ABSTRACT

There is a growing of studies explore about trust in parent-child and staff-employer, however, there is paucity of researches explore in student- lecturer’s trust (Bogels, & Brechman-Toussaint, 2006; Arbona & Power, 2003). It is a rich area to understand the relationship between lecturer and student in terms of teaching, assignment, presentation, examination and these criteria effects to health and behaviour. As a result, the present study aimed to explore the trust formation towards lecture by using qualitative approach. Students were interviewed by using three open-ended questions and students were categorized in their field of studies, year of studies and gender. Findings revealed that there were five themes emerged for trust: 1) respect the title 2) experienced and knowledgeable 3) communication 4) competency 5) personal trait. Students were habitually respecting the title of lecturers as they are professional educators and having trust that lecturers can guide them. Besides that, students claimed lecturers are experienced and knowledgeable (Lecturers have gone through many experiences, the experiences can help me in my studies and life). On the other hand, some of the students did not trust lecturers as (The lecturer is new at the university, I hardly know him/her, There is no close relationship between me and my lecturer, only in class. I don’t know what he did behind me). As a result, the relationship between student- lecturer takes time to form trust and the building process is a long run process.

Keyword: Trust, university student, lecturer
INTRODUCTION

A mutual relationship for example, among parent-child, student-teacher, and staff-employer is a timely process. All parties need to put some efforts in order to have a healthy relationship. There are many research on trust but research on student-lecturer relationship are rare (Bogels, & Brechman-Toussaint, 2006; Arbona & Power, 2003).

At university, learning takes place in an exclusive context. Students and lecturer are together in a classroom for about 52 hours in a semester, that is, three hours a week. During this time, reciprocal relationship are developed and relational atmosphere in the lecture rooms is formed. Apart than that, students can meet their lecturers at their own time. Sense of trust can be experienced by students when the relationship is authentic, responsive, and physical and emotional safety (Raider-Roth, 2005). According to Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy (2001), when it relates to interpersonal relationships, trust is divided into six attributes in a teacher-students relationship i.e., vulnerability, benevolence in motivation, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. These attributes interact and impact each other to create trust (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Openness is the readiness to share information, honesty refers to the integrity of a person, whereas, reliable and competent enquire a period of time. Teachers and students relationship may also be influenced by previous experience.

Trust can be divided into three dimensions. According to Jefferies and Reed (2000), cognitive-based trust can develop relatively quickly as compared to rational component and emotional component. Cognitive-based trust is related to assessment made upon other person’s abilities and skills (MCAllister, 1995). Trust in the teacher-student relationship is cognitive-based where the student judge the teaching competence and reliability of their teacher. The rational component and emotional component of trust can influence performance, i.e. low level of affective trust will result in less sharing of information and less co-operation with others (Jefferies and Reed, 2000). Trust in the classroom is a effect of mutual relationship between teachers and students and an influencing the behaviour of both teachers and students. When a teacher show her/his trust towards her/his students by listening and attending to them, giving the students chance to express themselves, and designing conducive learning environment to further increase their academic success, the students will then begin to trust that their teacher will indulge them fairly and will help and guide them respectfully (Cothran and Ennis, 1997).

The degree to which students trust their teachers. Researchers have studied how students experience trust in the teacher-student relationship and how trust impacts the academic and social lives of the students and how trust affects the school culture. Trust in the teacher-student relationship is an important element in improving classroom climate (Byrk & Schneider, 1996; Raider-Roth, 2005). Trust in the teacher student relationship uniquely contributes to students’ school adjustment, engagement in school, and avoidance of problematic behaviors in school (Wentzel, 1991; Van Petegen, Aelterman, Van Keer, & Rosseel, 2006; Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008; Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowen, 1991).

Various researchers tried to conceptualised trust by suggesting important attributes for trust to exist. As research on trust developed, researchers tried to define trust, for example, Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) and Lewicki & Tomlinson (2003) define trust as the perception of the others as a competent, reliable, and caring person. Many researchers, such as Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998), find that honesty is as an element of trust. In the context of classroom, Bryk and Schneider (1996) find that trust consists of individual respect, mutual understanding, and expectations around behaviors.

Trust is then perceived depending on the context of the relationship and the judgement by people whom related to the relationship. In a teacher-student relationship, teachers and students judge each other on how well the others perform certain behaviors in the classroom. Students will judge their teachers for example, for being expert in the subject matter, caring, provide conducive learning
environment so that the learning process can happen. As a result, when the students expectations are met, trust may be expected to be perceived (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

**Significance of the Study**

Researches on the impact of teacher-student trust in secondary schools found that relationship with teachers is significant in influencing adolescents’ motivation and academic achievement (Wentzel, 1998; Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowen, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The importance of teacher-student trust needs to be emphasized in schools. Studies are needed to explore how teachers experience and express their levels of trust in their students. Researchers also need to explore how teachers’ levels of trust affect their decision-making processes regarding classroom behavioral management. In addition, studies are needed to examine how teachers’ levels of trust affect their choice of pedagogy in the classroom. Trust impacts teacher behaviors, student behaviors, and student academic achievement. Trust impacts the decisions that teachers make about classroom management and teaching methods.

During this time, relationships are developed and a relational atmosphere in the classroom is formed. The relational tenor of the classroom is read and responded to by students and teachers. Schools are, therefore, places where “children and adolescents learn to reach beyond early conceptualizations of family trust to initiate trusting relationships with classmates and teachers” (Ennis & McCauley, 2002, p. 15)

**Methodology**

This study used qualitative design for the researchers to analyse an issue. In the study, the researchers provide open-ended questions for the participants to express their thought on issues investigated. The researchers select participants based on criterias set by the researchers. In this case study, the criteria were their field of studies, year of studies and gender.

**Data Collection and Data Analysis**

The researchers developed a set of open-ended question that act as an interview protocol. According to Yin (1996), the use of interview protocol can increase the validity of the study. The protocol has three open-ended questions related to trust ie Why do you trust your lecturer?, Why don’t you trust your lecturer?. The researchers took about three months to collect all the response from the participants from six faculties at the university. In open ended questions, the participants were given opportunities to provide wide range of answers on the issue. It may include answers which the researchers may have not predicted.

Obviously, these are the spirit to qualitative interviewing, but are used in quantitative research to give more in-depth understanding and new insight. However, open-ended questions were time consuming and difficult to analyse. The researchers typed all the responses and the responses were read many times to get general themes that may emerged from the data. The data were coded and categorised and were put into few sub-headings. Once completed the researchers used coding and categories to investigate themes pertaining trust. For analysis purposes, the responds were also quantified where each categories / ideas that was mentioned were counted.

**Results**

Frequency count on the unit analysis coded at each theme show that, six theme emerged for trust. The five themes for trust were 1) respect the title 2) experienced and knowlegeable 3) communication 4) competency 5) personal trait.
The data show that ‘respect the title’ was the most prominent theme that contributed to the development of trust between students and lecturers. The participants describe ‘respect the title’ as a) they are my lecturer / teacher, b) they teach and guide me c) they are professionals. The participants suggested that they believe their lecturers because of the title (I trust my lecturers because they are lecturers). This is agreed by both the male and female students. Lecturers were trusted by their students because the lecturers taught and guided them (They teach and guide me, I must trust them). In addition, the students believe that lecturing is a professional job (I trust my lecturers because they are professionals).

However, few male students emphasised that in order for lecturers to be trusted, lecturers need to guide and not mislead students (Lecturers role is to guide me not to mislead me). In addition, the female students mentioned lecturers should be trusted in order for the learning process occurred (Lecturers should be trusted so that learning can occur).

Another theme that clearly emerged from the data was ‘experienced and knowledgeable’. The participants agreed that ‘experienced and knowledgeable’ lecturers was important factor in students-lecturer relationship. These two essential elements contribute to level of trust. Several participants suggested that lecturers had more experience than them, then only they trust their lecturers (because they have more experience than me). In addition, the participants believed that the lecturer’s experiences were important as guide and help for them (Lecturers have gone through many experiences, the experiences can help me in my studies and life).

The participants believed that their lecturers were more knowledgeable than them and the lecturers had the highest achievement in academic (my lecturers have the highest achievement and knowledge in their fields). The participants also believed that their lecturers were the main source of knowledge (My lecturers are the source of knowledge). In addition, several participants suggested that their lecturers had done many researches which make them trust their lecturers (My lecturers have done many researches). In short, lecturers were always seen as experienced and knowledgeable persons which deserve students’ trust.

As suggested by several participants, that the more and the longer time they know the lecturer then they will trust their lecturer. In other words, they don’t trust their lecturer because they hardly know the lecturer (The lecturer is new at the university, I hardly know him/her, There is no close relationship between me and my lecturer, only in class. I don’t know what he did behind me).

The next theme emerged was competency. The students suggested that they trust lecturers who are competent in teaching, credible, and seldom doing mistakes in terms of teaching contents. In their opinion, lecturers should be competent person with least mistakes (I don’t trust my lecturer because sometimes he gives me wrong information, the lecturer’s teaching style is scary, some of the lecturers have limited knowledge and they are not qualified).

The last theme is personal trait. This theme can be divided into five sub-categories i.e. a) telling lies, b) not committed, c) not fair / emotional d) always breaking promise e) hardly discuss. The students claimed that their lecturer tell lies (The lecturers are not honest, some of my lecturers tell lies). Lecturers who are not commit to their jobs will gain less trust from their students (The lecturers less care towards their students, the lecturer give minimal attention to their students). The students also complained that some of their lecturers were biased especially when it comes to giving marks to the students (Sometimes lecturers can be biased, some lecturers have close relationship only with certain students, some of the lecturers are not fair). Lecturers are trusted when they kept their kept their promises (The lecturers do not kept their promise, they only prioritise themselves). Some students need their lecturers to discuss their problems including personal problems. When this does not happen, it will cause the students to be disappointed and do not trust the lecturer (I hardly can discuss with my lecturers, especially personal problems).
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Data from the study showed five crucial elements needed to develop trust between students and their lecturers. The elements are 1) respect the title 2) experienced and knowledgeable 3) communication 4) competency 5) personal trait. These findings partially supported Erickson’s (1950) concept of basic trust. When both caregivers and care seekers respond, and understand each other’s needs, share information will benefit the others, trust will develop. In this view Gutman (1992) suggested that ‘trust is an individual’s characteristic belief that one can rely on other’s sincerity, benevolence, or truthfulness of others (p.989). However, this study also shows that respect, one of the most significant relationship building element in Asian culture, is a significant element in increasing the quality of student-lecturer trust. The only impediments, is the respect mentioned has a one way direction. The students were expected to respect their lecturers, but not vice versa. They had to earn their lecturers’ respect by being obedience.

Two other new elements emerged as contributing factors to the development of trust are respect the title and experienced and knowledgeable. The researchers see this in relation to the cultural milieu of Asian people. Students have high expectation of their lecturers, for example, they trust their lecturers because of the title being a lecturer. They also trust their lecturers because the lecturers are experienced person and knowledgeable if compared to them, and being a role model for them.

Another element, personal trait, have to do with the concept of elderly that govern Asian culture. Lecturers are expected to be perfect, almost taking the role of their parents. Lecturers have to be matured persons, committed and fair. Trust between lecturers and students develop partly when the students have limited time together in discussing problems and academic matters. These findings supported Jefferies and Reed (2000) notion regarding low level of trust will result in less sharing of information and less co-operation with others. Students-lecturer relationship is not built overnight, and the building process is never easy. It takes both parties to trust and communicate the building process especially when both parties do not have any blood relationship and seldom together.

REFERENCES


