

TEACHING WITH HEART

Mastering Soft Skills for Transformative Education

Editors

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Chapter 4

Heart-Centered Pedagogy: Blending Compassion with Curriculum

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Abstract

In an era marked by increasing academic pressures, emotional distress among learners, and growing educational inequities, there is a pressing need for pedagogical approaches that address the holistic development of students. Heart-centered pedagogy responds to this need by integrating compassion, empathy, emotional intelligence, and reflective practice into curriculum and classroom instruction. Grounded in theories of holistic education, humanistic psychology, social-emotional learning, and compassionate pedagogy, this approach positions emotional well-being and relational trust as foundational to meaningful learning. The chapter systematically examines the theoretical foundations, conceptual framework, core components, and practical strategies associated with heart-centered pedagogy, drawing upon empirical research and global educational practices. Key elements such as authentic teacher–student relationships, mindfulness, reflective learning, restorative practices, and inclusive learning environments are explored in depth. The chapter also addresses challenges related to implementation, including institutional constraints and the need for professional development. It argues that heart-centered pedagogy does not diminish academic rigor but enhances it by creating emotionally