

University Students' Development Of Emotional Intelligence Skills For Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to add to the knowledge base and further the understanding of Emotional Intelligence and leadership theory. Freshmen business students enrolled in BUAD 1201: Principles of Business Administration and graduating senior business students enrolled in MGMT 4325: Decision Making and Business Policy class provided the data for the descriptive study of student profiles. Some interesting and relevant findings were found in developing both the first-year freshmen profiles and graduating senior student profiles. When examining the range in which first-year freshmen students and graduating seniors fell, the results indicated that both groups of students fell within the same range for all areas of the Personal Excellence Map (PEM), which were develop, strengthen, and enhance categories of personal excellence and leadership. The data provided a general benchmark of Emotional Intelligence skills as described by the PEM. With the exception of Positive Influence area of skill, the PEM skill areas in the five dimensions were in strengthen and enhance categories of development for first-year freshmen and graduating senior students. This study developed benchmarks of development and a rationale for initiating development of Personal Excellence skills for university students in business.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Leadership; Business Education

INTRODUCTION

Every day, millions of individuals pick up a periodical and read about the changes occurring in organizations. It is rare to pick up a business periodical like Forbes, Business Week, Washington Post, and Fortune 500, and not read about some type of change occurring in our world (Konczak, 2008). Effective leaders promote and embrace change by promoting the growth of organizations to go beyond their calling, offering a better environment for their employees, and providing outstanding customer service. Leaders are thrown into situations where they must solve complex problems rapidly and have final answers in the decision-making process (Fullan, 2001). The complex situations in which leaders need to be prepared reflect the education our students attain in college. Potential employers expect college graduates to be effective leaders with enhanced problem-solving skills.

University faculty sometimes contemplate whether students leave their courses with sufficient knowledge to solve problems practically, analytically, and creatively to perform well in their careers. According to Vela (2003), "Research suggests that both the cognitive and the emotional domains of student's academic development should be the primary goals for educating students" (p.1). Although education systems teach to the cognitive domain of the student, there is also the emotional domain that education systems assist students in developing. "To better meet the demands and challenges of today's public education system, research studies indicate that the development of emotional skills should be in the academic curriculum to produce healthy, responsible, and productive students" (Vela, 2003, pp. 1-2).

Students take a positive step in the direction of becoming effective leaders when they become aware of their leadership skills through personal assessment, identifying their core areas, understanding that things change, and recognizing the importance of leadership in their academic and career fields. Personal excellence skills are

processes of learning that can help students approach their coursework in a different mentality. Personal excellence is a progression of rejuvenation and continuous improvement and positive building at each step of an individual's life (Nelson, Low, & Hammett, 2007). Personal excellence represents a development of the self in which individuals recognize behaviors that can lead them to successful outcomes. Becoming the best person sets the standard for becoming a great leader who can motivate others toward organizational goals. Personal excellence is indicated in people who develop their gifts and talents to the fullest, achieving a harmony in how they think, feel, behave, and believe that leads to productive relationships and outcomes. Rather than an arrival state, personal excellence is a journey in positive development beyond one's self. It manifests in self-defined and self-valued achievements that reflect one's best efforts. The emotional intelligence (EI) centric theory of personal excellence connects the process of building quality from within the individual with the lived experience each individual has in their life (Nelson, Low, & Hammett, 2007).

The Emotional Intelligence Leadership Model (Hammett, Low, & Nelson, 2007) depicts the interrelationships between Emotional Intelligence and Leadership skills. This model suggests that individuals with high emotional intelligence skills and high levels of reflective skills develop appropriate leadership behavioral skills that are favored by colleagues, subordinates, and the organization as a whole. The left upper and lower quadrants depict individuals with poor Emotional Intelligence Skills and the right upper and lower quadrants depict individuals with higher Emotional Intelligence Skills. An individual with poor Emotional Intelligence skills but high visionary and collaborative skills (reflective) tends to receive mixed or negative interpretations of actions, causing others to view the leader in a negative manner (Hammett, Low, & Nelson, 2007). If the leader has poor Emotional Intelligence skills and falls within the short-term focus, coercive (reactive) quadrant, the leader will exhibit inappropriate and toxic behavior toward others (Hammett, Low, & Nelson, 2007). Destructive leadership can destroy organizational culture and cause internal conflict and damage to both the organization and its subordinates (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2004). However, leaders high on Emotional Intelligence skills and high on visionary and collaborative (reflective) skills are prone to establish positive relationships with colleagues and peers. These types of leaders provide the supportive environments where constructive thinking, critical thinking, and collaboration thrive. Leaders in this environment serve as coaches and facilitators for their subordinates (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). They also establish trust and positive relationships with subordinates and create positive work environments. Leaders create environments that are safe for employees to voice personal and professional issues (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

The last quadrant depicts a leader that has excellent Emotional Intelligence skills and has short term focus and coercive (reactive) skills. In this type of individual, there is negative interpretation of work done by team members when trust is absent (Hammett, Low, & Nelson, 2007). In this type of situation the leader distrusts their subordinates because trust is absent from the leader-subordinate relationship. The leader takes on a reactive role instead of taking the time to think before they react to certain issues and situations. This model depicts the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Leadership. The more an individual leans toward positive enhanced Emotional Intelligence skills, visionary, and collaborative skills, the more the leader displays appropriate behavior and creates positive environments in which the leader motivates and supports others toward reaching organizational goals (Hammett, Low, & Nelson, 2007).

Individuals who know, understand, and recognize personal excellence skills can focus on their core competencies and continue to increase their leadership strengths (Nelson, Low, & Hammett, 2007). Individuals may also want to focus their attention on those areas where they may need help and seek assistance to convert their weaknesses into strengths. It is becoming imperative that corporate and non-profit employers hire college graduates who possess critical thinking skills, good communication skills, foster relationships, have purpose, establish loyalty, and commit to their responsibilities (Fullan, 2001). Students need to recognize the importance of the assessment of their leadership skills because it can foster a sense of success, motivation, and help individuals understand their role in becoming a leader in today's society (Fullan, 2001).

As the economy of the United States seems to be coming into a decline and employees are being laid off by major corporations, the adjustment of change is occurring (Konczak, 2008). Jobs must be combined for the remaining employees, work hours cut back, decisions made about closing organizational chains, and budgets shifted to accommodate departments making a profit. As organizations change their structure of doing business, leaders in

organizations need to adapt quickly to stay competitive and continue to make a profit during times of recession and hardship. It will take effective leaders to pull their organizations through this change process and make their organizations successful (Fullan, 2001). The most appropriate leader today is one who can motivate others and assist others to lead themselves toward stated goals and objectives (Manz & Sims, 1991). Today's leaders need to be Super-Leaders in which the focus is to unleash the hidden leadership present in their followers and provide rewards and incentives to motivate others toward the goals and objectives that need to get accomplished (Manz & Sims, 1991).

The purpose of this study was to develop a baseline profile of leadership skills for both freshmen and graduating senior business students. The researcher specifically examined similarities and differences in first-year freshmen and graduating senior business students in five dimensions: Relationships and Support, Vision and Guidance, Commitment and Power, Change and Balance, and Purpose and Beliefs, as assessed by the Personal Excellence Map (PEM). In examining the differences between first-year freshmen and graduating senior business students' responses, the researcher developed leadership skill profiles based upon the responses to the five dimensions of the PEM for these two cohorts of students. The researcher described the similarities and differences of the profiles in each of the five dimensions of the PEM.

METHOD

This descriptive study was designed to develop leadership skill profiles for first-year and graduating senior students. The study utilized the PEM to measure leadership skills between two cohorts of students who are first-year freshmen business students enrolled in BUAD 1201 and graduating senior capstone business students enrolled in MGMT 4325. The variables that were identified as showing determinants of the characteristics that were studied are the five dimensions of the PEM. Each of the five dimensions contained support areas that were explored. The first dimension is the relationships and support with support areas of assertion, teambuilding, positive influence, and empathy. The second dimension is vision and guidance with support areas of personal orientation, self-control, and goal setting. The third dimension is commitment and power with support areas of drive strength and self management. The fourth dimension is change and balance with support areas of decision making and stress management. The last dimension is the purpose and beliefs dimension with support areas of self-esteem, congruence, self-appreciation, and self-confidence (Nelson, Low, & Hammett, 2007).

The population for this study consisted of freshmen and graduating senior students enrolled at a south Texas university. The population, as a whole, was made up of 60% Hispanic origin, 30% Caucasian origin, and 10% African American origin. The ratio between males and females was 50% for all the population. The age group of freshmen students ranged between 16 to 40 years of age and senior students 22 years of age and up. Students were enrolled in the College of Business Administration BUAD 1201 Principles of Business Administration and MGMT 4325 Business Policy and Decision Making Courses.

Thirty-five first-year freshmen students participated in the study, of whom 54.3% were males and 45.7% were female. Approximately 17% of the participants were African American, 6% were Asian American, 23% were Caucasian, 51% were Hispanic, and 3% of other decent. Thirty-five graduating senior business students participated in study, of which 54.3% were male students and 45.7% were female students. Approximately 6% of the senior participants were African American, 3% of the participants were Asian American, 20% were Caucasian, 69% were Hispanic, and 3% of other decent.

The PEM consists of five areas of leadership, (relationships and support skills, vision and guidance skills, commitment and power skills, change and balance skills, and purpose and beliefs skills), designed to provide a descriptive analysis through collecting quantitative data. The survey response instrument was a five point scale assessment in which participants read the responses and circled the response that best fit their personality. The survey instrument responses ranged from numbers 0 = never, 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = usually, and 4 = always. Questions were placed in a situation type of perspective such that the respondent answered each situational question with a leadership and decision making emphasis. Data were gathered regarding relationship and support skills, vision and guidance skills, commitment and power skills, change and balance skills, and purpose and belief skills.

The researcher examined the descriptions of responses from both cohorts of students to analyze where students fell in relation to the five dimensions of the PEM. Derived scores were calculated to assist in interpreting the measures of a participant's performance to each dimension of the PEM. The data were entered in the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) database, and descriptive measures were calculated for first-year freshmen and graduating senior students.

The majority of the questions of the PEM come from the Emotional Skills Assessment Process Instrument (ESAP). According to Hammett (2007), "The PEI's 15 scales incorporate most of those of its predecessor, the ESAP" (p. 90). Vela (2003) stated, "A reliability analysis of Cronbach's alpha determined an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.64, indicating a consistency in responses among the 13 scale items in the Emotional Skills Assessment Process (ESAP)" (p. 67). According to Kaplan and Saccuzzo (2005), "validity can be defined as the agreement between a test score or measure and the quality it is believed to measure" (p. 134). In a pilot study done in a doctoral and graduate counseling and guidance class the PEM was tested to check for face value, content validity, and measurement error of the instrument (Hammett, 2007).

RESULTS

Relationship and Support

The four areas of the relationship and support dimension are assertion, teambuilding, positive influence, and empathy. The profiles for graduating seniors and first-year freshmen scores fell within similar categories for all areas of the relationship and support dimension. In the areas of assertion, teambuilding, and empathy both graduating seniors and first-year freshmen scored in the strengthened category of the PEM, while in the area of positive influence, they both scored in the develop area as seen on Table 1.

Table 1
Relationship/ Support Dimension Means of First-year Freshmen (N = 35) and Graduating Senior Students (N = 35)

Variables	M Freshmen	M Seniors	Category
Assertion	16.31	17.11	Strengthen
Teambuilding	13.09	12.94	Strengthen
Positive influence	13.91	13.86	Develop
Empathy	21.40	21.89	Strengthen

Vision and Guidance

In the vision and guidance dimension, the profiles of first-year freshmen and graduating senior students were similar. Both graduating senior students and first-year freshmen students scored within the strengthened category of the PEM for all areas as shown in Table 2. The areas that were explored were personal orientation, self-control, and goal setting.

Table 2
Vision/Guidance Dimension Means of First-year Freshmen Students and Graduating Senior Students

Variables	M Freshmen	M Seniors	Category
Personal Orientation	21.77	21.94	Strengthen
Self Control	16.37	17.17	Strengthen
Goal Setting	12.29	13.22	Strengthen

Commitment and Power

The commitment and power dimension contain the areas of drive strength and self-management. The profiles of graduating senior students and first-year freshmen students were similar. Both profiles of students had similarities because they fell within the strengthened categories of the commitment and power dimension as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Commitment and Power Dimension Means for First-year Freshmen Students and Graduating Senior Students

Variables	M Freshmen	M Seniors	Category
Drive Strength	17.14	19.29	Strengthen
Self Management	21.17	23.25	Strengthen

Change and Balance

The student profiles for first-year freshmen and graduating senior students were reported as being similar in the dimension of change and balance with the areas of decision making and stress management. Both profiles of students fell within the strengthened category of the PEM as described in Table 4.

Table 4
Change and Balance Dimension Means of First-year Freshmen Students and Graduating Senior Students

Variables	M Freshmen	M Seniors	Category
Decision making	20.34	19.83	Strengthen
Stress management	16.77	17.29	Strengthen

Purpose and Belief

The student profiles of first-year freshmen and graduating senior students were similar for this dimension of the PEM. Both categories fell within the strengthened category for self-esteem, congruence, and self-confidence. Both categories of students fell within the enhanced category for self-appreciation as the data indicate in Table 5.

Table 5
Purpose and Beliefs Dimension Means of First-year Freshmen Students and Graduating Senior Students

Variables	M Freshmen	M Seniors	Category
Self-esteem	16.54	16.31	Strengthen
Congruence	19.71	20.49	Strengthen
Self-appreciation	14.66	14.83	Enhance
Self-confidence	18.97	19.66	Strengthen

DISCUSSION

The study focused on examining the personal excellence and leadership skills of first-year freshmen and graduating senior business students using the PEM. The results indicated that graduating senior and first-year freshmen students' profiles scored within the same categories of develop, strengthen, and enhance skills for all areas of the PEM. These results indicate that currently the business program does not emphasize Emotional Intelligence skills as part of the program curriculum. Perhaps inclusion of Emotional Intelligence skills throughout the business program could assist in shaping students to develop positive behaviors that prospective employers will require.

It is important to recognize that first-year freshmen students and graduating senior students have many areas that must be strengthened along their learning path to achieve their full potential. Tables 6 and 7 show implications for curriculum development in the dimensions and areas of Emotional Intelligence and leadership skills in which students are expected to apply and demonstrate leadership as they enter the university setting and make the transition into organizations in their respective career fields.

Table 6
Overall Personal Excellence skills of First-year Freshmen Students (N = 35)

Variables	M	SD	Category
Relationship & Support			
Assertion	16.31	2.55	Strengthen
Team Building	13.09	1.93	Strengthen
*Positive Influence	13.91	2.70	Develop
Empathy	21.40	3.66	Strengthen
Vision & Guidance			
Personal Orientation	21.77	3.76	Strengthen
Self Control	16.37	3.46	Strengthen
Goal Setting	12.29	4.68	Strengthen
Commitment & Power			
Drive Strength	17.14	4.91	Strengthen
Self Management	21.17	4.31	Strengthen
Change & Balance			
Decision Making	20.34	3.98	Strengthen
Stress Management	16.77	4.40	Strengthen
Purpose and Belief			
Self-Esteem	16.54	4.33	Strengthen
Congruence	19.71	3.85	Strengthen
Self-Appreciation	14.66	3.11	Enhance
Self-Confidence	18.97	4.08	Strengthen
GPE Score	730.29	120.00	Positive Enhancing

*Denotes a skill to develop further.

Table 7
Overall Personal Excellence skills of Graduating Capstone Senior Students (N = 35)

Variables	M	SD	Category
Relationship & Support			
Assertion	17.11	2.94	Strengthen
Team Building	12.94	2.34	Strengthen
*Positive Influence	13.86	3.05	Develop
Empathy	21.89	3.95	Strengthen
Vision & Guidance			
Personal Orientation	21.94	3.93	Strengthen
Self Control	17.17	4.15	Strengthen
Goal Setting	13.22	3.80	Strengthen
Commitment & Power			
Drive Strength	19.29	4.33	Strengthen
Self Management	23.25	4.41	Strengthen
Change & Balance			
Decision Making	19.83	5.00	Strengthen
Stress Management	17.29	5.47	Strengthen
Purpose and Belief			
Self-Esteem	16.31	3.24	Strengthen
Congruence	20.49	3.26	Strengthen
Self-Appreciation	14.83	2.63	Enhance
Self-Confidence	19.66	3.00	Strengthen
GPE Score	772.34	146.64	Toward Excellence

*Denotes a skill to develop further.

CONCLUSIONS

Both first-year freshmen and graduating senior students fell within the same categories for all areas of the PEM. Both categories of students have the similar profiles for each dimension of the PEM. Currently the business program does not emphasize Emotional Intelligence skills as part of the program curriculum. Inclusion of Emotional Intelligence skills throughout the business program could assist in shaping students to develop positive behaviors

that prospective employers will be searching for. Without Emotional Intelligence awareness, students do not become exposed to their leadership capabilities and develop the positive behaviors needed for academic and career success.

Graduating seniors and first-year freshmen have the personal excellence and leadership skills to be successful in their college careers but need to strengthen them by practicing these skills on a daily basis. Higher Education faculty members can help both first-year freshmen students and graduating senior students bridge the gaps between entering into college and entering into the workforce by providing support, encouragement, and program development in the student's academic college plan.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Joseph Ramos-Villarreal is a Lecturer for Educational Leadership and Counseling at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. He was previously employed as a Lecturer for the College of Business Administration for 3 ½ years and taught the freshmen seminar and Introduction to Business courses. He has worked in the Office of Development and the Office of Student Financial Aid. He holds a terminal degree in Educational Leadership with a cognate area in Counseling and Guidance. His professional interests include quantitative and qualitative research methods and the use of technology in the classroom to improve student involvement and learning.

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NOTES