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E is for Ethics, Evaluation & Emotional
Intelligence

by

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Abstract

Daniel Goleman (1995) believed the superior performance of star performers at Bell Labs was, amongst other things, due to their ability to co-ordinate teamwork, build consensus, see things from the perspective of others, and be self-managed in regulating time and work commitments.

This paper evaluates an active learning communication project designed to promote emotional intelligence, and explores the ethics of individual assessment based on team performance and peer evaluations.

The course project and its assessment were constructed in response to recent research on the competencies and attitudes sought by employers of business faculty graduates for the year 2005.

Emotional Intelligence

In his seminal work *Frames of Mind (1983)* Howard Gardner published the culmination of work by researchers at the Harvard Graduate School of Education on *The Nature and Realisation of Human Potential*. He deliberately used the expression *multiple intelligences* to stress an unknown number of separate human

capacities, ranging from musical intelligence to the intelligence involved in understanding oneself.

This concept was picked up by educationalists, and ten years later Gardner published *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice* (1993). Daniel Goleman incorporated Gardner's theory into *Emotional Intelligence – Why it can matter more than IQ* (1995). Emotional intelligence, claims Goleman, “includes self-awareness and impulse control, persistence, zeal and motivation, empathy and social deftness. These are the qualities that mark people who excel: whose relationships flourish, who are stars in the workplace”(Jacket cover. See also p34).

These qualities were echoed in New Zealand surveys of employers and recruitment agencies undertaken to identify the perceived requirements of graduates in the workplace. Hodges, Rainsbury and Burchell (1999) surveyed opinions from four contrasting perspectives: the Top 500 New Zealand Companies as identified by the NZ Business magazine 1998; New Zealand business recruitment agencies; UNITEC Faculty of Business academic staff; and UNITEC undergraduate business students who attended class in a one week period in November 1998. The combined results of these comparative surveys are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. A comparison of the importance ranking of the top 10 competencies

| Competency | Ranking 1999 | Predicted Ranking 2005 |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Customer service orientation | 1 | 2 |
| Willingness to learn | 2 | 1 |
| Teamwork & co-operation | 3 | 7 |
| Computer literacy | 4 | 3 |
| Achievement orientation | 5 | 5 |
| Self confidence | 6 | 10 |
| Personal planning | 7 | 11 |
| Initiative | 8 | 4 |
| Flexibility | 9 | 6 |
| Written communication | 10= | 16 |
| Analytical thinking | 10= | 8 |
| Relationship building | 12 | 9 |
| Information seeking | 13 | 12 |
| Conceptual thinking | 14 | 13 |
| Interpersonal understanding | 15 | 14 |
| Self control | 16 | 15 |
| Order, quality & accuracy | 17 | 17 |
| Technical expertise | 18 | 18 |
| Organisational commitment | 19 | 23 |
| Team leadership | 20 | 19 |
| Influence on others | 21 | 20 |
| Organisational awareness | 22 | 22 |
| Developing others | 23 | 21 |
| Directiveness | 24 | 24 |

Applied Knowledge or Work Readiness of Students

A concern of employers has always been the work-readiness of graduates (O'Reilly 1995). It is expected that students will have subject content knowledge, but more is expected in a business environment where employees must interact with a wide range and diverse group of people as colleagues, clients and customers. In 1995 Chris O'Reilly surveyed employers in Christchurch, New Zealand, for the specific skills they required from employees. The employers' major concern with tertiary courses generally was "relevance to reality in the workplace" and the "lack of practical application". Table 2 shows the specific skills required by employers surveyed by Chris O'Reilly (O'Reilly, 1995).

Table 2. Specific Skills required by Christchurch employers. Survey by Chris O'Reilly 1995.

| Rank | Skill/Competency | Percentage |
|------|--|------------|
| 1 | Communication/personal relations | 49% |
| 2 | Subject knowledge | 39% |
| 3 | Problem solving/lateral thinking ability | 37% |
| 4 | Team member/group skills | 24% |
| 5 | Ability to analyse/think quickly | 12% |

Many of the competencies referred to in Tables 1 and 2 relate to the concept of developing emotional intelligence.

The graduate profile of the national New Zealand Diploma in Business also reflects these competencies (Table 3).

Table 3. Graduate Profile for New Zealand Diploma in Business (1999)

| |
|--|
| <p>The objectives of the qualification are to develop graduates who will demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to apply a broad range of generic business skills, principles and practices and the ability to apply technical knowledge and skills particular to a specific business field • An organised approach to problem solving • Recognition of the ethical dimensions inherent in decision making • Well developed critical thinking capabilities • Effective communication and well developed inter-personal skills • Self direction, and independent working practices • Acceptance of responsibility for the quality of own work outcome • Ability to guide and supervise the work of others • Acceptance of responsibility for, and ability to manage, own further learning and development • Ability to work effectively in diverse cultural contexts • Ability to work effectively in group situations |
|--|

Essential requirements of the project

To develop as autonomous learners students needed to develop an awareness of their own strengths, weaknesses and preferences. This included extending their awareness of and

respect for others by developing empathy and an appreciation of other cultures. The teaching team also needed to model these skills and values.

The major assignment for the course was a project which had to be undertaken in a commercial organisation by a diverse group of four students. They had to negotiate with the manager of the company to get permission to carry out their project, agree on a communication topic, plan and carry out the research, and prepare a report for the company. Group work was supported in tutorials where possible, and feedback points were built in throughout the semester. This feedback shared knowledge and progress with the class to enhance everyone's progress and learning.

Competencies and attitudes required to successfully complete this Business Communication project included the ability to approach and successfully negotiate with an organisation, and use time-management planning. Students needed to have options when arrangements failed, which meant being flexible and adaptable. They needed to show initiative in their groups to solve problems and advance the project. They also needed to relate effectively to the client organisation. Only by effective teamwork, co-operation and self-discipline could this project be achieved.

The lecturing team identified the competencies and attitudes in Table 4. as being important for success in this project.

**Table 4 Competencies and attitudes
required in communication course**

| Competencies and attitudes required in communication course | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Willingness to learn | Teamwork & co-operation |
| Achievement orientation | Self-confidence |
| Personal planning | Initiative |
| Flexibility | Written communication |
| Analytical thinking | Information seeking |
| Conceptual thinking | Interpersonal understanding |
| Self control | Order, quality & accuracy |
| Commitment | Influence on others |
| Organisational awareness | Developing others |

Ethics in a Workplace Project

A number of ethical issues arose in the development of this project. These included considering whether new entry students should take on such a complex project. This has been addressed by providing a high level of support throughout the semester, with built in weekly monitoring of the work in progress.

The ethical issues which arose from students being in the workplace, included confidentiality of sensitive commercial information and of any disclosures made by staff members about other staff members. For these reasons compliance with UNITEC's ethical procedures was required. This included providing a full explanation of the requirements of the project to the manager; obtaining written consent before proceeding; a signed undertaking by the students to preserve the

confidentiality of the information; plus providing an undertaking to withdraw from the project should the manager of the client organisation become unhappy with any aspect of the assignment.

The issue of accountability of the students to their team-mates, the class, the company and to UNITEC needed to be considered. Ensuring that the students individually were accountable to the organisation for their actions, and also to their colleagues was achieved by the implementation of peer assessment. Students also completed a peer assessment of their team members which may alter the allocation of their shared group report mark. This is to ensure any 'sleepers' do not benefit from their non-performance. Each team who achieved a passing mark, had their report forwarded to the organisation. On the few occasions reports could not be sent to the company, a letter of appreciation was sent instead. The importance of providing a positive experience for employers was stressed, as it would impact on other projects undertaken by other students across campus.

The company staff involved in interviews for the project also had to be given similar assurances as the manager, but their permission in writing was not sought. All students were made aware of the importance of discretion regarding information they were given.

Finally, a senior staff member with experience in workplace assignments and the ethical issues involved examined the whole project, including its consent procedures.

Co-operative learning develops emotional intelligence competencies

The value of co-operative learning is highlighted by McNeill and Payne (1996) who define co-operative learning as occurring when small groups of students work together to maximise their own and each other's learning. The essential elements include positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal skills, and group processing, with the additional benefit of learning from others in informal interactions. This social learning *enlightens* students to the differences and similarities among individuals, and the experience of a positive, collaborative team model.

Co-operative learning also requires critical thinking skills and the opportunity to cognitively incorporate theoretical concepts and higher-order thinking skills through practical applications. McNeill and Payne also mentioned that co-operative learning provides teachers with insights into students' learning and responsiveness to others. This highlighted the value of a social learning environment where 'theory and practice go hand in hand' to achieve a student-centred co-operative environment, which is critical 'for success in today's society and workforce' (1996, Pg7).

This viewpoint was endorsed in a major study on innovative teaching and learning programmes undertaken by a consortium of four community colleges in Southern California (Anthony 1991). The value of co-operative learning outlined in the Consortium innovative teaching and learning programme was evident in the 140 Business Communication classes. William

Blake from the Consortium reported on the value of collaboration in a critiquing group. His conclusions include:

The groups must be four in number. Regular and frank assessment of members' value to other members must be done. Increased early semester training in critiquing is critical. Two thirds of students stated that they enjoyed the groups and profited from them. "I regard this figure as remarkable. The courses cited are early evening and night courses. Students work all day and come to school tired. Ethnic students with poor English skills are a significant minority. (Pages 57-60)

Blake's comments regarding the diversity and tiredness of some students, and a lack of fluency or confidence in English were also relevant to 140 Business Communication. Students needed to acknowledge and overcome these barriers.

Another consortium participant Cheryl Ooten made the following observations on student confidence which were also mirrored in the 140 classes:

The classroom atmosphere was more co-operative and accepting. The students integrated the material better. They discussed the problems with each other and corrected themselves. The class came alive working together in groups with mixed intellectual and ethnic characteristics. They did not do well when groups were changed every time. (Pg 67-71).

This reflects the 140 experience. The atmosphere became more co-operative and accepting, except when deadlines loomed and the tension increased. However the project groups became, on the whole, self directed and goal achieving entities.

There were a few dysfunctional groups as a result of lack of skills, confidence or a negative attitude. Nearly 60% of the students in these classes spoke English as their second language, and visiting New Zealand workplaces was a daunting prospect for them. As groups were required to self select after several weeks, those quietest, shy and retiring waited for others to choose them. When that did not happen, they had to form their own group. These 'weaker' groups did struggle, but extra help was available. Students in these groups still achieved and succeeded collectively where they would not have on their own, and to succeed in the workplace they *did* need initiative. In Semester One 1999 there were four dysfunctional groups, sixteen students out of 130 students. In the second semester there were three, twelve students out of 100. In previous years such weaker students might have dropped out of class already. This retention is a very positive aspect of the project which is currently being explored further.

The value of collaborative learning as described by McNeill and Payne (1996) and echoed by Blake and Ooten in the Consortium Project (1990-91), was experienced in this project. Collaborative learning was used not only in the project, but also in classes to ensure students explored the diverse opportunities and challenges of a multicultural classroom. In their evaluations of the course students consistently identified group-work as an activity they really appreciated and enjoyed. Examples of comments from the SEQUAL¹

- *The encouragement of interaction with classmates to stimulate relationship building*
- *Group-work helped me to get to know others from other ethnic backgrounds*

¹ SEQUAL is the Student Evaluation Quality System

- *Being involved with groups was also good for real-life situations*
- *Have enjoyed the interaction with colleagues*

Evaluation

Patricia Cross, in her working paper “Pedagogical Pluses of Vocational Education” (1992), identified the challenge of measuring and evaluating the intense and personal involvement of students with their peers and in the workplace. This included the opportunities for active problem solving and critical thinking. The need to analyse, synthesise and evaluate information to provide higher level learning is crucial to the learner, as is feedback between the lecturer and the student. Vocational learning is usually observable, assessable and indicative of whether students can apply their learning (Cross 1992). All of these factors were relevant to the project.

Measuring Emotional Intelligence

This project was designed to develop as many facets of a student’s behaviour as possible. However measuring improvements or developments is problematical as Linda Conrad discussed (1995). Conrad in “Assessing Thoughtfulness: A new paradigm” (1995), develops the concept of authentic assessment as that which measures relevant real-life skills, encourages higher order thinking and creativity in projects and allows students to demonstrate their knowledge in various ways. This project required students to develop and apply these higher order skills.

Conrad identifies learning logs, reflective journals, Likert scales, descriptive scales, evaluative scales and checklists as valid tools

for authentic assessment. A range of these tools was used in this project. They included learning diaries which provided material for an individual reflective memorandum; the development of peer assessment descriptors to assist constructive evaluation and feedback to team members by their peers; individual oral presentations which included peer feedback; group writing and peer critiquing which helped students develop their writing skills; checklists and marking schedules provided for all assignments; and a confidential peer evaluation form completed by each team member on their peers' overall contribution to the project which could affect the individual marks allocated to the team project report.

Student Perceptions of Progress

To measure students' perception of their progress, an evaluative scale was designed which asked students to rate their individual level, and those of their team peers, on twelve key competencies (Table 5). A 1999 pilot surveyed students near the end of the course to assess how much they believed (a) they had improved or developed and (b) how much their team mates had improved or developed during the course. This meant asking for a retrospective assessment of how effective they believed they were at the beginning of the course. In the second semester a survey was taken halfway through the semester to measure any change and again at the end. Statistical data from Semester Two (Table 5) shows This was done half way through the course, several weeks after the teams had been formed. It was repeated at the end of the course. The mid and post course means for each competency are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

From Table 5 differences in the means show statistically significant gains in self perception for each of the 12 competencies. The highest beginning and end course ratings came in intercultural interaction, listening and teamwork roles. However the greatest gains came in developing recommendations, carrying out research and making presentations.

Table 5. Self perceptions of progress in key competencies.

| Competency | Self | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|---------|------|
| | Mid | Post | Diff | p-score | S/NS |
| Writes effectively, accurately, and appropriately | 6.409 | 7.275 | 0.866 | 0.0044 | S |
| Gives a viewpoint, justifies it and influences others' thinking | 6.485 | 7.425 | 0.940 | 0.0006 | S |
| Listens constructively and with empathy to others' points of view | 7.167 | 8.050 | 0.883 | 0.0013 | S |
| Can plan and carry out a successful interview to get information | 6.591 | 7.650 | 1.059 | 0.0003 | S |
| Can plan & deliver an effective oral presentation | 6.439 | 7.800 | 1.361 | 0.0000 | S |
| Can deal with people constructively and assertively | 6.606 | 7.575 | 0.969 | 0.0008 | S |
| Can analyse a problem constructively - sort relevant from irrelevant | 6.892 | 7.550 | 0.658 | 0.0126 | S |
| Can create a range of solutions and select the best | 6.682 | 7.775 | 1.093 | 0.0000 | S |
| Can plan and carry out research on a client organisation on a particular issue | 6.470 | 7.800 | 1.330 | 0.0000 | S |
| Can organise, analyse, conclude and make relevant recommendations based on research | 6.545 | 7.975 | 1.430 | 0.0000 | S |
| Can greet and interact with people from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds | 7.231 | 8.100 | 0.869 | 0.0072 | S |
| Can carry out both task and maintenance roles in a team/group | 7.076 | 8.125 | 1.049 | 0.0000 | S |

Students also rated the other members of their teams on each competency (See Table 6). Mean ratings of peers for the beginning of the course were higher than or about the same as the self-ratings, but for the end of the course were either about the same or lower. This suggests students tended to see their personal improvement as being greater than that of their peers in their team. Comments from the SEQUAL survey indicate

that students' growth in self-confidence is an important factor in this change. The results of this are shown in Table 5.

Table 6. Perceptions of peer progress in key competencies.

| Competency | Peer | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------|-------|---------|------|
| | Mid | Post | Diff | p-score | S/NS |
| Writes effectively, accurately, and appropriately | 6.940 | 7.393 | 0.453 | 0.0110 | S |
| Gives a viewpoint, justifies it and influences others' thinking | 6.672 | 7.364 | 0.692 | 0.0004 | S |
| Listens constructively and with empathy to others' points of view | 7.262 | 7.504 | 0.242 | 0.1938 | NS |
| Can plan and carry out a successful interview to get information | 6.885 | 7.475 | 0.590 | 0.0034 | S |
| Can plan and deliver an effective oral presentation | 6.989 | 7.487 | 0.498 | 0.0083 | S |
| Can deal with people constructively and assertively | 6.547 | 7.500 | 0.953 | 0.0000 | S |
| Can analyse a problem constructively - sort relevant from irrelevant | 7.005 | 7.513 | 0.508 | 0.0056 | S |
| Can create a range of solutions and select the best | 6.966 | 7.436 | 0.470 | 0.0105 | S |
| Can plan and carry out research in a client organisation on a particular issue | 6.939 | 7.636 | 0.697 | 0.0004 | S |
| Can organise, analyse, conclude and make relevant recommendations based on research | 6.951 | 7.619 | 0.668 | 0.0007 | S |
| Can greet and interact with people from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds | 7.396 | 7.863 | 0.467 | 0.0182 | S |
| Carries out both task and maintenance roles in a team/group | 7.027 | 7.615 | 0.588 | 0.0057 | S |

Conclusions

The project has provided both rich learning opportunities for the students. Students were required to interact with a diverse range of people, plan their formal communications to elicit relevant and useful material from a work-site, then use their critical thinking skills to evaluate and organise this material into a cohesive and useful report and present it to the company. They had to interact and communicate interpersonally, verbally and non-verbally with a range of people, in a variety of contexts, and under different levels of pressure. They were assessed on

the process as well as the outcome of these interactions. This project has challenged the students and given them the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their emotional intelligence.

To substantiate the claim that this project has developed numbers of the competencies identified as ideal by employers, a greater range of assessment tools may be needed. However, for students to complete all facets of this assignment they required the attitudes and competencies described. Whether the project enables students to stand out in the employment market has yet to be tested. A number of students, by their own testimony and their work, have developed their range and depth of interpersonal skills which allowed them to respond appropriately in diverse situations.

Those who pass the course are likely to have developed autonomous learning skills and be able to operate considerably more effectively in the workplace. However this claim may need to be followed up in two years with employers to be justified. Future development will be in focused on assessing learning outcomes more accurately and incorporating on-line material as additional support and extension for students.

This project has challenged students and lecturers to examine some dimensions of emotional intelligence, to identify and apply ethical considerations in a practical workplace setting, and to explore a range of approaches to evaluate perceptual student learning.

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