

The Effectiveness of Vocational Teacher Training Program in Enhancing Communication Skills Among Prospective Vocational Teachers

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Abstract: Malaysia moves forward to increase the number of high skilled laborers in 2025. This expectation, however, reflects the readiness of education institutions in offering good students preparation before getting into the real workplace environment. Teacher is one of the crucial models in an education system that may impart with the dynamic changes in student skills acquisition and thus the development of generic skills among future teachers are seems necessary, especially communication skills itself. As in Malaysia, the efforts in the development of teachers' skills in communication have been fully established and implemented in the curriculum of the Vocational Teacher's Training Program. This study was done to distinguish the perceptions of students in mastering the Interpersonal Communication Skills among Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PLTV) students after attending the Vocational Teacher Training Program. The sample consists of 200 respondents with a total of 158 prospective teachers of undergraduate students from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) as well as 42 people of prospective teachers of undergraduates from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational, UPSI. The methodology that has been used is descriptive and inferential statistics through a questionnaire with a five-point scale and Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.954. The analysis showed no significant difference between students who participated in the program and not participate program. This is, however, the overall mean value among students attending the program is slightly higher than students not attending the program indicating that this program is statistically able to improvise students' skills in the future. Therefore, the empowerment in the

implementation of the Vocational Teacher's Training Program seems crucial so that it could continuously strengthen the communication skills among prospective teachers.

Keywords: interpersonal communication skills, *program bina insan guru vokasional (bigv)*, prospective vocational teacher program, teacher training program

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1. Introduction

Education is one of the important platforms in producing a good quality nation in driving economic growth. A balanced and healthy education system can produce sustainable development of national economic growth and nurture a positive impact on the economic way of living style among the nation (Sukmawati & Maryanti, 2022). This contribution highlights the significant importance of education in creating a brighter future for a nation that evolves the extension of education in harmonizing the nation's lifestyle, promotes noble practice in developing positive behavioral maturity, and maintain the needs of psychology in determining minds of act and attitude (Ana, 2020). Mastery of knowledge in education will produce a noble attitude among the nation and cultivate nations' devotion to promoting sustainable national economic growth development as per mentioned in the main

vision of Philosophy of National Education and Teacher Education (Idris & Hamzah, 2013; Omar et al., 2020; Ahsan et al., 2022). As in the education system itself, the teacher is one of the important elements that could harmonize the needs of education and plays a great influence in determining the performance of the education system. Teachers may influence big changes in student skills acquisition and hence the development of generic skills among future teachers are seems necessary especially related to communication skills itself (Nuhu & Onojah, 2022; Shah, 2022; Lumbu-ani et al, 2021). It was believed that an effective educator should impart good interpersonal skills in ensuring their teaching and learning process runs interactively and went as per expected (Ulah et al., 2012; Othman et al., 2020). Thus, the efforts on producing a good quality teacher should be placed in a way that the objectives of teaching and learning outcomes can be achieved successfully.

As in the Malaysia scenario, the efforts for the development of teachers' skills in communication have been fully established, and it is implemented in the curriculum of the Vocational Teacher's Training Program. In detail, this program is a part of the component program that should be taken by education students especially vocational teacher-student in Malaysia. To fulfill the needs of preparing prospective teachers to face future challenges, this program is expected to prepare the prospective teachers for any teaching circumstances exerted when they start entering the real teaching environment (Mohd Fauzi et al., 2016; Othman et al., 2020). Moreover, the other objective of this program is to enhance the high order thinking skills in solving analytical problems and complex situations and at the same time able to plan decisions in solving the identified problem. This program also is a compulsory program to be taken by the students before they undergo teaching training placement at a designated school in Malaysia. As a consequence, a future teacher is possible to construct an effective learning session and provide a good teaching style (Omar et al., 2020).

2. Research Purpose

This study was carried out to identify the perceptions of students in mastering the Interpersonal Communication Skills among Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PLTV) students after attending the Vocational Teacher Training Program. Furthermore, this study is designed to raise awareness among future vocational instructors about the importance of improving interpersonal communication skills through activities in this program. Perhaps, in the future, when working as a teacher, students will value all of the knowledge they have received and will take advantage of opportunities to improve their communication skills. This study also seeks to provide a substantial benchmark on the success of the existing program being implemented, as well as enrich suggestions for future actions that could help to improve the program's quality.

3. Vocational Teacher Training Program

Malaysia Standard Teacher had outlined Teacher Professional Competency as a benchmark to be achieved

by prospective teachers before they are graduated. Through the need for this competency, the enrichment of suitable competency has been formalized within this program to produce good standard quality for the teacher. This program is a compulsory subject that must be taken by the Bachelor Degree Teacher program in all Malaysia's Universities. It was expected that this program could provide a good platform for preparing prospective vocational teachers with the basics of teaching and competency needed being as a teacher (Mohamed et al, 2014; Omar et al., 2020; Othman et al., 2020). This program includes potential activities such as seminar and motivation camp that helps to increase the self-confidence level and communication skills among prospective teacher. Moreover, this program requires the prospective teacher to undergo the active learning style to ensure that the comprehensive physical and emotional development among prospective teachers could be maintained and be practiced consistently. Figure 1 illustrates the module involved in this program. The method must be connected to the curriculum to improve the quality of the results (Rosina et al., 2021; Maryanti et al., 2021a; Maryanti et al., 2021b; Maryanti & Nandiyanto, 2021; Maryanti & Nandiyanto, 2023).

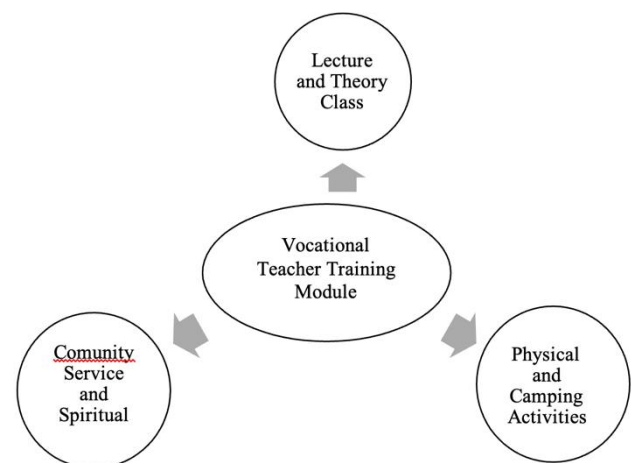


Fig. 1. Curriculum Structure of the program

As explained above, this program involves there different teaching approaches and focuses mainly on the outside class session that exposed the students to the real situation of community social needs and enhances their communication skills, moral value, and intellectual skills awareness within living in society. Within this objective definition, it was thought that this program would provide a strong platform and design for the educational institution to strengthen the requirements of attitudes and soft skills as a teacher while also it is exposing students to get actual teaching experience through advantageous activities. Indeed, this is during the program is in progress. (Mohamed et al., 2014; Othman et al., 2020).

4. Interpersonal Communication Skill

Education is a process of behavioral changes toward the development of individual attitudes (Ekunola et al., 2022). The teacher is a role model for students and somehow students' behavior is being influenced by the teacher's attitude itself (Estrellan et al., 2021). A good teacher must represent well-mannered behavior and be a good role model to their students (Mohamad & Masek, 2021). This is because personality represents the individual character and can be observed and may be influenced at a specific time being (Tamuri et al., 2012; Tengku Kasim & Abdulajak, 2018). A good teacher also should know how to convey information effectively during teaching and learning sessions and a variety way of communication skills to gain student interest during the learning session.

Moreover, professional teachers must always be equipped with adequate interpersonal communication skills themselves and capable to perform teaching and learning sessions ineffective way (Parkay, 1992; Yahaya, 2005; Idris & Hamzah, 2013; Mohamed et al, 2014; Omar et al., 2020; Othman et al., 2020). In conjunction with this importance, it can be stated that the good acquisition of interpersonal communication skills can impart with a great influence on human relationships especially teaching job as it involves two-way communication interaction most of the time.

Interpersonal skill is made up of various parts, the most important of which are leadership, teamwork, and networking. It combines the enhancement of an individual's quality with the development of soft communication skills. Figure 2 depicts the overall factors that make up human interpersonal ability.

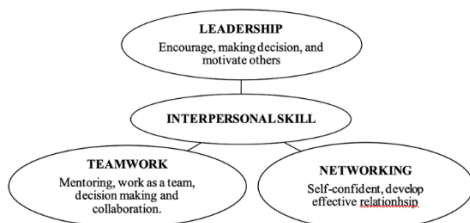


Fig. 2. Interpersonal skills aspect

According to Musa and Abd. Halim (2015) and Omar et al. (2020), teachers should improve their interpersonal communication skills since it helps to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning sessions in and out of the classroom. Furthermore, communication is critical in learning and teaching sessions since it facilitates interaction between teachers and students for the majority of the time. As a result, the more effective communication a teacher produces, the better the teaching and learning session will be (Guat, 2013; Othman et al., 2020).

5. Methodology

The primary methodology used in this study was a survey to determine the effectiveness of a Vocational Teacher Training Program among prospective teachers (education students) in a Malaysian university. The purpose of the survey was to learn about the student's perceptions of their level of Interpersonal Communication Skill learning. Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussein

Onn Malaysia (UTHM) represents a group of students who are enrolled in a Vocational Teacher Training Program, while the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Perguruan Sultan Idris (UPSI) represents a group of students who are not enrolled in a Vocational Teacher Training Program.

The t-test analysis of the perception score from the students among two different groups' answers will be analyzed to justify the differences in student perceptions of those who attend the Vocational Teacher Training Program in UTHM and students who are not attending the Vocational Teacher Training Program in UPSI. A descriptive analysis of means score value from the student perception will next be analyzed to further clarify the level of interpersonal communication skills among students after undergoing Vocational Teacher Training Program. The sample consists of 200 respondents with a total of 158 prospective teachers of undergraduate students from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, UTHM as well as 42 people of prospective teachers of undergraduates from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational, UPSI.

A conceptual framework was also constructed by the researcher to ensure that this research works smoothly and according to plan. This paradigm was updated to satisfy research constraints and adapted from Dale (1956) and Md. Salleh (1995). This is shown in Fig. 3).

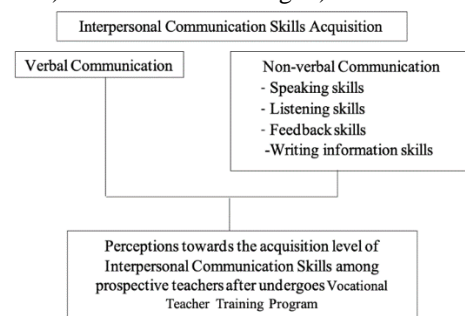


Fig. 3. Research Conceptual Framework

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 The significant differences in the perception between students attending Vocational Teacher Training Program (UTHM) and not attending Vocational Teacher Training Program (UPSI)

The differences in the acquisition level of interpersonal communication skills between two groups of education students were measured using an independent t-test analysis: students in the Vocational Teacher Training Program (UTHM student) class versus students not in the Vocational Teacher Training Program class (UPSI student). The results revealed that there is no significant difference between the UTHM ($M = 158.674$, $SD = 21.394$) and UPSI ($M = 164.076$, $SD = 21.353$) student groups. Furthermore, both groups had a reduced mean difference (mean difference = 5.402, 95 percent CI = -1.945 to 12.750) with a smaller effect size of 0.011. This suggests that students' levels of acquisition of interpersonal communication skills are nearly the same in both groups (Table 1).

Table 1. Independent t-test analysis for perception on the acquisition level of Interpersonal Communication skills among students after undergoing the Vocational Teacher Training Program.

Group	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 Tailed)	Mean	St. dev.	Effect Size	Mean Differences	95% Confidence Interval	
									Lower	Upper
UTHM	0.276	1.468	66.770	0.147	164.076	21.353	0.011	5.402	-1.945	12.750
UPSI					158.674	21.394				

Even though there is no significant difference in perceptions between both groups, it can be found that there is a slight improvement in the mean score value of student acquisition level perceptions after attending Vocational Teacher Training Program. This situation proved that there is still a contribution found (Quynh, 2021). Specifically, the contribution is from the Vocational Teacher Training Program in promoting a positive development upon acquisition levels of communication skills among prospective vocational teachers. Perhaps the empowerment of the Vocational Teacher Training Program in the future may be able to strengthen the communication skills among prospective vocational teachers.

6.2 The acquisition level of Interpersonal communication skills among prospective vocational teachers after attending the Vocational Teacher Training Program for UTHM student

The result of the analysis shows that the average mean score for all elements of interpersonal communication skills for UTHM students is at a high level with a score of 4.0107. The highest score lies in Non-verbal Communication which is Writing Information Skills followed by Listening Skills. The lowest score was recorded for verbal communication skills with an average score of 3.9508 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Mean score value of Interpersonal Communication Skill among attending Vocational Teacher Training Program

Element	Mean	Interpretation
Verbal Communication	3.9508	High
Non-verbal communication (Speaking skills)	3.9605	High
Non-verbal communication (Listening skill)	4.0336	High
Non-verbal communication (feedback skill)	4.0198	High
Non-verbal communication (writing information skill)	4.0886	High
Overall Mean Average	4.0107	High

The previous study has shown that Interpersonal Communication Skill is the dominant score by the prospective teacher as they actively participate in two-way interaction during learning and teaching session and their level of communication skills are improvised through experience (Buntat, 2004; Guat, 2013; Omar et al. (2020). Apart from that, the result of this study shows its similarity with the study found by Musa and Abd. Halim (2015) were found that interpersonal communication skills among teachers are at a moderate level. However, there are still issues of prospective teachers having fewer pedagogy competencies and lack of teaching competency. Goh et al., (2017) and Othman et al., (2020) proved that the lack of pedagogy competency among prospective teachers is affected by student behavior and teacher poor awareness of their communication and self-management elements. Hence, the initiatives on improving communication skills among prospective teachers should always be highlighted so that the quality of communication skills can be maintained.

6.3 The significant differences in the perception of Interpersonal Communication skills among students attending the Vocational Teacher Training Program (UTHM) according to the field of study

The p-value from the Kruskal-Wallis analysis shows a value of 0.000, a smaller value than 0.005. This indicates that there is no significant difference statistically between students' perceptions according to the field of study after attending Vocational Teacher Training Program. Further analysis of the field of the study indicates that mechanical students score the highest rank of mean rank, followed by hospitality students with a score of 92.46. The lowest score has been found on civil students with a score of 47.64. Table 3 below explains the detail of the score (see Table 3).

Table 3: Kruskal-Wallis Analysis for differences among the field of study.

Rank				Test Statistics		
Field of study (for Bachelor's Degree of Vocational Education)			N	Mean Rank	Sig.	Chi-Square
Mechanical	BBA	General Machining	33	93.28		
	BBD	Welding and Metal fabrication				
	BBG	Air Conditioning and Refrigeration				
Hospitality	BBC	Catering	27	92.46		
Electrical	BBE	Electric Electronic	23	88.98		
Graphic Art	BBF	Multimedia Creative	40	81.64		
Civil	BBB	Building Construction	35	47.64		
Total			158		0.00	23.342
						4

Previous research also supported that there is no significant difference in the perception of Interpersonal Communication skills among students attending the Vocational Teacher Training Program (UTHM) according to the field of study (Mohamed et al., 2013; Othman et al., 2020). He claimed that the overall acquisition level of communication skills is somehow depending on how the individual has a willingness to perform self-learning in improving their communication whenever possible.

7 Conclusion

Following the result and discussion, it can be stated that interpersonal communication skill is one of the most important skills for a prospective teacher. A teacher needs to own good interpersonal communication skills so that the teaching quality and credibility of the teacher can be placed in a way that is capable to educate our future nation is facing dynamic challenges. As in this Vocational Teacher Training Program itself, the implementation of this program has been proven helps to maintain the interpersonal communication skill needed by a prospective teacher at a satisfactory level. Even though there is no significant difference among students who are not attending Vocational Teacher Training Program, this research believed that there is still a point of improvement that can be gathered through this program. The empowerment of the curriculum of the Vocational Teacher Training Program is seemed advisable to be updated following current challenges and technological needs so that the significant contribution to the needs on communication skills can be assessed. For future research undertakes, it is advisable to allocate more data on sampling so that more significant data could be recorded and more suggestions and challenging issues could be addressed effectively.

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