TEACHERS' USE OF EMPATHY TO IMPROVE THEIR JOB BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract - Being simply cognitively capable would be inadequate for teachers tosatisfy job performance requirements associated with their job behaviour. Before employees perform their jobs, they must understand what the jobs entail because the activities and behaviours associated with a particular job are defined largely by the expectations and demands of other people, both inside and outside any organization. For instance, a teacher's role is defined by the expectations of his or her pupils, their parents, school managers, and society at large. In order to create positive relationships within the organization, employees need to offer encouraging words to each other when they try something new, be patient, understanding and empathetic. The aim of the study is therefore to determine the need to develop empathy as a social skill of emotionally intelligent teachers. The quantitative research method was used in this study. The findings of this study strongly suggest that teachers must develop their social skill ofempathy as part of their job behaviour. Empathy is an essential emotional intelligence trait for teachers to overtly include in their instructional strategies. Teachers who use instructional empathy will reduce anxiety and tension in the learning environment. Evidently, expressing empathy in the organization requires the employee to thoughtfully consider everyone's feelings in the process of making intelligent decisions. This study affirms that anemployee who has a developed sense of empathy will have a much better understanding on how to handle different situations which could range from dealing with underachieving learners to working with gifted pupils.

Keywords - Empathy, Emotional Intelligence, Social Skills

I. INTRODUCTION

Empathy is a vital component of employees' emotional intelligence (EI) in shapingtheir job behaviour because "empathy is the ability to see the world from another person's perspective, the capacityto tune into what someone else might be thinking and feeling about a situation"– regardless of how that view might differ from their own perception (Stein & Book, 2001, p. 112).Empathy empowers employees such as teachers to consider others' feelings, especially when making decisions (Goleman,2011; Berman, 2004). Every employee occupies a position within the organization to which a role is attached, and this role is like a prescription in that it represents the activities and behaviours that are to be performed by a person who occupies that position (Churchill, Ford & Walker, 1990). Being simply cognitively capable would be inadequate for satisfying job performance requirements(Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Eysenk, & Calvo, 1992). Cherniss and Goleman (2004) state that EI is experiential when an individual demonstrates the competencies that comprises of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and social skills such as empathy at the correct times, and that the frequency should be effective in every situation. Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden and Dornheim (1998) assert that the study of intelligence has always been mainly focused on the adaptive use of cognition and not EI, while Nelson and Low (2011) believe that EI is the guide to accomplishing academic and career excellence, and is a self-directed guide for everyone to acquire the contributions of their emotive mind.

In order to promote learning and nurture mindset growth, employees need to create a climate of inquiry and openness, of patience, and of encouragement (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). Churchill, Ford and Walker (1990) affirm that behaviour refers to what the workers actually "do – that is, the tasks they expend effort on while working" (p. 729). Job behaviour would therefore include formally required and expected job behaviours, and volitional or discretionary behaviours which are referred to as part of the psychological contract (Wei, 2012; Stiles, Gratton, Truss, Hope-Hailey & McGovern, 1997), as organisational citizenship behaviour (Al-Sharafi&Rajiani, 2013; Bateman & Organ, 1983), or as pro-social, organisational behaviour (Hyde, Harris &Boaden, 2013; Brief &Motowidlo, 1986). Inthe Business Dictionary (Web Finance, 2013), job behaviour is defined as a pattern of actions and interactions of the members of an organisation that directly or indirectly affects their productivity.

Before employees perform their jobs, they must understand what the jobs entail because the activities and behaviours associated with a particular job are defined largely by the expectations and demands of other people, both inside and outside any organisation. For instance, a teacher's role is defined by the expectations of his or her pupils, their parents, school managers, and society at large. In order to create positive relationships within the organization, employees need to offer encouraging words to each other when they try something new, be patient, understanding and empathetic "when they get off track, and offer helpful suggestions as they try to learn and bounce back from mistakes" (Kouzes & Posner, 2013, p. 204). Even when employees such as

teachers have the aptitude to do their jobs and an understanding of what they are expected to do in the classrooms, they must also have the necessary interpersonal skills of empathy to accomplish their required tasks effectively. Singh (2010) argues that the human factor is not secondary to the existence of the organisation. The happiness of employees is the key driver to achieve the vision of any organisation and empathy forms a crucial component of this process. Churchill, Ford and Walker (1990) justly point out that it is naïve to think that a happy worker is invariably a productive worker, but much evidence collected from a variety of occupations suggests that a worker's satisfaction does influence job behaviour. For instance, a negative relationship can appear between job satisfaction and absenteeism and employee turnover.

The employees' motivation to expend effort would therefore be a function of their expectancies that expending a given effort on their tasks would lead to improved job behaviour and performance (Churchill, Ford & Walker, 1990). Empathy shown by leaders can contribute to both the intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction of employees, and this is usually associated with the opportunities fortheir personal growth and accomplishment that the job provides (Mayer,Caruso & Salovey, 2000).Churchill, Ford and Walker (1990) allude to the fact that "a worker's overall level of self-esteem and perceived ability to perform necessary tasks are positively related to the magnitude of the person's expectancy estimates" (p. 371). Hence, the amount of satisfaction employees get from their occupation is also influenced by their role perceptions because those who perceive large amounts of conflict in the demands placed on them tend to be less satisfied than those who do not. Empathy can be a powerful tool in organizations to eliminate such negative role perceptions (Goleman, 2011).It is therefore important for employees to balance EI and their IQ (Weare&Gray, 2003). The importance of combining one's EI and IQ to create organisational effectiveness and job satisfaction is also supported by Caruso (1999) and is clarified by the following definition:

EI is the ability to use emotions to help you solve problems and live a more effective life. Emotional intelligence without intelligence, or intelligence without emotional intelligence is only part of a solution. The complete solution is the head working with the heart.(p. 26)

Stein and Book (2001) confirm that empathy entails:

The ability to be aware of, to understand and to appreciate the feelings and thoughts of others. Empathy is "tuning in" (being sensitive) to what, how and why people feel and think the way they do. Being empathic means being able to "emotionally read" other people. Empathetic people care about others and show interest in and concern for them. (p. 111)

Empathy is an essential trait for teachers to overtly include in their instructional strategies. As aptly pointed out by Goleman (2011), empathy does not simply mean a kind of "I'm OK, you 're OK" mushiness. Expressing empathy in the organization requires the employee to thoughtfully consider everyone's feelings in the process of making intelligent decisions. Teachers who use instructional empathy will reduce anxiety, tension and the effects of tobephobia in the learning environment (Singh, 2010). When learners see their teachers expressing empathy, they feel more comfortable and open to talk about problems they may have in the classroom or even at home (Birch & Ladd, 1996). If teachers want learners to succeed in theirclasses, it is important for teachers to connect with their learners on a professional and personal level (Seligman, 2005). Good listening skills are the keys to genuine empathy because when teachers learn to listen better, they gain the respect of their pupils (Sterrett, 2000). Expectedly, empathy would increase trust and closeness within the organization, and this would inevitably impact positively on the productivity and job satisfaction of employees (Singh, 2010).

Empathy is an emotion where people try to understand the minds of other people and try to see things from a different perspective that will explain the actions of one another (Stein & Book, 2001; Goleman, 2011). It is also the process of how we interact with other minds and mostly coincide with other emotions such as caring for others (Coplan&Goldie, 2011). A teacher who has a developed sense of empathy will have a much better understanding on how to handle different situations which could range from dealing with underachieving learners to working with gifted learners (Singh, 2010). Hence, the aim of the study was to determine the need to develop empathy as a social skill of emotionally intelligent teachers as part of their job behaviour. The main objectives of this study were to determine the need for teachers to determine how empathy as a social skill can empower teachers in their jobs to provide quality and differentiated education to all learners in a heterogeneous learning environment. The problem statement for this study is: Why is it necessary for teachers to develop empathy as an emotionally intelligent social skill to improve their job behaviour?

II. EMPATHIC TEMPERAMENT OF TEACHERS

Empathy can be a powerful social skill in any organization (Goleman, 2011). However, as pointed out by Stein and Book (2001), it can be underutilized. Stein and Bookjustly point out that many people are prohibited from using empathy to their advantage

because of three misconceptions about it. In the first instance, people confuse empathy with being "nice" – as opposed to what empathy really means. Secondly, many people confuse empathy with sympathy, and thirdly, some people believe that by making an empathic statement, they would appear to be agreeing with or approving of the other person's position, whenin fact they may be totally opposed to it.According to Whitefield and Kloot (2006), empathy is neither part of the implicit nor the explicit curriculum. Palmer (2013) states that empathy is one of the most important skills that teachers can and must teach to their learners whileSagkal, Turnuklu and Totan (2012) claim that empathy is the most important skill that should be learnt in schools. Ikiz (2009) asserts that people should create a balance between self-awareness and empathy in such a way that self-awareness emanates from empathy.

An empathic temperament has been a popular attribute for teachers in a varied classroom and this disposition is associated with an increase in sensitivity to different cultures (McAllister, 2002; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2000). The empathetic disposition often also manifests itself in the teacher's caring relationship (McAllister, 2002). Studies have shown that learners who have a thoughtful connection with their educator are often more motivated and can perform at a greater academic level than students who do not share this bond (Singh, 2010). Studies also proved that empathy can contribute to the success of a teacher (McAllister, 2002). In a recent study (Singh, 2013) it was found that there is a strong relationship between the ability to work with, appreciate and respond to workers. The self-esteem of employees is higher in a working environment that encourages an empathic relationship amongst workers (Singh, 2013). Employees are motivated to a greater extent to excel and this inevitably contributes to their job satisfaction. McAllister (2002)suggests than an increase in empathetic skills can improve classroom interactions by means of various attributes such as listening, being patient, reflecting constantly and caring for the students. Singh (2013) stresses that EI is the potential of humans to succeed within a people-orientated environment.

Raver and Maydosz (2010) highlighted that learners who have made their own notes engage much more in the learning process than just giving learners already completed study notes. According to Rayneri, Gerber, and Wiley (2003), underachievement by learners is an infuriating occurrence for both teachers and parents. Therefore, teachers need to be flexible when dealing with the diverse learning needs of their learners. Noble early childhood educators fundamentally recognise that they are a significant influence on the future educational and life achievement of their scholars because they have been explicitly trained to have a child focused view that cultivates social and emotional advance in young learners (Kremenitzer, 2005).Whitefield and Kloot (2006) confirm that behavioural skills such as empathy are often more complex and abstract than cognitive skills as empathy involves a range of interpretations and a specific meaning in a given context while Ikiz (2009) argues that empathic skills refers to the ability for therapeutic techniques which can be developed by means of education. Culturally sensitive empathy is very important when working with a diverse cultural group, as found in all schools (Chung&Bemark, 2002). Ickes (2003) believes that empathy is a skill that can and must be learned. Decety and Jackson (2004) also stated that empathy is a skill that is a product of accidental mutation which only occurs in humans and it is without any evolutionary history.For empathy and compassion to thrive, Cooper and Sawaf (1997) note that people need to be held responsible and accountable and be encouraged to face difficult situations without fear of failure.They suggest that empathy and compassion are the nucleus of collaboration and empowerment because without them, human feelings and emotions are ignored and workers then begin to stray from the organisation's core purpose because they are unhappy:

It is from empathy, especially when there is an environment of trust, that connection comes, one person to another. In terms of corporate and career achievements, it can be said that almost everything begins and ends in the emotions of confident relationships, in human connectedness. (p. 53)

Empathetic teachers will be able to accept certain barriers to learning and will be able to help their learners to overcome these barriers (Singh, 2010). These teachers will also be able to listen to the problems of their learners even if these problems are not directly related to the content or context of schooling. The teacher will also be able to understand the background of the learners, respect them and their situations and in the end, the learner will have more respect for the teacher (Ward, 2013). Hunter (2013) asserts that learners will bring their emotions, which will have a direct effect on how they learn, in the classroom and that a teacher must be able to connect with them and to understand them. Wilson (2011) also postulates that empathy is an important element needed for teachers to be able to transfer knowledge. As pointed out by Jackson, Meltzoff and Decety (2005), empathy is a multi-faceted form of mental deduction where memory, observation, reasoning and knowledge are combined to achieve new insights into the feelings and thoughts of others.Wiggins and McTighe (2005) state that empathy, together with explanation, interpretation, application, perspective and self-knowledge are all abilities that are important for a teacher and learner to achieve goals and to understand the contentsof the curriculum. Wiggins and McTighe(2005) also define understanding as "a mental construct, an abstraction made by the human mind to make sense of many distinct pieces of knowledge" (p. 37). Parents have aduty to teach their children how to care for other people and how to be

empathetic. However, their curriculum contributions can be limited because the parents' empathetic skills might be limited. Studies proved that the teachers have a greater ability to influence the motivation and the behaviour of learners than parents can (Narinasamy& Wan Mamat, 2013).

Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) argue that the active consideration of imagining how a learner is affected by his or her situation produces, allows for an empathic arousal that can lead to the employee as a perspective-taker to offer greater assistance to the learner. Wang, Chignell and Ishizuka(2006) observed that attention loss by learners does not only occur when teaching in a virtual environment but also in any other teaching environment or learning area.Weare and Gray (2003) suggest that both emotional and social competencies should not only be taught at school, but also at higher education institutions that train teachers. Emotional competencies should be compulsory in schooling and be part of the objective of pre-service teacher training (Wang & Huang, 2009; Palomera, Fernandez-Berrocal&Barckett, 2008). It should be considered as one of the most important basic competencies that employees at schools should have (Sagkal, Turnuklu&Totan, 2012). Undoubtedly, teachers who are emotionally intelligent can have a profound effect on the teaching and the achievement of their learners (Durlak, Weissberg &Pachan, 2005).

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The quantitative research method was used to conduct the investigation in this study. A quantitative approach is one in which the investigators have primarily post-positivist claims for developing knowledge and employing strategies of inquiry, such as surveys.Muijs (2010) states that survey research is well suited where a researcher wants to look at the relationship between variables occurring in particular real-life contexts. The survey used in this investigation focused on the teachers' empathy as a social skill. A total of six schools participated in his exploratory study.From each school, six teachers were purposefully selected and altogether, 36 participants took part in this study. The structured questionnaire comprised two main sections: section A required the participants to provide their biographic information relevant to this research. Section B of the questionnaire comprised of twelve items focusing on the use of empathy by teachers as part of their instructional skills. The participants needed to respond to each statement by using the five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (See Table 1). The necessary precautionary measures were taken to obtain ethical clearance for this study. All the participants had to give consent before they took part in this study. They were informed that their identities as well as that of their schools, would not be disclosed, and confidentiality was always observed. They were also informed that participation in this study was voluntary. Participants could withdraw from the study at any point of time without any consequences. Once a participant wanted to withdraw from the study, all information gathered from that specific participant would be discarded. The participants were informed that there were no risks involved in participating in this study as they were required to complete the questionnaire at their respective schools.

IV. FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. The main objective of using statistics is to determine if significant and meaningful patterns are present in the research results (Gravetter&Wallnau, 2008). Reliability testing was also done with Cronbach's α being equal to 0.62. This indicated that the questionnaire was for all practical purposes reliable. In terms of content validity, the questionnaire was initially approved by five teachers, an academic, and the statistician who analysed the data.

Item		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Emotional intelligence is not given the same recognition as cognition in developing teachers' professional competencies to cope with the constant changes in education	0%	0%	3.125%	75%	21.875%	4.19	0.47
2	Emotionally intelligent teachers depend on empathy as a social skill to plan their lessons	0%	12.5%	21.875%	53.125%	12.5%	3.66	0.87

3	Empathy allows the teachers to demonstrate humanistic values in their choice of learning materials for learners of different abilities	0%	0%	12.5%	59.375%	28.125%	4.16	0.63
4	Empathy gives teachers flexibility to identify with the individual learning needs of their diverse ability learners by not adhering strictly to a standardised assessment approach	0%	0%	18.75%	53.125%	28.125%	4.13	0.66
5	Teachers show empathy to high risk learners (who fail to understand the subject matter easily) by preparing special worksheets for them	9.375%	18.75%	12.5%	34.375%	25%	3.47	1.32
6	Teachers show empathy to high risk learners by slowing the pace of instruction for them	6.25%	6.25%	9.375%	43.75%	34.375%	3.88	1.13
7	Teachers show empathy only to high risk learners at the expense of other ability learners	12.5%	56.25%	15.625%	15.625%	0%	2.34	0.90
8	Teachers design differentiated learning activities for advanced ability learners	3.125%	18.75%	15.625%	56.25%	6.25%	3.44	0.98
9	Advanced ability learners are not given more of the same subject matter just to keep them busy and quiet	12.5%	34.375%	6.25%	40.625%	6.25%	3.16	1.22
10	Teachers are easily approachable and sensitive to the diverse needs of their learners from different communities	3.125%	9.375%	18.75%	46.875%	21.875	3.75	1.02
11	Teachers easily empathise with learners who do not speak the official language of the school by allowing learners to use code switching of languages to improve their communication ability	18.75%	37.5%	34.375%	9.375%	0%	2.34	0.90
12	Teachers demonstrate empathy by promoting multicultural values in their curriculum by integrating artefacts from different religions on a voluntary basis	9.375%	18.75%	25%	37.5%	9.375%	3.19	1.15

Table 1: Summary of Responses to the Survey

Table 1 indicates that participants responded positively (mean average above 3) in all items except for when considering item seven and item eleven, each item scoring a mean average of 2.34. A total of 68.75% of the participants disagreed with item seven indicating that they do not show empathy only to high

risk learners at the expense of other ability learners, thus it can be seen as a positive response. It was also found that 56.25% of the participants disagreed with item eleven indicating that teachers do not easily empathise with learners who do not speak the official language of the school by allowing learners to use code switching of languages to improve their communication ability.

V. CONCLUSION

It is evident from the findings of this study that no one person can single-handedly educate a child – collegial collaboration and teaming amongst employees in schools contribute to the mission and vision of these organizations being achieved. In terms of the findings in this exploratory study, the hallmarks of empathy for employees includes expertise in attracting and developing talent in their organizations; having the ability to develop others; and demonstrating sensitivity to cross-cultural differences. Employees must be afforded the opportunity to develop their ability as leaders whose expertise defines what they can accomplish in the organization. IQ alone would not suffice to attain this noble objective. Hence, it is imperative that for employees using an empathetic approach, they develop cooperative goals and roles, foster collaboration and create a climate of trust, support norms of reciprocity, and ultimately show concern for others. The umbilical link between employees' job performance and their empathetic behaviour needs to be strengthened in all organizations. Nothing less should be exacted. More compelling research needs to be undertaken on this subject.

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