Educator Perceptions of Soft Skill Development: An Examination within the Malaysian Public Higher Education Sector

Wan Sofiah Meor Osman, Antonia Girardi and Megan Paull
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Wan Sofiah Meor Osman, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak, Malaysia
Antonia Girardi, Murdoch University, Western Australia, Australia
Megan Paull, Murdoch University, Western Australia, Australia

Abstract: Recognition of the importance of soft skills in today’s workforce has gained increasing momentum, with educators and industry bodies identifying that generic skills are vitally important to business success. Despite this acknowledgement, a survey of the current literature highlights that many higher education institutions (HEIs) maintain a stronger emphasis on subject-specific knowledge and skill development when compared to soft skills. A number of factors have been shown to influence the development of soft skills including demographic makers, professional body/accreditation requirements and educator personal expectations or views. In this study, the focus is on those educator perceptions which influence the teaching and learning of soft skills. The study is set in Malaysia, where the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has formally acknowledged the importance of seven soft skills. Semi-structured interviews were used to examine the views of 25 educators from five Malaysian Public HEIs. Findings from the interviews showed that educator beliefs and their personal expectations or views influenced their emphasis on the teaching and learning of soft skills. The findings of the study have implications for educators, HEIs and policy makers, and for future research into the effectiveness, roles and responsibilities of HEIs in this important area.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Higher Education, Teaching and Learning

Introduction

Changing demands of work, changing work environments, and changing employment patterns and contexts have led to a reconsideration of the skills and attributes needed by graduates as they seek employment at the end of a university degree. There are increased demands for work ready graduates to possess high levels of what are known as generic or soft skills, as well as the more focused discipline specific skills of their chosen field. This has led to an increasingly complex landscape associated with soft skill initiatives in many levels of education on the international stage. Issues associated with definition and conceptualisation, as well as delivery and assessment have been the focus of increased research in recent times.

Soft skills are known by many terms in different contexts and surroundings. In Australian higher education institutions (HEIs) these skills have been referred to as generic skills, and more recently are amongst those known as graduate attributes (Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training [DEST], n.d.). In contrast, industry refers to
these skills as employability skills (National Centre for Vocational Education Research [NCVER], 2003). The preferred terms also vary by country as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Terms used in Various Countries to Describe Soft Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Core skills, key skills, common skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Essential skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Key competencies, employability skills, generic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Employability skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Basic skills, necessary skills, workplace know how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Critical enabling skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Transferable skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Key qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Trans-disciplinary goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Process independent qualifications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The term soft skills has been employed here as the preferred term adopted in Malaysia (Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia [KPTM], 2006). The Malaysian Public HEI curricula, recommended by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in 2006, incorporates a focus on seven soft skills: communication, critical thinking and problem solving, teamwork, lifelong learning and information management, entrepreneurship, moral and professional ethics and leadership.

Previous research suggests that within HEIs, subject-specific knowledge and skills are strongly emphasised, yet development of soft skills is an area needing more attention (Armstrong & Kleiner, 1996; Harvey, 1993; Precision Consultancy for Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council [BIHECC], 2007). In particular, how educators 1 integrate soft skills into teaching and learning processes needs to be better understood.

**Soft Skills in the Curriculum**

The MOHE soft skills curriculum suggests three approaches for development of soft skills in students (see Figure 1):

1. Incorporation into the formal activities of teaching and learning in an embedded or stand-alone model
2. Parallel support programs which have academic or non-academic foci

1 In this paper, the term educators refers to those directly involved in the delivery of curriculum to students.
3. Skills development through campus life experiences including on-campus and residential college activities

As a result, educators are either directly or indirectly involved in this effort.

![Soft Skill Development Framework](image)

Incorporation of soft skills into the curriculum means their development is explicitly outlined and the role of educators is formalised.

**Aim of the Study**

Despite the crucial role educators have to play, very little is known about educator perceptions regarding teaching and learning soft skills. Three key studies have been carried out in Malaysia and Australia investigating soft skill development at HEIs (see Abu, Kamsah & Razzaly, 2008; Precision Consultancy for BIHECC, 2007; Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology [RMIT] University, 2009). These studies employed a variety of methodologies and present important findings.

The key Malaysian study was conducted a year after the soft skills framework was launched in 2006 (Abu et al., 2008). This study surveyed 3696 educators from 20 public HEIs. It found that most of the respondents were not only aware of the Ministry’s intention to embed soft skills in teaching and learning, but believed they were also ready to carry out this task at their institutions. This study showed that personal initiative, not university directive, played an important role in whether educators embed soft skills in their teaching and learning. This quantitative study did not further examine educator perceptions about their role in teaching...
and learning soft skills, their awareness of how soft skills education can be delivered or their views on the relative emphasis on subject-specific knowledge and skills versus soft skills.

In 2007, the Australian BIHECC conducted a study to investigate the development, teaching, assessment and reporting of graduate employability skills or soft skills in Australia (Precision Consultancy for BIHECC, 2007). A range of stakeholders participated in this study which included respondents across ten HEIs (15 participants) and from business and industry (34 participants). This qualitative study identified that approaches such as the integration of soft skills into the curriculum, and Work Integrated Learning (WIL), amongst others, were used by HEIs to develop soft skills. The study also highlighted that explicit inclusion of soft skills assessment in course materials and learning objectives was an effective way to assess soft skills. In terms of reporting, e-portfolios were seen as a practical approach. Once again, this study did not explore educator perceptions about teaching and learning soft skills.

A further Australian study known as the B Factor project, was conducted in 2008 to investigate graduate attributes or soft skills at HEIs (RMIT University, 2009). The researchers collected both quantitative and qualitative data from an online survey of 1064 educators across 16 Australian HEIs. A largely quantitative approach was adopted, with limited in-depth detail being elicited from respondents. Demographic characteristics such as gender, discipline, and industry experience were found to influence the emphasis placed by the educator on teaching and assessing soft skills.

Despite these studies, there is still limited understanding of the role educator perceptions play in soft skill development. To further explore the opinions and perceptions of educators, and provide further insights into practices associated with soft skills teaching and learning, a more in-depth qualitative approach was adopted in the current study.

**Methodology**

Qualitative data were collected via in-depth interviews, in a constructivist-interpretive approach. Educators were also asked to give yes/no answers, rank their views or give responses in terms of percentages where applicable, as part of a nested method to allow better comparison of certain elements of the data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The evidence generated from the nested component was given lower priority. The MOHE identified soft skills (communication, critical thinking and problem solving, teamwork, lifelong learning and information management, entrepreneurship, moral and professional ethics and leadership in Bachelor degree programs) were the focus of this study.

**Interviews**

The standard set of semi-structured interviews consisted of three major themes: educator awareness of the delivery approaches, opinions about the relative emphasis of ‘subject-specific knowledge and skills’ and ‘soft skills’ and perceptions about whether these should be taught or learned. Pilot interviews were conducted to identify the presence of any unclear statements, points of confusion and omissions in the interview framework. Four educators participated in this pilot, and amendments were made to the framework based on their feedback.

Data collection commenced in February 2009. The average duration of the interviews was 90 minutes. Educators were provided with the opportunity to use either Malay language or
English in the interview, with some interviews containing elements of each. Audio recordings were made for all interview sessions. The data were transcribed verbatim and analysed in the first instance using a thematic approach. Translation was made where applicable by one of the researchers holding insider status (Temple & Young, 2004). In reporting the data, efforts have been made to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents.

**Setting and Sample**

This study was conducted at five public HEIs located in West and East Malaysia, referred to A–E in the study. Educators were invited to participate in the study via a direct email based on information obtained from their University’s web page. This purposive sampling gathered data from two groups of educators: senior leadership group and non-senior leadership group. The senior leadership group was divided into: university level, faculty level and residential college staff.

**Respondent Profile**

A total of 25 educators participated in the interviews with 52% male and 48% female. The educators were from various discipline areas: management (28%), society and culture (24%), sciences (20%), engineering (8%), education (8%), information technology (8%) and health (4%). Of those interviewed, 12% were lecturers, 36% were senior lecturers, 44% were associate professors and eight percent were professors. All the educators who participated in the interviews were employed permanently on a full-time basis. In terms of teaching experience, 72% of the educators had more than 10 years experience, 24% had 6–10 years experience and 4% had 1–5 years experience. Sixty percent of the respondents were in the senior leadership group (university level-12%; faculty level-28%; and residential college-20%). The remaining 40% made up the non-senior leadership group. This profile demonstrates the diversity of the educators who participated in the study.

**Analysis and Findings**

Thematic analysis of the data collected is presented according to the key themes explored in the interviews. In exploring educator beliefs and their personal expectations about soft skill development, the analysis started by looking at the context of educators (awareness and involvement) and then followed by studying educator opinions about the emphasis on teaching and learning (subject-specific knowledge and skills vs. soft skills). Finally, the analysis investigated educator perceptions of teaching and learning soft skills (teaching vs. learning). In the discussion of the data, educators are identified by the letter designating their university (A–E), and by the interview number assigned by the researchers.

**Awareness and Involvement**

The majority of the respondents (84%) were very much aware of how soft skills should be delivered through tertiary education as suggested by the soft skills curriculum (mean=5.92/7).

Educator 2D and Educator 20E highlighted that their universities had been working on soft skill development before the soft skills curriculum was introduced in 2006. In terms of the delivery approach, Educator 5D and Educator 9C acknowledged that they were not aware
of the categories of each approach, but they recognized that soft skill development had been implemented at their universities. Educator 6C mentioned that despite students being unaware of the delivery options, they understood that a lot of activities had been conducted to develop their soft skills.

The three approaches outlined above (see Figure 1) are: formal activities of teaching and learning, parallel support programs and skills development through campus life, which support the development of soft skills. All of the respondents were involved in the embedded model of formal teaching and learning of soft skills, and 56% were also involved in the stand-alone model. In terms of the parallel programs, more than a half (64%) of respondents were involved in the academic focused approach, and more than a quarter (28%) in the non-academic focused approach. Forty-four percent of respondents were involved with campus life activities in residential colleges and 88% in on-campus activities.

Analysis of the data also revealed that educators perceived other soft skill development opportunities not tied to the university environment, such as family, community and the workplace, to be important factors.

**Balance between Subject-specific Knowledge and Skills, and Soft Skill Development**

Respondents were asked to assign a percentage to represent the emphasis they would place on ‘soft skills’ when compared to ‘subject-specific knowledge and skills’ in the embedded model of soft skill development. Responses ranged from 5% to 70%. The lowest response (5%) was received from Educator 22E, who teaches in the sociology field. This respondent believes educators have to allocate more time to the subject-specific knowledge and skills. The highest response (70%) was received from Educator 18A, who teaches in counselling/psychology. Respondents who teach in design technology (textile and fashion), marketing and statistics assigned an equal weighting to soft skills. There is evidence here that the emphasis on soft skills may vary by discipline as well as by educator beliefs.

**Perceptions of Teaching vs. Learning**

Respondents were asked whether or not soft skills should be taught or learned. Educators were briefed that ‘should be taught’ meant the initiative is centred on the educators; with ‘should be learned’ being centred on the students. Four subcategories relating to educator beliefs and personal expectation about soft skill development were identified (see Table 2). Sixty percent of respondents expressed the belief that soft skills should be both taught and learned with educators having joint responsibility with students for acquisition of these skills. Sixteen percent were of the view that soft skills should be learned rather than taught, placing responsibility on the student and 12% were of the opinion that soft skills should be taught rather than learned, thus making the educator responsible. A further 12% indicated soft skills should be assessed in order to be learned.
Table 2: Educator Beliefs about Responsibility for Soft Skill Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>The General Consensus of Respondents’ Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ‘Joint responsibility’      | Core element: Shared responsibility between educators and students  
How: Educators ‘teach’ (formal learning) and students ‘learn’ (formal, nonformal* and informal learning)  
Support: Formal, nonformal and informal learning  
**Interpretation of role:** learning should be initiated and controlled by both educators and students |
| ‘Student responsibility’     | Core element: Students observe and experience good practice, and will need to seek help  
How: Student ‘learn’ (nonformal and informal learning)  
Support: nonformal and informal learning (including incidental learning), parallel programs  
**Interpretation of role:** learning should be initiated and controlled by students |
| ‘Educator responsibility’   | Core element: Educators incorporate formal activities into teaching  
How: Educator ‘teach’ (formal learning) through activities  
Support: Formal learning  
**Interpretation of role:** learning initiated and controlled by educators |
| ‘Assessment driven’         | Core element: Evaluation of student skills (validity and reliability)  
How: Educators ‘assess’ through various assessment  
Support: assessment of formal and nonformal learning (including co-curricular activities)  
**Interpretation of role:** learning is driven by assessment system |

* In this paper, the term nonformal learning is an intermediate concept referring to HEI organised activities which may have learning objectives and are not usually the focus of formal discipline based curriculum.

‘Joint Responsibility’

Most respondents indicated that it is ideal to develop soft skills in students by finding a balance between teaching and learning. The educators justified their beliefs by highlighting the transition of responsibility from the educator to the student as the student becomes more proficient and gains higher level skills. The educators indicated that students came into university underprepared in basic skills, including communication skills, thus placing primary responsibility on tertiary educators. There was some indication that educators felt that students with low motivation ‘should be taught’ and students with high motivation would take on this responsibility for themselves.
Educators perceived responsibility should be shared between educators and students. Educators are responsible for ‘teaching’ through formal learning activities and students are responsible for their own ‘learning’ through formal, nonformal and informal activities.

This means both [should be taught and learned] are needed, the right balance should be there for students to have some guides but normally individual easily possess [soft skills] by...he or she experiences this by himself or herself which means it’s not someone teaches him or her but he or she obtains [soft skills] from the environment... (Educator 23E) ².

‘Student Responsibility’

Educators who expressed the belief that soft skills ‘should be learned’ also stressed that soft skills are continuously developed over time and are the responsibility of the student.

…it’s not like organising one workshop.... it’s a continuous process they [students] should have....internalised whatever that they have learned or acquired… (Educator 18A).

From this perspective, learning takes place through student observation and experience.

…you [students] learn from what you observe, it’s not us [educators] to teach them to perform... often these skills are obtained by an individual because of his or her experience … (Educator 1D) ³.

This student responsibility approach, according to these educators, needs a supportive environment to generate student efforts to learn, including role models. Educators themselves have to show a good example.

...the positive conducive environment where there are role models for them [students] to emulate…is part of developing a person...of people skills [ soft skills ]… (Educator 18A).

Educator responses indicated support for informal and incidental learning.

…To me it [soft skill development] is incidental, …it’s just like during teaching..., there are instances or incidents where we [educators] can highlight that’s a good way of answering...., we point out the signs [strengths] and weaknesses so that the students can see, ....it’s unplanned, it’s not like having learning outcomes… (Educator 18A).

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² Paraphrased from original Malay “Dia maksudnya kedua-duanya [harus diajar dan dipelajari] kena ada ya dia kena adalah balance di situ supaya pelajar tu ada guide tapi yang selalunya orang mudah untuk dapat [kemahiran insaniah] adalah......dia sendiri melalui dia sendiri maknanya bukan orang ajar dia tapi dia dapat [kemahiran insaniah] daripada environment…(Pengajar 23E)”.

³ Paraphrased from original Malay “…you [pelajar] pelajari sesuatu daripada apa you lihat, bukan kita yang nak mengajar macam ni...kadang-kadang benda ni dalam diri sendiri itu because daripada experience…(Pengajar 1D)”.

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‘Educator Responsibility’

The 12% of educators who indicated soft skills ‘should be taught’ indicated a belief that the primary and secondary school systems were not succeeding in preparing students to think for themselves. They perceived that students are not self-directed learners. ‘Directing’ the students to learn soft skills was seen as a way to increase development of these skills, as many students may not have the initiative to take up these activities outside of the classroom. Educators acknowledged there is an opportunity to ‘teach’ soft skills through targeted activities (learning by doing).

…it [soft skills] should be embedded but not in a glaring way because some students… if you ask them to read something... you are suppose to learn this they don’t want to learn but if you give [it to] them indirectly [through activities] then they will accept it... (Educator 3D).

‘Assessment Driven’

The remaining 12% of educators expressed the opinion that soft skills ‘should be assessed’ and viewed assessment as a medium which can drive learning.

...these [soft skills] have been integrated through activities... which means through practical activities... for example teamwork, we [educators] don’t mention ‘this is teamwork’... you give assignments and it’s part of... the way you assess... their soft skills... through activities... (Educator 6C).

...most of these assessments, in fact if they [students] are actively involved in the activities.... they will directly and indirectly acquire these soft skills... (Educator 11B).

According to educators, assessment will direct student effort in developing soft skills. Issues of validity and reliability must be addressed by those who are involved in assessment. Educators supported the assessment of soft skills in formal and nonformal learning, including assessment of co-curricular activities.

Educator perceptions are important elements when considering the delivery and assessment of soft skill development in students. Perceptions of teaching and learning are influenced by educator level of awareness of options, involvement in activities, and beliefs about responsibility.

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4 Paraphrased from original Malay “...ini dia benda [kemahiran insaniah] ni...ini benda tapi dia integrate through kita kata through activities...activities=makanya praktikal sebagai contoh saya kata teamwork, kita [pengajar] tak cakap ini teamwork, you bagi tugasan...you bagi tugasan dan nak menilai tugasan tu lah cara nak menilai tu...soft skills dia...melalui aktiviti... (Pengajar 6C)

5 Paraphrased from original Malay “...lebih kepada penilaian, sebenarnya kalau mereka [pelajar] banyak terlibat aktif dengan apa-apa sahaja persatuan dan aktiviti di peringkat universiti mereka akan secara langsung atau tidak langsung akan mendapat kemahiran insaniah ini... (Pengajar 11B)"
Discussion

This study has highlighted that educators are aware of soft skills delivery options. It was reported that some HEIs formally outlined this effort as a part of their strategic plans before the soft skills curriculum was introduced in 2006. A few educators were not aware of the categories of delivery suggested by the soft skills curriculum. Students, too, appeared to be unaware. Awareness of the categories is important in teaching and learning for both educators and students as this assists educators in shaping how they can contribute to soft skill development.

Although, all educators were involved in delivery of soft skills via the embedded model, more than half were also involved in parallel modes of delivery. The role of educators in teaching and learning soft skills is vital particularly when engaged in the embedded model. It is important, however, to consider the relative emphasis on subject-specific knowledge and skills, and the influence of educator perceptions on delivery, as there are implications for student outcomes when teaching in this mode.

Educators were aware of the importance of their role in developing students’ soft skills irrespective of their views as to where the responsibility lies. Four key approaches emerged from the interviews. The first group of educators acknowledged that both educators and students have an important role in developing soft skills. Accordingly, ‘educator’ and ‘student’ initiative were seen as important. This result echoes the findings of Abu, et al. (2008) who showed that educator initiative was a predictor of embedding soft skills in teaching and learning. This present study also shows that student initiative will play a role.

Virgona and Waterhouse (2004) describe the continuous development of soft skills in a range of contexts such as family, community and workplace. This is consistent with the views of those educators who believe that soft skill development is a student responsibility. Educators stressed the importance of learning soft skills through observation and experience, acknowledging that students have control over their own learning.

Role modelling and setting of good examples are key components in developing an institutional culture supportive of soft skill development. These have been identified by Smith and Comyn (2004) as informal processes in organisations. However, Julian (2004) stressed that educators who are good at delivering subject-specific knowledge and skills may not be the best role models for soft skill development. Educators in this study highlighted the need for a supportive environment, highlighting that other factors may also facilitate student learning. Creating the right institutional culture is an integral part of effective programs.

Some educators in this study believe soft skills are better learned by students informally and incidentally. In a theoretical framework exploring informal and incidental learning, Watkins and Marsick (1992) show that people learn through experiences outside the classroom. Planned and unplanned informal learning opportunities, such as self-directed learning, coaching and mentoring, highlight the role of educators as facilitators rather than traditional lecturers. Incidental learning is unplanned and is related to learning from mistakes and learning through interpersonal experiments. It is important therefore to explore how educators are able to capitalise on informal learning opportunities, and have the necessary skills to draw on the incidental learning of students for use in the classroom.

Those educators who believe soft skills are the responsibility of educators and expressed concern about the incapability of the schooling system to train students to manage their own learning, felt responsible for assisting the students to develop soft skills. They were also
aware that they possess the necessary capacity to get involved. These educators perceived
their role as central in teaching and learning soft skills. Virgona and Waterhouse (2004)
agree that the primary ‘method’ of soft skills acquisition is experiential learning activities.
Curtis (2004) argues that soft skills will be seen as less important if there is no assessment.
This is consistent with the view of a group of educators in this study. An assessment driven
approach demands a good system which pays attention to valid and reliable means of assess-
ment. The beliefs of educators influenced the emphasis they placed on the methods used to
develop soft skills.
The degree to which educators embed soft skills in their teaching is influenced by both
their personal expectations and discipline areas. This result was echoed in the *B Factor*
project outcomes, which showed that a combination of personal ideals and discipline had a
significant impact on the emphasis placed on the teaching and assessment of soft skills
(RMIT University, 2009).

**Study Implications**
The findings of this study have implications for policy development, educator training and
practice. These implications are important for policy makers at the government and institu-
tional levels, and for professional development and practice.

**Implications for Policy**
The study has shown that there are variations in views of teaching and learning soft skills.
Generally educators support government efforts in developing these skills. HEIs should ensure
that their strategic plans clearly emphasise the role of their tertiary institutions in soft skill
development and harness a culture that supports educators to effectively undertake their role,
a view that is supported by Yorks (2005). One way in which this support can be offered is
via training and recognition of individual educator’s beliefs about their responsibilities.

**Implications for Educator Training**
These findings suggest that the educators were aware of their role and issues related to soft
skill development. Training programs for educators need to be built within a framework
which recognises the contribution of the individuals’ perceptions and beliefs and embraces
these. Such training should not only focus on ‘how to’ develop soft skills but also on the
creation of a supportive learning environment which employs a combination of the three
approaches in the MOHE soft skills curriculum. The framework should be underpinned by
a focus on developing awareness amongst policy-makers, decision-makers and educators
about the various views on the delivery of soft skills and the responsibilities of educators.
It should incorporate strong emphasis on the development of institutional culture.

In conducting soft skills training for educators, HEIs must also consider educator discipline
areas, and the extent to which educators are able to assess soft skills. The *B Factor*
project suggested ability was a function of educator self-efficacy in assessing soft skills, a matter
which emerged in this study but is not canvassed in this paper (RMIT University, 2009).
**Implications for Practice**

The design of the soft skills curriculum should emphasise continuous development and experiential learning. In considering soft skill development as a continuous process, the effort should incorporate all three approaches and include avenues for informal and incidental learning. There is also a need to explore and share creative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning soft skills in a culture of collegiate sharing within and between HEIs.

Perceptions of teaching and learning may not equate to educator practice but a study of perceptions is important because they influence the way educators act and react to their surroundings (Pratt, 1992). This study looked at the way educator beliefs and expectations influenced their emphasis on the teaching and learning of soft skills and provided an insight into the development of soft skills within the Malaysian higher education system. These preliminary findings highlight matters for consideration in policy development, institutional practice and educator training. The key message from these findings is that the educator is a linchpin in the successful development of soft skills in HEIs. It is important, therefore, to recognise their role and acknowledge their perceptions and beliefs. Further exploration in this area is needed given the attention on soft skill development in higher education internationally.
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About the Authors

Wan Sofiah Meor Osman
Wan Sofiah Meor Osman is a lecturer in human resource development at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia. She holds a B.A (Hons) in public administration from Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia, and a Masters in labour relations and human resources from Cleveland State University, Ohio. Currently, she is pursuing her doctoral degree at Murdoch University, Australia. Her research interests include human capital development, human resources, and employment.

Dr. Antonia Girardi
Dr. Antonia Girardi is an associate professor in management at Murdoch University, Australia. She obtained her BCom (Hons) and PhD from the University of Western Australia, Australia. Her research interests lie in the areas of strategic HRM, job design, intellectual capital management, benefits and remuneration management, employer branding, and organisational change. Her work is published in national and international journals and has been presented at conferences in the U.S., Europe, and Australia.

Dr. Megan Paull
Dr. Megan Paull is a senior lecturer in management at Murdoch University, Australia. She is currently the associate dean of learning and teaching in the Murdoch Business School. Megan teaches in the areas of human resource management and organisational behaviour. A mainly qualitative researcher, her research interests are in the fields of volunteering, non-profits and organisational behaviour, including when behaviour is not so “good”.

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This knowledge community is brought together by a common concern for learning and an interest to explore new educational possibilities. The community interacts through an innovative, annual face-to-face conference, as well as year-round virtual relationships in a weblog, peer reviewed journal and book series—exploring the affordances of the new digital media. Members of this knowledge community include academics, teachers, administrators, policy makers and other education practitioners.

Conference
Members of the Learner Community meet at The International Conference on Learning, held annually in different locations around the world, each selected for the particular role education is playing in social, cultural and economic change. In recent years, the Conference has been held at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia in 1999; RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia in 2000; the University of Athens, Spetses, Greece in 2001; Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China in 2002; Institute of Education, London University, London, UK in 2003; Institute of Pedagogical Sciences, Havana, Cuba in 2004; University of Granada, Granada, Spain in 2005; Sam Sharpe Teachers College, Montego Bay, Jamaica in 2006; the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa in 2007; the University of Illinois, Chicago, USA in 2008; the University of Barcelona, Spain in 2009; Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong in 2010; and the University of Mauritius, Mauritius in 2011. In 2012, the Conference will be held at The Institute of Education, University of London, London, UK.

Our community members and first time attendees come from all corners of the globe. Intellectually, our interests span the breath of the field of education. The Conference is a site of critical reflection, both by leaders in the field and emerging scholars and teachers. Those unable to attend the Conference may opt for virtual participation in which community members can submit a video and/or slide presentation with voice-over, or simply submit a paper for peer review and possible publication in the Journal.

Online presentations can be viewed on YouTube.

Publishing
The Learner Community enables members to publish through three mediums. First, by participating in the Learning Conference, community members can enter a world of journal publication unlike the traditional academic publishing forums—a result of the responsive, non-hierarchical and constructive nature of the peer review process. The International Journal of Learning provides a framework for double-blind peer review, enabling authors to publish into an academic journal of the highest standard.

The second publication medium is through the book series The Learner, publishing cutting edge books on education in print and electronic formats. Publication proposals and manuscript submissions are welcome.

The third major publishing medium is our news blog, constantly publishing short news updates from the Learner Community, as well as major developments in the field of education. You can also join this conversation at Facebook and Twitter or subscribe to our email Newsletter.
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