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Identifying Emotional Intelligence Competencies among Malaysian Teacher Educators

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Abstract

The research purpose was to identify the core and critical Emotional Intelligence (EQ) competencies among teacher educators. This was a quantitative research conducted on 140 samples from Malaysia Institute of Teacher Education (MITE) to respond to the Malaysian Emotional Quotient Inventory (MEQI). The data was descriptively analysed using *SPSS 12.0*. The findings revealed that the samples had an average EQ competencies; highest scores on spirituality, followed by maturity, self-awareness, self-motivation, empathy, self-regulation, and social skills. Sixteen EQ sub-domains were considered as the core competencies and eleven as the critical competencies. EQ competencies contribute to teachers' role as a change catalyst.

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1. Introduction

EQ is a competency that can help individual to recognize and manage his own emotion and identify others' emotion and build good relationship with them (Goleman 1996). This competency is crucial in teachers' education services, in order to achieve the vision towards producing teachers with the world class quality based on moral values of Malaysian community. Local researchers had agreed that EQ is one of the main factor in generating

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excellent teachers' personality with a leadership quality (Noriah 2003, Syed Najmuddin 2005, Syafrimen 2004, & Rorlinda 2010). Goad (2005) and Justice (2005) highlighted the relation between EQ with work performance and teacher education. They found that EQ acts as a basic factor to the personal well-being and professional sustainability of the pre and in service teachers. This is due to the role of EQ in managing self, understanding others, managing relations between humans and interaction with the environment. Therefore, EQ competence is an essential need, especially for teacher educators as they are dealing with students (teacher trainees) from different background and various challenges in the working environment.

2. Problem Statement

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is a core competency in education profession services (Constaintine & Gainor 2001; Easton 2004; & Stone, Parker & Wood 2005). Findings of EQ research on educators and lecturers showed that on overall, they have medium to high EQ's level (Mohd. Najib 2000; Author 2003; Syed Najmuddin 2005; Syafrimen 2008, & Author 2010). However, there are several lower EQ competencies among teacher educators such as emotional management, emotional domination, and influential ability (Rajagopal 2012) as well as critical EQ competencies such as changes catalyst competency, building relationship, conflict management, communication, and influential capability (Author 2010). Research findings have associated EQ with the effectiveness in leadership, work performance, human resource management, confidence, self-efficacy, stress, and mental health (Abdul Hamid 2005; Boyatzis 2002; Ghazali 2006; Mohd Azhar 2004; Mayer 1999, Rajagopal 2012; Author 2010, Syed Sofian & Rohany 2010; & Wan Ashibah 2003). EQ research on teacher education shows that lecturers faced high work pressure (Rajagopal 2012). This is supported by the finding of Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Cuevas, & Lonsdale's (2014) study which shows that negative health-related outcomes in teachers were related to job pressure, psychological need thwarting, burnout, and somatic complaints. The pressures caused by emotional breakdown and depersonalization (burn out) due to irregular working hours, expectation of works beyond capabilities, and miscellaneous job scopes (Botherridge & Greenglass 2002; Taniza 2005). According to Muchinsky (2000), depression and prolonged emotional disorder would affect performance at work. Hence, previous research finding shows that EQ is an essential competency in producing quality and excellent performance among educators. Having high EQ would enable personal and social competencies to be able to handle stress and challenges professionally because EQ acts as perseverance support in teachers' professionalism (Author 2010). Hence, Mohd Najib (2000) suggested that teacher educators should have high emotional awareness as they are the trainer of future teachers. Moreover EQ competency and high confidence level of teachers' educators can be an example to the students who assume their teachers as the best role model. To sum up, the awareness of EQ competency should be identified in order to help teacher educators at Malaysia Institute of Teacher Education in enhancing personal and professional competence in upgrading the quality of teacher educators' professionalism.

3. Research Objective

Generally, this research is formed to look at personal criteria and professionalism of teacher educators from the aspect of emotional intelligence (EQ). A profile of emotional intelligence (EQ) of teacher educators is developed to identify the elements in core competency which can be strengthened and critical competency which needs to be developed. The research objectives include:

- i. Identifying the profile of emotional intelligence competency among teacher educators at Malaysia Institute of Teacher Education.
- ii. Identifying the core and critical competency of emotional intelligence among teacher educators at Malaysia Institute of Teacher Education.

4. Methodology

This study used a quantitative approach which involved survey research method to answer the research questions.

4.1. Respondents

A total of one hundred and forty teacher educators from Malaysia Institute of Teacher Education at the middle zone of Peninsular Malaysia were randomly selected to provide response to the research instruments. Respondents consisted of teacher educators from various departments such as Education, Special Education, Visual Art Education, Science and Mathematics, Social Studies, English Studies, Malay Language, Islamic Studies and Morale Health and Physical Education, and Research and Innovation Department.

4.2. Research Instruments

For the purpose of data collection, this research used Malaysia Quotient Competency Inventory (MEQI). The inventory is developed by Noriah et al. (2002) based on Goleman EQ Model (1999). This inventory has 151 items which measures seven EQ domains at the scale of 5-point likert. The seven domains include (a) self-awareness, (b) self-regulation, (c) self-motivation, (d) empathy, (e) social skills, (f) spirituality, and (g) maturity. The reliability of the instrument is at the value of cronbach alpha α 0.9 and above (Syafrimen 2004, Syed Najmuddin 2005, Iskandar 2008, and Rorlinda 2010).

4.3. Data Analysis Procedure

The information derived from the questionnaire was code and entered into the computer. The data were processed and analysed using the software program "Statistical Package For The Social Sciences Version 12.0 (SPSS 12.0). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics to describe the overall EQ score and the EQ components' profile. To answer the second research question of identifying the core and critical competencies, index value was use to interpret the score. The index value was obtained from the average percentage of each EQ component studied (Table 1.0). The EQ Component or sub-domain EQ that exceed the index value was consider as a core competency, while those with values less than the index is considered as a critical competency.

5. Research Findings

5.1. Research Question 1: What is the emotional intelligence (EQ) competency profile among lecturers at Malaysia Teacher Institute of Education (MTIE)?

Mean score for all domains of EQ has been totalled and divided into seven to get the overall mean percentage of the teacher educators' EQ. The overall mean of the teacher educators' EQ competency for seven EQ domains which have been studied is 85.86%. The MTIE teacher educators' EQ profile shows the profile of seven main EQ domains. The EQ domain which has the highest min percentage (as shown in Figure 1.0) is spirituality (94.86) followed by maturity (91.14), self-awareness (85.38), self-motivation (84.61), empathy (82.68), self-regulation (82.48), and social skills (79.88).

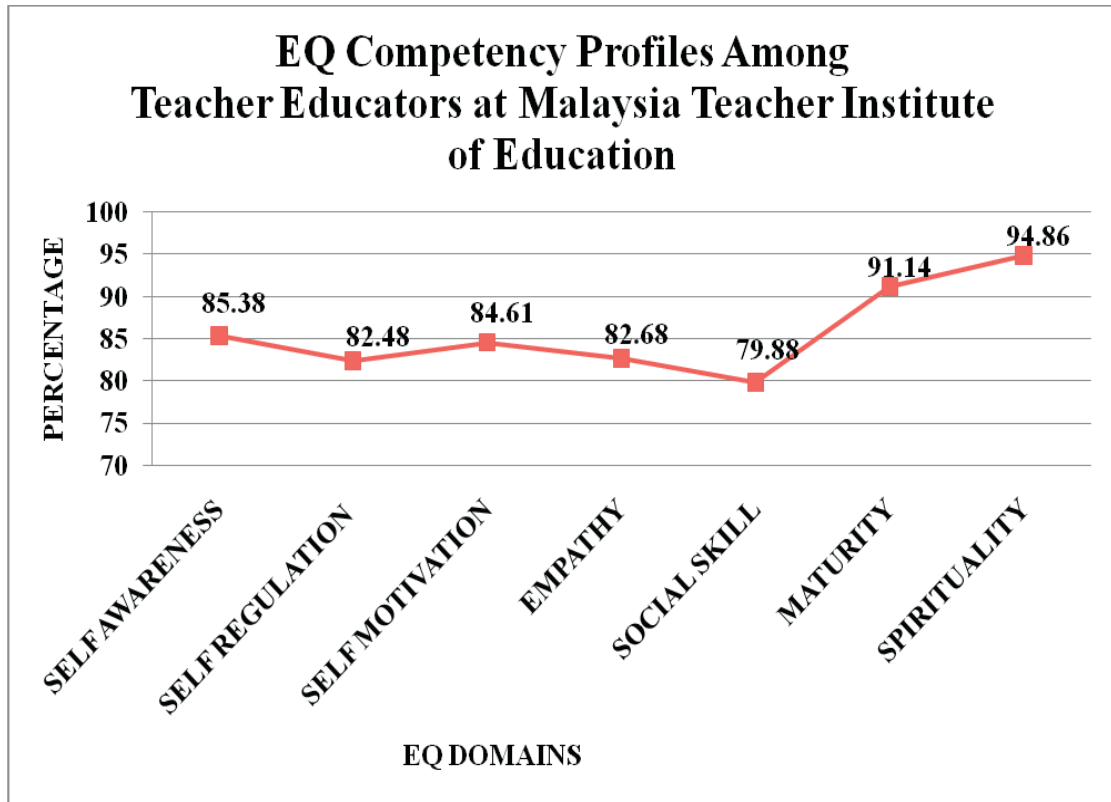


Figure 1 Graph of Overall EQ Domain Profile of teacher educators at MITE

Furthermore, this study has obtained min score for sub domains in each main domain. Out of seven main domains, this study has obtained profiles for 27 EQ sub domains. Sub domains are components in EQ main domains which indicate competencies for that domain.

5.2. Research Objective 2: What is the core competency and critical competency of EQ among teacher educators at Malaysia Institute of Teacher Education?

Furthermore, out of seven main domains, this study has obtained the profile of 27 EQ sub-domains. Sub-domains are the components that reflect the EQ main domain (Self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skill). In answering the second research question, which is to determine the core and critical EQ competencies among teacher educators, this study referred to EQ index value. The EQ index value for teacher educators in this study is 82.50. It was obtained by calculating the total percentage of each EQ component and divided into twenty seven components. Therefore in this study, 82.50 is considered as the minimum value needed to be obtained by the teacher educators. As such, any component which obtained a value more than 82.50 is regarded as core competencies, while any component which obtained a value less than 82.50 is regarded as critical competencies. Based on the EQ index value, there are several components obtained a mean more than the index value (82.50), such as; honesty (91.84), accurate self-assessment (88.95), and self-confidence (83.19) for self-awareness domain, followed by accountability/conscientiousness (89.64) and trustworthiness (87.15) for self-regulation domain. Next, interest (90.07), achievement orientation (87.72), and commitment (89.59) for self-motivation domain, and service orientation (88.70), developing others (88.12), caring (85.95), and political awareness (82.81) for empathy domain. For social skills domain, the core competencies include, developing relationship (87.84), collaboration (86.92), team work (86.24) and change catalyst (83.07). Analysis showed that out

of twenty seven (27) EQ components studied, sixteen (16) are considered as core competencies for this research samples. Further analysis had shown that there are several EQ components that obtained a mean score less than the index value (82.50). These components include emotional awareness (79.91) for self-awareness domain, self-control (76.04), innovative (82.02), and adaptability (82.21) for self-regulation domain, optimistic (76.64) for self-motivation domain, understanding others (78.76) and leveraging diversity (74.61) for empathy domain, influence (68.23), leadership (82.21), communication (78.57), and conflict management (76.06) for social skills domain. Analysis showed that out of twenty seven EQ components studied, eleven are considered as critical competencies to this research samples. The most critical component (less than 80.00) are influence, self-control, conflict management, optimistic, leveraging diversity, understanding others, emotional awareness, and communication.

6. Discussions And Implications

This research found out that, overall teacher educators at MITE have a medium high level of emotional intelligence, similar to findings of research on teachers' EQ by Syed Najmuddin (2005), Syafrimen (2004), Zurinah (2007), and Author (2010). This means that lecturers been studied were aware of the existence of EQ competencies in themselves; however they are unable to practise them in certain situations. The finding of this study also showed that the teacher educators have a high level of spiritual and maturity competencies, followed by self-motivation, self-awareness, empathy, self-regulation, and social skills at the lowest level. This finding shows that the teacher educators been studied, relied upon three main competencies in their daily actions, which are spiritual competency, maturity, and self-motivation. This means that they always connect their daily behaviours and practices with their responsibilities to God and religious values. Addition to that, they make use of their own experience and other peoples' experiences in making decision and handling difficulties. The competence to mobilize and learn from various experiences maturely lead to insightful thinking and resilience, while facing challenging tasks in their services. This is in accordance to Rajagopal (2012) findings which showed lecturers at the MITE, in spite of facing high work stress, are able to manage stress very well. Therefore, spiritual competencies need to be strengthened and appreciated by the educators because according to Author (2005) spiritual appreciation is able to help an individual to be calm, careful and never give up although they have to face failures or unexpected disappointment.

Based on the high spiritual value and maturity, the teacher educators were capable to generate self-motivation continuously. This shows that they have high interest and are committed in doing their work, practise achievement oriented characteristics, where they always work for success in accomplishing any task. Again, this finding is in accordance with Rajagopal's (2012) finding which found out that teacher educators at Institute of Teacher Education have high motivation to continue working excellently. However, one competency that needs to be developed in order to enhance self-motivation of the teacher educators is optimistic behaviour. Optimistic score which is slightly lower prevents them from being successful and having the courage to explore or to try something new or new ideas. Optimistic competency needs to be developed in order for the teacher educators to have the courage to face any challenges in their works and life. According to Goleman (1996), an optimistic individual will always look at any situation from the point of view of "hope for success", not from the point of view of "possibility to fail". This individual looks at problems or obstacles in works as a challenges which can be overcome, not as personal drawback. Every challenges faced will be welcomed with an open heart and having faith that success will always be there, if one keep trying. Besides that, the teacher educators were identified to have average level of empathy. This competence was shown through their caring attitude, such as willingness to develop others, having the attitude of always ready to serve, and able to figure out or aware of any situation or condition happened in their surroundings. These are very significant competencies, as they give a positive impact to the development a quality of warm-hearted professionals' educators. However, the finding showed that the teacher educators were lacking in understanding individual differences and therefore were unable to leverage their potential. This could delay the process of achieving the teacher education vision and mission in developing and producing quality teachers. Basically, the ability to have the skill of empathy according to Goleman (1996) requires sensibility and ability of an individual to understand other people's feeling according to that person's perspective. He insisted that the capability of understanding others is important and the lack of it will affect the quality of work of an individual who is involved in the helping services. As such, teacher educators need to enhance the skill of understanding others

because their tasks are not only to develop future teachers, they are also responsible in creating a cohesive relationship towards producing a harmonious and quality working environment.

One interesting finding in this research is teacher educators are found to do their works with honest intention. This means that they have clear directions and goal in doing their jobs as teachers educator. According to Author (2005), good intention is able to uplift commitment towards works and this is shown through the perseverance, even while doing difficult and challenging tasks. Other than that, teacher educators in this research are able to identify and accept their personal strengths and weaknesses. This awareness according to Goleman (1996) is able to encourage and help an individual to amend his own weakness by being more open in accepting other peoples' views and critics. This awareness can be a basis in spurring the excellence of teacher educators' professionalism. However, this research finding has shown that the teacher educators have lower level of self-control and emotional awareness. The findings show that the teacher educators are less competent in controlling their instincts and destructive emotion in certain situation. This is probably because they are unable to recognize and understand their own feelings and emotion, to differentiate between them, and understand the cause or reason of the emotion. According to Goleman (1999), an individual who has low level of self-control shows less competent attitude in monitoring feelings and preventing negative emotional outburst from being detected by others. They are also shown as rigid individuals and having difficulties to adapt with any changes happened, always bounded by anxiety, feel uncomfortable, feel not satisfied, and decline any changes until they are less competent in handling challenges. Thus, Author (2010) states that self-control competency is critical as it helps teachers to be more stable when facing any irregular condition and able to keep calm while facing adverse situation. These competencies need to be improved as according to Goleman (2000), a good emotional self-awareness promotes successful conflict resolution and leads to improved interaction between individuals. This will help them to be more flexible in handling changes or adverse situation, creative in making decision, and dynamic on going through the process of education transformation.

Finally, research finding has shown that the teacher educators obtained the lowest score on social skills compared to other competencies. Social skill is an ability to demonstrate oneself as a cooperative, contributing, and constructive member of one's social group (Campbell 2012). The finding showed that although the teacher educators have competency in developing relationship, teamwork and collaboration, they were find to be less competent in managing conflict. This is due to the lack of communication skills, which made them difficult to influence others. This condition is critical and needs to be rectified, since teacher educators are working with future teachers. Teachers must have a high level of soft skills competencies such as humanity relationship, social skills specifically communication and influential skills in order to create a humanistic learning environment. Mastering these skills will generate persuasive skills, dealing skills and solving problems or conflict management skills by using the win-win method in teamwork spirit (Author 2005).

7. Conclusion

EQ is a core competency which can contribute to personal, social and professional excellence. The internalization of EQ values assures psychological well-being, good relationship with others, and resilience in coping with daily demands and pressures. Considering teacher educators who act as knowledge educator, mind generators, unity stimulant, and personality developer, at the same time are exposed to various and challenging tasks continuously. EQ competencies will help them to achieve personal and professional goals and make them significant role-models by the nation future educators. EQ practice in teacher educators' life is able to spur awareness of their responsibility as the catalyst to the process of transforming national education system. By embracing the values of EQ, teacher educators will not just able to educate future teachers with high and competitive intellectuality, it could also develop teachers who have strong professional identity and adhere to the teachings of religion and universal values.

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