

Student Retention, Workplace Passion And The Role Of Emotional Intelligence In The Higher Education Sector.

Dr Phillip Walden Bowen

Abstract: Student retention and success remains an issue of interest across the globe as it can impact upon experience and outcomes in higher education as well as life opportunities. Students have to cope with family pressure at the same time as having to face challenges of studying at university and possibly living away from home. While this article focuses upon the higher educational sector in England, student retention and success are identified as issues of concern across the globe. If change is to meet with student experience there needs to be active engagement in social learning that is integrated into the culture within higher education. This includes the valuing of people. It is a key to unlocking the door of workplace passion that, when shared, can spread throughout the organization. In the context of this article, the passionate workplace passion is associated with the term harmonious passion. If passion already exists, followers do not need to be pushed as it is an intrinsic factor that helps drive a person. Organizations, therefore, need to create and develop the passionate workplace that inspires purpose, engaging people, cognitively, emotionally and physically, in their work. This can include developing skills in emotional intelligence, an important factor in social and personal interactions. Findings suggest that developing skills in emotional intelligence, one instrument in the tool box of life, can help improve levels of student retention, active engagement, social interaction, achievement and satisfaction. Recommendations are made that include student training and development, associated with emotional intelligence, being embedded into each program. This could also extend to all members of staff to help themselves and to help support students, that in turn may help reduce level of student dropout.

Keywords— Emotions, emotional intelligence, higher education, multiple intelligences, passion, passion killers, passionate workplace, pathocratic influence, student dropout, student retention, university, workplace passion.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a study of over 1,000 university students, 70% consider dropping out of their course (Hanna, 2023). Reasons provided include living costs (40%) and adjusting to increased cost of living (69%) (Hanna, 2023). However, there may be a combination of reasons for student dropout (Jones, 2008). Dixon (2023) points out that students who are in full time higher education in England, who begin their studies in the academic year commencing October 2023, are expected to borrow in excess of £42,000. In addition, there is a significant, real terms, cut in the maintenance loan since the academic year of 2020-2021 as it does not take account of the full increase in inflation brought on by the war in Ukraine and the Covid- 19 pandemic (Dixon, 2023). As students struggle with coping with the increased cost of living, dropout rates could rise further (Fox, 2023).

Furthermore, the student dropout rate is also costing the university sector more than ever before (ANS, 2022). HESA (2021a), report that 82.1% full-time students complete their first degree while remaining with the same provider while 9.4% leave without an award. This is exacerbated by the number of international students from the European Union dropping by 50% since Brexit; falling to the lowest level since reorganization of higher education in 1994 (ANS, 2022; Bolton, Lewis, and Gower, 2023). Since 2016/17, the percentages are down from Romania (70%), Poland (66%), Greece (66%), Cyprus (58%), Germany (52%) and Italy (51%). In the academic year 2021-22, the International student recruitment data (2023) shows 679,970 international students studying in the UK of which 120,140 are from the European

Union. However, since, 2011/12 there has been a percentage increase from other countries (for example, China, India and Nigeria). Bolton, Lewis, and Gower (2023) comment that to the year 2021-22 a new record is recorded, where 24% of the student population is made up of overseas students. However, this figure drops to 486,107 students in the year ending September 2023 (International student recruitment data, 2023). Bolton, Lewis, and Gower (2023) add that in 2019, the UK dropped to be the third most popular destination for overseas students after the USA (1st) and Australia (2nd). There is also increasing competition from other English-speaking countries such as Canada and New Zealand as well as universities in the European Union providing courses in English (Bolton, Lewis, and Gower, 2023).

To add to the challenges experienced in higher education sector in England, as the responsibility of financing study in higher education is placed with the student, understanding the reasons for student engagement and retention has moved from being the student's responsibility to the higher education organization (Tight, 2018).

Successive Governments continue to make efforts to incentivize the university sector in England that include financial rewards for those students who complete their course as well as seeking ways of improving social mobility of disadvantaged students (Dougherty and Callender, 2018). Whereas studies are regularly carried out on the topic of student retention dropout levels remain stubbornly high (for example: Aina, Baici, Casalone and Pastore, 2022; Bradley and Migali, 2019; Crosling, Heagney and Thomas, 2009; Kahu and Nelson, 2018; Kehm, Larsen and Sommersel, 2019; Perchinunno, Bilancia and Vitale, 2019).

It is, therefore, important that universities recognize and adapt policies and strategies to address the challenges associated with attracting students to study in the UK and to avoid student dropout during their study. This may require the support of the UK Government in building and developing tailored legislation and policies to support UK universities when faced with global competition

While this article focuses upon the higher educational sector in England, student retention and success are identified as issues of concern across the globe that can impact upon the life opportunities (Crosling, Heagney and Thomas, 2009). Therefore, it may be possible to make fuzzy generalizations with respect to other academic establishments, within the UK, and to those in other countries (Bassey, 1999, 2001; Bowen, 2021).

2. STUDENT RETENTION, ACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND WORKPLACE PASSION

2.1 Student retention

Retention is where a student remains in one higher education organization and completes their course of study (AdvanceHE, nd). It can be compared to the marketing term loyalty (Haverila, Haverila and McLaughlin, 2020). Berge and Huang (2004) add that retention is the continued student participation in a learning event (course, program, organization or system from start to completion. There also appears to be a clear relationship between retention, attainment, access and progression (Austen, Hodgson, Heaton, Pickering, Dickinson, et al, 2021). This includes student success; the recognition of benefits student's experience, that include progression into work and/ or a career, further learning, and personal development (AdvanceHE, nd).

In comparison, student dropout is associated with someone who never receives a degree from higher educational organization (Spady, 1970). Spady (1970) adds that an alternative definition to dropout is where the student simply leaves the higher educational organization. Spady (1970) suggests two reasons (academic and social) for dropout. Jones, (2008) adds that reasons student's dropout include: weak program/ organizational match, unsatisfactory experience in the academic environment, poor preparation for studying in higher education, lack of social integration, financial concerns, lack of commitment and personal/ family reasons. It is apparent that the reasons for dropout from a program of studies are wide and varied and may not be for a single reason (Crosling, Heagney and Thomas, 2009; Jones, 2008; Martinez and Munday, 1998; Nieuwoudt and Pedler, 2023; Williams and Roberts, 2023).

Martinez and Munday (1998) undertake a study of 9,000 students in 31 inner city colleges of further education in the UK. Their findings show that students who are most likely to dropout include the following:

- Students feel they are in an inappropriate course;

- Challenges making friends and/ or settling into their course;
- When compared with their peers students are less satisfied with the quality of teaching and/ or
- Experience financial difficulties.

In a study of 578 university students, reasons for dropout include financial strain, time management, work commitments, family commitments, expected study load (Nieuwoudt and Pedler, 2023). Nieuwoudt and Pedler (2023) also find that reasons for staying at university include student's commitment to achieving career and personal goals and social support.

It may be that students find it challenging to transition into the higher education environment due to feelings of awkwardness preventing them from fully integrating into student life (Williams and Roberts, 2023).

82.1% full-time students complete their first degree while remaining with the same provider while 9.4% leave without an award (HESA, 2022a). The HESA (2022a) report that, in data from 179 UK higher education providers, in the year 1st August 2019 to 31st July 2020, 5.3% of full-time UK domiciled, first degree, young entrants, did not continue beyond their first year of study. This equates to a total of 329,315 full time entrants with 17,415 no longer in higher education (HESA, 2022b). This is a drop of 1.4% from the previous year. The HESA (2022a) state that this is the lowest dropout rate they have observed. However, the data includes the first five months of the Covid pandemic. To provide a clearer picture, the HESA (2022a) add that the dropout rate for the previous five years was between 6.5% and 6.8%. When universities are compared, this ranges between 0% and 30%. For mature students the dropout rate is 11.9% in the year 1st August 2019 to 31st July 2020. This is a drop from 13.5% in the previous year.

In the year August 2022 to August 2023, the Times Higher Education (2023) report that data from the Students Loan Company show the number of U.K. students who dropout from their course has risen 5%, from the previous year, to 41,914 and this equates to 1 student in every 37 (Jack, 2023).

Notwithstanding the term, student retention, withdrawal, dropout, lack of success remains a concern.

Changes in the use of technology and delivery of programs and modules are allowing greater flexibility in the student learning experience. However, this may lead to a more passive and impersonal learning environment where there is less interaction between the student and lecturer (Altbach, 1997; Astin, 1993). It is, therefore, helpful to consider developing an active learning environment in which students feel included.

2.2 Active learning environment

There has been a move to greater use of lecture-based teaching from early in the twentieth century creating a

massified system in an increasing international competitive market, together with fewer resources (Altbach, 1997; Crosling, Heagney and Thomas, 2009; Maringe and Sing, 2014).

As explained by Crosling, Heagney and Thomas (2009), it is important to recognize the dynamic interplay between quality of learning, the learning and teaching context, student engagement, and the teaching and learning context. This includes engaging students, providing probing and well-formed questions so as to promote knowledge transfer and critical thinking, while fostering a student-centered concept of teaching compared to one that is teacher centered (Annansingh, 2019; Bryson and Hand, 2007). It is creating an active learning environment, recognizing that student engage across a continuum within which the student may experience different degrees of engagement.

To improve student engagement, students need to feel included and experience a positive influence (Dwyer, 2017). Furthermore, the teacher needs to be supported accordingly (Bryson and Hand, 2007). This can help develop an active learning environment. This is supported by Smith and Cardaciotto (2011) who suggest that an active learning environment experience can help improve levels of retention of material. This may include the use of online virtual learning environment (VLE) which in turn can provide flexibility and may help improve independent learning, student interest, motivation and involvement (Petare, Shamim, Gupta, Verma and Singh, 2023).

Active learning should include collaborative peer working that in turn creates a learning community that can have a positive impact on retention for all students regardless of their academic ability, gender or race (Loes, An, Saichale, and Pascarella, 2017). This is supported by Bowen, Rajasinghe, Evans, Rose and Pilkington (2018) who suggest that in a study of 75 academics (lecturers, tutors, instructors and researchers) at a university in the UK, active engagement in social learning can be embedded into student experience within higher education. The aforementioned can help encourage student integration into the learning environment where there is a feeling of belonging (Smith and Van Aken, 2020; Strayhorn, 2018). Developing an active learning environment may, therefore, help reduce the level of student dropout.

Students have to cope with family pressure at the same time as having to face challenges of studying at university and possibly living away from home. If change is to meet with student experience there needs to be active engagement in social learning that is integrated into the culture within higher education (Bowen, Rajasinghe, Evans, Rose and Pilkington, 2018).

Where required, academics and professional services staff could be given financial/ time resourcing focused on student support allowing for greater engagement with students who are absent and to get to know students better (Bowen, Rajasinghe, Evans, Rose and Pilkington, 2018). This could help provide

the student with greater social and inter/ intra personal skills with others, that include university staff and peers (Bowen, Rajasinghe, Evans, Rose and Pilkington, 2018; Tinto, 1993).

Intra and interpersonal skills include developing skills in emotional intelligence; understanding one's own emotions, emotions in others and managing emotions effectively (Goleman, 1996, 1998, 2000). The role of emotional intelligence is, therefore, identified as an important factor in social and personal interactions that can play a role in improving student retention.

2.3 Emotional intelligence

In the first instance it is helpful to understand the term multiple intelligences and its relationship with emotional intelligence. In his book "*Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*", Gardner (1983) puts forward the idea of multiple intelligences that include: logical/ mathematical, linguistic/ language, visual/spatial/ sport, musical, kinesthetic/ bodily, naturalistic and interpersonal/ intrapersonal relationships. However, multiple intelligences, identified by Gardner, may not exist. As pointed out by Waterhouse (2023), there does not appear to be evidence to show intelligences as being independent of each other and, in 40 years of neurological study, it appears that the brain is not separated into specific forms of cognition. This is supported by McGreal (2013) who states that of the few studies that have been carried out, there does not appear to be evidence to support the view that there are multi-intelligences that operate separately from one another. Therefore, Gardner's theory of multi-intelligences could simply be described as a neuromyth that continues to be widely taught in classrooms (Waterhouse, 2023). However, in a review of 318 neuroscience reports, Shearer and Karanian (2017) conclude that there is evidence to suggest that there is distinct, clear, and aligned neural coherence between each intelligence identified by Gardner.

People may experience the world in different ways, that include different social and emotional reactions and feelings (Shearer, 2018; Shearer and Karanian, 2017). Interpersonal/ intrapersonal intelligence, as identified by Gardner (1983, 1999), is associated with understanding one's own feelings (Bay and Lim, 2006). As explained by Goleman (1996) emotional intelligence is associated with understanding one's own emotions, emotions in others and managing them accordingly. Goleman (1998) identifies five dimensions of emotional intelligence: 1) self-awareness; 2) self-regulation; 3) motivation; 4) empathy and 5) social skills. Later, he amends the model and subsumes motivation into the other four dimensions: 1) self-awareness, 2) self-management, 3) social awareness and 4) social skills (Goleman, 2000). There does, however, appear to be a lack of universal acceptance of the term, emotional intelligence, and this gives rise to inconsistency and findings that are contradictory (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe and Bakker, 2010). There are also different tools/ approaches to measure emotional intelligence (Bowen, 2021). For example:

- The ability model (Mayer and Salovey, 1990, 1997),
- The mixed model (Bar-On, 1997, 2002; Goleman, 1996, 1998), and
- The trait model (Petrides, 2009; Petrides and Furnham, 2000, 2001, 2003).

The theories and models associated with emotional intelligence suggest that it may be associated with such areas as biology, cognition, non-cognition (patterns of feelings, behaviour and thought), competency, ability and personality (Bowen, 2019, 2021). Indeed, it could be made up of all the aforementioned and maybe more. However, studies undertaken do suggest that each model and theory demonstrate internal validity, and construct, and when applied, show a relationship between emotional intelligence, personality and well-being (for example: Bar-On, 1997, 2002, 2005a, b, 2006; Bowen, 2019, 2021; Bowen, Rose and Pilkington, 2017, 2018; Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee, 2000; Mayer and Salovey, 1993, 1997; Petrides, 2009, 2010, 2011; Petrides and Furnham, 2000, 2001, 2003; Petrides, Perez-Gonzales and Furnham, 2007; Petrides, Pita and Kokkinaki, 2007). Furnham (2016) adds that emotional intelligence is a distinct concept and it cannot be as simple as rebranding the term personality.

Notwithstanding the research undertaken, there continues to be a lack of consensus as to the definition and approach to the measurement of emotional intelligence (Bowen, 2019, 2021). Furthermore, correlation between the different models of emotional intelligence appears to be weak; findings appear contradictory and inconsistent; and many of the studies carried out in a theoretical vacuum (Perez, Petrides and Furnham, 2005). There, therefore, needs to be a clear distinction between each approach (Brannick, Wahi, Arce, Johnson, Nazian, et al, 2009). However, a substantial number of studies has been undertaken on the ability, mixed and trait emotional intelligence models and findings suggest that emotional intelligence does exist (for example: Bowen 2019; Bowen, Rose and Pilkington, 2017, 2018; Goleman, 1996, 1998; Mayer and Salovey, 1993, 1997; Salovey, Brackett and Mayer, 2004; Salovey and Mayer, 1990).

Like multiple intelligences, emotional intelligence could be a popular fad and a neuromyth that is too complex to gain a consensual definition and agreed means of measurement (Bowen, 2021). Whereas there does not appear to be a consensus as to the definition and measurement emotional intelligence, studies have been undertaken throughout the world using different tools and measurement techniques. These studies suggest that different types of intelligence can be defined and measured and this includes emotional intelligence. It is on this basis that emotional intelligence is considered to be a distinct intelligence and could be added to those intelligences as identified by Gardner.

In a study undertaken by Dryden and Vos (1994), findings suggest that emotional intelligence skills, associated with the domains of personal confidence and self-esteem, are essential

to all learning. They add that if the education sector fails to address personal and emotional domains, they may also fail in its other tasks (Dryden and Vos, 1994).

Schutte and Malouff (2002) find that students who complete a transition course that includes communication, critical thinking and emotional skills showed greater understanding to regulate and harness their emotions when compared to those students who did not undertake the course. They add that student retention rate was significantly higher for those who had undertaken sections of the course associated with emotional skills.

In a study of 300 upper primary school students Bay and Lim (2006) identify a correlation between emotional intelligence and multiple intelligence. They also find a correlation between student dropout and emotional competencies (Bay and Lim, 2006). In a study of 1270 young adults, undertaken by Parker, Hogan, Eastabrook, Oke and Wood (2006), results show that students who withdrew showed lower ranges of emotional and social competencies when compared to those who persisted in their program.

Nasir and Masrur (2010) undertake a study of 132 students at a university in Pakistan. They find that there is a significant correlation between academic achievement and emotional intelligence. However, there was little or no correlation found between emotional intelligence, age and gender. In a study of 253 undergraduate and graduate students, Thomas and Allen (2020) find that emotional intelligence has a significant effect on the student's emotional and behavioral engagement as well as emotional disaffection.

In a study of 480 college students at a private university in Kuwait, Halimi, AlShammari and Navarro (2021) find that academic success is strongly associated with the use of emotions and emotion appraisal. In a study of 560 first year students in Hong Kong, Zhoc, King, Chung and Chen (2020) find that emotional intelligence is a positive predictor of student engagement and that it promoted key learning outcomes as well as student satisfaction. In a further study, undertaken by Tang and He (2023), findings, from a sample of 366 college students in China, show that emotional intelligence correlates positively with social support together with student self-efficacy and learning motivation. Tang and He (2023) also recommend student intervention to help them develop emotional intelligence. Thomas and Allen (2020) also support student intervention to help the student enhance emotional intelligence so as to increase the learner engagement, coping ability and overall academic success. This is supported by Maguire, Egan, Hyland and Maguire (2017) who also recommend intervention to help increase the level of student emotional intelligence to improve engagement and performance.

It is important to note that not all findings agree with the above. For example, Gorgens-Ekermans, Delpont and Du Preez (2015) find that, in a study of 114 first year students, there is limited empirical data to support the impact of

increased levels of emotional intelligence on student success. However, they do add that emotional intelligence could be malleable and further research is necessary.

Notwithstanding the differences in findings from studies, there does appear to be wide acknowledgement that providing students with greater skills in emotional intelligence can play a key role student experience at all levels of education (for example, Allen, MacCann, Matthews and Roberts, 2014). This can be extended to include the tutor and/ or the support staff. This is supported by Lillis (2011) who find that student mentors who have higher emotional intelligence are more likely to identify student attrition. However, they also find that there is no direct correlation with student gender, nationality, age and school system.

Findings suggest that developing skills in emotional intelligence at all levels of student education can help improve levels of retention, active engagement, social interaction, achievement and satisfaction. Notwithstanding gender, age, background or nationality, active engagement in social learning as discussed by Bowen, Rajasinghe, Evans, Rose and Pilkington (2018) could include student training and development in greater skills associated with emotional intelligence that could be embedded into each program. Training and development of emotional intelligence could also extend to all members of staff to help themselves and to help support students. This could also help with developing a passionate workplace, one in which stakeholders feel valued.

Valuing people is key to unlocking the door of the passionate workplace (Bowen, 2021). Workplace passion is therefore an important factor to consider in helping to improve levels of retention.

2.4 The passionate workplace

The term passion is often associated with passionate love that may include sexual desire, lust, personal attraction and romance (Baumeister and Bratslavsky, 1999; Bowen, 2020, 2021; Gargett, 2004; Shrivastava, 2010). The reason for this may be because, in Western culture, emotions have been dismissed as irrational from the time of Aristotle (Solomon, 1993). This is exemplified by Hergenbahn (2009) who point out that passion can engage negative emotions that in turn may contaminate thought and/ or interfere with clear thinking. It can result in a person losing control of emotion and cognition (Wong, 2006).

If a person is not in control, passion can be described as bad (obsessive). Obsessive passion has negative links with well-being that includes burnout where people may feel compelled to search for life's purpose (for example, Bowen 2020, 2021, 2023; Carpentier, Mageau and Vallerand, 2012; Yukhymenko-Lescroart and Sharma, 2019; Slemp, Zhao, Hou and Vallerand, 2020; Vallerand, 2012). It is also associated with conflict and risky behavior that can impact upon life's activities (Akehurst and Oliver, 2014; Goodwin and Goodwin, 2017; Vallerand, 2012). Breeden (2013) adds that obsessive passion is where a person engages in an activity because they

have to. Therefore, the term passion is associated with negative emotions and should be suppressed (Bowen, 2021; Wong, 2006). This may help explain why Western philosophy has such strong underpinning influences that reinforce the rationalization of emotions within social values and the stereotyping of genders (Fineman, 2003).

However, it is acknowledged that not all passion is bad (Ho and Pollack, 2014). It can be divided into a dualist point of view of harmonious passion and obsessive passion (for example, Bowen, 2020; Choi, Permpongaree, Kim, Choi and Sohn, 2020; Fisher, Merlot and Johnson, 2018; Forest, Mageau, Sarrazin and Morin, 2010; Rosa and Vienello, 2020; Vallerand, 2010; Vallerand, 2012; Vallerand, Blanchard, Mageau, Koestner, Ratelle, et al, 2003; Vallerand and Houliort, 2003). Rather than considering passion from a dualist viewpoint, passion may lie on a continuum that are situationally and context dependent (Bowen, 2020, 2021, 2023; Gillet, Vallerand, Schellenberg, Bonnaventure, Becker, et al, 2022). At one end of the continuum lies harmonious passion. At the other end lies obsessive passion.

Harmonious passion can be described as being voluntary but is not an overpowering urge to engage in higher job creation (Patel, Thorgren and Wincent, 2015). It is associated, positively, with mental health and increased performance (for example, Bowen, 2020, 2021, 2023; Ho, Wong and Lee, 2010; Patel, Thorgren and Wincent, 2015; Suchy, 2007; Vallerand, 2010; Vallerand, 2012; Vallerand, Blanchard, Mageau, Koestner, Ratelle, et al, 2003; Vallerand and Houliort, 2003).

Thus, when harmonious emotions are used to generate positive feelings, they can enhance the behaviour that is associated with a healthy work/ life balance and a high performing environment in which people feel valued and experience rich intrinsic satisfaction that serves the needs of the organization (Bowen, 2020, 2022; Goodwin and Goodwin, 2017; Martin, 2000; Roka, 2009; Vallerand 2012; Vallerand, and Houliort, 2003; Veltman, 2016; Zigarmi, Nimon, Houson, Witt and Diehl, 2011). This can help develop a passionate work place where work is found to be meaningful and there is a sensible and reasonable workload. Zigarmi, Nimon, Houson, Witt and Diehl (2011) also point out that a passionate workplace includes one where there is a feeling of connectedness with colleagues and with the leader. Passion becomes an essential element of success in the workplace (Vallerand and Houliort, 2003).

In the context of this article, the passionate workplace is associated with the term harmonious passion. If passion already exists, followers do not need to be pushed (Bennett, 2016; Stein, 2017). It is an intrinsic factor that helps drive a person (Bowen, 2020, 2021). Organizations, therefore, need to create and develop a culture that inspires purpose engaging people, cognitively, emotionally and physically, in their work (Kahn, 1990; Morton, 2017; Sharma and Jain, 2022; Shirley, Hargreaves, and Washington-Wangia, 2020; Stein, 2017). This includes the role of emotional intelligence.

The workplace is saturated with emotions and with the increase of people working in the service sector, staff are likely to engage in greater intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships that is leading to greater interest in the role that emotional intelligence plays in the workplace (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Bowen, Pilkington and Rose, 2016; Briner 1999). The next section, therefore, discusses the importance emotional intelligence plays in the passionate workplace.

2.5 Managing emotions, pathocratic influence and the role of emotional intelligence in the passionate workplace

To mismanage negative emotions can cause physical and mental illness impacting feelings of well-being (for example: Alexander and French, 1946; Bowen, 2019, 2021, 2022; Bowen, Pilkington and Rose, 2016; Dunbar, 1954; Dunnagan, Peterson and Haynes, 2001; Friedman, 1990, Gross, 1998; Tuckey, Dollard, Saebel and Berry, 2010).

Negative workplace emotions that are commonly reported include: hurt, bitterness, fear, unhappiness, worry, frustration, annoyance, sadness, embarrassment and disgust (Ashkanasy and Dorris, 2017). To mis-manage emotions may help to partly explain the reason why the number of people experiencing work related stress, anxiety or depression is shown to be increasing over recent years (The Health and Safety Executive, HSE, 2023). The HSE (2023) report that in the year 2022/ 23, 875,000 people experience work related stress, anxiety or depression and this equates to 17.1 million working days being lost. The HSE (2023) add that 49% of all work-related ill health is associated with stress, anxiety or depression and; 54% of all working days lost due to work related illness. This can impact feelings of well-being. Examples of associated causes that can affect feelings of well-being include: burnout, anger inhibition, bullying, heart disease, chronic hostility and hypertension, isolation and loneliness (for example: Dembroski, MacDougall, Williams, Haney and Blumenthal, 1985; D'Oliveira and Perisco, 2023; Farley, Mokhtar, Ng and Niven, 2023; Jorgensen, Johnson, Kolodziej and Schreer, 1996; Julkunen, Salonen, Kaplan, Chesney and Salonen, 1994; Suls, Wan, and Costa, 1995; Yang and Hayes, 2020). The aforementioned may be associated with passion killers; *“people (intra and interpersonal relationships) and/or things (stimuli) that inhibit commitment and passion, creating a toxic environment in which to work”* (Bowen, 2020:10). Passion killers trigger negative emotions that can create feelings of stress and anxiety resulting in psychological and physical ailments (Bowen, 2020). They can be compared to component parts of a virulent pathogen, manifesting itself in likeminded thinking and behaviour, creating a toxic workplace (Bowen, 2020, 2021). Bowen (2020) explains that passion killers include fear, threat, intimidation, repression, unnecessary conflict, criticism, lack of trust, feelings of uncertainty, poor feedback, lack of clarity around role and responsibilities.

These are examples of factors that can be associated with passion killing; where leaders may use pathocratic influence encouraging others to think and behave in a similar way.

Bowen (2023:86) defines pathocratic influence as *“the effect someone has on others while seeking to gain advantage, creating a cabal of like-minded individuals, to the detriment of the well-being of others within the working, political and social environment”*. It may not just be one or two people. It may lead to others engaging in shared destructive values where pathocratic influence invades the organization like a virulent virus (Bowen, 2021, 2023). If not addressed, the organization can develop into one that is a toxic place to work and where pathocratic influence can thrive (Bowen, 2022, 2023).

Pathocratic influence can be to the detriment of individual and organizational well-being. If unwell, a person may not perform to their best. They may be absent from work putting pressure and stress on others in the workplace. They may decide to leave the organization, increasing stress levels on those remaining. Those who do remain in the organization may participate in reinforcing and underpinning the role of pathocratic influence, increasing the feelings of cultural toxicity. This can, in turn, influence potential candidates for jobs at the organization to look elsewhere. Thus, pathocratic influence can lead to damaging intra and interpersonal relationships, both within the organization and with those outside. This can be felt by students as well as staff members. They may experience problems of concentrating. They may take time off, being absent for short and/ or long periods of time. They may decide to leave. The aforementioned can lead to increased financial costs for the organization that can place greater pressure and stress on staff. Indeed, the reputation of the organization may become one that is associated with a place to avoid.

The organization, therefore needs to reinforce the value of passion as an added value in the passionate workplace (Bowen, 2020). A passionate workplace is where people want to come to work and where they feel valued. It is one where leaders engage in *“passion thrillers”* that drive and motivate themselves and others; valuing people for who and what they are (Bowen, 2020:7). An important factor, associated with the passionate workplace, is the development of positive intra and interpersonal relationships, breaking down barriers between the leader and follower (Bowen, 2020). This includes developing skills in emotional intelligence.

Jain and Duggal (2016) describe emotional intelligence as being the most important factor that can influence performance. Emotional intelligence is considered to be twice as valuable as technical and analytical skills (Navas, Vijayakumar and Sulthan, 2022). Those who are shown to have higher levels of emotional intelligence are more inclined to develop stronger personal relationships, are healthier, have greater career success and demonstrate effective leadership skills (Cooper, 1997). It is, therefore, important that the organization supports staff well-being and this includes an acknowledgement of the role that emotional intelligence plays in the workplace (for example, Akbar, Kannan, Nagahi and Morteza, 2014; Bar-On, 2005b; Bhullar, Schutte, and Malouff, 2012; Di Fabio and Kenny, 2016; Schutte, Malouff, Simunek,

McKenley and Hollander, 2002; Zeidner, Matthews and Roberts, 2011).

To help create and develop the passionate workplace, the organization should, therefore, provide training and development for all members of staff to develop their skills in emotional intelligence. In the education sector, this can be extended to all students. However, it is important to acknowledge that training and development of skills in emotional intelligence is one instrument in the toolbox of life that can be an asset to the organization that seeks to create and develop the passionate workplace (Bowen, 2020).

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Whereas the responsibility of financing study in higher education is placed with the student, understanding the reasons for student engagement and retention has moved from being the student's responsibility to the higher education organization (Tight, 2018). When faced with global competition, universities in the UK face increasing challenges of attracting students to study in the UK. In the year 2019, the UK has dropped to be the third most popular destination for overseas students after the USA (1st) and Australia (2nd) (Bolton, Lewis, and Gower, 2023). Bolton, Lewis, and Gower (2023). Furthermore, there is a substantial increase in competition from other English-speaking countries such as Canada and New Zealand while universities in the European Union are providing courses in English (Bolton, Lewis, and Gower, 2023). The number of international students from the European Union has also dropped by 50% since Brexit, falling to the lowest level since reorganization of higher education in 1994 (ANS, 2022; Bolton, Lewis, and Gower, 2023). It is therefore important that universities have policies and procedures in place to address this challenge.

It may be helpful if universities based in the UK, continue to develop stronger partnership working with those in other countries allowing students to study an English delivered course in their home country or in a country of their own choosing. Universities in the UK may also consider setting up a center of their own in other countries. They may also find it helpful to increase their online presence delivering programs that are tailored to suite those students who may not wish to study in the UK, reducing financial and emotional costs (for example: property rental, living and travelling costs, living away from home, social interaction). This may also help the student by reducing the bureaucracy of studying in the UK. To maintain consistency of module delivery and marking, staff from universities in the UK could be offered the opportunity to work in these centers. The aforementioned may help reducing overseas student dropout rate.

Student retention dropout levels remain stubbornly high (for example: Aina, Baici, Casalone and Pastore, 2022; Bradley and Migali, 2019; Crosling, Heagney and Thomas, 2009; Kahu and Nelson, 2018; Kehm, Larsen and Sommerse, 2019; Perchinunno, Bilancia and Vitale, 2019). Whereas this article focuses upon the higher educational sector in England,

student retention and success are identified as issues of concern across the globe that can impact upon the life opportunities (Crosling, Heagney and Thomas, 2009).

Student dropout rate may be associated with a number of reasons (Crosling, Heagney and Thomas, 2009; Jones, 2008; Martinez and Munday, 1998; Nieuwoudt and Pedler, 2023; Williams and Roberts, 2023). Reasons may include weak program/ organizational match, unsatisfactory experience in the academic environment, poor preparation for studying in higher education, lack of social integration, financial concerns, lack of commitment and personal/ family reasons (Fox, 2023; Jones, 2008). Dixon (2023) points out that students who are in full time higher education in England, who begin their studies in the academic year commencing October 2023, are expected to borrow in excess of £42,000. In addition, there is a significant, real terms, cut in the maintenance loan since the academic year of 2020-2021 as it does not take account of the full increase in inflation brought on by the war in Ukraine and the Covid- 19 pandemic (Dixon, 2023). As students struggle with coping with the increased cost of living, dropout rates could rise further (Fox, 2023). It is, therefore, important that universities have the right mechanisms in place to identify those students who may be struggling and at risk of dropping out and this can include the modernization of ways of student interaction and communication (Hanna, 2023). Hanna (2023) adds that 69% of students are happy with the blended learning approach of split online and in person tuition, however, it is important that universities embrace smart technology and maintain an agile approach, intervening when students are found to be struggling emotionally and financially. Universities could, therefore, provide a specialized team who focus solely on reducing student dropout.

It is important that students are valued as individuals. Developing a passionate workplace can help achieve this. Valuing people (and this includes student and members of staff) is key to unlocking the door of workplace passion that, when shared, can spread throughout the organization (Bowen, 2021). The passionate workplace passion is associated with the term harmonious passion. If passion already exists, followers do not need to be pushed as it is an intrinsic factor that helps drive a person (Bennett, 2016; Bowen, 2020, 2021; Stein, 2017). Organizations, therefore, need to create and develop a culture that inspires purpose engaging people, cognitively, emotionally and physically, in their work (Kahn, 1990; Morton, 2017; Sharma and Jain, 2022; Shirley, Hargreaves, and Washington-Wangia, 2020; Stein, 2017). In higher education, this includes students and staff, where there is active engagement in social learning that is integrated into the culture (Bowen, Rajasinghe, Evans, Rose and Pilkington, 2018). Where required, academics and professional services staff could be given financial/ time resourcing focused on student support allowing for greater engagement with students who are absent and to get to know them better (Bowen, Rajasinghe, Evans, Rose and Pilkington, 2018). This could help provide the student with greater social and personal interaction with others that include university staff and peers

(Bowen, Rajasinghe, Evans, Rose and Pilkington, 2018; Tinto, 1993). This may also help reduce the level of student dropout.

The role of emotional intelligence is identified as an important factor in social and personal interactions. Therefore, developing skills in emotional intelligence at all levels of student education can help improve levels of retention, active engagement, social interaction, achievement and satisfaction. Training and development of emotional intelligence could also extend to all members of staff to help themselves and to help support students. This may also help with reducing the student dropout rate. However, it is important to acknowledge that training and development of skills in emotional intelligence is one instrument in the toolbox of life that can be an asset to the organization that seeks to create and develop the passionate workplace; one that is actively engaged in helping students cope with challenging experiences in higher education and preparing them for a career following their studies.

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