

MODELLING WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS FOR ACADEMICIAN IN MALAYSIA

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—Abstract —

Teaching effectiveness is a complex area of study without supported by an extensive body of empirical research. Developing effective behaviors is a part of every academician in Malaysia. With the surge in public demand for accountability in higher education and the growing concern for quality of university teaching, evaluating teaching effectiveness is very important function. Workplace spirituality is among the important factors that pose a strong influence on teaching effectiveness. In teaching effectiveness, the concern of workplace spirituality relate to inner life, meaningful work, and sense of community. This paper examines the effect of workplace spirituality on teaching effectiveness for academician in public universities in Malaysia. Structured Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted to test the model. Results were then discussed.

Keywords: *Workplace spirituality, Teaching effectiveness, Modeling*

JEL Classification: M12

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are communities of researchers and teachers (Gilliot, Overlaet, & Verdin, 2002). Lecturers are therefore higher education's most important asset and questions related to the internal structure and organization of the academic profession are more and more on the agenda of policy-making as well as of research on higher education (Enders, 1997). The aim of the government is to provide a "world-class" quality education system. The Malaysian government's effort to see higher education flourish is indicated by the largest allocation of budget for the education sector from year to year.

Recently, the government of Malaysia has launched a long term strategy to transform Malaysia from a middle income to an advanced nation by 2020 through the introduction of New Economic Model (NEM). Part of the major concern by government through NEM mechanism is *knowledge creation and the knowledge economy*. In a high income economy the demand for knowledge workers will increase. Educational reforms will be a vital need for inclusive growth and human capital policies will be given top priority. In the same vein, the 10th Malaysia Plan indicates that in order for the country to be competitive on the world stage, the need to develop human resource which is knowledgeable, highly skilled, flexible, creative and imbued with positive work ethics and spiritual values is critical. In order to make sure the Malaysian government's aspiration becomes reality, the higher education communities at tertiary level are bear with this heavy responsibility.

In line with the challenging demand currently facing by the higher education communities and given the nature of their work that involve "transformation" of human being into "human capital asset", the need for strong spirit and the feeling of connection to the supreme being is ever evident. Spirituality study has become widely acceptable area of study in campus (Bradley & Kuanui, 2003) and in other workplaces (Neal, Lichtenstein & Banner, 1999; Boje, 2000). However, spirituality in academic workplace seriously lag behind that done in corporate workplace (Bradley & Kuanui, 2003). Spirituality variable is absent from organizational research, despite it is among the most powerful variables related to personal, team and organizational effectiveness (Heermann, 1997).

The importance of spirituality in workplace emerged because it can lead to individual attitudes and behavior and organizational effectiveness (Krahnke, Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; King & Crowther, 2004). More research needs to

be embarked in order to proof the connectivity between workplace spirituality and teaching effectiveness. Specifically, spirituality at workplace is linked with increased creativity, honesty, trust, and commitment (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). Thus, this study is trying to propose a model of workplace spirituality and teaching effectiveness in the public higher education institutions.

1.1. Workplace spirituality and Teaching effectiveness

Research on spirituality and its relationship to personal relational values, such as teaching role and interactions with students, has been especially limited and hampered by a lack of empirically validated methods of assessment. Therefore a study by Cecero and Esquivel (2007) was designed to address gaps in the literature. They assessed the associations between spirituality and teaching style based on student perceptions.

There is growing advocacy for the salience of spirituality in higher education system and emerging conceptual and reseach bases for assuming that lecturer may play a significant role in transmitting spiritual values through student-centered attitudes and teaching methods. It has been argued that educators have a responsibility to nurture the soul (their own and students) through their teaching and to inform their teaching strategies, classroom management skills, etc. with this soul work. However, there are virtually no comprehensive valid measures of faculty spirituality and there is limited empirical support for the relation between faculty spirituality and teaching effectiveness (Cecero and Esquivel, 2007).

A study by Kernochan, McCormick and White (2007) revealed that spirituality values have an impact on teaching. They further added that their teaching is more effective as a result of spiritual values.

The Malaysian perspectives on spirituality studies by Abd Ghani, Nasie and Intsar (2009) found the relationship between workplace spirituality and leadership effectiveness in school in Malaysia. They found that workplace spirituality has an important role to play as an aide to leadership development, as well as leadership effectiveness. The results also confirmed that effective leadership practices could explain significant variance in teachers' satisfaction and commitment as well as departmental performance. Another study by Diana & Wan Rafaie (2005) on spirituality and organizational citizenship behavior revealed that employees who view their work as a means to advance spirituality will likely to give greater effort to their work.

Bradley and Kauanui (2003) examined the spirituality of professors and the spiritual culture found in a private secular college, a private Christian college and

a state university, all located in Southern California. The results showed that there was a difference in the spiritual culture between these three campuses and that the spirituality of the professors is a reflection of the spiritual culture found on the campuses. In general, the respondents perceived their departments as fairly warm, democratic, worldly, somewhat happy, low level of anxiety with a fairly high level of involvement with the students. The Christian college, however was considerably warmer, flexible, and spiritual in comparison to both of the secular schools. It was acknowledged that the need for spiritual expression lags far behind that of the corporate world, yet, it is within the academic setting that the entire person should be developed-mind, body, and also spirit. However scientific advances led to a split between the curriculum and religious traditions, a split that may have contributed to today's problem of academia searching for a deeper meaning to their work and its integration into the rest of their life. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H1: workplace spirituality effected teaching effectiveness

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sample design and Data collection

The unit of analysis for this study is the individual. The population involved all lecturers working in public universities in Malaysia. The sampling frame is derived from a list of lecturers in the public universities obtained from the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). The total numbers of lecturers by the year 2010 is 23,567 inclusive of all the three categories of universities in Malaysia. They are the research university (4); comprehensive universities (4) and twelve (12) focused universities. Based on the total number of lecturers, a sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique. Structured questionnaires were used in this study. A total of 300 questionnaires were sent by mail to the respondents

2.2 Instrumentation

Teaching effectiveness is measured by respondents' evaluation and judgment of their teaching effectiveness. The 27-item scale, of teaching effectiveness was adapted from Ansari, Achoui and Ansari (2000). It used a 7-point scale . Workplace spirituality is measured by instrument adapted from Ashmos and Duchon (2000) It consists of a 21-items that measures the three dimensions as follows: Conditions for Community, Meaning at Work and inner life. A 7-point Likert scale format ranged from (1) = *Never*, (2) = *Almost never* (3) = *Seldom*, (4)

= Occasionally (5) = Usually, (6)=Almost always and (7)=Always was used to assess reactions to the items

3. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Result shows that majority of the respondents are female (62%) , the remaining are male (38%). In terms of age, 48.8% of the respondents are at the age of 31 to 40, followed by 37.2% of the age of more than 40 years. With regard to position, 38.9% of the respondents are senior lecturers, while 33.1% of them are lecturers. In terms of year of service, most of the respondents are in the year 1 to 5 (35.5%), 29.8% in the year between 6 to 10, while 19.8% in the year of 11 to 15.

3.1 Structural model

The structural model specifies the relationship among exogenous and endogenous variables.

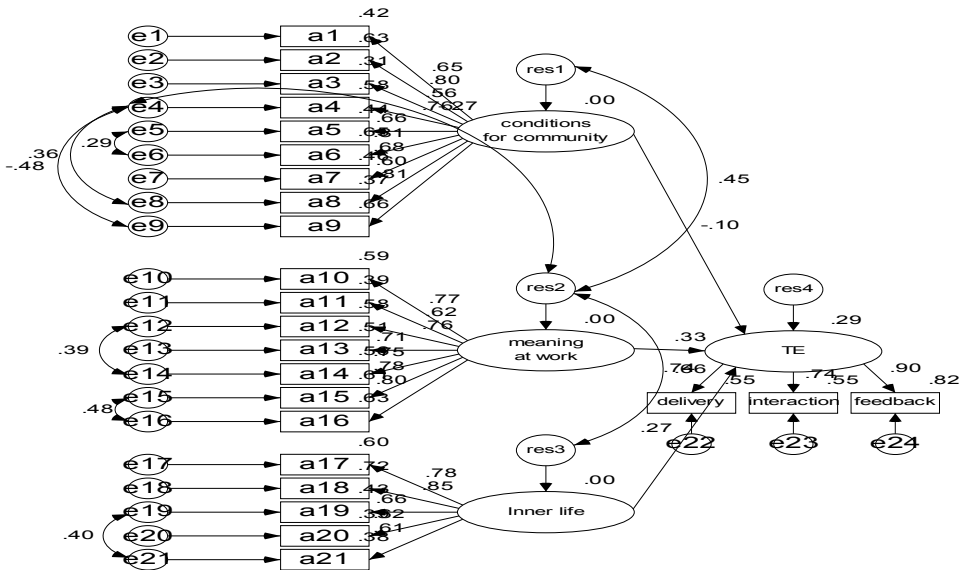


Figure 1- Structural model of workplace spirituality and teaching effectiveness

The findings show that conditions for community is a minimal significant predictor of teaching effectiveness with the path coefficient ($R^2 = 0.06$, $\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$) but the structural model is a good fit ($\chi^2 = 89.83$, $p < 0.01$, $RMSEA = 0.08$, $TLI = 0.92$, $CFI = 0.94$, $SRMR = 0.07$). The result of the structural model between meaning at work and teaching effectiveness indicates that the model is significant with the strong goodness of fit indexes ($\chi^2 = 51.53$, $p < 0.01$, $RMSEA = 0.07$, $TLI = 0.96$, $CFI = 0.97$, $SRMR = 0.05$), while inner life and teaching

effectiveness indicates that the model is significant with the strong goodness of fit indexes ($\chi^2 = 20.14$, $p=0.33$, RMSEA = 0.03, TLI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99, SRMR = 0.04) . Thus, the structural model of workplace spirituality that effect teaching effectiveness demonstrates that the structural model is significant with the acceptable range of goodness of fit indexes ($\chi^2 = 425.83$, $p<0.001$, RMSEA = 0.08, TLI = 0.88, CFI = 0.90, SRMR = 0.18). This structural model is significantly evident enough to explain teaching effectiveness (conditions for community with $\beta = 0.10$, and meaning at work with $\beta = 0.33$, inner life with $\beta = 0.27$). This findings is in line with the proposition suggested by Ashmos and Duchon (2000). This study also suggests that inner life has contributed most to teaching effectiveness, followed by meaning at work and conditions for community.

These results provide empirical support for the significant importance of inner life (an individual's hopefulness, awareness of personal values) and concern for connectedness with the universe. The inner life dimension of spirituality is based on the assumption that people have both an inner and outer life. By nourishing the inner life through ways such as expressing aspects of one's being at work, one can lead a more meaningful and productive outer life. As such, the recognition of an inner life at workplace means accepting that people have both mind and spirit and that the development of the spirit at work is as important as the development of mind (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

In case of academicians, their roles goes beyond teaching or imparting knowledge but also require them to involve in character building of students to develop future leaders. Today's academicians need to keep pace with increasing job demand and rapid acceleration of change which may require them to balance up between inner and outer life to remain healthy and avoid burnout. This is in line with Neal (1999) who asserted that types of careers where inner life seems to be most widespread among them are consulting, education and healthcare. The findings also provide additional validity support for Ashmos and Duchon's (2000) workplace spirituality where sample was drawn from healthcare sector, professional and significant portion being female. The current study surveyed academician professionals and majority were women.

With regard to meaning at work, the quest for purpose in work is not a new idea. From spirituality perspective, work is not just meant to be interesting or challenging (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), but it is about things such as searching for deeper meaning and purpose, living one's dream, expressing one's inner life needs by seeking meaningful work and contributing to others (Ashmos &

Duchon, 2000; Fox, 1994; Neal, 1999; William, Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2001). Graber and Johnson (2001) called this as spiritual growth in the workplace. In the case of academicians as in this study, the meaning of work can be derived from many ways such as interaction with students, delivery of lectures and feedback from students.

3. CONCLUSION

Workplace spirituality enables a business people to gain a better perspective on their firm, family, neighbors, community and themselves. There is much evidence of the interest of spirituality in business. However, there is lack of evidence on the study of the relationship between workplace spirituality and teaching effectiveness, specifically in the education sector. This study served to add more evidence on the importance of workplace spirituality in the academic settings. It also provides initial empirical support for the premise that workplace spirituality can also have the same positive impact in higher learning institutions as on other business organizations. This study also provides some empirical data confirming the validity of the three dimensions of workplace spirituality as well as the predictive validity of the three dimensions of workplace spirituality. In conclusion, this study has provided some empirical data confirming the validity of three dimensions of workplace spirituality with teaching effectiveness. While this is a promising study, more research is needed on the comprehensive nature of the relationship of workplace spirituality and teaching effectiveness. Such studies need to be guided not only by more rigorous methods but also critical thoughts.

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