

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY AS AN INTEGRAL PART
OF THE CURRICULUM IN SELECT COLLEGES AND
UNIVERSITIES IN BATANGAS PROVINCE, PHILIPPINES**

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ABSTRACT

The study centered on defining the issues related to interpersonal communication. Insights on the subject were gotten from both the students and faculty members of selected colleges and universities in the province of Batangas.

Likewise, their perceptions about the present situation related to interpersonal communication were gathered to find out if there really is a need for change. Apparently, the study is an action research project done to assess existing practices.

A combination of different research designs: grounded theory, exploratory and descriptive, was used for this purpose.

Results of the study revealed that students find said competency very relevant to their business courses. Faculty members opined that said skill is important in their teaching and classroom instruction.

The students also perceived that said skill is more important than any other skills: computer skill; general business skill and problem-solving skill. They moderately agree that such is being given enough emphasis in class and in their curricula. On the other hand, faculty members strongly agree that it is being given sufficient emphasis in class and they disagree that students exhibit enough interpersonal communication in class. Students, likewise, have the same view.

The above situation would trigger an in-depth study in the future to find out the cause and effect of this abnormal condition and to thresh out the problem.

CHAPTER 1

Problem & Significance

The global arena appears to be seething as each one prepares to unleash its weapon to fight off the seemingly unending tag race. The barrage of attacks which continuously hounds and pounds the environment of a firm serves as a wake-up call for those that merely attempt to preserve the comfortable features of the present.

An organization which has slid into a rut, should seek ways to revitalize its turf to avoid being locked and pushed to stagnation.

Educational institutions in different countries are all gearing up to surmount the attacks mounted by the growing forces of the government, the business sector and the studentry.

In the Philippines, the deteriorating quality of education with the big percentage of Grade VI students failing miserably in the national test had caused alarm for the Department of Education to initiate fundamental changes. Likewise, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is taking drastic steps to curb the growing numbers of college graduates who could not find jobs after graduation or those who work in jobs not related to their courses. The severe unemployment problem (and underemployment) is manifested in the quality of life that we have right now. This is essentially attributed to the kind of skills that educational institutions are providing their graduates which apparently are not the ones required by the business sector. The same worry was echoed by businesses in the Batangas/Laguna area in the study conducted by the researcher in 2001. They professed their concern about the quality of graduated produced by the Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) which has attenuated tremendously. In said study, practically all firms in various industries in the above-mentioned area articulated their desire to employ only individuals

astute in interpersonal communication: verbal and non-verbal communication; conversation and relationships. Said characteristic contributes largely to productivity (Torres 1981).

Indeed, one competency of value to the students is the interpersonal communication. In the United States, a new attention was given to this skill and such attention was primarily brought about by a societal shift that empowered individuals and placed a new found emphasis on relationships (Knapp & Dally 2002). In addition, interpersonal communication course in various schools in the U.S. was examined to determine if it is meeting national standards (Nesmith 2003). Suffice it to say, the skill is that important evidenced by the amount of weight put into it.

The aforementioned situation raised the researcher's concern and made a decision to find out whether students (are aware of the relevance) of this competency to their business courses and their employment chances. Students will also be asked about the importance of interpersonal communication skill vis-à-vis other skills; what they feel about the amount of emphasis being given in their classes and curricula. Faculty members will also be asked of its importance to their profession and if said competency is being given adequate emphasis in the student's curriculum.

Research Questions

Students:

1. To what extent do they feel the relevance of interpersonal communication skill?
2. How important is interpersonal communication skill to them compared to other skills?
3. What do they feel of the amount of emphasis being given to interpersonal communication in the class and in their curricula?

Faculty Members:

1. To what extent do they use interpersonal communication in their teaching methods?

2. What do they think of the amount of emphasis being given to interpersonal communication in the student's curriculum?

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Interpersonal communication courses offered by schools in the United States were examined to find out if they are meeting national standards (Nesmith 2003). The general education requirement in communication has transcended to become an interpersonal communication course that dwells not only in public speaking (verbal communication) but also on other subjects as well, which include non-verbal communication, conversation, relationship, and awareness of self. It was brought about by a societal shift that empowered individuals and placed a new found emphasis on relationships (Knapp & Dally 2002).

Workers in the Philippines placed high premium on Smooth Interpersonal Relations (SIR) since they are known for their high affiliation and personalism needs. Further, interpersonal communication, e.g., good relationships with workers, is what drives the Filipino work force to work harder than they already do (Torres 1981; Lanuza 1983).

Interpersonal communication is important because of the function it achieves (Borchers __). One reason we engage in interpersonal communication is to enable us to gain information about another individual. We can better predict how they will think, feel, and act if we know who they are. We also engage in interpersonal communication to help us better understand what someone says in a given context. Finally, we engage in interpersonal communication because we need to express and receive interpersonal needs: inclusion – the need to establish identity with others; control – the need to exercise leadership and prove one's abilities; and affection – the need to develop relationships with people. All these needs are vital to doing work effectively and efficiently (Borchers __).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Research Design

Since the study is basically an action research, the researcher made use of the combination of grounded theory, exploratory and descriptive research designs to effect the necessary change in response to an immediate need. Grounded theory was utilized to understand the research situation. Exploratory research design was used to gain insights from the respondents about the issue. Whereas, descriptive research design was employed to get the respondents' perceptions of the situation.

Method of Data Collection

Survey questionnaire was used to know how the students and faculty members perceive the prevailing conditions related to interpersonal communication. The questionnaire had both close-end and open-end questions. The close-end questions were designed to get the perceptions of the respondents on the issue, while open-end questions were used to gather insights from them:

Example:

Student

1. How relevant is interpersonal communication to you?

() Very relevant () Relevant () Not so relevant () Not at all relevant

Explain why:

Faculty

1. Students in the department exhibit enough interpersonal communication skill.

() Strongly agree () Agree () Disagree () Strongly Disagree

Explain why:

After the respondents had filled up the questionnaire, focus group discussion ensued.

Sampling Design and Procedure

Five (5) schools situated in the province of Batangas were selected based on the following criteria: number of enrollees and the number of years (at least 5 years) business courses (including marketing) are offered.

Since in focus group discussion (FGD) limited number of respondents is required, the same number (15 students per group) was utilized in the survey,

Method of Data Analysis

Weighted Arithmetic Mean was used to get the means of the two samples:

$$X = \frac{f_1 x_1 + f_2 x_2 + \dots + f_k x_k}{f_1 + f_2 + \dots + f_k}$$

Where X = Weighted arithmetic mean

Σfx = Sum of all the products of f and x ; where f is the frequency of each option and x is the weight of each option

CHAPTER 4

Results and Findings

TABLE 1

Mean Values and Descriptive Interpretation on the Relevance of Interpersonal Communication and whether it is being given emphasis in Class and Curriculum as Perceived by Students in 5 Colleges and Universities in Batangas Province

Survey Question	— X	Descriptive Interpretation
1	3.76	Very relevant
2	3.66	More important
3	3.29	Moderately agree
4	3.05	Moderately agree

Scale: #1

2

- 4 - Very relevant - More impt.
 3 - Relevant - As important
 2 - Not so relevant - Not as impt.
 1 - Not at all relevant - Less impt.

#s 3 & 4

- 4 - Strongly agree
 3 - Moderately agree
 2 - Disagree
 1 - Strongly disagree

Interpretation:

Based on the foregoing results as shown in Table 1, students find the skill to be very relevant since they are taking business courses and would be of help to them not just when they market the products they will be selling but when they "sell" themselves as well to their would-be-employers, knowing that nowadays competition is very stiff. They also find this skill more important than the other skills since, according to them, without this competency no matter how good you are in say, problem-solving skill, you would not be effective unless you have the ability to express yourself and the ability to relate yourself to others. With regard to whether said skill is being given emphasis in class (with the teachers demonstrating the skill in their teaching and classroom instruction) and in their curriculum (the subjects that focus on this are enough to acquire the skill), the students moderately agree. Some teachers could not fully express themselves, according to them, and some make use of antiquated techniques which they find it

boring. Regarding the latter, they said that there are enough subjects that focus on interpersonal communication skill but according to them acquiring the skill largely depend on the ability of their mentors and the school's capability to provide the necessary trainings for the teachers and the acquisition of facilities which would be useful for both the students and the faculty members. Also, majority of the students were honest enough to admit that they still lack this skill and they attribute it to several factors: teachers, policies of the school, family background, their foundation (pre-college education); and some said that they were not that interested since the course that they are presently taking is not their first choice.

TABLE 2

Mean Values and Descriptive Interpretation on the Importance of Interpersonal Communication; Students Proficiency in Interpersonal Communication; the Emphasis being given in Class and Curriculum as Perceived by the Faculty Members of 5 Selected Colleges and Universities in the Province of Batangas

Survey Question	— X	Descriptive Interpretation
1	2.54	Disagree
2	3.88	Very Important
3	3.70	Strongly agree
4	3.25	Moderately agree

Scale #s 1, 3, 4

2

- 4 - Strongly agree - Very impt.
 3 - Moderately agree - Important
 2 - Disagree - Not so impt
 1 - Strongly disagree - Not at all important

Interpretation:

Based on the foregoing results as shown in Table 2, teachers disagree that students possess enough interpersonal skill. Although some faculty members interviewed were saying that students in their school are trying to make extra effort and taking the cudgel of conversing without fear of being rejected which then result to students being able to express their opinions, generally, teachers are saying that their students are passive and could not express themselves well in class. Despite making extra effort, by taking a backstep to adjust to their level and intellect and establishing anxiety free atmosphere and treating them not just student learners but giving value to emotional quotient (EQ); notwithstanding the change in classroom environment they have initiated

- shifting strategies from the traditional lecture-type of instruction to mentor-learner relationship wherein one gives value to what one thinks and how he feels; and despite giving them various activities and other techniques like panel discussions, debate, brainstorming, dramatizations and the like, still students could hardly communicate and relate themselves especially in class.

Faculty members also saw the relevance of interpersonal communication. They said that possessing this skill would enable them to reach out to their students and can boost one's confidence especially when in contact with their students. According to the faculty members interviewed during the focus group discussion, having good interpersonal communication would make the students believe on what the teacher is saying in class. They further said that without it, it would be very hard to have a successful transfer of knowledge. They also conveyed that if you are adept in this skill, it will enable you develop harmonious relationship, understanding and cohesiveness which are considered vital for effective performance and in the attainment of goals.

Lastly, they moderately agree that the student's curriculum provides enough space for them to learn the skill. They said that their institution encourages teachers to focus on classroom activities where students would have the chance to converse and relate to each other. Others said that although the number of subjects that focus on interpersonal communication is adequate, the problem, according to them is with the students. They said that students are not very receptive and it ends up that only the teachers are the ones who develop the skill. Some said that adequacy of the subjects is not enough for the students to acquire the skill if the school lacks the facilities, e.g. speech laboratory that could enhance group interaction and communication.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the above findings, there is indeed a clash in the perceptions of the students and faculty members about the issue.

The study was able to dig up the alleged causes of the problem and somehow clear the situation.

This study could serve as starting point for a more in-depth investigation of the problem. Looking into whether the teacher factor, the student's educational foundation, school policies and educational system, the student's family background, etc. has something to do with the level of interpersonal communication that they presently have.

In future study, teachers will be evaluated using tested tool to assess whether interpersonal communication is applied and given emphasis in their teaching method and classroom instruction.