

Relationship Between Knowledge Workers and Teaching Effectiveness Among Malaysian University Lecturers

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims to examine whether lecturers in Perak, Malaysia who are considered as knowledge workers possess the necessary knowledge and emotional intelligence to teach effectively in the classroom. The conceptual framework of this study is based on the model of emotional intelligence named Emotional Skills Assessment Process (ESAP) developed by Nelson and Low (1998) and the model of teaching effectiveness developed by Aregbeye (2010). This study involves lecturers from public and private universities in Perak, Malaysia. For the purpose of this study, only permanent lecturers from the selected universities are chosen as respondents. Part time and contract lecturers are not included as they are not usually required to carry out both teaching and research activities. This study will also provide recommendations and suggestions for future research.*

KEYWORDS: *Emotional intelligence, Higher education, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Knowledge workers, Leadership skills, Self-management, Teaching effectiveness*

I. INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the primary goal of universities is to produce graduates who fulfill the needs of the industry. In short, universities are entrusted with the task to ensure that their graduates are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to be successful in both their professional and personal lives (Syahrina Hayati, 2011). In recent years, there have been increasing calls for quality and accountability in universities. In light of this development, it is inevitable that universities focus on the teaching and learning process as the outcomes attained by their learners manifest the standard of that educational institution within the industry.

Furthermore, it is this sort of accountability that accrediting bodies are seeking for when ranking a university as world-class. Towards achieving this aim, most universities within Malaysia have begun to place emphasis on the quality of the lecturers not only in terms of their academic qualification but also in terms of their teaching effectiveness to produce graduates who are globally competitive. Thus, to perform effectively, lecturers need to possess knowledge in a subject matter (Efimova, 2003) as well as emotional intelligence skills (Goleman, 1998).

Knowledge workers should have the capability to understand their jobs, understand their emotions, and possess excellent interpersonal skills (Niblick, 2007). University lecturers are also categorized as knowledge workers because their abilities include producing ideas, interacting with students and peers, and conveying information rather than goods or services (Serrat, 2008). Moreover, lecturers are considered as important assets to the university as they are entrusted with the task of producing human capital with first class mentality that can fulfil the demands of the increasingly competitive and challenging environment (Syahrina Hayati, 2011).

In the academic setting in Malaysia, environment and workload are the factors that contribute to stress among lecturers, thus giving a negative impact on their physical and mental health (Iskandar, Rohaty & Zuria, 2009). For instance, lecturers are expected to take on multiple roles and tasks such as conducting researches, publishing materials, presenting papers, and engaging with students and community service activities (Iskandar et al., 2009). Furthermore, they have to struggle to achieve the highest level of performance that could possibly lead to job burnout. These increasing demands at the workplace can create an unhealthy work environment and this can affect the management of the core business of lecturers which is teaching. This is because a study by

Nelson and Low (2003) reveal that lecturers who experienced emotional instability were not able to perform successfully in the teaching process. In addition, Petrides and Furnham (2000) emphasise that individuals who have a high level of emotional intelligence are better able to regulate their emotional reactions over time, manage stress, and be assertive. Therefore, it is important for the lecturers to be emotionally stable (Nelson & Low, 2003) and use their mental ability to generate value by using appropriate knowledge to deliver results (Niblick, 2007).

Corcoran and Tormey (2013) state that teachers can have varying scores on the different sub-skills within the emotional intelligence framework and thus it is important to determine to what extent each sub-skill affects teaching effectiveness. Identifying the significant predictor of teaching effectiveness through this study will be useful information for educators to develop aspects of emotional intelligence that can contribute towards improved teaching and learning. The purpose of this study was to:

- 1) Identify the level of agreement on the four components of emotional intelligence skills among lecturers in public and private universities.
- 2) Identify the level of agreement on the five components of teaching effectiveness among lecturers in public and private universities.
- 3) Examine the relationship between each component of emotional intelligence skills and teaching effectiveness.
- 4) Identify the significant predictor for teaching effectiveness.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

With the aim of achieving the vision to be an industrialised nation by the year 2020, organisations in Malaysia especially universities need to have a pool of knowledge workers to ensure the vision is successfully accomplished. The idea of knowledge workers is gaining more significance in the workplace as it has the potential to increase efficiency. Similarly, knowledge workers are important assets in an organisation as they contribute to the success of the establishment. Companies today are investing more money into hiring knowledge workers as they for see that they can reap a lot of benefits from doing so. Professionals, educators, scientists, and information system designers fall into this category of workers as they perform work that using their cognitive abilities rather than their physical strengths. Knowledge workers are required to complete “non-routine” problem solving that requires a combination of convergent, divergent, and creative thinking (Reinhardt, Schmidt, Sloep & Drachsler, 2011).

The term “knowledge worker” was coined by Peter Drucker, a management expert who defined these workers as high level employees who use their expertise gained from formal education to develop new products or services. Knowledge workers want to be recognised for their professionalism and intellectuality and demand that knowledge becomes the basis for achievement and performance. Furthermore, knowledge workers who are equipped with emotional intelligence skills are able to understand the emotions of others and in doing so, they empower themselves and others.

In educational institutions, the terms knowledge and knowledge workers are crucial because these institutions are focused on imparting education and knowledge which in turn builds up and shapes the economic stability and the development of society. The educational system and the programmes offered at tertiary level are all based on the necessity of the present scenario and in accordance to the present trends. As higher educational institutions at the national level have begun to emphasise on the quality and accountability of the educational process, it is expected that universities produce graduates who are prepared to face with future challenges and contribute significantly to societal development (Siti Asiah, 2011). In short, there is a need to investigate what is required and what is essential to make knowledge workers more efficient in their work.

In an article by Mazharul and Eaw (2008) on the readiness of higher education institutions in Malaysia towards a knowledge based economy, it was reported that the nation was still deficient in many of the pre-requisites for the k-economy as indicated by the knowledge-based Economy Development Index (KDI). They recommended that higher educational institutions should have a suitable mix in the level of qualification and area of specialisation and ensure that quality education and training is delivered. In addition, higher education institutions have to be prepared for changes to fulfil the new requirements and challenges from both the industry and society.

One crucial aspect that needs to be given emphasis in ensuring the quality of education and training is the teaching effectiveness in these intuitions. Teaching effectiveness is of primary importance as it entails the

transfer of knowledge from lecturers to students. California State University's working conceptualization of effective teaching consists of the following four categories: 1) belief system and dispositions; 2) knowledge base: subject matter knowledge, subject specific pedagogy; 3) professional/political knowledge and 4) practices and skills (CSUN, 2006).

The first aspect of effective teaching in this working definition is the belief system that emphasises equality in imparting knowledge to learners irregardless of their diverse backgrounds. Secondly, effective teaching requires not only subject matter knowledge but this should also be integrated with pedagogic knowledge and the ethical responsibility to improve professionally in their work places. Finally, effective teaching requires educators to equip learners with the skills required to survive and succeed in the real world. The ability to integrate all these aspects in their teaching and to develop professionally in their career as lecturers requires educators to possess emotional intelligence skills.

Goleman (1998) highlighted that emotional quotient or emotional intelligence is the determiner which distinguishes a successful individual from a less successful one. He states that, "(We) are being judged by a new yardstick: not just how smart we are, or by our training and expertise, but also by how well we handle ourselves and each other" (p.3). Effectiveness of instructors refers to the quality and quantity of task accomplishments by an instructor or group of instructors at work. It is a cornerstone of productivity and has great contribution to achievements of university. Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) generated a relatively general view of profession performance as "scalable actions, behaviour and outcomes that employees engage in or bring about that are linked with and contribute to organisation goals."

There is a wide body of research on emotional intelligence. Psychologists have used different approaches to define emotional intelligence. The theory of emotional intelligence can be synthesised into the ability model and mixed model.

Ability model defines emotional intelligence as a set of mental abilities and makes claims about the importance of emotional information and the potential uses of reasoning well with that information. Representatives of this model are Mayer and Salovey with their four-branch model of emotional intelligence which include the "ability to accurately perceive, appraise, and express emotions; the ability to access and/or generate feelings that facilitate thinking; the ability to understand emotions and to utilise emotional knowledge, and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997 as cited in P. Salovey & D. Sluyter, 1997).

Mixed model is more popularly oriented and mixes mental abilities with personality attributes such as persistence, zeal, and optimism. Goleman (2000), Bar-on (1997) and Nelson and Low (2003) are representatives for this model. They expanded the meaning of emotional intelligence by explicitly mixing the ability to understand and process emotion with other diverse parts of personality or skills, hence creating mixed approaches to emotional intelligence.

Classifications of these emotional intelligence models create a basis to develop an instrument to measure emotional intelligence. Mixed models use self-reports and multi-rater assessment to measure individuals' emotional quotient while ability models require task-based assessment procedures.

In the academic profession, emotional intelligence is viewed as a personality trait that is essential for lecturers to succeed in their career. Therefore, lecturers who lack emotional competence would indirectly affect the overall performance of the universities especially in terms of producing high quality graduates who can fulfil the demands of the industry. Furthermore, lecturers who possess a high level of emotional intelligence skills are more likely to achieve higher teaching effectiveness levels (Hwang, 2007). Aregbeyen (2010) adds that effective lecturers are those who not only touch the minds but also the hearts and souls of the students. In other words, lecturers who are considered as knowledge workers must commit not only in the areas of intellectual growth but also in the areas of emotional intelligence. Emotionally intelligent lecturers would be able to create effective learning environments by connecting their students with the emotional experiences of pleasure, challenge, joy, and creativity (Hargreaves, 1998, as cited in Robitaille, 2008).

In addition, effective lecturers must be able to develop emotional and cognitive minds through teaching, modeling, and informal interaction with students (Haskett, 2002). Through such informal interactions, lecturers would have a better understanding of students' preferences and learning styles and could work towards ensuring that these factors are catered for in their teaching performance. If lecturers lack emotional competence,

they would misunderstand a stressed student's behavior as assertiveness and hostility and react by suppressing the student's behavior which in turn would lead to negative effects on students' development (Ogrenir, 2008).

According to Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2008), an emotionally intelligent individual is able to understand the relationship of emotions and work affairs as well as understand how the individual could manage one's own and others' emotions in the organisation. In addition, lecturers of the present era have to deal with multiple work pressures in their daily tasks but they can still manage their work effectively if they possess skills such as time management, stress management, emotional management, patience, empathy, leadership ability, and positive thinking which are all sub-skills that encompass personal emotional intelligence (Hwang, 2007). A study conducted by Gohm, Corser and Dalsky (2005), propose that emotional intelligence is useful in reducing stress for some individuals, but unnecessary or irrelevant for others. However, through learning, mastering, and practicing emotional intelligence skills the lecturers would be able to motivate themselves (Meek, 2000), identify individual strengths and weaknesses, deal successfully with the demands and pressures of daily living (Nelson, Low & Vela, 2003), communicate and lead effectively (Rohana, Kamaruzaman & Zanariah, 2009) and recognise the emotions of others (Serrat, 2009). To summarise, it is expected that lecturers who possess high emotional intelligence skills would be able to administer their work more effectively than those who lack these skills.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology to be utilised in this study is survey research design and the sampling method that will be used is simple random sampling. The justification of using this method is every element in the population has a known and equal chance of being selected as a subject (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The sample in the study will comprise of permanent lecturers in selected public and private universities in Perak. Therefore, the total population comprised of 1,619 university lecturers in Perak.

The sampling method used in this study is simple random sampling. The justification of using this method is because every element in the population has a known and equal chance of being selected as a subject (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Additionally, the simple random sampling technique was applied because it is simple and fast (Barrero & Albandoz, 2001).

With reference to sample size, Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998) state that the sample size should not be less than 50 and that the preferable sample size should be 100 or more. According to them, the selection of the most number of items in the research variables which is eight in this study should be multiplied by five or ten. With reference to that, the most number of items in this study is eight hence the appropriate sample size for each university should be 40 or 80 ($8 \times 5 = 40$; $8 \times 10 = 80$). Therefore, for this study the sample size is more than 50 which is considered appropriate for this study.

(Table 1) Total Sample Size

University	Total Sample Size Selected for Study
University A (Public)	71
University B (Public)	99
University C (Private)	55
University D (Private)	50
TOTAL	275

The survey instrument for this study is a set of questionnaire which is an adapted version of the items in the Emotional Skills Assessment Process (ESAP) combined with the elements of the knowledge workers and self-evaluation of teaching effectiveness (SETE). Overall, the survey questionnaire consists of 54 questions (including demographic items in this study). There are three sections, namely Section A, B, and C such as respondents' demographic background, four components of emotional intelligence based on Nelson and Low (1998), and five components of teaching effectiveness based on Aregbeyen (2010) respectively.

The validity of the instrument was conducted to make sure that the questionnaire measures what it is supposed to measure and is relevant to the respondents before the researchers distributed it to them. The questionnaire was tested for content validity by experts to measure whether the instrument truly measures each component of EI and teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, the instruments used in this study are considered valid as they were particularly designed to measure the lecturers' EI and teaching effectiveness. In addition, these two instruments were used widely in the study of EI and teaching effectiveness.

The pilot study helped the researchers to identify any unnecessary questions in the questionnaire as well as to estimate the time needed from the respondents to answer the questionnaires (Salkind, 2006). The pilot study was conducted at one of the public universities in Perak. These respondents were excluded from being chosen as the actual respondents for this research.

The instrument used in this study is considered reliable because the researchers had performed a pilot study before conducting the actual study. Furthermore, internal consistency measures were used to ensure the internal consistency of the items in the instrument. As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach Alpha values ranged from .859 to .861. Hence, it can be concluded that the instruments in this study were reliable and good as its Cronbach's coefficient alpha exceeds .80 (Sekaran, 2006).

(Table 2) Scale Reliability

Scales	No. of Scale Items	Reliability Coefficient (Alpha)
EI Skills (Overall)	28	0.859
Interpersonal	4	0.658
Personal Leadership	8	0.727
Self-Management	8	0.815
Intrapersonal	8	0.719
Teaching Effectiveness (Overall)	20	0.861

The questionnaires will be distributed personally by the researchers through the respective representatives from each university. Data will be gathered over a period of three months. After collection of the survey data, descriptive, co-relational and multiple regression statistical analysis will be conducted to analyze the data. All collected data will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20.0.

IV. DISCUSSION

There are a lot of contributions of knowledge workers towards both individual achievement and organizational success. The researchers foresee that the results from this study will create an awareness of the importance of knowledge workers competencies in improving teaching effectiveness among lecturers success. As a whole, this study will be able to facilitate and improve the teaching and learning environment which can contribute towards a better standard and quality of education at the tertiary level in Malaysia. The success of educators at work is evaluated through their professional performance. Testimonies of educators have highlighted that emotional intelligence has a great impact on job performance. As university tasks run on brain power, it is important that every aspect of their intelligence is utilised by educators to enhance their work quality.

In addition, this study will help to establish the criteria for lecturer evaluation specifically in terms of teaching effectiveness. The feedback obtained through this study could help lecturers to reflect upon their strengths and weaknesses to further enhance their teaching in achieving personal and career excellence. This awareness in lecturers would also indirectly benefit the students as improvement in teaching approaches would enhance learner's grasp of the subject matter and contribute towards a better understanding of the importance of knowledge of a subject matter.

Apart from being beneficial to both lecturers and students, this study will also be useful for the universities especially in the recruitment and selection of lecturers in the future. Various training programmes can be developed for university lecturers to develop their emotional intelligence skills as well as knowledge in their areas, thus increasing their teaching effectiveness. The positive relationship between knowledge workers and teaching performance would become the basis to determine the approaches and methods to improve emotional intelligence of instructors such as team building, emotional intelligence training application, performance feedback, and motivation. Thus, it is hoped that the results of this study will be beneficial to the Ministry of Higher Education as a means to equip prospective lecturers with the knowledge, teaching skills and emotional intelligence. This can be done by organising specific programmes, seminars or by conducting evaluation to ensure that the needs of the universities are met in terms of knowledge workers.

V. CONCLUSION

This study is useful especially for people who want to learn about the importance of handling their emotions at the workplace. Many previous studies have established a positive relationship between emotionally intelligent workers and their contribution towards work productivity and organisational performance. Thus, it is time for the Malaysian educational system specifically at the tertiary level to focus on the emotional competence of its lecturers as it is predicted that lecturers with high emotional intelligence would be more effective in their teaching performance. The mission of education at the tertiary level should focus on producing first class mentality graduates who are equipped with not only cognitive intelligence but also with high emotional intelligence. Knowledge workers, including lecturers who have learnt how to utilise their emotions effectively will be more likely to be successful at the workplace and in life.

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