ABSTRACT

This paper studies the relationship between communication skills, personality factors and performance in secondary school and academic success in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) programme in a Malaysian university. It was found that three specific skills: fluency, clarity and language use were modestly predictive of success over the first six semesters of the degree programme but that personality traits and general and educational knowledge were not. Performance on the Malaysian secondary school examination, especially in maths, also predicted academic success. It was also found that the qualities assessed at the interview were barely detectable by lecturers a little more than two years later although communicative skills were somewhat more so than the others. The findings suggest that when students are studying in the medium of a second language, communicative competence and prior academic achievement, possibly reflective of underlying general intelligence are important factors contributing to academic success.
Keywords: selection, university admission, communication skills, personality, intelligence

Introduction

This study investigates the relationship of communication skills, personality factors and academic achievement in secondary school to success in pre-degree and degree programs in the Education Faculty in an Asian university. The aim of this study is firstly to determine whether there was any relationship between the qualities assessed at an admission interview, that is communication skills and personality, and academic performance in university and secondly to determine whether these qualities remained stable as students entered the early part of the degree programme. The study also examined the contribution of academic performance in secondary school.

A very large literature has emerged in the last few years concerning the validity of various forms of selection for employment and admission to higher education courses and training programmes. This is an issue of great significance since almost everywhere admission to universities and colleges or employment of students by large companies and government agencies is crucial for economic success and social status. Moreover, selection for education and employment is often linked to conflict and competition between ethnic, racial and gender groups and is of great importance for the competitiveness of national economies.

The findings of the literature are fairly consistent. For employment, there is an abundance of evidence that the best single predictor of success or productivity in most occupations of moderate or high complexity is quite simply general mental ability or intelligence. (Gottfredson, 1997; Hulsheger, Maier & Stumpp, 2007; Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998, 2004). This is not by any means the only factor that contributes to success in employment since optimal predictive validity can be obtained by combining intelligence test scores with other measures such as integrity tests, structured interviews, validated personality tests or work samples. There are also highly specialized occupations such as modeling or entertainment that depend on what Adam Smith (1776:1/10/28) called “very agreeable and beautiful talents of which the possession commands a certain sort of admiration…” but have little connection with any sort of intelligence.
There is, however, considerable unease about the documented importance of intelligence in education and employment. A great deal of energy has been expended on attempts to demonstrate the existence and importance of different types of intelligence – multiple, creative, practical, social, emotional, spiritual – supposedly distinct from that measured by conventional tests of mental ability (Buzan, 2001; Gardner, 1983; Goleman, 1983, 2006; Sternberg, 1985). So far, emotional intelligence has not been shown to have very much validity or to differ appreciably from conventional intelligence or personality traits. (Antonakis, 2004; Jensen 1998; Newsome, Day & Catano, 2000; O’Connor & Little 2003; Stankov, 2000) while “spiritual quotient” or “spiritual intelligence” appears to measure little more than adherence to beliefs and practices that are specific to particular faiths or sects (see e.g. Amran & Dryer 2007; Jain & Purohit, 2006).

There has also been a lot of interest in the use of personality factors or other noncognitive characteristics to predict future success in employment or education. Usually, these are measured by performance at some sort of interview although sometimes they are assessed by a written test. For selection for employment and promotion, the evidence indicates that structured, standardized and validated interviews that assess job knowledge or a limited range of personality traits have a high degree of predictive validity. Unstructured interviews that attempt to assess personality traits usually have little especially if there is only one interviewer. A meta-analysis by Wiesner and Cronshaw (1988), for example, found that after correcting for restriction of range, the validity of structured interviews was very high at 0.64 while that of unstructured interviews was 0.20. Similar results are discussed by Robertson and Smith (2001).

With regard to academic selection, it seems that tests of attainment and knowledge are probably the best single predictor of future academic success, followed closely by tests of general intelligence or standardized tests such as the American SAT or GRE with which the former have a very high correlation (Geiser & Santelices, 2007). Arulampalam, Naylor & Smith (2004), for example, indicate that in the UK there is a close association between A-level results and retention in medical school. Similar results were found for undergraduate and postgraduate medical education as well as subsequent medical careers by McManus et al (2003). Five personality traits; openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism have been shown to have construct validity and to relate in varying degrees to academic performance, although to a
lesser extent overall than general mental ability. A review of the literature by O’Connor and Paunonen (2007) found that conscientiousness was often and openness to experience sometimes linked to academic success. Chowdhury (2006) has noted that openness and neuroticism are important predictors of success among marketing students. There is, however, little or no evidence that broadly defined characteristics such as character, leadership, honesty, ethical values, sensitivity, appearance, spirituality, commitment to “social justice” and so on can contribute anything to the prediction of academic performance. Such qualities are not easy to define let alone assess accurately, fairly and without racial, ethnic, gender, class or political bias.

There is some evidence that in professional education in fields such as law, medicine, dentistry and education, factors other than intelligence or prior academic success may have some influence, particularly on the practical or clinical components of degree or diploma courses, although the data is very mixed at this point. A meta-analysis by Goho and Blackman (2006) for instance, found a modest relationship between interview performance and clinical performance in health related professional education. Hughes (2002) has also reported studies that show that some noncognitive factors are predictive for some groups in some fields and that there is evidence that the clinical performance of medical students can be predicted by admission interviews. For example, interview performance and previous experience are better predictors of academic success in medical studies than exam scores for women and ethnic minorities in the US. There is also some evidence that while interviews do not predict relative academic performance among those who persist, they are able to identify future dropouts. Fagan and Squitiera (2002) have observed that achievement via independence, capacity for status, and psychological-mindedness were associate with early success in law school.

It could be argued though, and in fact often is, especially in Asian countries, that some personal qualities are desirable in themselves and that society values and perhaps needs graduates and public servants who are honest, confident, well groomed, loyal and sensitive as much as or more than it does those who are competent and intelligent. The question then arises whether noncognitive factors such as these should be considered as criteria for university entrance even if they have no effect on academic proficiency or even on success in practical course components. We need to ask whether such qualities can be defined, whether they can be objectively measured and whether they are
reasonably stable over a significant part of a career or an academic or professional course.

As already noted, there are several studies of the ability of noncognitive factors to predict success in employment and higher education. This study, however, is also concerned with another issue. While it examines the relationship between various noncognitive factors assessed at an interview and academic performance, it is also concerned with whether students who apparently display certain characteristics continue to display them after entering a pre-degree programme and embarking on a degree course. We are then interested in whether these qualities persist after a period of university study as well as in whether they contribute to academic or professional success. This study therefore looks at the relationship between these factors and academic success as measured by GPA and by persistence in the degree programme. We therefore investigated whether students who attended an interview and were assessed for the twelve qualities of understanding, articulateness, fluency, clarity, language use, knowledge of educational issues, knowledge of current affairs, leadership, sensitivity, motivation, politeness and confidence continue to display these qualities a little more than two years later.

This study investigates a very small fraction of a large group who perhaps deserve more attention than they have received in the literature, namely students who are studying or intending to study through the medium of a second language. The numbers of this group are increasing rapidly. For example, in Southeast Asia, tertiary science and professional education in Brunei, Singapore, the Philippines and Malaysia are now largely in English. It is possible then that the determinants of academic success in such places may depend substantially on written and spoken communication skills in what for many students is their second language as much as it does on academic aptitude.

**Methods**

In May 2003, applicants were interviewed for places in the pre-TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) programme in the Faculty of Education at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). This is one of the largest universities in the world and the largest in Malaysia. It is located in Shah Alam, the capital of the state of Selangor. The programme lasts for one year after which most students enter a four
year B Ed TESL programme that prepares them to become teachers of English in secondary schools or junior colleges. Although other institutions offer degree courses in TESL or equivalent, the pre-degree programme is unique in Malaysia. It attracts a fairly high number of applicants. The students were all bumiputeras (members of “indigenous” groups) and their first language was Malay or a related Austronesian language. The majority were Muslim and females.

They were first screened based on their SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia – Malaysian Certificate of Education, roughly equivalent to British GCSE and normally taken at the age of 17) results. They had to have 5 credits (grades 1-6) with a minimum of grade 3 in English. Shortly before being interviewed, they were given a brief test of reading comprehension and writing. Each candidate was interviewed for 10 to 15 minutes by a panel of two interviewers who were relatively senior lecturers in the faculty. A significant amount of the interviewers’ time was devoted to inspecting and verifying the documents provided by the candidates. Students were then interviewed and assessed according to the following characteristics and awarded a score out of ten for each: language skills compromising kefahaman (understanding), pernyataan (articulateness), perjelasan (clarity), perlancaran (fluency) and penggunaan (use of language), isu semasa (knowledge of current issues) and isu pendidikan (knowledge of educational issues) and personality including kesopanan (politeness), motivasi (motivation), kepekaan (sensitivity), keyakinan (confidence) and kepimpinan (leadership). Although the assessment forms were in Malay, the interviews were conducted entirely in English. The scores were weighted so that the reading and writing test had a value of thirty points, communication skills thirty, knowledge of educational and current issues twenty and personality twenty points. The interviewers were then required to add up the scores, including those for the reading and writing test, and assign a mark to the candidates. Seventy per cent was the mark for acceptance, 60 per cent meant “keep in view” and below 60 per cent meant rejection. Total interview scores were available for 41 applicants although in three cases, scores for specific criteria were not available. Forty of these had scored over seventy percent and one, a “keep in view”, a little over 60 percent. Data was not available for rejected candidates resulting in a marked restriction of range. Thirty-six students completed the pre-TESL programme and 27 were still present in the degree programme by the sixth semester in October, 2007.
The subsequent academic performance of students was assessed by Grade Point Average (GPA) for the first, third, fifth and sixth semesters of the degree programme and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) for the second (final) semester of the pre-degree programme and the sixth semester of the degree programme. By the latter semester, most students had completed their course work and only had the Teaching Practicum and Academic Exercise to complete. It was felt that performance on the latter two items required separate and detailed treatment in future papers.

In addition, in September 2005, after the accepted students had completed two semesters of the pre-TESL programme and were nearing the end of the first semester of the B Ed TESL programme, lecturers in the programme were asked to evaluate the same students according to the same criteria and using the same scoring system. In most cases, students were assessed by several lecturers and a mean score was therefore obtained. Only about half of the lecturers returned the forms, despite prompting, and one actually refused to have anything to do with the study. The purpose of this exercise was to determine whether students continue to demonstrate the qualities assessed during the interview after they had entered the TESL degree programme.

**Results**

**Interview Scores and Academic Performance in the Pre-degree Programme**

First of all, there is a slight positive but statistically insignificant association between the overall interview scores and academic success in the pre-TESL programme. The correlation between the weighted total interview score and cumulative grade point average (CGPA) for the two semesters was .216 (significance = .205; N = 36) If the reading and writing scores are excluded then the correlation is even lower at .161 (significance = .370; N = 33)

However, it is noticeable that communication skills, especially articulateness and clarity show a somewhat greater correlation with CGPA for the two semesters of the pre-TESL programme. This has been discussed in more detail in an earlier paper (Lee, Arif & Holmes, 2006) There was a modest correlation with CGPA for the pre-degree programme of .309 (significance = .080; N = 33) for articulateness and .322 (significance = .068; N = 33) for clarity. In these cases, the
level of significance is quite close to the conventional .05 level. The admission process therefore does have some value since it includes an assessment of those communication skills that appear to contribute, albeit modestly, to success in the pre-degree programme.

**Interview Scores and Academic Performance in the Degree programme**

The overall interview scores had very little relationship with performance in the degree programme as measured by GPA. Table 1 indicates that the correlation between the total weighted interview scores including the reading and writing test and GPA for the first semester of the degree programme was actually negative at -.154 (significance = .426; N = 29). However, by the third semester of the degree programme the interview scores showed a positive and significant correlation of .383 (significance = .040; N = 29) with GPA. In subsequent semesters, the correlation between interview scores and GPA returned to insignificance. In the fifth semester, it was .117 (significance = .562; N = 27) and in the sixth, .057 (significance = .781; N= 26). Over the three years from the first to the sixth semester of the degree programme, the correlation between Cumulative GPA and total weighted interview scores was .130 (significance = .517; N= 27). If the scores for the reading and writing test are excluded from the total for the interview, the correlation with CGPA is slightly higher at .203 (.320) but still small and statistically insignificant.

Table 1. Correlation between Total Interview Score and Grade Point Average in the B Ed TESL Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GPA Semester 1</th>
<th>GPA Semester 3</th>
<th>GPA Semester 5</th>
<th>GPA Semester 6</th>
<th>CGPA Semester 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>-.154</td>
<td>.383*</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.426</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.562</td>
<td>.781</td>
<td>.517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .05 level (2-tailed)
Communication skills in general are not apparently associated with academic success when students enter the first semester of the degree programme. While there are slight correlations between communication skills and pre-TESL grades, the correlations between these skills and GPA at the start of the degree programme are actually negative although still insignificant at -116 (significance = .563; N = 29). For semesters three, five and six, the correlation between communication skills and GPA was -.129 (significance = .521; N = 29), .069 (significance = .737; N = 27) and .091 (significance = .665; N = 26) respectively. For CGPA for the six semesters, it was .248 (significance = .221; N= 27).

However, a somewhat different picture emerges when we look at these communication skills one by one. In no case was there any very substantial or very significant correlation between these skills and semester GPA but there were correlations of .356 (significance = .074; N = 27), .327 (significance = .103; N = 27) and .351 (significance = .079; N = 27) between CGPA over six semesters and fluency, clarity and language use respectively. Combining the scores for these three elements produced a correlation of .363 (significance = .068; N= 27).

Thus, the total interview weighted score was unable to predict academic performance in the pre-degree programme or the degree programme. It was, however, moderately predictive of success in the third semester of the degree programme. Overall, the correlation between CGPA for the first six semesters of the degree programme and interview score was low and insignificant.

It was also noted that the correlation between the combined score for communication skills and GPA in all semesters and CGPA after six semesters was also low and negligibly significant in all semesters. What is interesting, however, is that three specific communication skills, fluency, clarity and language use, did correlate modestly with CGPA over six semesters of the degree programme and those significance levels were close to the .05 level.

The study also looked at the predictive validity of SPM scores. Looking at students for whom interview scores and SPM grades were available and who persisted until the sixth semester of the degree programme, it was found that the correlation between the aggregate of the best five SPM scores and CGPA for the six semesters of the degree programme was .540 (significance = .004; N = 26). The most predictive subject was maths, with a correlation of .460 (significance = .018; N= 26), followed by additional maths with a correlation of .412 (significance = .51; N = 23), English with a correlation of .344
(significance = .85; N= 26) and chemistry with a correlation of .328 (significance = .136; N = 22). For Bahasa Malaysia (Malay), history, Islamic education and biology, the correlations were all under .300 and all were statistically insignificant. The correlation between CGPA and SPM scores for physics was actually negative although not significant. Table 2 shows a significant relationship between aggregate SPM grades and GPA for semesters one, three and six. In semester five, the correlation is somewhat lower than for the other semesters.

Table 2. Correlation between Aggregate of Five Best SPM Scores and Grade Point Average in the B Ed TESL Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GPA Semester 1</th>
<th>GPA Semester 3</th>
<th>GPA Semester 5</th>
<th>GPA Semester 6</th>
<th>CGPA Semester 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>.432*</td>
<td>.418*</td>
<td>.345</td>
<td>.396*</td>
<td>.540**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .05 level (2-tailed)  
**Significant at .05 level (2-tailed)

The Persistence of Noncognitive Factors

It might, as we have said, be argued that it is a good thing to have students or teachers who are articulate, fluent, knowledgeable about educational and other issues, confident, sensitive, motivated and polite rather than students who are inarticulate, stuttering, ignorant, timid, coarse and demotivated even if the latter are brighter and get better GPAs and after they start teaching produce better exam results. The problem, though, is that the interviewers in this study seemed not only unable, under the then current procedures, to predict the academic success of candidates but also were unable to predict whether these qualities would persist even for a short period.

The results of the second part of the study are unequivocal. There is no significant relationship between the scores given at the interview and those given by lecturers a little more than two years later. The best correlations are for language use and fluency although they are still small and of slight significance while those for understanding (of
Table 3: Correlation of Interview Scores and Lecturers’ Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Significance (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulateness</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.460</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.605</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language use</td>
<td>.223</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current issues</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.626</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational issues</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.897</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>-.118</td>
<td>.519</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>.326</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>.147</td>
<td>.423</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.924</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.847</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

spoken English), leadership and knowledge of educational issues were actually negative although still insignificant.

Discussion

We can conclude, therefore, that there is very little or no relationship between the overall scores awarded at the interview and academic performance in the pre-degree programme. However, there is a very slight but insignificant relationship between articulateness and fluency and grades in the pre-TESL programme. This suggests that in this and similar contexts it might be worth investigating how to improve students’ communicative English and giving it greater emphasis in admission interviews. The effect of this would almost certainly be quite modest at best.

With regard to performance throughout the degree programme, the most predictive factor appears to be aggregate grades for SPM and grades for maths and additional maths. It should be noted that these students had completed their secondary education entirely, except for English language classes, in the medium of Malay and that very little in the secondary school maths syllabi, except perhaps for some elementary statistics, would be of direct relevance to any TESL course. It therefore seems likely that the reason for the high correlation is that secondary
school maths and science and the TESL degree programme both require a substantial amount of general mental ability to do well. In addition, it appears that over the whole of the first six semesters of the degree programme some spoken communication skills observed at the interview, namely clarity, fluency and language use, are quite important in contributing to academic performance. Whether this is because they have a direct input into assessment through presentations, discussions and so on or because they are reflective of an underlying factor or factors cannot be determined here.

The very limited predictive validity of this particular interview as a whole does not necessarily mean that it should be immediately discarded since it is not impossible that elements of it would predict performance on the teaching practicum. However, it is necessary to wait for results from further studies before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

It seems clear then that academic success in these programmes depends to some extent on two main factors. One is communicative competence assessed at the interview, more specifically fluency, clarity and language use, and the other is general mental ability as indicated by relatively high scores at SPM, especially for maths. The two appear to be independent since there is no substantial or significant correlation between the two.

If Asian universities, especially those that use English as the medium of instruction, are concerned with selecting a student body that will perform at a high level academically then the admission process might be modified to emphasize communicative competence, especially in English, and performance in maths, additional maths and related subjects. It might, however, be premature to do this before the results of the students’ teaching practicum are available since it is possible that some personality factors might be irrelevant to academic competence but could affect performance in the classroom.

Another question to be considered is that if the qualities assessed at the interview are valuable per se then we should seek to determine whether they remain apparent throughout the students’ academic and professional careers. This study provides no evidence they do to any substantial degree since lecturers’ perceptions two years later show little or no correlation with those of the admission interviewers. However, it is noticeable that of the qualities assessed at the interview certain communication skills were likely to show a limited discernible persistence after a little more than two years.
Selecting Future Teachers

It is also likely that the structure and format of the interview may well have mitigated against accurate assessment in several ways. First, as noted already, the interview was very short and the interviewers had to carry out a number of administrative tasks during the interview, such as checking exam results and records of co-curricular activities. They therefore had less than a minute to assess each of the twelve attributes and inevitably short cuts had to be taken. Thus, leadership was invariably measured by looking at the applicants’ secondary school records and awarding points for being a member of a club or society committee and a bit more for being a prefect. Since participation in co-curricular activities is compulsory in Malaysian secondary schools this criterion would appear to be close to meaningless. General knowledge was tested by asking one or two questions or sometimes estimating how the candidate would have answered if he or she had been asked any.

It was also observed by the authors of the present study, who were members of the interview panels, that interviewers sometimes used the general and educational knowledge section for other purposes. Thus it was common for interviewers to provide candidates with information about a political issue and ask them to respond. This was perhaps a good test of pragmatic competence but in no way did it test general knowledge. It was also noticeable that when students were asked to nominate a topic of current concern they almost invariably chose Palestine, Iraq or Afghanistan and usually displayed a negligible knowledge of the topic, sometimes failing to recognise that these were three different places. The interviewers, however, generally did not expect candidates to know any more than that there was a conflict in these places.

Another problem resulted from an observed strong and often irresistible tendency to adjust the various section scores to come up with a desired result. If, for example, a candidate had made a good impression on the interviewers and had received a score just below the acceptance score of 70 then often a few percentage points would be added to one of the component scores to reach the desired figures.

We cannot therefore conclude that the interview process per se is totally invalid until changes in the process are introduced. First, if analytical scoring is required, then the addition of the scores and the final decision should not be made by the interviewers. Secondly, the number of qualities needs to be reduced and some thought should be given to the possibility of written assessment. In particular, it would seem that testing general and educational knowledge could be done easily by a set of multiple choice questions. If leadership is operationalised as the holding of offices
in school clubs and societies then it could be easily checked by office or junior staff before the interview.

There is some evidence in the literature that the big five personality traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience are in varying degrees related to academic performance and career success. It might be worth considering whether these traits or some of them might be included in the admission process. An alternative approach might be to test personality separately using off the shelf tests while the interview deals with the assessment of communication skills

Only when such steps are taken could we come to a definite conclusion about whether desirable personality factors will persist throughout a student’s academic and professional career. At the moment, all we can say is that the admission process that has been in effect since 2003 does not predict the extent to which desirable characteristics are still retained two years later.

The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) has recently introduced a test battery, Malaysian Educators Selection Inventory (MEDSI) that assesses a number of personality traits (Joharry Othman, et al., 2008). All candidates for education courses are now required to take it. The battery is essentially a screening mechanism to keep out candidates who are manifestly unsuited for teaching. The qualities assessed include personality, career interest, integrity and emotional quotient. The personality component has subscales for the following items: Assertive, Analytical, Autonomous, Extrovert, Intellectual, Resistance, Self-Criticism, Leadership, Helping and Achievement. Some of the items appear to be similar to cognitive abilities (analytical) or personality traits (extrovert, helping) that have been demonstrated to have some degree of validity. It is, however, unfortunate that it contains a subscale for emotional quotient,

If MEDSI is demonstrated to have a high level of validity, which so far has not been done, then there would be an opportunity for the admission interview to focus largely on the assessment of communicative competence which has a modest and detectable degree of stability and which also contributes to overall academic success.
**Conclusion**

To conclude, the present study indicates that at the moment communicative skills are likely to be more indicative of academic success in a pre degree and degree programme for future English teachers than personality and other noncognitive factors and more likely to correlate with lecturers’ perceptions during the early years of the degree programme. It is possible therefore that the selection of future teachers in Malaysia and elsewhere and candidates for other courses conducted in English might be improved by putting more emphasis on spoken communication skills, by keeping analytical and holistic assessment distinct, by reducing the number of characteristics assessed, by paying more attention to grades in maths and science as a proxy for general intelligence and by assessing those personality characteristics that have been demonstrated to be predictive of career and academic success.

**Bibliography**


implications of 85 years of research findings. Psychological Bulletin, 124, 262-274.


