

THE ELEMENTS OF INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS PRACTICED AMONG EXCELLENT LECTURERS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA POLYTECHNICS

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Abstract

Intrapersonal skills have been referred as important to be acquired by teachers to become excellent in teaching. Teachers will be able to self-reflect their behaviour, modify the recognized behaviour accordingly, build strength and reduce limitation. Purpose: This study aimed to explore the elements of Intrapersonal skills acquired by Excellent Lecturers of Islamic Education (ELIE) in Malaysia polytechnics. Methodology: Interview method was adopted to conduct this study. Six lecturers teaching Islamic Education were chosen as participants, supported by three head of Islamic Education unit, 12 colleagues, and 12 students. The interview data were triangulated with the data collected through observation and document analysis. Data were analysed using software N'Vivo version 7, producing themes and elements of interpersonal skills which finally creating pattern of data (matrix tables). Finding: Themes related to the elements of intrapersonal skill practiced both during teaching and learning (T&L) inside and outside classroom were recognized. The ELLIE were discovered to apply four elements of the intrapersonal skills, which were recognising self-ability, acquiring thinking and problem solving skills, self-motivated and the passion to achieve personal satisfaction. Significant: These four elements help ELIE to identify the true meaning in teaching and finally produce distinctive feature for excellent teaching. The finding of this study can be used as guidance, especially to the novice lecturers in pursuing excellent teaching experience in the future.

Keywords-- Intrapersonal skills, Excellent Lecturer of Islamic Education, polytechnic.

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INTRODUCTION

The dynamic of national change always require new ideas and initiatives towards acquiring the status of a developed nation. Hence, the development of the education sector through technical and vocational education (TVET) should not be neglected as it requires new inputs and skills capable of achieving national aspirations. Professionals and skilled educators are highly indispensable in guiding students to achieve the aspirations of the country. The lecturers in polytechnics should join hand-in-hand with the government to produce holistic human capitals at the tertiary level as mentioned in the Philosophy of National Education through TVET. Therefore, the lecturers themselves must be equipped with skills that build their inner capabilities, thus build excellent teacher persona.

Islam greatly encourages competitive effort towards success and achievement. The dynamic changes and development of ideas in the field of TVET are parallel to the commitment of the lecturers in Islamic Education, striving towards excellence. Striving for excellence is the nature (*fitrah*) of humankind, as Allah SWT described it in the Quran about the people of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the best people created. As Allah SWT mentioned:

Meaning: "You [true believers in Islamic Monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Muhammad SAW and his Sunnah (legal ways, etc.)] are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoy Al-Ma'ruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam has ordained) and forbid Al-Munkar (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islām has forbidden), and you believe in Allah. And had the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) believed, it would have been better for them; among them are some who have faith, but most of them are Al-Fasiqun (disobedient to Allah - and rebellious against Allah's Command)."

(Surah Ali 'Imran, 3:110)

Based on this verse, according to al-Qurthubi (2007; 2008), the people of Muhammad SAW are referred as *khaira ummah* which means 'the best people', the most blessed in the world. Even al-Qurthubi associated the people of Muhammad SAW with outstanding practices through their deeds of enjoining good and forbidding evil and they are best practice in Islam. He added, that the elaboration of the term *ukhrijat lin naas* describes human function in giving guidance and benefit to all humanity.

M. Quraish Shihab (2009) has also referred the people of Muhammad SAW as *khaira umma*, which explains that this practice signifies the trust and responsibility of Muslim educators. This verse encourages people who acquired special qualities and skills to apply them and benefit the whole society. In the context of Lecturers of Islamic Education in polytechnics, lecturers should comply with the encouragement of the Quran to develop and master skills that will benefit students in polytechnics, thus become one of the contributors to the successful transformation of TVET in Malaysia.

It begins with the intrapersonal skills, as elements to be developed from within, thus become the starting point of developing other skills for excellent. Intrapersonal skill is essential to become a professional leader (Nur Hafizoh Idris and Rohana Hamzah, 2013). Experience build higher intrapersonal skill as the way people embrace the real world is through perspective built from experience (Sambaiah and Aneel, 2016). However, as intrapersonal is built from within, this skill is not apparent, even when people are close to each other (Vijayalakshmi, 2016). Therefore, it is a need to highlight the importance of intrapersonal skill among lecturers because of the ability of this skill helps lecturers to understand self, in terms of emotion, motivation, belief, value and so on, and start to appreciate them and discover the inner strength. Through self-awareness and understanding, lecturers develop expertise from

the experience-based perception, thus help them to plan the right strategy to fully participate in the teaching and learning process.

There are various aspect to define intrapersonal skill in the dictionary. The Cambridge Dictionary defines intrapersonal as "relating too or within a person's mind", meanwhile The Merriam-Webster Dictionary refers intrapersonal as "occurring within the individual mind or self." Collins Dictionary defines intrapersonal in two versions. From the British English definition, intrapersonal is referred to "occurring within a person's mind, whereas from the American English definition, intrapersonal skill is referred as "existing or occurring within one person's mind or self." All definitions from dictionaries refer intrapersonal as a cognitive-based action, which involves the use of mind of a person.

Gravells (2017) relates intrapersonal skill with reflection and accessing the inner feelings in his definition. He believes that people learn from the past, thus reflection helps people to identify behaviour they need to modify, develop strength and reduce limitation, so as people might become closer to achievement. People with higher intrapersonal skill are able to manage oneself from within (Vijayalakshmi, 2016) because emotional turmoil is sometimes delivered through facial expression and the message sent outside through internal feeling is somehow observed and interpreted by someone else, even though it was not intended to be delivered (McCabe and Timmins, 2013). However, positive facial expression can also be the outcome of this unconscious communication.

Vijayalakshmi (2016) has added emotions and feelings along with the thought to define intrapersonal skill. He believes that intrapersonal skill should be partnered with the interpersonal skill (if intrapersonal deals with the inner feelings, thought and emotion, then interpersonal skill refers to the soft skills related to relationship or interaction between people) as it might lesson internal conflict and, able to perceive external experience internally and make someone aware of personal quality, limitation and potential. A study conducted by Domville, Watson, Richardson, and Graves (2018) suggest that the intervention of intra- and interpersonal skills in Physical Education should be more studied and the barriers should be covered to promote physical activities in school. At the interpersonal level, the study Domville et al. found that even though the strategy to deliver school-based physical activity was developed, poor teacher-coach relationship decreased the physical activity promotion opportunity. Meanwhile, child physical activity was further refuted including lack of teacher training particularly in Physical Education training and varying teachers' interest in physical activity and sport.

According to Salhah Abdullah (2009), intrapersonal skills are the ability to understand oneself by looking at the strengths and weaknesses, desires and wills, and the ability to have the same or different skills with others. This statement is supported by Abdullah Hassan and Ainon Mohd. (2009) by explaining, other than knowing oneself, a person also acknowledges the strengths and weaknesses he possess. This person will be able to know what is best and what is feared. He also knows what drives his own behaviour without being told by others.

Nur Hafizoh Idris and Rohana Hamzah (2013) believe that interpersonal skills are important to become a professional teacher. This is largely related to the role of lecturers in polytechnics as teachers. Intrapersonal skills can help individuals solve problems involving feelings, controlling anger or selfishness and how to manage them with courtesy. Intrapersonal skills also enable individuals to develop high self-esteem (Salhah Abdullah, 2009), even to train leadership, communication, and the ability to motivate others (Aristigueta

and Denhardt, 2015). Teachers should be able to manage emotions and feelings as it might affect their relationship with not only students, also with the administration and people around them. Teachers perceive teaching professionalism not only as a person who delivers curriculum, however, they believe that they are responsible on the holistic development of the students too. Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2011) studied psychosocial support offered by the teachers and found that teachers' willingness to offer support was related to the intrapersonal characteristic of teachers. It gave great impact on teachers' interpersonal skill too as teachers form network with service providers (including the children and family, community volunteers and community organizations, to promote resilience in school.

There are two factors of intrapersonal skill; first is perception as knowledge, understanding and value are shaped from the way we look at things, and second is self-esteem as our self-perception is somehow moulded by the experience on how people see us (Sambaiah and Aneel, 2016). Teachers' experience will have great impact on self-perception. People learn from the past, thus reflection helps people to identify behaviour they need to modify, develop strength and reduce limitation, so as people might become closer to achievement Gravells (2017). High level of self-esteem and positive self-perception plays important in managing the inner feeling, thought and emotion. There are distinctive attributes to represent interpersonal skill in this study, as derived from the theory of Imam al-Ghazali (n.d.) including the feeling of sympathy, love and sincerity.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to explore the elements of intrapersonal skills that can be practiced during teaching and learning (T&L) of Islamic Education inside and outside the classroom which can contribute to the success of TVET in Malaysia. Hence the research question of this study is:

What are the intrapersonal skills required to support the success of TVET in Malaysia as practiced by Excellent Lecturers of Islamic Education inside and outside the classroom?

To fulfil the objective and to answer the question of this study, method of case study using qualitative approach was used. There are many researchers who use case studies in their researches (Kamarul Azmi, 2010; Abdul Razaq et al., 2010; Ahmad Yunus and Ab. Halim, 2010; Faridah & Mohini, 2012; Kamarul Azmi and Nazirah, 2012; Rozita Radhiah and Abdul Rasid, 2012; Mohamad Ziyad and Izuddin, 2012; Jennifer L. Jones and Robert St. Hilaire, 2012). Semi structural interview method was used to collect primary source and the supportive data were collected through observation and document analysis. Participants were observed and relevant documents were analysed. To strengthen the collection of data, field notes and diaries were included. This field note method was also used by Kamarul Azmi (2010), Inglis and Cook (2011), Lee (2012), and Mohd. Azhar (2012) in their study. Through the qualitative approach and the methods used, the researcher delved into all features of intrapersonal skills among participants of the study.

The study were participated by six Excellent Lecturers of Islamic Education, three head of Islamic Education unit, 12 colleagues, and 12 students from three polytechnics in Malaysia, which offered degree courses. These participants were interviewed to establish a coordination between the answers and the research questions as well as the objectives developed. The selected participants met the following requirements, which were; (1) seven years of teaching experience, (2) having at least a master degree, (3) was promoted through the process of the criteria of excellent service assessment for polytechnic lecturers, (4) grade of DH 44 and above, (5) selected by Head of Islamic & Moral

Study Unit, and (6) obtained the Excellent Service Award (APC). The results of this interview process were transcribed into narrative data and themes were derived through the application of N'Vivo 7.0 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on table 1, from the interview, the study found that there were four elements of interpersonal skills acquired by the Excellent Lecturers of Islamic Education (ELIE). These four elements have reached the pattern, which means each collected data is agreed upon by some of the participants (Kamarul Azmi, 2010). Skills dominated by all ELIE were recognizing self-ability

(PCPI1, 2014: 745, PCPI2, 2014: 777, PCPI3, 2014: 539, PCPI4, 2014: 381, PCPI5, 2014: 240, PCPI6, 2014: 309). Other elements such as thinking and problem solving skills (P1PCPI1, 2014: 445, RP1PCPI2, 2014: 161, P1PCPI4, 2014: 112, RP2PCPI5, 2014: 88), self-motivation (KUPCPI1, 2014: 83, PCPI2, 2014: 725, PCPI3, 2014: 539, PCPI4, 2014: 141, PCPI6, 2014: 719), and achieving personal satisfaction (PCPI2, 2014: 777, PCPI3, 2014: 539, PCPI4, 2014: 141, PCPI6, 2014: 287) acquired by almost all ELIE, therefore pattern were identified among these three elements. This finding is vital in contributing to the development of TVET in Malaysia.

Table 1. Interpersonal Skills ELIE1-ELIE6

No.	Interpersonal Skills	ELIE1	ELIE2	ELIE3	ELIE4	ELIE5	ELIE6
1.	Recognizing self-ability	x	x	x	x	x	x
2.	Thinking and problem solving skill	x	x	-	x	x	-
3.	Self-motivation	x	x	x	x	-	x
4.	Achieving personal satisfaction	-	x	x	x	-	x

The skill of recognizing self-ability refers to the ability to perform well and constantly strives to improve (ELIE3, 2014: 539). The ELIE believed that lecturers should learn and develop knowledge in technology as she mentioned, "I like when people's perceptions have changed of going to high-tech courses. It used to be less favourable." According to Aristigueta and Denhardt (2015), the aspects of self-management and self-awareness are among the key components of improving one's emotional intelligence. Lecturers should be aware of the disabilities that might hinder them away from the success. The acknowledgement of disabilities lead to asking for help, especially from colleagues. They also perceive that this action can enhance social skills among lecturers. This statement is acknowledged by RP2PCPI1 (2014: 218), a colleague to the ELIE1 "sometimes he also shared problem with other fellow lecturers and other fellow lecturers can help him to solve it". Improvement as a result of asking for help increases self-esteem and self-efficacy even more. The second highest skill is self-motivation. This is stated by ELIE2 (2014: 725); "...but at the same time, we have to be strong, for me that's what I said about the internal motivation". This allows individuals to control decisions made for the future (Smith et al, 2015). The element of self-motivation also includes helping others to become motivated (Aristigueta and Denhardt, 2015). The ELIE2's colleague, RP1PCPI2 (2014: 105), mentioned; "While we were eating, he would motivate us and uttered words of passion". The ability self-motivate, ELIE were able to share their path to excellence through motivational programs either as speakers or facilitators (ADPCPI2, 2014: 475, ADPCPI2, 2014: 121, ADPCPI4, 2014: 48, ADPCPI4, 2014: 67).

Excellent Lecturers of Islamic Education must also be acquainted with thinking and problem solving skills. According to Kamarul Azmi and Ab. Halim Tamuri (2012), the thinking aspect should become the core in conducting T&L. People shares ideas and reach clear learning objectives through thinking behaviour (Cramer, 2006). The colleague of ELIE2 mentioned;

"...if it's something that we see from outside, he can see from the inside, seeing from the angle people can't see, because he's a thinker. He can use his thinking skill very well on particular levels. He's a thinker and that's why he can think of the necessary and unnecessary curriculum."

(RP1PCPI2, 2014: 161)

This skill was also applied throughout the T&L activities based on the observation of the participant in the classroom (OPCPI3, 2014: 120, OPCPI4, 2014: 92, OPCPI5, 2014: 234).

The final interpersonal skill that should be acquired by the ELIE is achieving personal satisfaction. Personal satisfaction drives ELIE to enthusiastically improve their ability and willingness to sacrifice to achieve them. According to Ahmad Firdaus et al. (2014), the aspects of intrapersonal skills makes ELIE aware of the ways to improve themselves. It also creates the feelings of happy and complacent towards their behaviour (Noraini Abdul Raop and Nor Ba'yah Abdul Kadir, 2011), as ELIE6 stated (2014: 287), "From the perspective of knowledge, even though we have learned, we acknowledged that the more we learn makes us realize that there are much more we have to dig. Even when students asked, I will become unsatisfied when I failed to answer ...there are much more to learn." This was also felt by ELIE2 (2014: 726) stating "Sometimes I feel tired too, but I contemplate ... a little bit more, I have to prepare a little more. Like that, the least I say, this is related to our satisfaction. "

Based on the findings, a model called Model of Excellent Interpersonal Skills (MKMCPPI-INTRA) was produced. This model is illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Model of Excellent Interpersonal Skills (MKMCPPI-INTRA)

Based on Figure 1, all the elements of intrapersonal skills listed can be practiced inside and outside the classroom by all Lecturers of Islamic Education in polytechnics. However, lecturers need to use these skills wisely and preferably according to their suitability.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the findings have produced the development of the Model of Excellent Interpersonal Skills (MKMCPCPI-INTRA). Lecturers of Islamic Education should take note that appropriate intrapersonal skills elements should be appropriately applied throughout T&L in order to produce a high level of understanding among students, so that they will be able to appreciate and practice the knowledge they acquire. Thus, the mastery of these elements will become a value-added quality for the ELIEs and will assist in the development of the TVET field in Malaysia.

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