



INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND FACILITATOR COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY ON EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUPERIOR HIGHER EDUCATION UPBRIGING PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of interpersonal communication and facilitators' communication competence on the effectiveness of the Superior Higher Education Upbringing Program at Universitas Mercu Buana. The research investigates three key variables: interpersonal communication, communication competence, and program effectiveness. Using a quantitative approach with survey methodology, the study analyzed data from program participants between 2017 and 2019. The findings reveal significant influences of both interpersonal communication and communication competence on program effectiveness, both individually and in combination. Specifically, interpersonal communication accounts for 53.3% of program effectiveness, while communication competence contributes 54.6%. Together, these two factors explain 57% of the program's effectiveness, with the remaining 43% attributed to other variables not examined in this study. Notably, the facilitators'

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motivational approach in the Superior Higher Education Program demonstrated the strongest correlation with participants' engagement in the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI), ultimately contributing to the development of a quality-focused culture at the university. This research highlights the crucial role of effective communication in educational program success and quality assurance implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Facilitators in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System are one of the qualifications of educators other than teachers, lecturers, counselors, tutors, widyasarana, tutors, instructors and other educator designations according to their specialty. The term facilitator as an educator is widely used in non-formal education, especially in training activities both held by government and non-government education and training institutions. The facilitator is someone who helps provide convenience and facilitate students.

In helping provide convenience and facilitation, various competencies must be owned by the facilitator to achieve goals and ensure program effectiveness. Apart from being reliable in compiling and mastering material, the facilitator must also have competence in conveying material to participants, namely communication competence, which is the facilitator's ability to communicate in a socially acceptable way. In public situations, this communication competency will involve audience perception in terms of message control, vocals, language, appearance and so on (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). Communication competence includes knowledge that must be possessed by the facilitator, skills and motivation that can be given to participants (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2011).

In communicating with training participants, the facilitator must also have the ability to encourage feedback, both verbally and non-verbally (Spitzberg et

al., 2013). This can happen through interpersonal communication activities (Nafi'a & Muhid, 2021). Interpersonal communication is considered the most effective communication because there is direct face-to-face contact, making it possible to use the five senses to enhance our persuasion in communicating. (Hutagalung, 2018). This face-to-face communication can also make participants feel more intimate (Yusnita, 2020).

Interpersonal communication itself is a unique communication context, because it can be present in various communication contexts such as in public communication there is 20% of interpersonal communication activity, in organizational communication there is 50% of interpersonal communication activity and in group communication there is 80% of interpersonal communication activity (DeVito et al., 2000). In this case the training carried out by the facilitators certainly presents interpersonal communication in which the facilitator can be open, empathetic, provide support, be positive and foster a sense of equality between the facilitator and the participants. (Setyastuti, 2012).

With the facilitator's communication competence and competence in developing interpersonal communication, it is expected that the program can run effectively so that the program objectives can be achieved (Kusuma, 2017). The effectiveness of the program based on the effect hierarchy model proposed by Cangara is characterized by the occurrence of cognitive effects, namely the consequences that arise in a person who is exposed to exposure that is informative for him. (Cangara, 2007). Cognitive effects include the level of understanding, knowledge, and understanding of the communicant. Furthermore, the affective effect is the audience's emotional reaction to the content (Cangara, 2007). Finally, behavioral effects refer to the behavior, actions or activities of the audience that has been exposed to exposure (DeVito et al., 2000).

The occurrence of cognitive, affective and conative or behavioral effects that lead to increased competence of trainees is certainly the hope of program organizers, such as the Superior Higher Education Fostering Program to improve the quality of higher education implementation which was initiated by the Directorate of Quality Assurance, Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs (Ditjen Belmawa), Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education.

Achieving the quality of implementing higher education itself is one of the main objectives of the education development program in Indonesia. Based on data from the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education, as of 31 December 2020 there were 2,526 higher education institutions that had been accredited and there were still more than 2,000 tertiary institutions that had not been accredited. As many as 60% of accredited tertiary institutions are still rated C/Good. Meanwhile for study programs, a total of 21,386 accredited study programs out of a total of more than 28,000 study programs in Indonesia. Of the number that have been accredited, 26% are still accredited C/Good (T. Basaruddin, Akreditasi di Kampus Merdeka, BAN PT).

The Directorate of Quality Assurance, the Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs (Ditjen Belmawa) seeks to improve the quality of higher education, including through the Superior Higher Education Fostering Program, which is a program to facilitate universities that have the ability and have proven to have superior quality to nurture (guide) other tertiary institutions whose quality still needs to be improved (Foster Program Guide PT Unggul 2019, Ditjen Belmawa, 2019).

In 2020, which is the third year of the Superior Higher Education Fostering Program, it was recorded that there were 20 universities that were entrusted with fostering, as well as 190 fostering universities. In 2018 there were 29 fostering colleges and 141 fostering colleges. In 2017 there were 26 foster universities and 91 foster universities with a total of 637 study programs (2017 Performance Report, Ditjen Belmawa).

Every year the Directorate General of Belmawa gives awards to fostering colleges that have successfully implemented the program very well. One of the universities that received this award is Mercu Buana University which has consistently and fully committed to giving its best contribution to the success of the Superior Higher Education Fostering Program. Mercu Buana University received the five best foster college awards in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively.

Referring to the PT Unggul Fostering Program Guidelines, the activities carried out by Mercu Buana University in the Superior Higher Education Fostering Program include: 1) Workshops with material on the National Policy of SPM Dikti, SPMI, SN Dikti, and PT Governance; 2) Workshop on the preparation of SPMI Documents and Annual Work Plans; 3) Technical guidance on the preparation of SPMI documents and the Annual Work Plan; 4) Internal Quality Audit Workshop and Management Review Meeting; 5) Internship Program at Mercu Buana University; 6) Monitoring and evaluation of SPMI implementation includes the application of SPMI Standards; 7) Study Program Accreditation Workshop, and 8) Mercu Buana University cooperation program with fostered universities.

The Superior Higher Education Foster Program is carried out for a limited time. For that, the program must be implemented effectively. A program is said to be effective in terms of the achievement of the objectives of the program implementation. The effectiveness of this program is inseparable from the competence of program facilitators in conducting training or workshops where facilitators must be able to convey material clearly, provide convenience and facilitation for participants. Communication competence and the ability to build important interpersonal communication is very important in achieving program effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Referring to previous research conducted by Meifilina (2017) on the theme of interpersonal communication and communication competence, in his research he found openness and empathy when conducting interpersonal communication to be very supportive in mentoring programs. Interpersonal communication has an influence on improving employee performance. Openness, mutual trust, positive thinking, support and empathy can be a motivation for employees to (Hendri, 2017). In accordance with this, Wulandari (2017) found that a positive feeling in the process of personal communication has the most dominant influence. Hartono (2007) added that the more positive interpersonal communication behavior with having the right self-concept, trust, sympathy, empathy and closeness/familiarity, leadership will be more effective. Regarding the theme of communication competence, Duwit (2015) found that communication competence has an influence on employee performance. The ability to share job information in appropriate and easy-to-understand language, a polite and tactful attitude and the occurrence of feedback can improve employee performance.. Kabu & Priadi (2020) found that communication competence is proven to be a unity of knowledge, skills, and communication attitudes related to carrying out tasks which must also be supported by an understanding of effective communication and appropriate communication attitudes.

In the context of evaluating the implementation of the program, the fostered tertiary institution provides an assessment of the implementation of activities carried out by Mercu Buana University as the fostering tertiary institution. The assessment carried out includes the level of understanding of the participants, the material presented, and the facilitator. Measuring the level of understanding of participants through pre-test and post-test during the implementation of the program. The competence of the facilitator, especially related to communication competence and the ability to build interpersonal

relationships, has not been measured in detail. The importance of measuring the competence of the facilitator is needed to improve the competence of the facilitator on an ongoing basis where it is known that the facilitator does not only have enough knowledge, skills and motivation personally in delivering the material but the message will be effectively conveyed supported by competence in building interpersonal relationships through openness, empathy, positive attitude, support and equality with participants because interpersonal communication can encourage feedback from participants.

Interpersonal communication according to Mulyana (2007) Communication is communication that occurs between two people who are face to face so as to allow feedback, both verbally and non-verbally. In communication, the senses of sight and hearing are often the primary senses, even though touch and smell are equally important in conveying intimate messages. (D Mulyana & Rakhmat, 2010). Interpersonal communication is considered the most effective communication because there is face-to-face contact, making it possible to use the five senses to enhance our persuasion in communicating (Briandana & Mohamad Saleh, 2022).

Effective interpersonal communication according Devito (2011) fulfills the following elements: 1) openness: the ability to respond with pleasure to information received in dealing with interpersonal relationships; 2) Empathy: feeling what others feel; 3) Support: an open situation to support effective communication; 4) Positive feelings: a person must have positive feelings towards himself, encourage others to participate more actively, and create conducive communication situations for effective interactions; 5) Equality: a tacit acknowledgment that both parties value, are useful and have something important to contribute.

Explanation of the above: 1) Transparency. Aspects of the ability to interact openly with others, convey and respond to all information with pleasure. Responding honestly to all stimuli that come to him; 2) Empathy. Aspects of

the ability to feel as others feel a feeling with the feelings of other people. In other words, trying to feel in the same way as other people feel so that one can understand that person's position; 3) Support. Aspects of the ability to provide support in the form of spoken or unspoken. Unspoken support such as gestures (nods, winks, smiles, applause); 4) Positive Sense. Aspects of the ability to give positive attention, communicate positive feelings towards others, 6) Equality. Aspects of the ability to equalize the position with the other person. Look for personality similarities between them and have a degree of similarity between the two. The closer the similarities between people in communication transactions, the more likely they are to share understanding.

Communication competence itself is the ability to communicate in a way that is socially acceptable. In interpersonal relations, communication competence involves the speaker's interaction with other people, while in public situations, communication competence involves the audience's perception in terms of controlling the message, vocals, language, appearance and so on. (Harivarman, 2017). Duwit (2015) explained that communication competence is the ability to adjust and shape communication behavior to suit the environment, other people, and oneself. The dimensions of communication competence proposed by Spitzberg & Cupach (2009) namely: 1) Knowledge. A communicator must be competent to have procedural knowledge to construct and execute scenarios in different social situations and must have the ability to read social situations; 2) Skills. The communication skills approach focuses on psychomotor abilities, namely the ability of individuals to speak, hear, see and express messages non-verbally in certain situations. The communication skills needed include coaching, listening, following instructions, providing feedback, exchanging information and solving problems, and 3) Motivation. The motivation scale is designed to measure a person's willingness to expand empathy, manage interactions, and adjust communication within the organization

A program is said to be effective in terms of the achievement of the objectives of the program. Measuring the effectiveness of the program using the effect hierarchy model. The effect hierarchy discovered by Morissan (2010) namely: (1) Cognitive Effects, namely the consequences that arise in a person who is exposed to exposure which is informative for him. Cognitive effects include the level of understanding, knowledge, and understanding of the communicant. The presence of the message provides knowledge, audiences who initially did not know become aware, those who were initially doubtful became convinced, unclear became clear and understood. (2) Affective Effects, namely effects that have a higher level than cognitive effects. The effect is not only that the audience knows about people, objects, and events that occur in the world around them, but the audience can also feel it. Affective effects can also be interpreted as the audience's emotional reaction to content. (3) Behavioral Effects, as the name implies, behavioral effects refer to the behavior, actions or activities of the audience that appear in their daily activities. In general, these effects include antisocial and prosocial behavior. In this effect, antisocial behavior includes all forms of negative behavior. The positive side of the behavioral effect is called the prosocial behavioral effects (Mansur, Hartaningrum, et al., 2021), (Mansur, Saragih, et al., 2021).

According to Mulyana & Rakhmat (2010) understanding is careful acceptance of the contents of the message conveyed by the communicator to change the attitude of the communicant. Acceptance here means positively accepting or rejecting the message received when we try to understand it. In the message conveyed by the communicator to the communicant, it is necessary to understand information so that communication can be said to be meaningful and can change the attitude of the communicant, which includes the following: (1) Receiving, meaning that people (subjects) want and pay attention to the stimulus given (object). (2) Responding, giving a response in accordance with the contents of the message where the communicant sends

the message back to the communicator. The information sent back is a response regarding feelings and thoughts about the message conveyed. In this case, one of the proofs that the communicator wants is that his message has been heard and heard. (3) Appreciate (valuing), the ability to invite other people to discuss a problem.

Achievement of the objectives of a program or program effectiveness cannot be separated from the role of the communicator, in this case the facilitator (Dwityas et al., 2021). In Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, it is explained that a facilitator is one of the qualifications of teaching staff other than teachers, lecturers, counselors, tutors, widyaswara, tutors, instructors and other educator designations according to their specificity. Educators are professionals whose job is to plan and carry out the learning process, assess learning outcomes, conduct mentoring and training, and conduct research and community service, especially for educators at tertiary institutions. The term facilitator as an educator is widely used in non-formal education, especially in training activities both held by government and non-government education and training institutions. The term facilitator is also known in community empowerment activities with a different scope of work from the term training facilitator, namely as assistant staff. In this study the intended training facilitators are facilitators as educators in training activities, hereinafter referred to as training facilitators.

The role of the training facilitator in training activities is related to their status as educators according to Sulaeman et al., (2015) : (1) as a trainer, the facilitator helps training participants learn to make agreements and study plans, observes participants in carrying out learning plans, offers suggestions, conducts demonstrations, helps participants identify learning material needs, monitors participant progress, suggests new approaches as needed, and assists training participants; (2) as a guide, the facilitator shows participants the right direction in learning and helps set their learning goals; (3) as a designer of the learning

environment, the facilitator assists the training participants to build a learning environment according to the participants' needs; (4) the facilitator also functions as a model or mentor; (5) as an evaluator, the facilitator provides information to the participants about the objectives of the training and their learning progress.

METHODS

The research methodology used is explanatory quantitative with survey methods (Sugiyono, 2012). The research population was participants in the Excellent Higher Education Foster Program at Mercu Buana University from 2017 to 2019, namely eight universities located on the island of Java and outside Java.

Sampling using a purposive technique (Taherdoost, 2017) totaling 100 participants. Sample sizes between 100-200 are considered quite stable in parameter estimation (Creswell, 2009). Respondents were selected based on certain considerations, namely university leaders, UPPS, Study Programs, Bureaus/Centers, lecturers and education staff who participated in all activities at the Excellent Higher Education Foster Program at Mercu Buana University.

The validity and reliability tests (Yusup, 2018) were carried out in two stages, the first was carried out to test the research instrument, and the second was to test the validity and reliability for all questionnaires (Roopa & Rani, 2012) that had been filled in by the research sample. The data analysis technique used is descriptive and inferential data analysis. Descriptive data analysis is used to analyze the respondent's data. While inferential data analysis consists of correlation and regression analysis (Meyers et al., 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis put forward is "interpersonal communication has an influence on the effectiveness of superior tertiary care programs". Based on the results of the correlation test, it is known that interpersonal communication

has a positive and significant relationship with the effectiveness of parenting programs with the strength of the relationship at the "strong" level. These results illustrate that if interpersonal communication increases, the effectiveness of the program will also increase, and vice versa.

Furthermore, from the results of the regression analysis it is known that interpersonal communication has an influence on program effectiveness. These results are evidenced by the results of statistical tests, from the partial influence test of variables (t test), it is known that the $t_{count} > t_{table}$, namely $10.678 > 1.984$ with a 95% confidence level. The effect of interpersonal communication partially on program effectiveness is 53.3%, the remaining 46.7% is influenced by other factors

Table 1. Simple Linear Regression Test Results
 Interpersonal Communication on Program Effectiveness

Model	R	Adjusted		Std. Error of the Estimate
		R Square	R Square	
1	,733 ^a	,538	,533	3,323

If you look at the inter-dimensional relationships in the interpersonal communication variable and program effectiveness, out of 15 (fifteen) pairs of inter-dimensional relationships there are seven inter-dimensional relationships that have a "strong" relationship level, namely 1) the openness dimension with the behavioral (conative) dimension; 2) the dimensions of support with the dimensions of attitude (affective); 3) the dimensions of openness with the dimensions of attitude (affective); 4) the support dimension with the behavioral dimension (conative); 5) the dimensions of equality with the dimensions of attitude (affective); 6) the dimensions of positive feelings with the behavioral dimensions (conative), and 7) the dimensions of equality with the behavioral dimensions (conative).

The openness of the facilitator in sharing knowledge, experience, ability to convey study material and building discussions with participants increase the interest of participants so participants can easily understand the material presented. More than that, the openness of the facilitator succeeded in fostering the commitment of participants to implement SPMI in everyday life and the willingness to invite colleagues in work units to carry out SPMI.

Support from the good facilitators in the form of enthusiasm, praise, appreciation for active participants, a pleasant atmosphere that was built during program implementation and besides growing interest from participants, the support provided by the facilitator has also built participants' motivation to run SPMI consistently and a desire to invite other people in the organization to run SPMI together.

Likewise, the principle of equality and positive feelings from the facilitators have fostered a positive attitude from the participants. The commitment and enthusiasm of the facilitator fosters positive attitudes and behavior of the participants towards SPMI. This is evidenced by the positive response in the high category from the majority of participants to the statements in the research instrument for dimensions at point 1 to. 7 above.

The second hypothesis in this study is "communication competence has an influence on program effectiveness in the Superior Higher Education Foster Program". Based on the results of the correlation test, it is known that communication competence has a positive and significant relationship with program effectiveness at foster tertiary institutions with the strength of the relationship at the "strong" correlation level.

These results illustrate that if the communication competency of the facilitator increases, the effectiveness of the program will also increase, and vice versa. Furthermore, from the results of the regression analysis it is known that communication competence has an influence on program effectiveness. These results are evidenced by the results of statistical tests, from the partial

influence test of variables (t test), it is known that the $t_{count} > t_{table}$, namely $10.968 > 1.984$ with a 95% confidence level. The influence of communication competence partially on program effectiveness is 54.6%, the remaining 45.4% is influenced by other factors.

Table 2. Simple Linear Regression Test Results
 Communication Competence on Program
 Effectiveness

Model	R	Adjusted		Std. Error of the Estimate
		R Square	R Square	
1	,742 ^a	,551	,546	3,275

If you look at the relationship between the dimensions of the communication competency variable and program effectiveness, it is known that from the nine inter-dimensional relationships there are five inter-dimensional relationships with a "strong" relationship level, namely: 1) the motivation dimension and the attitude (affective) dimension; 2) the skill dimension with the knowledge dimension (cognitive); 3) the motivational dimension with the behavioral dimension (conative); 4) skill dimension with behavioral (conative) dimension, and 5) skill dimension with attitude (affective) dimension.

The facilitator puts himself in the participant's position, interacts intensively, builds closeness with the participants (Sulaeman et al., 2015). This is an effort to be able to provide motivation for participants (Sari, 2018). Viewed from the positive response from the participants to the statements on the research indicators, these efforts yielded good results, with the motivation given by the facilitator, they succeeded in fostering interest, the participants liked things related to SPMI and fostered participant commitment to implementing SPMI in everyday life and inviting other people at tertiary institutions to implement SPMI.

Supported by the skills possessed by the facilitator, namely verbal and non-verbal communication skills, listening skills, discussion building skills and

providing input for each problem faced by participants, has succeeded in building aspects of attitude, knowledge and behavior of participants as evidenced by positive responses with high categories for the variable effectiveness of Superior Higher Education Foster Program.

The third hypothesis in this study is "there is an influence of interpersonal communication and communication competence together on the effectiveness of Superior Higher Education Foster Program"

From the test results it is known that interpersonal communication and communication competence together have an influence on the effectiveness of the superior tertiary care program. Through the analysis of the relationship it is also known that there is a positive and significant relationship between interpersonal communication and communication competence together with the effectiveness of the program, which means that the more the interpersonal communication of the facilitator increases and the communication competence of the facilitator with the audience increases, the effectiveness of the program at foster tertiary institutions will also increase.

Furthermore, from the simultaneous test results it is known that interpersonal communication and communication competence together have a significant influence on program effectiveness at foster tertiary institutions, which is equal to 57% and the remaining 43% is influenced by other factors.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Test Results. Interpersonal Communication and Communication Competence on Program Effectiveness

Model	R	Adjusted		Std. Error of the Estimate
		R Square	R Square	
1	,761 ^a	,579	,570	3,188

Thus, the third hypothesis of this study, namely "there is an influence of interpersonal communication and communication competence together on the effectiveness of Superior Higher Education Foster Program" can be accepted.

From the results of the study simultaneously it was found that the communication competence of the facilitator has a greater influence than interpersonal communication. This finding is in line with the partial test. In accordance with the external objectives of the Superior Higher Education Fostering Program, namely the formulation of an internal quality assurance system as outlined in the SPMI document and being tested and ready to be implemented according to the Determination, Implementation, Evaluation, Control and Improvement (PPEPP) cycle in study programs at PT Asuhan, the formation of a quality assurance unit or the integration of SPMI in tertiary management to the level of study programs and the filling of PT Asuhan SPMI implementation data through the SPMI Implementation Mapping page.

With this output target, the communication competence of the facilitator is needed to be able to deliver SPMI materials including explaining and providing understanding and skills in compiling SPMI documents. Likewise with the skills of the facilitator which includes the ability to deliver material, the ability to listen, the ability to direct and discuss with program participants. Equally important is the ability of the facilitator in motivating the participants to build the knowledge, attitudes and actions of the participants to build SPMI at tertiary institutions.

The motivation given by the facilitator is a dimension of the interpersonal communication variable that has the strongest relationship in building participants' interest in SPMI to build a culture of quality. Likewise, openness from the facilitator is the strongest dimension of the communication competency variable which has the strongest relationship in building participant behavior to implement SPMI and fostering participants' desire to invite other people in the work unit to implement SPMI.

The commitment of all civitas is very important in implementing SPMI in the context of continuous quality improvement so that a culture of quality can

be built. Quality assurance should be carried out not because of compulsion, but because of the urge to improve oneself.

CONCLUSION

Interpersonal communication and facilitator communication competence collectively influence program effectiveness. The study's simultaneous analysis revealed that facilitator communication competence exerts a stronger influence compared to interpersonal communication, which aligns with the findings from the partial test results. Within the interpersonal communication variable, facilitator-provided motivation emerged as the strongest dimensional factor in cultivating participants' interest in SPMI (Internal Quality Assurance System) and establishing a quality-oriented culture. Similarly, facilitator openness proved to be the most significant dimension of communication competency, demonstrating the strongest correlation in both encouraging participants to implement SPMI and fostering their willingness to engage colleagues in implementing SPMI within their respective work units.

It is noteworthy that there remains a substantial contribution from unexamined variables affecting program effectiveness. This presents an opportunity for future research to explore and identify additional variables that may impact program effectiveness. From a methodological perspective, this study faced limitations due to its restricted sample size and reliance on purposive sampling techniques. Future research is recommended to expand the scope by including a larger and more representative sample and employing probability sampling methods to allow for broader generalization to the population. This enhanced approach can provide deeper insights into how communication frameworks impact the effectiveness of similar programs, further advancing the knowledge in this area.

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