The Influence of Emotional Intelligence Management Curriculum to Improve College Students’ Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Skills to Impact Leader Behavior and Team Effectiveness

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The International Journal of
Transformative
Emotional Intelligence:
Research, Theory, and Practice

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There is a growing emphasis on institutions of higher learning to produce sustainable and competitive graduates who possess relevant personal competencies for career success. Emotional intelligence (EI) skills can provide the competitive edge for graduates to be successful in their industry of choice. Integrating emotional intelligence into higher education can potentially shift the learning environment and increase specific personal competencies. This study investigated the influence of an emotional intelligence intervention to improve college students’ intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to impact leader behaviors and team effectiveness. The research looked at student’s EI skills in three ESAP dimensions (intrapersonal, interpersonal, and leadership) and their performance in two areas (leader behavior and team effectiveness).

Emotional intelligence competencies were viewed as critical skills employers seek when hiring graduates based on the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2008) survey. More recently, NACE (2012) reported that employers expressed teamwork and collaboration as critical skills for the work environment, thus making teamwork a top skill that employers value. This quasi-experimental research design connects the new recommendations from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business with a curriculum to improve interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of leadership by incorporating EI as an integral part of the Management Concept course in the School of Business and Economics at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. Findings suggest a positive significant impact on emotional intelligence scores and team effectiveness. Implications are that emotional intelligence embedded in the business curriculum can make a significant difference in individuals’ performance in a team environment.

Introduction

Universities and colleges across the globe are being challenged to produce highly skilled competitive graduates who are able to respond to the ever changing and complex needs of a technically driven workplace (Andrews & Higson, 2008). According to Daud, Abidin, Sapuan, and Rajadurai (2010), the job market has changed significantly requiring employees to have more personal development skills for future projected employment. Concerns have been raised regarding the quality of sustainable and competitive graduates and their ability to meet the needs of employers. Chakraborty (2009) explains that there is a critical need to create a blend of technical know-how and soft skills development with an emphasis on emotional intelligence to guide a more productive outcome. Educational institutions must seek ways to meet the growing demand for supplying industries with the type of talent needed to meet challenges and create initiatives for future growth and development (Daud et al., 2010).

Most industry leaders across the globe are insisting that educational institutions employ some type of holistic approach by incorporating training in the development of personal attributes of emotional intelligence (EI) into business curriculum to prepare college graduates for the hiring process and future promotions (Abraham, 2006; Beard, Schwieger, & Surendran, 2009; Daud et al., 2010; Duygulu, Hicdurmaz, & Akyar, 2011; Kidwell, Hardesty, Murtha, & Sheng, 2011; Mo, Dainty, & Price, 2007). Leaders from various industries argue that EI abilities and soft non-technical skills are significant factors that predict employee business effectiveness (Mo et al., 2007). From a sales perspective, emotions are vital to the overall behavior and performance of the sales representative to close a potential sale (Kidwell, Hardesty, Murtha, & Sheng, 2011). In the health care industry in particular it is critical to have caring professionals who are in touch with and understand their emotions as well as the emotions of the individuals they serve (Duygulu, Hicdurmaz, & Akyar, 2011). Mitchell, Skinner, and White (2010), according to the National Business Education Association, explained that graduates are faced with meeting the growing demands of a dynamic workforce that go beyond
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