

The Importance of Teachers' Interpersonal Communication Skills in Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: This study aimed to identify the importance of interpersonal relationship skills that need to be addressed for the development of education and the effectiveness in teaching. The need of interpersonal relationships that emphasized on the social and emotional development of students have also become the focus of the study. The role of interpersonal communication skills is seen from the teachers' ability to master various forms of skills which includes speaking skills, classroom control, teaching techniques and the use of effective communication. This qualitative case studies are based on detailed information from five excellent teachers obtained through in-depth interviews and observation. The information was analysed in an interpretive and descriptive approach based on the themes that appeared and triangulation data techniques is done to determine the validity and reliability of the results. The study found interpersonal relationships skills played an important role in creating attractive teaching and learning process in addition to creating intimacy atmosphere, share feelings, love and caring attitude. The review summed up that the role of teachers are not only to convey knowledge, but interpersonal skills should be mastered to enhance social development of student and learning quality. Accordingly, this study is expected to provide guidance to the teacher education program in planning and implementing professional development efforts for teachers that emphasized the importance of interpersonal communication skills to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching.

Key words: Interpersonal Relationship • Effective Communication • Excellent Teachers

INTRODUCTION

In the context of teaching and learning, communication skills have become an important aspect that needs to be mastered as the process of communication will happen by itself when there is interaction between two individuals [1]. Communication is both receptive and expressive. Teachers must be skilled at listening to their students as well as explaining things clearly. Teachers must be able to adapt their methods of communication to all students regardless of ability or learning style. Effective communication includes transforming the boring into the interesting and having good presentation skills [2]. This means communication skills can be defined as the transmission of a message that involves the shared understanding between the contexts in which the communication skills are applied in the teachers' classroom management, pedagogy and interaction with the students [3]. According to Kenneth [4], teachers who have communication skills will have

more advantages in creating more effective learning situation. Someone with communication skills is capable and has the potential to influence someone and effective communication strategies can dominate and produce success [5].

In this case, the process of communication involving the interaction between teachers and students, should be done well to help teaching and learning processes to run smoothly. Interpersonal communication has been reported to contribute to success in communication skills. It is clear that the ability to communicate effectively at an interpersonal level is a vital in human life. As such, knowledge of various types of skills and of their effects in social interaction, is crucial for interpersonal functioning. Therefore, interest in the study of skilled communication has emerged in the past few years [6]. Thus, every teacher needs to know how interpersonal communication skills play a role in establishing a good relationship. In developing effective communication, interpersonal relations need to respect between each other and to give

satisfaction to every person in communication that is being formed. This means that the teachers' communication skills are seen in terms of skills to convey ideas clearly, smoothly and easy to understand using effective language, interesting intonation and outspoken and behaviour movement that is able to attract and retain the interest of the students to continue listening [7].

Research that touched on interpersonal communication between teachers and students is seen as a necessity to closely recognize students and to give space to the teacher in understanding all the problems and the expression that needs to be shared. The communication skills aspect of excellent teachers is the focus of the study because the effectiveness of a teaching is determined by the skills of teachers in creating a relationship [8]. Communication skills of excellent teachers in the context of this study are not only seen from the aspect of its effectiveness towards certain teaching, but communication skills are also seen in terms of the requirements of social relationships and student's emotion.

Problem Statements: Teachers are still having difficulties to interact with the students because they could easily lose focus while learning in the classroom due to the weakness of the teachers' communication skills that could not attract the attention of students [9]. Teachers should create the features of understanding, fun and be able to influence the students attitudes through an effective communication network [10]. The teachers' failure to communicate effectively will not only cause the students to be disappointed, but will also failed to achieve the objectives of teaching and teaching and learning will become meaningless [1]. There might be some comprehension problem when the teacher could not understand what is saying by the students. Miss communications tends to occur if the students phrase their questions poorly or in ambiguous manner. Therefore, teacher needs to ask the students every time during lesson [11]. In the classroom context, the time for teachers to interact with students is so limited. All feedback that occurs between both sides often happened spontaneously and instantly, but it seems that there is no opportunity to plan and think. When dealing with students, teachers will not only need to be creative and innovative, but must be patient, smart, efficient and optimistic to face the situations and challenges. Students have less opportunity to communicate because the teacher sometimes is too active to provide information to students and are not using effective communication techniques to help students in their learning. In this case,

teachers require knowledge and skills using effective communication techniques to find out students' thinking and the way they act in processing information [12].

Meanwhile, other than strategies, approaches and appropriate material selection, it is found that teachers still have difficulties to interact with students because of their weaknesses in communication and personality style that does attract the students' interest [13]. Several weaknesses are still faced by teachers and among them is the delivery method that was still less effective, boring and unplanned [14]. The use of unclear languages also does not provide students with the understanding. Students also often say they are unclear of what is being said by the teacher [15, 16]. In addition, the students also said they did not hear the teacher's voice while the voice is the main tool to deliver a knowledge based message [17]. In learning session, teachers frequently faced with students who vary in their abilities. According to Zahari [18] not all students have the same cognitive development in the process of understanding while receiving knowledge. Teachers should be smart enough to spot the difference in students to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Thus, teachers can determine the approach, selecting the methods and setting certain appropriate techniques to the student's progress and ability as it is often said that they make mistakes when handling student's behaviour. According to Barbetta, Norona and Bicard [19], praise must be given to the students to win their hearts and teachers should avoid sarcasm when advising problematic students. To achieve a level of expertise and excellence, this problem needs to be addressed because the boring communication techniques, can threaten the teaching and learning process.

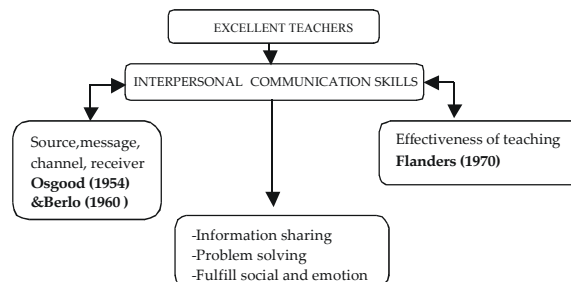
In view that teaching and learning process involve a lot of communication, the question arises that not all teachers can communicate well. According to Ho [20], more demands are being made on the students to explain, justify and reason through problem-solving strategies. The interaction among students as they co-construct knowledge becomes important as a collaborative activity. It shouldn't be just one-sided, as in teacher disseminating information, but two-way with teacher and students responding to each other to deepen content learning. This phenomenon requires skill, ability and commitment to produce understanding where teachers and students must be prepared to share experiences and work together. The indirect relationship that is established will foster relationships and the problems encountered by students will be shared. In this respect, interpersonal communication should be emphasized, which includes

elements such as communication points, the body positions and body movements, gestures or facial expression, voice, language diversity and listener involvement. The relationship between teachers and students in the classroom must be created and teachers must have interpersonal communication skills to attract students to understand what it is trying to convey [21].

The Purpose of the Study: The aim of this study is to identify how excellent teachers practice good communication skills and its effectiveness in the teaching and learning process. This study does not only look at the importance of communication skills in terms of teaching delivery alone, but also the importance of communication that should be focused on the aspects of social relationships, increasing knowledge and the importance of interpersonal relationship which focuses on the emotional development of students. The study also looked at communication skills of excellent teachers in terms of their expertise in handling the teaching and learning process as well to help students understand learning easier and not experienced boredom. Recognition of excellent teachers by the Ministry of Education is an important asset to be utilized. Through the study, it is hoped that the skills and expertise of all excellent teachers would benefit the teachers, especially in order to improve the quality of teaching and its effectiveness in guiding and educating students. This study can also be used as a source of reference for teachers and researchers on the effective communication skills that should be practiced in performing tasks as educators.

Conceptual Framework: The conceptual framework of this study is based on Osgood [22] and Berlo [23] models, which is considered to be an appropriate reference model as both clearly show the process of communication that took place in the classroom. Based on the model, the elements of communication such as the source, message, channel and receiver are seen to play an important role in helping teachers to implement teaching and learning processes. In addition to the theory of communication, conceptual framework also refers to Flanders Interaction Analysis as a guide to look at the interactions that occur in the classroom, according to the stages of teaching and learning that are closely linked to the objectives and strategies used by the teacher. Through the Flanders Interaction Analysis, the importance of teachers' communication skills is observed based on the reaction carried out by teachers and students. The conceptual framework of the study is shown as follows:

Table 1: Conceptual Framework Study



MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a case study involving five excellent teachers from five schools. Qualitative case studies are selected based on qualitative methods that can read and understand an in-depth phenomenon regarding communication processes that took place in a classroom. A total of five excellent teachers from five different schools were used as the main sample selected through the purposive sampling method. This method was chosen because researchers can choose sample and places that are expected to provide accurate information [24, 25]. The researcher selected the participants based on a list of excellent teachers who have been recognized by the Ministry of Education. The selection of study is not conducted based on their field of study or sex, but is based on the highest recognition as excellent teachers. To answer the review questions, in-depth interview done based on partial interview questions on the structure of excellent teachers as main study participants, interview of five groups of students and teaching observation needs in terms of communication skills in the classroom. The information is analyzed in interpretive and descriptive approaches based on the theme that appeared and data triangulation techniques is done to determine the validity and reliability of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Building Self Confidence: The study found that teachers must possess communication skills in interpersonal relationships to build confidence when communicating with students. In teaching and learning process, it is found that verbal and nonverbal communication is considered as important interpersonal communication. Studies showed individuals with communication skills possess a better chance to adapt the environment such as exchanging ideas or sharing experiences with other individuals. This finding fits with the Pearson [26] view

which states that interpersonal communication is needed to solve problems, share information, improve self-perception of themselves or meeting social needs such as wanting to love and be loved.

Effective and Conducive Teaching and Learning Environment:

Studies have shown that effective communication skills are needed to achieve the teaching objective and improve student performance. Communication skills are not only seen as factors that determine the effectiveness of a teaching, but also the ability to communicate effectively can help teachers to identify student behaviors and instill positive values in order to enhance social and emotional skills of students. As an interactive process, effective learning provides an opportunity for students to interact, collaborate, meeting their responsibilities and building self-confidence. A teaching method that is interesting and fun, can encourage students to channel their thoughts and insights effectively. To obtain a good teaching environment, teachers not only need to share feelings, but also affectionate approach should be prioritized so that students can feel they are respected [27, 28]. Based on the findings, the study proves that the experience and knowledge to be shared can help the communication process runs smoothly.

Broad Interaction Space: Extensive interaction space can give students the opportunity to voice their opinions and get rid of stress. This study was supported by Abd. Rahim [29] which explains that teaching is a process of communication between teachers and students and not only involves the transmission of knowledge or information but also involving relationships and social control in the classroom. The attitude shown by the participants such as friendly, considerate and caring is seen as an important factor that plays a role in building relationships between teachers and students. The teacher's skills to create interesting teaching and learning process can attract an atmosphere of warmth, sharing of feelings, compassion and a caring attitude. Discussion on this study concluded that the teacher's task is not only to impart knowledge alone, but interpersonal communication skills are needed by teachers to improve students' social development. Interpersonal communication that focuses on the aspects of social skills can help students to respond to the environment and self-control in facing challenges to improve self-excellence.

Voice Usage Skills, Language Skills, Listening Skills and Nonverbal Behavior Skills: The study found

participants strive to acquire key elements of interpersonal communication skills such as nonverbal behavior, clothing and appearance, voice, language and listener involvement as stated by Zulkifli [21]. The teachers' communication skills involving interpersonal communication relationship is seen based on themes that are detected as follows:

Voice Usage Skills: Advantages of voice in influencing any act give space and opportunity for the teacher to get the required response from students. Firmness shown by teachers through the use of loud voice not only will attract student's concentration, but is a command that should be given attention. In addition, the techniques of pause through the clear voice and intonation of slow voice is found to attract students. The difference in the voice tone as strictly giving instructions or low during the brief shows the diversity of participant's tone of voice while delivering knowledge and information. The different tone of voice is intended aims to make teaching more interesting because emotional attraction is done when participants used both voice tone [30].

Language Proficiency Skills: Good language skills shown by participants to draw attention and enhance the confidence of students that teachers have the credibility to influence someone. To maintain the focus and attention of students, participants used simplified terms for difficult sentence for certain subjects. The skills to adapt language with students' emotion is done to increase student friendliness in order to overcome shyness or taciturn. Such action is to strengthen both parties because the study considers students as partners and respect the views submitted. The importance of mastering the language specified by MohdSahandri, Ramli and Shaffe [31] that there is a strong correlation between the successes achieved by someone with the style of language used by him. Therefore, the language used is one of the things that transmit a person's self-esteem. The study finds the use of language have been adapted according to the situation and context of teaching so that the presentation and information becomes clearer and proper.

Listening Skills: To evaluate each student's conversation and expression, the participants are found to use listening skills to ensure the expression of views and feelings of the students can be understood clearly. Brooks [32], explains that the ability to listen carefully is very important to draw the attention in a discussion. A good listener can understand the thoughts and feelings

of someone because the listening skills can cultivate openness among each other. In this case, bilateral relations play an important role because the focus of a discussion requires the cooperation of both parties for mutual understanding. Participants are found to listen with empathy so that students feel comfortable with discussion that is done. Thus, the listening skills are found to provide an opportunity for participants to raise questions and make room for the students to express personal opinion about certain issues whether related to teaching or expression of feeling.

Nonverbal Behavior Skills: The study also found that nonverbal behavior skills were used to strengthen explanation, provide an example or for the purpose of confirmation. Participants used nonverbal behavior while teaching to enhance students' understanding and to create a more exciting teaching atmosphere. Behavioral skills such as hand and body movements, facial expression and eye contact are found to have an influence in attracting students to the intended meaning to be delivered. The importance of this behavior skills is explained by [33] that nonverbal communication signal is said to carry more than 90 percent of the meaning contained in a message and often occur spontaneously and quickly. Samsuddin [34] also stated that whether consciously or not, we will move the hands to describe something that would like to be delivered. Based on observation, positive and friendly communication network is found to be established through facial expression such as a smile which reflects the happy feelings and positive towards others.

CONCLUSIONS

Teachers who act as the main source should have a good and effective communication in accordance with its role as educators and advisors to students. The importance of interpersonal communication is needed to help teachers know the students more closely and understand their requirements and needs. Meanwhile, different backgrounds and inconsistent attitudes of students requires teachers' determination to be closed with them to understand their requirements and needs. This means students' emotional and social factors need to be addressed and therefore the ability to influence other individuals is considered to be a key factor in interpersonal relationship quality. This is in line with the views of Pearson [26], that interpersonal communication is needed to solve problems, share information, improve

self-perception of themselves or fulfil social needs such as to love and be loved. Teaching that is done in interesting and fun way, can motivate students to channel their thoughts and point of view effectively. Overall, this study look at excellent teacher as an individual with high expertise in the subjects and communication skills that is in practice and should be used as guidance to handle the teaching process effectively.

Implications and Recommendations: The findings have provided information that excellent teachers are suitable as role models to other teachers in terms of the effectiveness of communication skills in teaching and learning process. In this regard, communication skills of excellent teacher, can be used as a guide and reference to other teachers in enhancing the quality of teaching delivery. In addition, the school officials can also organize a mentor system in collaboration with excellent teachers to give guidance and tutoring to other teachers in improving communication skills during teaching and learning process. Sharing of skills, information and knowledge is not only meant for the purpose to improve the teaching practice, but will strengthen the bond and help to enhance teachers' professionalism.

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