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BEYOND LECTURES: INSIGHTS FROM BUSINESS DISCIPLINES (REFLECTIONS, TRANSFORMATIONS, AND THE HUMAN SIDE OF TEACHING)

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT
UiTM CAWANGAN JOHOR

Beyond Lectures: Insights from Business Discipline-

(Reflections, Transformations, and the Human Side of Teaching)

Chief Editor
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TEACHING A 'COLD' SUBJECT WITH A WARM HEART

Rohanizan Md Lazan, Roha Mohd Noah, Nurul Aien Abd Aziz, Nor Hadaliza Abd Rahman

Introduction

Finance has always been seen as technical and unemotional. Most of the time, it seems the classroom is full of numbers, NPV, IRR, GDP growth, inflation rates, portfolio beta and valuation models. Students get into investment and finance classes hoping to learn complexity, formulas and high stakes calculations. Many also enter with fear.

Working as a lecturer in investment and finance courses, I could not help but emphasize much on making sure that the students were able to master technical competencies. Accuracy matters. It was analytical thinking that was important. Exam performance mattered. It occurred to me that students would achieve success if I explained everything properly and offered enough practice questions.

However, with time, I also started to notice more than that. Students were not just having the problem with numbers. They were grappling with self-confidence, worry, self-doubt and personal battles that were silent at times. Finance and investment were not only cognitively challenging, but emotionally challenging.

Thus, this is what changed my philosophy of teaching. I developed an understanding that there is more to teaching finance than just graduating good analysts. It is concerned with getting emotionally strong decision makers.

The Emotional Landscape of Finance Students

Topics that are related to investment and finance are commonly assumed and referred to as killer papers. Students often come to me before presentations or examinations with such statements:

- "Madam, I'm scared I cannot answer the questions."

a) "I understand in class, but when I see numbers, I panic."

b) "What if I fail?"

These statements are not related to intellectual incompetence. They are about fear and lack of confidence. Performance pressure is instigated by the subjects of finance due to the high expectations involving the academic and professional expectations. Furthermore, this emotional burden was also aggravated by the conditions in the post-pandemic environment. Students going back to physical classrooms had shorter attention spans, poorer underlying knowledge, and increased anxiety (Mesghina et al., 2021). Some showed disengagement. Some were over reliant on recorded materials and slides. This is when I had to make myself think, "Was it all academic or was it emotional?" I learnt that, to develop critical and analytical thinking aspects, technical explanation is not enough, but rather a psychologically supportive learning atmosphere in which a student could feel free to ask questions, make errors, and learn to do so would be essential. Therefore, students will be more ready to participate in the demanding concepts when they think of the classroom as a place where it is okay to be uncertain and confused as an element of learning. This understanding led me to reflect on the larger affective aspects of teaching and learning in teaching finance.

Integrating Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Motivation Theory

This observation is very similar to the phenomenon of Emotional Intelligence (EI) popularized by Daniel Goleman. Emotional intelligence focuses on the presence of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills as critical skills in coping with complex

environments (Goleman, 1995). Although EI is a topic of discussion in corporate management, it is also applicable in the field of finance education. When students start panicking when faced with numerical challenges, they do not necessarily have a deficiency in intellectual capability but are simply having a problem with the ability to control their emotions and remain confident during stressful situations.

Recognising this perspective, it prompted me to reconsider my own role as an educator. I do realise this view, and it led me to revise my role as an educator. Teaching finance could no longer restrict itself to describing formulas and technical ideas but also had to model emotional stability for students. Being empathetic implied recognizing the fear of students and addressing their interests, as opposed to ignoring their emotional condition. On the same note, being calm when describing the complicated valuation models was an example of self-regulation in action. With time, I came to understand that good finance instruction is not merely about instilling an analytical ability in the students, it is also about teaching students to be emotionally competent and resilient in an environment where the material is difficult. Thus, this experience can be further explained through Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, which suggests that individuals are more likely to thrive when three fundamental psychological needs are fulfilled: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).They can experience disconnection (low relatedness) and excessive standards of strict assessment forms (low autonomy). My responses to this psychological need were realized through the act of establishing a conducive environment whereby inquiries were invited and compliments were given. With the development of a feeling of competency and support in students, their participation was enhanced.

During one of my semesters, I observed that even the high achievers were reluctant when giving presentations. I started to affirm their logical thinking and only proceeded to correct technical mistakes after establishing their financial context was in the right position. The transition was very slight and strong. Their posture improved. Their voices got more even. As of critical reinforcement, I realised that confidence does not lie in criticisms but through emotional reinforcement

From Lecturer to Mentor: A Shift in Professional Identity

In my initial academic career, I had conceptualised my role to be that of a content specialist. My fundamental duties focused on the coverage of syllabus, the correspondence of the syllabus to the learning outcomes as required, and sufficient preparation of learners to take tests. The effectiveness was also determined largely with the help of clarity of explanation, completion of quantitative problems sets, and performance of students in general in assessments. In this context, effective teaching was identified with the possibility of students to reproduce analytical steps correctly.

Eventually, however, this content-based orientation started to become inadequate. The repetitive contacts with the students implied that the knowledge of financial formulas was not the sole indicator of significant learning. Gradually, I noted that the challenges that students face were not necessarily only cognitive, but effective. Low self-confidence, anxiety and fear of failure often appeared especially when it came to high stakes situations like presentations and final examinations.

The turning point in my professional identity was not the formal classroom review, but rather the informal events that take place outside regular lecture sessions. Communication among students before examinations were always emotional in nature instead of being confused with the subject matter. The degree to which academic performance had become embedded in psychological pressure was reflected in messages that showed nervousness, self-doubt, or fear of failing to live to expectations.

These led to an evaluation of my role. I also started to understand that any successful finance learning needs to focus on both cognitive and emotional aspects of learning. Such a gradual transformation is indicative of a general change in a transmission-based teaching model to one based on mentorship. As opposed to the role of an information provider, I increasingly assumed the role of a facilitator of confidence, resilience, and reflective thinking. These examples demonstrated that the lecturer and student relationship has relational and motivational implications outside of the formal assessment framework. The sense of responsibility among the students seemed to be not only related to the system of grading but the trust between people and the feeling of expectation. This point highlights the relational nature of higher education, in which notable interaction tends to boost intrinsic motivation.

The teaching approach that included motivating those students who proved to be analytically competent, but with little confidence in their presentations also changed my teaching focus. I started to focus not only on the technical corrections, but on the strengths-based approach, where I started to affirm logical reasoning and structured thinking before focusing on the correctional areas. The strategy is consistent with educational views that reinforcement is an important aspect of enhancing self-efficacy. Gradually, the observable improvements in the contact of students, involvement, and calmness indicated that confidence is an intellectual output prerogative generator.

The described development of professional identity can be linked to the idea of Emotional Intelligence (EI) as described by Daniel Goleman. In this view, good educators can be seen to be empathetic to the affective conditions of students and self-controlled in the face of pressure. Emotionally intelligent instructional practices in fields of study like finance, where the presence of errors can be a significant source of anxiety, can also serve to provide a psychologically safe learning environment.

Additionally, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which is a theory created by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, gives a convenient explanatory frame of this transformation. According to SDT, competence, autonomy, and relatedness are the best things to make people feel optimal motivation. I was indirectly supporting these psychological needs by providing constructive reassurance and establishing a friendly classroom environment and by fostering contemplative participation in financial decision making. These conditions do not only curb anxiety but also increase intrinsic motivation especially in academic rigorous subjects.

The transition from lecturer to mentor was neither abrupt nor formally planned. Instead, it evolved out of a continuous contemplation of classroom realities and reactions of students. This change expanded my perception of the effectiveness of education. Academic performance continued to be significant, but it was now seen as being in association with emotional growth and inspirational encouragement.

Finally, this re-definition of my professional role implies that the education in finances cannot be confined to technical proficiency alone. Development of analytical competence should be supported by building confidence, resilience, and awareness of ethics. Mentorship under this sense is not a peripheral part of disciplinary teaching, it becomes a part of it.

Conclusion: Humanising Finance Education

The considerations raised in this discussion indicate that the teaching of finance extends far beyond the delivery of technical knowledge. Although analytical competency remains an essential aspect of financial education, emotional and motivational aspects that define the study experience among students should also be considered. Topics that are assumed to be challenging or very quantitative tend to cause anxiety in students, making it hard to engage in it, ask questions or delve into intricate concepts. As such, educators must be attentive not only to cognitive progress, but also to the emotional atmosphere in the classroom.

By integrating the concepts of Emotional Intelligence suggested by Daniel Goleman and the motivation principles suggested by the Self-Determination Theory invented by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, educators can establish the learning environment where competence and confidence will be enhanced. Positivity, understanding, and positive communication make students develop psychologically safe, so that they can be more engaged in the problematic content. In this regard, the role of the lecturer evolves from a transmitter of knowledge to a mentor who guides students through both intellectual and emotional aspects of learning.

Finally, humanising finance education does not undermine academic rigor, on the contrary, it strengthens it. With support and motivation, students become more resilient, able to think critically, and become ethically aware of what they will need to do in future professional practice. Teaching, therefore, is not only about the process of producing competent graduates but also of producing intelligent and self-confident individuals who are ready to face the complicated economic reality. Educators and lecturers have a significant role in providing a learning atmosphere where students are motivated to learn new, difficult content without being afraid of failure. This kind of atmosphere will enable students to develop the ability to analyze and to gain emotional strength that is necessary in the financial and business industry, progressively.

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