SIES School of Learning and Leadership Development (SIESSLLD)

TRAINING NOTE (028/2026-27)

on

Manage Emotions First and Then Comes Teaching: Reality of Today

October 2026

SIES School of Learning and Leadership Development (SIESSLLD),
SIES Education Complex, Plot 1E, Sector-5, Nerul
Navi Mumbai-400 706

Background:

Education has always been considered a noble profession because it shapes not merely careers but lives. While subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and technological competence remain indispensable qualities of a teacher, they alone do not guarantee meaningful learning. Before students remember what a teacher taught, they remember how that teacher made them feel. This is why emotional connection with students comes first, and teaching comes second.

The renowned educator Rita Pierson once remarked, *"Kids don't learn from people they don't like."* Although simple, this statement captures a profound truth about human learning. Every meaningful educational process begins with trust, respect, and emotional safety. A student who feels understood, valued, and accepted is naturally more receptive to learning than one who experiences fear, indifference, or neglect.

Learning Is an Emotional Process:

Modern neuroscience has established that “emotions” and “cognition” are inseparable. The brain learns best when it feels safe and motivated. Anxiety, humiliation, and constant criticism activate stress responses that interfere with memory, attention, and problem-solving. In contrast, encouragement, appreciation, and empathy stimulate curiosity and intrinsic motivation.

Psychologists have often emphasised that learning is fundamentally a social process. Carl Rogers advocated learner-centred education, arguing that empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard are essential conditions for effective learning. These theories remind us that teaching is not merely “transferring information” but “nurturing human potential”.

The Changing Profile of Today's Students:

Today's students, largely belonging to Generation Z or Alpha, have grown up in a digital world filled with information but often lacking meaningful human interaction. They are exposed to academic competition, social media pressures, career uncertainties, mental health concerns, and rapidly changing societal expectations. Many silently struggle with loneliness, anxiety, fear of failure, and identity issues.

In such a scenario, students need teachers who are not merely “instructors” but trusted “mentors”. A teacher who notices a student's

silence, appreciates small achievements, listens without judgment, and provides reassurance during difficult times often influences that student's life far beyond the classroom.

Many successful professionals, when asked about their educational journey, rarely remember every lecture they attended. Instead, they fondly recall that one teacher who believed in them when nobody else did. Emotional connection creates lifelong memories that textbooks cannot.

Emotional Connection Is Not Emotional Dependency:

Some educators mistakenly believe that maintaining emotional distance reflects professionalism. On the contrary, professionalism includes compassionate engagement while maintaining appropriate boundaries.

Emotional connection does not imply becoming a friend in the social sense or becoming involved in students' personal affairs beyond professional limits. Rather, it means creating an atmosphere where students feel respected, heard, and psychologically safe. It means being approachable, fair, patient, and genuinely interested in students' growth.

A smile, remembering a student's name, acknowledging effort, encouraging participation, or asking, "Are you doing fine?" can often have a greater educational impact than an additional hour of lecturing.

Teaching Becomes Effective Only After Connection:

Educational institutions invest heavily in smart classrooms, digital platforms, AI-based learning systems, and innovative pedagogies. While these resources enhance learning, they cannot replace human relationships.

A teacher may possess exceptional subject expertise, impressive presentations, and sophisticated teaching methods. However, if students perceive the teacher as inaccessible, intimidating, or indifferent, much of the teaching remains ineffective.

Conversely, even a moderately talented teacher who genuinely cares for students often inspires extraordinary learning. Emotional connection enhances classroom participation, improves attendance, reduces discipline problems, encourages questioning, and strengthens collaborative learning.

Students willingly accept academic challenges when they trust that the teacher is committed to their success rather than merely evaluating their performance.

Practical Ways to Build Emotional Connection:

Building meaningful relationships does not require extraordinary effort. Small but consistent practices make a significant difference:

- Learn and use students' names.
- Listen actively without interrupting.
- Appreciate sincere effort, not only high achievement.
- Encourage questions without fear of ridicule.
- Provide constructive rather than aggressive feedback.
- Recognize that every student learns at a different pace.
- Show empathy during personal or academic difficulties.
- Celebrate diversity of backgrounds, opinions, and abilities.
- Be available for academic guidance beyond classroom hours.
- Maintain fairness, consistency, and transparency in all interactions.

These seemingly simple actions gradually create a classroom culture built on mutual respect and trust.

The Teacher's Role in the AI Era:

Artificial Intelligence is transforming education. Students can now access explanations, tutorials, simulations, and personalized learning through AI-powered platforms within seconds. Information is becoming increasingly abundant and easily accessible.

This technological shift raises an important question: if AI can teach concepts, what remains uniquely human about teaching?

The answer lies in “emotional intelligence”. AI can explain, but it cannot genuinely care. It cannot inspire through authentic human presence, understand unspoken emotions, or build lasting relationships. The teacher's greatest value in the future may not lie in delivering information but in cultivating wisdom, character, resilience, ethics, and emotional well-being.

The teacher of tomorrow will, therefore, be less of an information provider and more of a mentor, facilitator, coach, and compassionate guide.

Moving Ahead:

Teaching begins not with the lesson plan but with the relationship. Before students can open their minds, they must first open their hearts. Emotional connection is not an optional soft skill; it is the foundation upon which effective teaching rests.

When students experience empathy, trust, and respect, learning becomes joyful rather than burdensome. They become confident enough to ask questions, courageous enough to make mistakes, and motivated enough to pursue excellence.

The finest teachers are remembered not because they covered every chapter in the syllabus but because they touched lives. Years after graduation, students may forget formulae, definitions, and examination scores, but they rarely forget the teacher who believed in them, encouraged them during moments of self-doubt, and inspired them to become better human beings, while also offering sound career advice.

In the final analysis, education is not merely about teaching subjects; it is about touching hearts. Once the heart is reached, the mind naturally follows.

Based on the article by Dr A K Sen Gupta, Founder, Higher Education Forum (HEF) in Free Press Journal FPJ on 26th October 2026.