaboratively for the benefit of society.

Synthesis of Key Insights

The discussion presented above highlights several key insights. First, emotional intelligence is a fundamental competency for effective teaching in contemporary education systems. Second, emotionally intelligent teachers contribute significantly to positive classroom environments, improved student outcomes, and stronger teacher well-being. Third, despite its importance, emotional intelligence remains insufficiently integrated into many teacher education programs.

The analysis also demonstrates that emotional intelligence aligns closely with holistic education philosophies and culturally responsive pedagogies, particularly in contexts such as the Pacific region. Finally, in an era defined by technological change and social complexity, emotional intelligence represents a uniquely human capability that will become increasingly valuable in education and the future workforce. These insights suggest that repositioning teacher education to incorporate emotional intelligence is not merely an

educational innovation but a necessary step toward creating more humane, inclusive, and future-ready education systems.

CONCLUSION

The rapidly evolving educational landscape of the twenty-first century has intensified calls for education systems to prepare students for uncertain futures characterized by technological disruption, global interconnectedness, and complex social challenges. In response, policymakers and educational scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of equipping learners with twenty-first-century competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy. However, as this paper has argued, the successful development of these competencies among students is fundamentally dependent on the preparedness and professional capacities of teachers. Within this context, emotional intelligence (EI) emerges as a critical yet often underemphasized dimension of teacher education and professional development.

This paper examined the role of emotional intelligence in teaching and highlighted the urgent need to reposition teacher education to support emotionally competent educators capable of fostering holistic and future-ready learning environments. Emotional intelligence, defined as the capacity to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively utilize emotions in oneself and others, plays a central role in shaping teacher-student relationships, classroom climate, and learning outcomes (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Teachers with strong emotional intelligence are better able to manage classroom dynamics, support diverse learners, and create learning environments characterized by trust, empathy, and mutual respect (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The literature reviewed in this study demonstrates that emotionally intelligent teachers contribute significantly to both academic achievement and socio-emotional development among students. Positive teacher-student relationships foster engagement, motivation, and resilience, which are critical for effective learning (Durlak et al., 2011). Furthermore, emotionally supportive classrooms promote inclusive learning environments that recognize the diverse cultural, social, and emotional experiences that students bring to the educational process. These findings underscore the importance of embedding emotional intelligence training within teacher education programs as a core professional competency rather than an optional or peripheral skill.

The relevance of emotional intelligence becomes even more pronounced within the context of contemporary technological transformations associated with the Fourth

and Fifth Industrial Revolutions. While emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, automation, and digital platforms are reshaping education systems, they simultaneously highlight the importance of uniquely human capabilities that cannot easily be replicated by machines. Skills such as empathy, ethical judgment, collaboration, and emotional awareness are increasingly recognized as essential for navigating human–technology interactions and addressing complex societal challenges (Schwab, 2016; Nahavandi, 2019).

In this context, emotionally intelligent teachers are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between technological advancement and human-centered education. As learning environments become increasingly digital and hybrid, teachers must support students not only in developing technical competencies but also in maintaining emotional wellbeing, ethical awareness, and interpersonal skills. Emotionally intelligent educators can help students navigate digital environments responsibly, manage online communication, and develop resilience in the face of rapid societal change.

Despite growing recognition of the importance of emotional intelligence in education, significant gaps remain in how teacher education programs address this dimension of professional preparation. Many teacher training curricula continue to prioritize subject knowledge and pedagogical techniques while giving limited attention to emotional and relational competencies. This imbalance reflects a broader tendency within education systems to privilege cognitive outcomes over socio-emotional development. Addressing this gap requires a fundamental rethinking of teacher education frameworks to incorporate emotional intelligence as a central pillar of professional competence.

Moreover, the importance of emotional intelligence is particularly relevant in culturally diverse educational contexts such as those found in the Pacific region. Education systems in countries such as Fiji operate within complex social environments characterized by cultural diversity, community values, and collective relationships. Emotional intelligence aligns closely with culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes empathy, respect, and meaningful engagement with students' cultural identities (Gay, 2018; Nabobo-Baba, 2013). By integrating emotional intelligence into teacher education programs, institutions can strengthen culturally responsive teaching practices and promote inclusive learning environments.

Overall, this study highlights that preparing teachers with emotional intelligence is essential for building education systems capable of responding to the demands of rapidly changing global contexts. Emotionally intelligent teachers are not only more effective educators but also contribute to the development of compassionate, resilient, and socially responsible learners. Repositioning teacher education to

prioritize emotional intelligence therefore represents a critical step toward achieving holistic and future-ready education systems.

WAY FORWARD

While the importance of emotional intelligence in teaching is increasingly recognized, translating this recognition into meaningful educational practice requires coordinated efforts across multiple levels of the education system. Teacher education institutions, policymakers, educational leaders, and professional development providers must work collaboratively to ensure that emotional intelligence becomes a central component of teacher preparation and ongoing professional learning.

One of the most important steps in advancing emotionally intelligent teaching is the systematic integration of emotional intelligence within teacher education curricula. Pre-service teacher education programs should incorporate courses and training modules that focus specifically on socio-emotional competencies, reflective practice, and relational pedagogy. Such courses can help future teachers develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and communication skills that are essential for effective teaching. Integrating emotional intelligence into teacher preparation programs also helps future educators understand how emotions influence learning processes and classroom interactions (Brackett et al., 2019).

In addition to formal coursework, experiential and reflective learning approaches should be incorporated into teacher education programs to support the development of emotional competencies. Reflective journals, mentorship programs, peer collaboration, and practicum experiences provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop emotional awareness and professional resilience. These learning experiences encourage future educators to critically reflect on their teaching practices and understand how emotional dynamics influence classroom environments.

Professional development initiatives for in-service teachers also play a crucial role in strengthening emotional intelligence in education systems. Many practicing teachers have received limited training in emotional intelligence during their initial teacher preparation programs. Continuous professional learning opportunities—such as workshops, coaching programs, and professional learning communities, can help teachers enhance their emotional competencies and adapt to evolving educational demands. These initiatives also contribute to teacher wellbeing by providing strategies for managing stress, preventing burnout, and maintaining professional motivation (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Educational leadership is another critical factor in promoting emotionally intelligent education systems. School leaders and administrators play an important role in shaping organizational cultures that support emotional wellbeing and collaborative relationships. Leaders who demonstrate emotional intelligence can create supportive environments where teachers feel valued, respected, and motivated to engage in professional growth. Such leadership practices contribute to positive school climates that enhance both teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, education policymakers must recognize the importance of emotional intelligence in shaping future education systems. National education policies and teacher standards should explicitly incorporate emotional intelligence competencies as part of professional teaching frameworks. By embedding emotional intelligence within policy frameworks, governments can ensure that teacher education institutions prioritize socio-emotional competencies alongside academic and technological skills.

In the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution, the future of education will increasingly depend on the ability to integrate technological innovation with human-centred values. Education systems must therefore prepare teachers who can navigate complex technological environments while maintaining empathy, ethical awareness, and social responsibility. Emotional intelligence plays a critical role in ensuring that education remains fundamentally human-centred despite rapid technological change (Breque et al., 2021).

Finally, further research is needed to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence, teacher effectiveness, and student outcomes across diverse educational contexts. Empirical studies examining how emotional intelligence training influences teaching practices and student learning can provide valuable insights for improving teacher education programs. Comparative research across different cultural and regional contexts may also contribute to a deeper understanding of how emotional intelligence can support inclusive and culturally responsive education systems.

In conclusion, the future of education depends not only on technological advancement but also on the development of emotionally intelligent educators who can nurture the intellectual, emotional, and social growth of learners. By repositioning teacher education to prioritize emotional intelligence, education systems can cultivate teachers who are capable of guiding future generations toward more compassionate, collaborative, and sustainable societies.

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