



Promoting Emotional Well-being and Emotional Intelligence through Yoga in Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

Teacher education is expected to prepare prospective teachers not only with pedagogical competencies but also with the emotional resilience required to address the diverse challenges of contemporary classrooms. Emotional well-being and emotional intelligence have emerged as essential attributes for effective teaching, influencing classroom management, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and professional commitment. Yoga, an ancient Indian system of holistic development, offers a practical and evidence-informed approach to fostering mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Yogic practices such as asanas, pranayama, meditation, and mindfulness contribute to stress reduction, emotional regulation, self-awareness, and psychological resilience. This thematic paper explores the role of yoga in promoting emotional well-being and emotional intelligence among prospective teachers and discusses its relevance within teacher education programmes. Drawing upon contemporary research and educational perspectives, the paper argues that integrating yoga into teacher education can cultivate emotionally competent, resilient, and reflective teachers capable of creating positive learning environments. The paper

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concludes with recommendations for embedding yoga-based well-being initiatives into teacher education curricula to promote holistic professional development.

Introduction

Teaching is widely recognised as one of the most emotionally demanding professions. Teachers continuously interact with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators while managing instructional responsibilities, classroom discipline, assessment, and administrative duties. These multiple responsibilities often generate emotional stress, making emotional competence a critical characteristic of successful teachers.

Teacher education programmes have traditionally focused on pedagogical knowledge, subject expertise, and instructional skills. While these competencies remain essential, they alone are insufficient to prepare teachers for the complex emotional realities of twenty-first-century classrooms. Contemporary education increasingly emphasises teachers' emotional well-being, resilience, empathy, and interpersonal effectiveness.

Prospective teachers frequently experience anxiety arising from academic expectations, teaching practice, examinations, classroom management, and career uncertainty. If these emotional challenges are not addressed during teacher preparation, they may adversely affect teaching performance, professional satisfaction, and long-term mental health. Consequently, teacher education institutions have a responsibility to nurture both professional competence and emotional wellness.

Emotional intelligence (EI), popularised by Daniel Goleman (1995), has become one of the most influential constructs in educational psychology. It refers to the ability to recognise, understand, regulate, and effectively utilise emotions in oneself and others. Teachers possessing high emotional intelligence establish stronger relationships with learners, demonstrate empathy, manage classroom conflicts constructively, and contribute positively to school culture.

Parallel to this development, increasing attention has been given to yoga as a holistic educational practice. Originating in ancient India, yoga encompasses physical postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayama), meditation (dhyana), relaxation techniques, and ethical principles that collectively enhance physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Unlike interventions that focus solely on physical fitness, yoga promotes balanced personality development by integrating body, mind, and emotions.



Scientific studies conducted during the past decade have consistently demonstrated that regular yoga practice reduces perceived stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and depression while improving attention, mindfulness, emotional regulation, self-confidence, and overall psychological well-being. These outcomes are especially valuable for prospective teachers, who require emotional stability and resilience to meet professional demands.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also advocates holistic education, health, well-being, and value-based learning. Integrating yoga into teacher education aligns with these national priorities by promoting self-awareness, emotional competence, and healthy lifestyles among future educators.

This paper explores how yoga can strengthen emotional well-being and emotional intelligence in prospective teachers and highlights its significance for teacher education institutions

Emotional Well-being: Concept and Significance

Emotional well-being refers to an individual's capacity to experience positive emotions, effectively manage negative emotions, cope with stress, maintain satisfying relationships, and adapt successfully to life's challenges. It extends beyond the absence of mental illness and encompasses psychological flourishing, life satisfaction, optimism, resilience, and emotional balance.

According to the World Health Organization, mental well-being enables individuals to realise their abilities, cope with normal stresses, work productively, and contribute meaningfully to society. For teachers, emotional well-being directly influences classroom effectiveness, professional commitment, and student outcomes. Emotionally healthy teachers generally demonstrate:

- Positive self-esteem
- Optimism and confidence
- Effective stress management
- Healthy interpersonal relationships
- Better decision-making abilities
- Professional satisfaction

Greater resilience during challenging situations Conversely, poor emotional well-being contributes to burnout, emotional exhaustion, reduced teaching effectiveness, absenteeism, diminished classroom engagement, and higher attrition from the profession. Teacher education institutions should therefore prioritise emotional well-being alongside academic and professional preparation.



Emotional Intelligence: Meaning and Components

The concept of emotional intelligence gained worldwide recognition through the work of Daniel Goleman (1995). Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify, understand, manage, and appropriately express emotions while recognising and responding effectively to the emotions of others.

Goleman proposed five major dimensions of emotional intelligence:

1. Self-awareness

The ability to recognise one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and behavioural patterns.

2. Self-regulation

The capacity to control impulsive reactions, manage stress, and maintain emotional balance during difficult situations.

3. Motivation

The ability to remain committed to goals with optimism, persistence, and enthusiasm despite setbacks.

4. Empathy

The capacity to understand and appreciate the feelings, perspectives, and experiences of others.

5. Social Skills

The ability to establish healthy relationships, communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, collaborate, and inspire others.

For prospective teachers, these competencies are indispensable. Emotionally intelligent teachers create inclusive classrooms, motivate learners, manage behavioural challenges effectively, communicate compassionately, and foster positive school climates.

Research consistently indicates that emotional intelligence contributes positively to teacher effectiveness, classroom management, student engagement, professional satisfaction, and psychological resilience.

Why Yoga Matters in Teacher Education

Yoga offers a comprehensive approach to developing emotional intelligence because it integrates physical health, emotional regulation, mental concentration, and self-awareness. Unlike isolated stress-management



programmes, yoga simultaneously nurtures cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and physiological dimensions of human functioning.

Regular yoga practice enhances mindfulness, improves breathing patterns, reduces physiological stress responses, strengthens emotional control, and promotes inner calm. These benefits help prospective teachers respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively during emotionally demanding situations.

Yoga also encourages reflective practice, compassion, patience, discipline, and ethical living—qualities that are fundamental to effective teaching. By cultivating these attributes during teacher preparation, institutions can prepare educators who are emotionally resilient, professionally competent, and capable of supporting students' holistic development.

As educational systems increasingly recognise the importance of social-emotional learning and teacher well-being, integrating yoga into teacher education represents a meaningful strategy for developing emotionally intelligent educators who can positively influence future generations

Review of Related Literature

Recent research demonstrates a growing interest in the role of emotional intelligence and yoga in teacher education and well-being. Emotional intelligence has consistently been associated with improved teacher effectiveness, psychological health, interpersonal relationships, and classroom management. A systematic review and meta-analysis of studies involving Indian teachers found that emotional intelligence is positively associated with both personal and professional health indicators, highlighting its importance for teacher preparation and professional success.

Research on teacher emotion regulation further indicates that educators who effectively manage their emotions create more positive classroom environments, strengthen teacher–student relationships, and enhance student learning outcomes. Emotional intelligence serves as one of the major frameworks explaining these positive educational outcomes.

Yoga-based interventions have also shown encouraging outcomes. A 2024 study involving yoga teacher trainees reported significant improvements in emotional intelligence following regular practice of yogasanas and Anulom Vilom pranayama, suggesting that structured yoga programmes can strengthen emotional competencies through enhanced self-awareness, self-regulation, and mental calmness.

Beyond emotional intelligence, systematic reviews have shown that yoga contributes to reduced stress, improved psychological well-being, better attention, enhanced resilience, and improved overall



psychosomatic health among learners in educational settings. These findings support the inclusion of yoga as an evidence-informed strategy for promoting holistic development in teacher education.

Studies examining emotional intelligence training programmes for educators likewise conclude that emotional competencies can be developed through structured interventions rather than being viewed as fixed personality traits. This finding strengthens the rationale for integrating yoga, mindfulness, and reflective practices into teacher education curricula.

Collectively, the available literature suggests that combining yoga practices with emotional intelligence development may significantly enhance the professional preparation of prospective teachers.

Theoretical Perspectives

The relationship between yoga and emotional intelligence can be understood through several complementary theoretical perspectives.

Emotional Intelligence Theory

Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory proposes five interrelated dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These competencies enable teachers to manage emotions effectively while maintaining positive relationships with learners and colleagues.

Yoga directly contributes to these dimensions by encouraging mindful awareness of thoughts and emotions, improving emotional regulation through controlled breathing, strengthening intrinsic motivation through disciplined practice, and fostering empathy through increased self-understanding and compassion.

Holistic Education Theory

Holistic education views learners as integrated beings whose intellectual, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual dimensions should develop simultaneously. Teacher education therefore extends beyond academic competence to include personal growth, ethical responsibility, and emotional maturity.

Yoga embodies this philosophy by integrating body, mind, and consciousness into a unified approach to human development.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology emphasises strengths, resilience, optimism, well-being, and flourishing rather than merely addressing psychological problems. Emotional intelligence and yoga both align with this perspective



by promoting positive emotions, resilience, gratitude, mindfulness, and psychological wellness among prospective teachers.

Yoga and Emotional Intelligence

Yoga is more than physical exercise. Derived from the Sanskrit root Yuj, meaning "to unite," yoga aims to harmonise body, mind, emotions, and consciousness. Traditional yoga includes several interconnected practices:

- Asanas (physical postures)
- Pranayama (breathing exercises)
- Dhyana (meditation)
- Relaxation techniques
- Mindfulness
- Ethical disciplines (Yama and Niyama)

These practices collectively contribute to emotional development in multiple ways.

Self-awareness

Meditation and mindful breathing encourage individuals to observe their emotions without judgement. Prospective teachers become more conscious of their emotional triggers, strengths, and behavioural patterns.

Self-regulation

Pranayama activates physiological relaxation responses, reducing stress and impulsive reactions. Teachers consequently develop greater emotional balance during challenging classroom situations.

Motivation

Regular yoga practice promotes discipline, perseverance, and intrinsic motivation, qualities essential for lifelong professional growth.

Empathy

Mindfulness practices increase compassion and emotional sensitivity, enabling teachers to understand students' feelings and respond with patience and kindness.



Social Skills

Emotionally balanced individuals communicate more effectively, resolve conflicts constructively, and establish healthier interpersonal relationships within educational settings. Through these mechanisms, yoga strengthens each component of emotional intelligence while simultaneously promoting physical and psychological well-being.

Yoga for Promoting Emotional Well-being

Prospective teachers often experience considerable stress arising from coursework, teaching practice, examinations, classroom observations, and career uncertainty. Without appropriate coping strategies, these stressors may negatively influence both academic achievement and professional identity. Yoga offers a preventive and promotive approach to emotional well-being through several mechanisms.

First, yogic breathing exercises reduce physiological stress responses by regulating the autonomic nervous system. Controlled breathing lowers anxiety, stabilises heart rate, and enhances emotional calmness.

Second, meditation improves attentional control and reduces rumination. Instead of reacting impulsively to stressful situations, individuals learn to respond thoughtfully and calmly.

Third, regular physical postures improve flexibility, circulation, muscular relaxation, and overall physical health, contributing indirectly to improved psychological well-being.

Fourth, yoga encourages positive lifestyle habits including healthy sleep, self-discipline, balanced nutrition, and reflective thinking.

For prospective teachers, these outcomes contribute to increased confidence, resilience, optimism, job readiness, and professional effectiveness.

Integrating Yoga into Teacher Education

Teacher education institutions can integrate yoga within existing programmes through structured and practical initiatives.

- Daily yoga sessions of 20–30 minutes may be incorporated into institutional routines. These sessions may include simple asanas, breathing exercises, meditation, and guided relaxation suitable for beginners.



- Dedicated workshops on emotional intelligence and mindfulness can complement theoretical instruction by providing experiential learning opportunities.
- Reflective journals may encourage student teachers to document emotional experiences during teaching practice while relating these experiences to yogic principles and emotional regulation strategies.
- Teacher educators should also model emotionally intelligent behaviour by fostering supportive classroom climates characterised by empathy, respect, collaboration, and constructive communication.
- Institutions may collaborate with certified yoga instructors to ensure scientifically informed and culturally appropriate implementation.
- Integrating yoga does not require replacing existing curriculum components; rather, it enriches teacher education by strengthening emotional resilience, interpersonal competence, reflective practice, and holistic professional development.

Overall, the available evidence indicates that yoga represents an accessible, cost-effective, and culturally relevant intervention capable of preparing emotionally competent teachers who can positively influence learners and educational communities.

Practical Implications for Prospective Teachers

The integration of yoga into teacher education offers several practical benefits that extend beyond physical fitness. As prospective teachers prepare to enter increasingly diverse and demanding classrooms, emotional competence becomes an essential professional attribute. Yoga can serve as a preventive and developmental strategy for nurturing these competencies.

First, yoga enhances stress management by equipping prospective teachers with breathing techniques, relaxation exercises, and mindfulness practices that reduce anxiety during examinations, teaching practice, and classroom interactions. Studies have shown that yoga interventions improve teachers' mental well-being while reducing state anxiety.

Second, yoga promotes self-awareness and reflective practice. Through meditation and mindful observation, student teachers become more conscious of their emotions, strengths, and areas requiring improvement. Such reflection contributes to continuous professional growth.



Third, yoga strengthens classroom management skills by improving emotional regulation. Teachers who remain calm under pressure are more capable of responding thoughtfully to disruptive behaviour, resolving conflicts constructively, and creating supportive learning environments.

Fourth, yoga fosters empathy and interpersonal competence. Compassion, patience, and active listening are cultivated through regular practice, enabling teachers to understand students' emotional needs and build positive teacher–student relationships.

Finally, yoga encourages a healthy lifestyle, including improved sleep, physical fitness, concentration, and resilience. These outcomes support long-term professional effectiveness and reduce the likelihood of burnout.

Challenges and Recommendations

Although the benefits of yoga are well documented, several challenges may hinder its implementation within teacher education programmes.

Challenges

- Limited curriculum time for wellness-oriented activities.
- Lack of trained yoga instructors in teacher education institutions.
- Misconceptions that yoga is solely a physical exercise rather than a holistic educational practice.
- Insufficient institutional policies supporting emotional well-being programmes.
- Limited empirical research specifically focusing on prospective teachers in diverse educational contexts.

Recommendations

- To maximise the benefits of yoga in teacher education, the following measures are recommended:
- Integrate yoga and mindfulness modules into Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and other teacher education programmes.
- Organise regular workshops on emotional intelligence, stress management, and mindfulness for student teachers.
- Encourage daily yoga practice of 20–30 minutes as part of institutional wellness initiatives.
- Train teacher educators to incorporate emotional learning and reflective practices into classroom instruction.



- Promote interdisciplinary research examining the relationship between yoga, emotional intelligence, resilience, teacher effectiveness, and student outcomes.
- Establish counselling and wellness centres in teacher education institutions to complement yoga-based interventions.

Align institutional practices with the holistic vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasises learners' physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Conclusion

The teaching profession requires educators who possess not only pedagogical competence but also emotional resilience, empathy, and psychological well-being. Emotional intelligence has become an indispensable professional competency because it influences teachers' decision-making, classroom management, interpersonal relationships, and overall effectiveness.

Yoga provides a holistic and evidence-informed approach to nurturing these competencies. Through asanas, pranayama, meditation, mindfulness, and relaxation techniques, yoga strengthens self-awareness, emotional regulation, resilience, and overall well-being. Contemporary research consistently demonstrates that yoga contributes to improved psychological health, reduced stress, enhanced emotional intelligence, and greater professional satisfaction among educators.

Teacher education institutions therefore have an opportunity to move beyond conventional academic preparation by embracing holistic approaches that cultivate emotionally competent educators. Integrating yoga into teacher education can prepare prospective teachers to manage professional challenges with confidence, empathy, and resilience while creating emotionally supportive classrooms that enhance student learning.

In the context of twenty-first-century education and the vision of NEP 2020, promoting emotional well-being and emotional intelligence through yoga is not merely an additional activity but an essential investment in the quality, sustainability, and humanisation of teacher education.

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