



Emotional Intelligence and Art-Based Learning among Pre-service Teachers: A Narrative Review

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a key competency for effective teaching, influencing classroom management, teacher well-being, communication, empathy, and student engagement. Pre-service teachers often encounter emotional challenges during teacher training, making the development of EI essential before entering the teaching profession. Simultaneously, art-based learning, including drama, music, painting, dance, storytelling, and creative expression, has gained recognition as an innovative pedagogical approach that promotes emotional awareness, creativity, and reflective practice. This narrative review synthesizes current evidence on the relationship between emotional intelligence and art-based learning among pre-service teachers. Relevant studies published in peer-reviewed journals were examined to identify the role of arts in enhancing emotional competencies, communication skills, empathy, resilience, and professional identity. The review indicates that participation in arts-based educational experiences positively influences emotional intelligence by fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and collaborative learning. However, existing research is limited by methodological heterogeneity and a lack of longitudinal evidence. Future research should employ standardized EI instruments and experimental designs to evaluate the long-term impact of arts-integrated teacher education. Integrating art-based learning into teacher education curricula may contribute to the preparation of emotionally competent and reflective educators capable of creating supportive and inclusive learning environments.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Art-Based Learning; Teacher Education; Pre-service Teachers; Drama; Fine Arts; Creativity; Emotional Competence

Introduction

Teaching is a profession that demands not only subject knowledge and pedagogical competence but also emotional maturity. Teachers interact daily with students from diverse social, cultural, and emotional backgrounds. Their ability to manage emotions, communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, and build positive relationships significantly influences student learning and classroom climate. Therefore, emotional intelligence has become an essential component of teacher effectiveness.

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and appropriately express one's own emotions while also understanding and responding effectively to the emotions of others. Since the work of Mayer and Salovey (1990) and Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence has been recognized as a predictor of leadership, communication, stress management, and professional success. In education, emotionally intelligent teachers demonstrate greater empathy, better classroom management, improved student engagement, and higher job satisfaction. Pre-service teachers represent the future teaching workforce. During teacher education programs, they encounter teaching practice, internships, lesson planning, peer interactions, and classroom observations that require emotional resilience and interpersonal competence. Developing emotional intelligence during this stage can improve confidence, reflective thinking, and professional identity.

Art-based learning is an educational approach that integrates creative arts such as visual arts, theatre, music, dance, storytelling, poetry, and creative writing into teaching and learning. It emphasizes experiential learning, creativity, collaboration, and emotional expression. Participation in artistic activities provides opportunities for learners to explore emotions, develop empathy, enhance communication skills, and strengthen critical thinking.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 strongly recommends art-integrated learning to promote holistic education. It recognizes that arts contribute to creativity, emotional development, cultural understanding, and experiential learning. Incorporating art-based learning into teacher education aligns with these objectives and may enhance the emotional competencies required for effective teaching.

Although emotional intelligence and art-based learning have been widely studied independently, research examining their relationship among pre-service teachers remains limited. This narrative review synthesizes existing evidence to understand how art-based learning contributes to the emotional development of future teachers and identifies areas for future research.

Review Methodology

This narrative review was prepared by examining peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and policy documents related to emotional intelligence, art-based learning, and teacher education. Relevant literature published in English over the past two decades was identified through databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, PubMed, and Google Scholar. Keywords including *emotional intelligence*, *art-based learning*, *teacher education*, *pre-service teachers*, *drama in education*, *creative pedagogy*, and *social-emotional learning* were used. Studies addressing emotional competencies, arts integration, and teacher preparation were included, while studies unrelated to education or emotional development were excluded.

Emotional Intelligence in Teacher Education

Emotional intelligence consists of several interconnected abilities, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These competencies enable teachers to respond appropriately to classroom challenges, maintain positive relationships, and create emotionally supportive learning environments.

Research has consistently demonstrated that teachers with higher emotional intelligence experience lower occupational stress, greater job satisfaction, improved classroom management, and stronger student-teacher relationships. Emotional intelligence also supports reflective practice, decision-making, conflict resolution, and effective communication.

Teacher education institutions have an important responsibility to cultivate emotional competencies alongside pedagogical knowledge. Classroom teaching requires emotional labour, and teachers must respond effectively to learners' diverse emotional and behavioural needs. Therefore, integrating emotional intelligence into teacher preparation programs can contribute to both teacher well-being and student success.

Art-Based Learning and Emotional Development

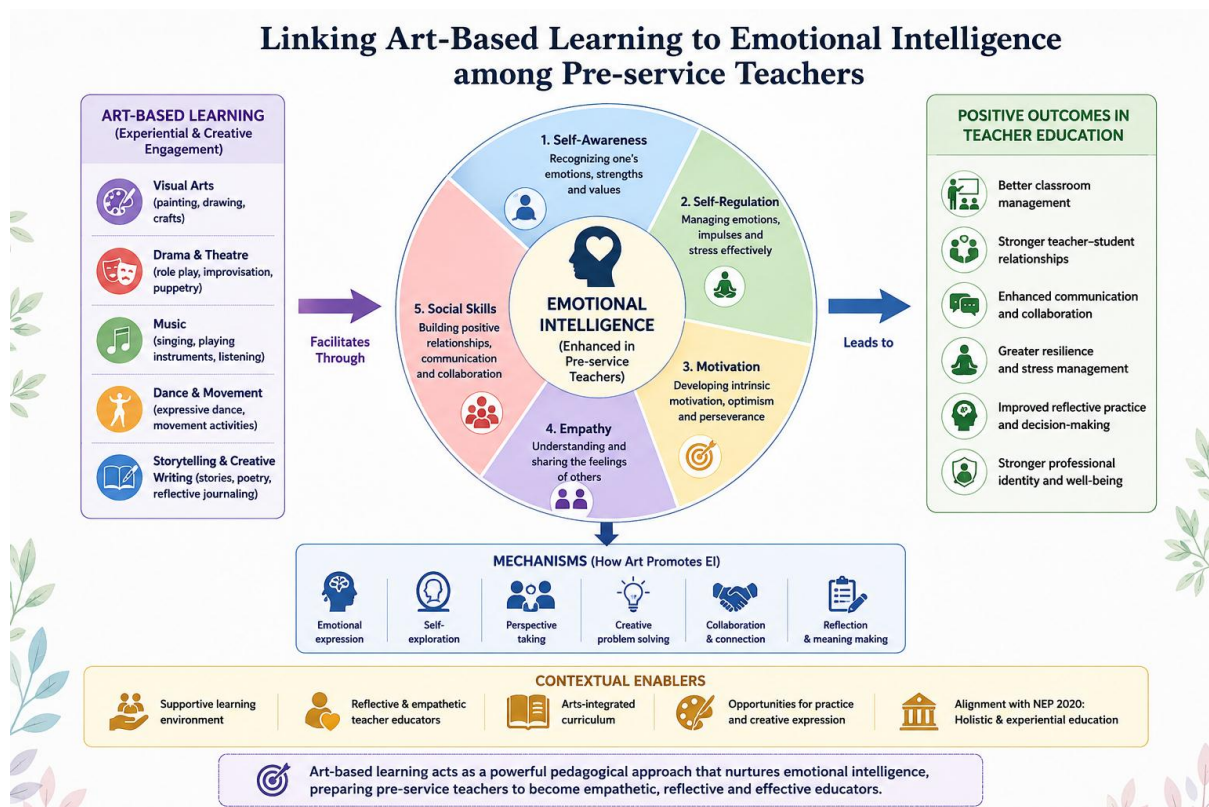
Art-based learning promotes experiential learning through creative expression. Activities such as drama, theatre, storytelling, painting, music, dance, and creative writing encourage learners to express emotions, collaborate with peers, and reflect on their experiences.

Drama and role-play help pre-service teachers understand different perspectives and develop empathy by placing themselves in realistic classroom situations. Music and dance reduce stress, improve mood, and encourage collaboration, while visual arts facilitate emotional expression and creative problem-solving.

Several studies suggest that participation in arts-based educational activities enhances self-confidence, communication skills, creativity, emotional regulation, and interpersonal competence. These outcomes are closely associated with the components of emotional

intelligence. Arts also encourage reflective thinking, allowing teacher trainees to evaluate their beliefs, emotions, and teaching practices.

The NEP 2020 emphasizes art-integrated learning as a strategy for developing holistic education. Integrating arts into teacher education may therefore enhance not only creativity but also emotional competence, resilience, and professional identity.



Research Gaps and Implications

Despite growing evidence supporting both emotional intelligence and art-based learning, relatively few studies have directly examined their relationship among pre-service teachers, particularly in developing countries. Many existing studies use small samples, different emotional intelligence measurement tools, and cross-sectional designs, making comparisons difficult.

Future research should employ longitudinal and experimental designs to determine the long-term effects of arts-based learning on emotional intelligence. Standardized assessment tools should be used to improve comparability across studies. More research is also needed in Indian teacher education institutions to evaluate the effectiveness of art-integrated pedagogies within the framework of NEP 2020.

Teacher education programs should incorporate structured activities such as theatre workshops, reflective journaling, music, storytelling, and visual arts to foster emotional competencies. Faculty development programs should also emphasize arts-based pedagogies to strengthen socio-emotional learning among future educators.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is an essential competency for effective teaching, contributing to communication, empathy, classroom management, and professional well-being. Art-based learning provides meaningful opportunities for emotional expression, creativity, collaboration, and reflective practice, making it a valuable approach for enhancing emotional intelligence among pre-service teachers. Although current evidence suggests a positive relationship between arts participation and emotional development, further high-quality research is required to establish causal relationships. Integrating art-based learning into teacher education curricula can help prepare emotionally competent, innovative, and reflective educators capable of meeting the complex demands of twenty-first-century classrooms.

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