



## A Qualitative and Quantitative Study of the Relationship between Interpersonal Communication Skills and Successful Teaching

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### **Abstract**

Today, establishing any productive professional relationship stands in the need of developing proper interpersonal communication skills. Since teaching is amongst those professions that requires remarkable interpersonal skills, the current research was an attempt to shed light on those components of interpersonal communication skills which have direct role in success of teaching. To this aim, a mixed method design was employed to investigate quantitatively the relationship between these skills and successful teaching and qualitatively portray a conceptual framework that actualizes this relationship. Therefore, 12 teachers and 100 students were selected conveniently and purposefully to fill in the blanks of two adopted questionnaires. The results of quantitative analysis showed that there is positive relationship between interpersonal communication skills and teaching success with coefficient of  $r = 0.473$ . The results of qualitative analysis gave birth to a conceptual framework which believes in, an at least hypothetical, relationship between components of interpersonal communication skills and effective teaching. These findings, rather than having implications for teachers, teacher trainers and researcher, shed lights on the way of future researchers in this area.

**Keywords:** *A Qualitative and Quantitative Study; Interpersonal Communication Skills; Successful Teaching*

### **Introduction**

There is no doubt that an effective and successful teaching stands in the need of many things more than mastery in subject matter and content area. This issue is not only touched in different approaches toward teaching but also the research findings have lit upon many characteristics of teacher which have a role in their teaching efficacy and success amongst which are the researches conducted by Ellett and Teddlie (2003), Ghanizade and Moafian (2010), Bagherkazemi and Birjandi (2010).

Too, in order to shed light on factors and characteristics of teachers contributing to successful teaching, many researches have performed studies which identify observable characteristics of teachers

that signal quality teaching. For instance, Jepsen( 2005), Noell (2005), and Goldhaber and Anthony (2007), teacher experience has a positive linear relationship with successful teaching. Besides, giving an abstract of the literature on factors affecting teaching effectiveness and success, Kyriakides, Campbell, and Christofidou (2002) found that effective teachers can provide adequate quantity of instruction, organize and manage the classroom environment, effectively use instructional time, structure instructional materials, give students practice and application opportunities, provide good classroom climate, and have enough subject knowledge.

On top of that, Falliber (2003) conclude that creating a sustaining situation conducive to learning has a direct role in teaching effectiveness. In the same line of the research, Lowman (1976) had already proved that an ideal teacher is the one who is knowledgeable in subject matter, interested in subject matter, and flexible in presenting materials. Some years later, Hiebert, Morris, Berk and Jansen (2007) conducted a similar study and found that specifying learning goals for students, evaluating if the goals being reached, hypothesizing the effects of teaching on students' learning and analyzing to improve teaching and learning quality are amongst the qualities of successful teachers.

Considering the issues stated above, many factors are involved in a successful teaching. Yet, a more intact area of the research in this filed is investigating the role of interpersonal communication skills on successful teaching. Having interpersonal communication competence is a very important factor for successful teaching, however many researchers take it for granted and are, therefore, inclined to think that almost all teachers are competent enough in interpersonal communication skills. That is why this area is not probed well by researchers. Thus, the current research is an attempt to shed light on the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and successful teaching from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. To this aim the following research questions are raised:

1. Is there any relationship between interpersonal communicative skills and successful teaching in Iranian context?
2. What is the best model which conceptualizes the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and successful teaching in the religious context of the country?

In the study of the historical context of communication, one can say that since people decided to live together, the need for communication was established and the people of the community tried to communicate with one another. From here, communication was discussed as a major issue for human life (Shaker, 2007). Therefore, social psychologists stipulate that humans need each other and need to communicate in order to meet their needs. From their point of view, paying attention to the work and the results achieved and the length of its implementation depends to a large extent on establishing relationships with others; those in the workplace, education, etc. are successful in being able to work properly and with different people properly Communicate. Every person needs additional skills to succeed in a community, in addition to individual skills, called interpersonal skills. Today in the psychology literature, there is a lot of effort to define the "skill of interpersonal relationships." In order to understand this concept, we review the definitions of some theorists: McGuire and Prestley (1981), they say that interpersonal skills are said to be behaviors that form the basis of successful and face-to-face communication. Kelly (1912) states that interpersonal skills are the same as certain and learned behaviors that individuals do in their interpersonal relationships to gain or maintain environmental enrichment. Harley (1986) says interpersonal skills are a set of targeted behaviors that are interrelated and relevant to a situation that is learned and controlled by one. In the definition of Ashland and McFaul (1985), interpersonal skills are the same complex processes that enable a person to behave in a way that others consider to be proficient, so skills are the ability to carry out targeted and successful behaviors. As a result of the skill of interpersonal relationships, the methods and practices necessary for a healthy and constructive life. These skills are a set of abilities that allow us to adapt to others and to form positive and

beneficial behaviors. These abilities enable a person to play his proper role in society, without harming himself or others .

Surely, having enough skills in interpersonal communication is an essential ability for completing job duties of every kind (Un, 2008). According to Magnus (2009) effective interpersonal communication skills are essential to social interaction, and to the building and maintenance of all relationships.

This importance is doubled in teaching context where establishing a harmonious relationship between teachers and students is critical and any poor communication skills on the part of the teacher may bring about irrevocable harms to education and amount of achievement by students. Un (2008) believes that failure in establishing such a relationship affects productivity, satisfaction, performance, morale, trust, respect, self confidence, and even physical health of students. In this part we review some recent studies on the variable touched above.

Matin, et al (2010) studied the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and organization commitment. The findings of their research showed that some components of interpersonal communication skills have a linear positive relationship with job success and professional commitment.

The interpersonal behavior of the teacher and his goodness are important aspects of the classroom environment. Teachers must try to create a strong learning environment to optimize the classroom environment. Teachers can create a more favorable classroom environment. The perceived environment through relationships An interpersonal positive has been identified in which everyone feels good, examples of which have been suggested by some scholars and thinkers, as Kennedy and Wilkot (1964) concluded by reviewing various experiments that encouragement, along with the observance of its essentials, Facilitates students' performance

Shock (1969) found that students who were trained in training were considered more efficient, and their students' progress was higher. Shack concludes that preparation skills are one of the most effective variables in determining student learning

Harji (1980) reported that teachers can pause after asking a question, or by pausing students' responses, to increase their attendance and attendance levels

Saunders (1993) found that in spite of the fact that people believed that all forms of teaching had to be completed, in practice none of them did. Most of them confessed that there would not be an opportunity to do so.

Rosenshenes (1971), reviewing research on various teaching methods, found that non-verbal emphasis (change of voice, gestures, and movements) attracted the attention of students and helped them learn their lessons better.

Also, investigating teachers' characteristics which may affect teaching success, Shabani and Khorsandi (2014) conducted a research and investigated the possible relationship between English language teachers' critical views and their professional success evaluated by students. to this aim, the Farsi version of Yilmaz Critical Pedagogy questionnaire was used to obtain the measures of the critical pedagogical views of 76 Iranian EFL teachers. Additionally students were to estimate teachers' professional success through the Successful Iranian EFL Teacher Questionnaire (Pishghadam & Moafian, 2009). A statistically significant relationship between the two sets of measures was demonstrated through the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis ( $r = 0.6, p \leq 0.05$ ).

And finally, in a research by Ghanizade and Moafian (2011) the relationship between Iranian teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their pedagogical success was investigated. This study was an effort to examine the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their pedagogical success, the role of

teachers' years of teaching experience in their self-efficacy and the relationship between teachers' age and their self-efficacy. The findings of this study showed there is a significant relationship between teachers' success and their self-efficacy. Furthermore, significant correlations were found between teachers' self-efficacy, their teaching experience, and age.

There are very few studies regarding the wearing and laundering of lab coats in hospitals and medical practice. This study highlights the role of lab coats acting as vector for transmitting health care infections to the patients and the common areas where contamination occurs.

### **Materials and Methods**

Two groups of Iranian teachers and students, teaching and studying different disciplines of humanities in ShahidMahalati higher education complex participated in this study. The first group of the study consisted of 12 teachers (5 M.A and 7 PhD) teaching theology and related courses in the complex. These participants were selected through convenient sampling procedures. Also, in order to assess the successfulness of these teachers, we selected 100 students from different disciplines of humanities which were taught more than three terms by these teachers. To this aim, the students were selected purposively.

### **Instrumentation**

The first instrument used in this research was a Persian questionnaire developed on the basis of the model of Robbins and Hunsaker (2003). The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by distributing it to 5 senior researchers in Imam Sadegh research center. The final questionnaire included 35 five-point Likert scale items ranging from very high (5) to very low (1). In order to get a fuller picture of the phenomenon and finding a more trustable answer to the second question of the research, 3 open-ended questions were also devised in the instrument. The reliability of the questionnaire was established through Cronbach-alpha with the coefficient of 0.92.

In order to investigate the amount of success in teaching the researcher adopted Moafian and Pishghadam's (2009) questionnaire consisting of 47 Likert scale items. The items of the questionnaire measure different components of successful teaching such as questionnaire measures the twelve following constructs as teaching accountability, interpersonal relationships, attention to all, examination, commitment, learning boosters, creating a sense of competence, teaching boosters, physical and emotional acceptance, empathy, class attendance, and dynamism.

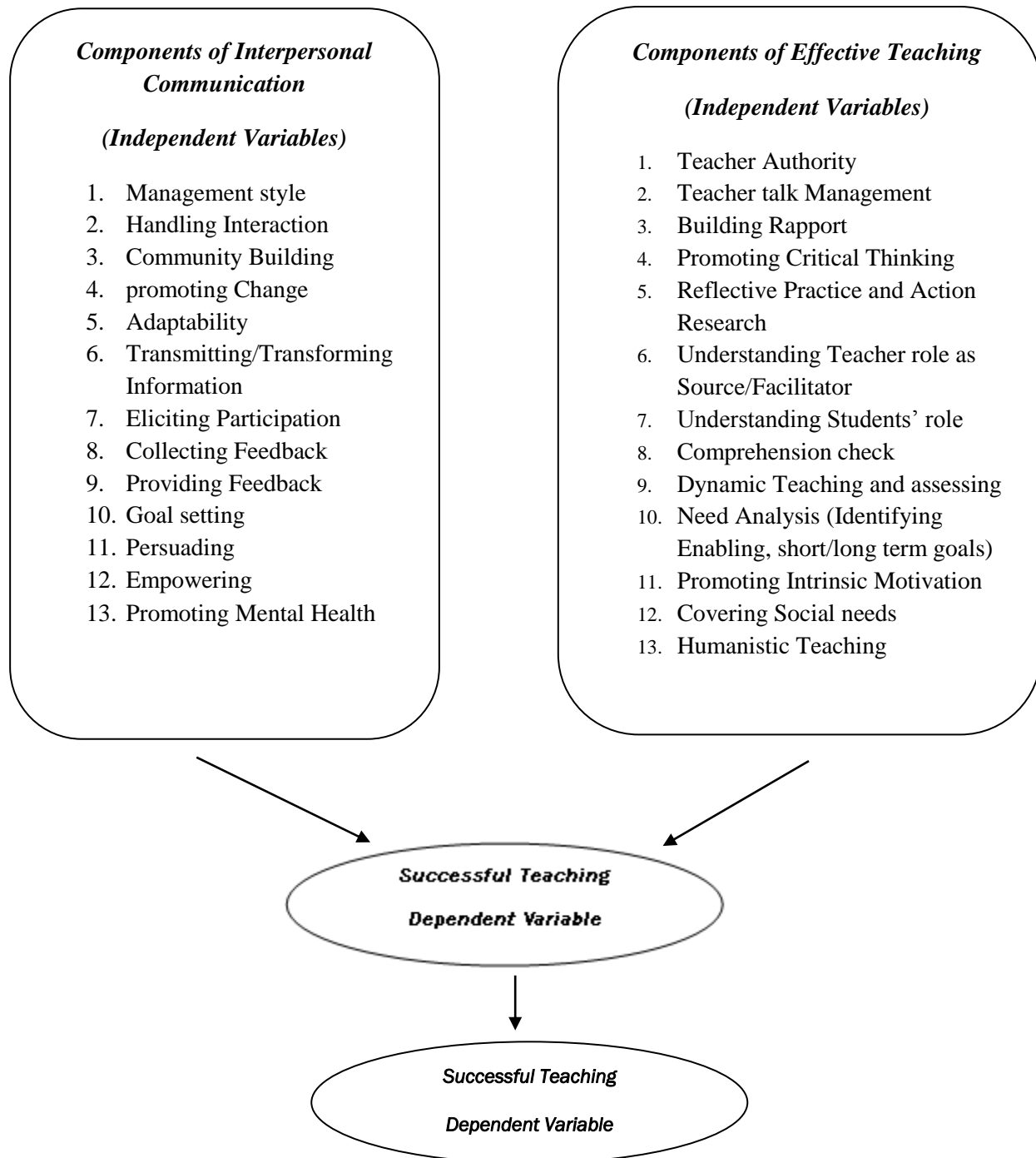
### **Procedures**

Teachers were given the first questionnaire to fill in the blanks. All for 12 teachers returned the questionnaire. Also, the students were given the second questionnaire. They filled in the blanks of Likert scale items and answered open-ended questions in writing. All 100 students returned the questionnaire. In order to analyze the relationship between data, a person-product moment correlation was performed. Too, concerning open-ended questions, students' answers were analyzed, coded and categorized to obtain meaningful patterns.

### **Results**

In order to answer the first question of the research and investigate the correlation between teacher's interpersonal skills and their success in teaching, a Pearson product-moment correlation was performed. The results of the correlation showed that there exists a significant correlation between teacher's success from the point of view of the students and the scores they gained in interpersonal communications skills. The results of the analysis showed that the correlation coefficient is  $r = 0.473$  and

P. value is less than .05 and equal to 0.031. However, in order to answer the second question of the research, the researched analyzed open-ended questions, different components of interpersonal communication skill, different components of teacher's pedagogical success, literature review and the Iranian-Islamic theoretical context in which research is conducted including holy tradition of Muslims. The results of this analysis were the following conceptual framework which brings to light the variables that are involved in successful teaching. This conceptual framework suggests some independent and dependent variables for teacher's pedagogical success.



As you can see in the framework shown above, many independent variables are involved in a successful teaching. Among components of interpersonal communication skills, the above mentioned components have direct role on/relationship with different components of effective teaching which have role in pedagogical success of teachers. A future researcher can form a one-to-one hypothetical relationship between corresponding components of interpersonal communication skills and effective teaching - as touched in theory, practice and literature of the phenomena stated above – and conducts new research which has innovatory implications for teachers and teacher trainers.

Although little research are conducted on this specific relationship, findings of this section are in somewhat in line with Ghanizadeh and Moaian (2011) who found that many components of self-efficacy, along with many other variables, are involved in teacher's success. Brown and Mark (1994) had already concluded that successful teachers in any kind of pedagogy are those who are involved in recurrent action research and reflect on their own teaching and those of others. Thus, the findings of this paper stand firm behind the findings of the literature on teaching success. Furthermore, according to Brookfield (1995) successful teachers are those who set up their instructional strategies, at an appropriate pace but stop regularly to check students' comprehension and engagement, focus on the topic and their instructional

objectives, and use humor in keeping with their individual styles to maximize rapport between themselves and students. the current research also supports these findings and emphasizes that man variables that have contribution in effective teaching have their roots in effective interpersonal communicative skills. Emphasizing the affective dimension of effective teaching, which is also covered in the suggested conceptual framework, Lowman (1996) stated that successful teachers are those who are inclined to promote high levels of learning in their students while also creating the positive memories of learning, emphasizing on teachers' enthusiasm as characteristics of successful teachers.

Ina addition, from Longs' interaction hypothesis (1984) to socio-cultural and sociolinguistics perspectives on learning, a bulk of research has shown beyond doubt the importance of interaction in pedagogical context. As one of main components of interpersonal communication skills and effective teaching, managing purposeful interaction results in internalized learning (Rex & Green, 2008). Thus, it can be concluded that components of interpersonal communication skills have a direct relationship with components of effective teaching and, as it is proposed by the suggested conceptual framework and proved by theory and practice in literature, on success of teaching respectively.

## **Conclusion**

Using a mixed method design, the current study investigated the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and teacher success. The findings of the quantitative analysis showed that there exists a significant correlation between teacher's success from the point of view of the students and the scores they gained in interpersonal communications skills. The results of the analysis showed that the correlation coefficient is  $r = 0.473$  and P. value is less than .05 and equal to 0.031. Also, the results of qualitative analysis showed that many components of interpersonal communication skills such as management style, handling interactions, community ability to community building, promoting change, adaptability, transmitting and transforming information, eliciting participation, collecting feedback , providing feedback, goal setting, persuading, empowering and promoting mental health have, at least a hypothetical, relationship with components of effective teaching as touched in the literature of the pedagogy such as teacher authority, teacher talk management, building rapport, promoting critical thinking, reflective practice and action research, understanding teacher role as source or facilitator, understanding students' role, comprehension check, dynamic teaching and assessing, need analysis, promoting intrinsic motivation, covering social needs and humanistic teaching. Each of these variables can be the subject of future research. Since this research was in a limited context with limited sets of

participants, any generalizations must be done with due care. These findings have implications for teachers, students and teacher trainers

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