

Lecturers-Students' Interpersonal Communication: Implication for Students' Academic Learning

O. Elegbe

University of Ibadan, Ibadan

Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of
Ibadan

E-mail: elegbeolugbenga@gmail.com

Abstract

There are increasing growing confrontations which have hindered healthy lecturer-student relationship due to the fact that most lecturers lack good interpersonal communication skills to meet the needs of their students. Using the pedagogical theory, the study through a qualitative research method conducted a focus group discussion with 24 students within 4 sub-groups and in-depth interviews with 6 lecturers from 6 faculties in the University of Ibadan. Data collected were collated, analyzed and findings show that interpersonal communication has a positive influence on lecturer-student' relationship. Lecturer-student relationships aid students' cognitive, social and emotional growth, lecturers spending more time with students especially those who have challenges in some courses can improve positive interpersonal relationship between them and eventually contribute to students' academic learning. Hence, lecturers should ensure positive interactions with their students while the students on their part should be positive about their interactions with lecturers.

Keyword: *Interpersonal communication, Lecturer-student relationship, Academic Learning, University of Ibadan*

Introduction

Communication is the substance of relationships. Through communication we establish and maintain relationships. Interpersonal relationships exist among people or between two persons who interact and fulfill one or more physical or emotional needs. Interpersonal relationship requires the most effort to nurture and maintain. Apart from the fact that it is the interaction between two or more people, it enhances socialization and relationships which are the essence of life. "In other words, the interpersonal relationships and the reciprocal communication regularly constitute the social life of human beings." (Chen and Chyi, 2003:3)

Landsford, Antonucci, Akiyama and Takahashi (2005) found that well-being is directly tied to personal relationships while the lack of high quality relationships results in negative effects including depression, anxiety, and poor health in general. In an ideal tertiary environment, meaningful interpersonal interaction between lecturers and students can be the key to the academic success and social development. Student-lecturer interaction occurs at various places including the classroom, the laboratory and office. Irrespective of where it occurs, it is at the core of tertiary experience associated with students' overall academic and social development.

Constructive and close interactions between students and their lecturers facilitate students' favourable educational experiences as well as their greater academic and personal development. In a study by Newton (2002:80), "higher education is nowadays viewed as business-like enterprise where students as consumers seek a business-like relationship with the producer (lecturer) that delivers knowledge, skills and competencies he or she wants". Lecturers could be likened to customer service officers of banks i.e. front desk

officers that meet the needs, demands and aspirations of customers by making them happy and willing to do more business with the bank. The teachers' success in facilitating learning is directly related to the quality of that relationship (Chepchieng, Mbugua and Kariuki, 2006). Bethami and Roger (2006) define interpersonal communication as interaction among a small number of people and is characterized by more personal and individualized communication than that which takes place in larger groups. Interpersonal communication occurs when people speak and relate to one another as unique individuals. Interpersonal communication is shaped by the nature of the relationship between the communicators and, in turn, the nature of the communication shapes the relationship. We communicate differently in different relationships. The nature of relationship is often communicated in the "relationship" component of a message.

Thapa, Cohen, Higgins-D'alessandro and Guffey (2012) state, that "interpersonal relationships are foundation for learning and human development". Therefore, the knowledge and understanding of the importance of interpersonal relationships shapes goals and the methods or strategies adopted to actualize these goals. Hence, the inherent qualities of the relationship (caring, knowing, trust, and mutual respect) result in helping students achieve their full potential as learners (Abdulrahman, 2007: 82). He further says that "in any interactive process, the use of a human approach plays a major role in success. Education is one such process, the success of which is influenced by student-teacher relationship. In other words, this relationship is an essential component of the teaching and learning process. The teacher's success in facilitating learning is directly related to the quality of that relationship. The more teachers know about their students, the better the rapport the teachers have with them and the more likely they are to benefit from the teachers'

experience of the world. This teaching is inherently interactive because it depends on interacting with active, growing minds". This shows that good classroom management and organization, and a good lesson plan also minimize the likelihood of misbehaviour. Craig and Dickenson (2003) stated that almost all classroom behaviour is learned and that students must clearly understand what is expected of them. The responsibility lies with the teachers to explain how and why they want them to work in that way, and to give positive feedback when students respond positively. (Rubio, 2009) This is where effective communication is a recommended method of improving the quality of relationship between teachers and students in order to enhance learning.

There are increasing growing confrontations which have hindered healthy lecturer-student relationship. Studies have shown that most lecturers lack good interpersonal communication skills to address and meet the needs and desires of their students. Most lecturers are seen as moody, unfriendly and unapproachable in their relations with their students, thereby making them lose interest in academic activities (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2009). In a study carried out by the Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos (2015) on improving student relationship with teachers, findings revealed that teachers' tendency to portray themselves as demigods affects interpersonal relationship within and outside the lecture room. This in turn affects listening effectively to lectures and active classroom interaction as students feel uneasy in class. The institutionalization of fear in the minds of students affects the teaching and learning process as students are unable to express their minds, ask questions or even answer questions in and out of class about what they did not understand. This situation is further complicated by recent revelations in the literature indicating a decrease in lecturers' time to interact with

students. A report by Kuh (2001) on "Assessing What Really Matters to Students Learning" showed a decrease in lecturers' time to interact with students outside the classroom as most lecturers spend more of their non-teaching period in the pursuit of research and publication rather than on students' interaction. Hence, this study seeks to assess the influence that interpersonal relationship between lecturer and student has on students' academic performance. The study sets out to provide answers to the following research questions; How does lecturers' efficiency in interpersonal communication determine the nature of relationship with students? How does lecturer-student' interpersonal communication efficiency influence the students' academic performance? What factors can promote lecturer-student' interpersonal communication?

Literature Review

Communication is important in our day-to-day activities. Communication helps human beings to develop identity, establish and build relationships, coordinate efforts with others, have impact on issues that matter to us, and work out problems and possibilities. Communication effectiveness is the lifeblood of meaningful relationships. Communication involves sharing our feelings, ideas and opinions with others. This can be intellectual, personal, spoken or written in nature. Communication motivates, informs, suggests, warns, orders, changes behaviour, and establishes better relationships, to make interaction meaningful and make oneself understood. Communication is effective when a communicator is effective enough to communicate competently, simply, clearly, sincerely and dynamically. One's communication can be termed as successful, if the receiver acknowledges it. That is, when a listener or reader understands, reacts, responds to this communication and shapes his/her learning behaviour. Zolten and Long (2006) define

communication as the sending of information from one person to another. Communication can be verbal, like one person talking to another or it can be non-verbal, like scowls on a person's face that will probably let other people know he is angry.

Hence, communication can be positive or negative, effective or ineffective (Lee and Lee, 2009: 302). Shotter (2000: 119) suggests that we cannot understand communication through external, abstract, and systematic processes. Instead, he describes communication as a "ceaseless flow of speech entwined, dialogically structured, social activity". In other words, communication is participatory; we are actively involved and relationally responsive in our use of communication. Communication is a process by which we understand others and in turn endeavour to be understood by them. It is dynamic, constantly changing and shifting in response to the total situation. Hence, 'communication' can also mean having the sense of participation. Participatory communication leads to interpersonal relationship. Interpersonal relationship can only take place when there is interpersonal communication between two people. Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging messages between people whose lives mutually influence each other in unique ways in relation to social and cultural norms. This definition highlights the fact that interpersonal communication involves two or more people who are interdependent to some degree and who build a unique bond based on the larger social and cultural contexts to which they belong (Wasserman, 2004).

Communication and Interpersonal Relationship

Communication is the substance of relationships. Through communication we establish and maintain relationships. Although

relationships are as unique as the individuals in them, there are general stages of development that many relationships experience as they mature. These stages are often characterized by particular communication patterns. Two general patterns of relationship development are relationship formation and relationship breakup (Bartholomew, Hiller, Knight, Nucatola and Simpson, 2000).

Relationship formation is characterized by increasing intimacy and commitment. In the initiating stage of a relationship, we open lines of communication. We gain more information about the other person in the experimenting stage. In the intensifying stage, we increase both the depth and breadth of the relationship. We assimilate activities, schedules and interests in the integrating stage. The bonding stage establishes mutual obligations and responsibilities and creates a foundation for long-term relationships. Hence, interpersonal relationships are important because positive interpersonal relationships will allow effective communication and understanding (Bartholomew, et al, 2000). However, there are many reasons why people have communication challenges in their relationships. These are due to fear, beliefs and social conditioning that do not serve us, the desire to hold on to being "Right", not listening to understand and running away from reality.

Communication and Lecturer-Student Interpersonal Relationship

The quality of a relationship is evidenced by levels of trust, intimacy, and sharing; the presence of positive effect, closeness, and affective tone; and the content and quality of communication (Laible and Thompson, 2007). Hence, relationships can evoke positive as well as negative experiences. Relationships undergo predictable changes as a function of development and the changing needs of the individual. Lecturer-student relationships are typically defined with respect to

emotional support as perceived by the student and examined with respect to their impact on the student's outcomes. Earlier studies have shown that strong and supportive relationships between teachers and students are fundamental to the healthy development of all students in schools (Wubbels, Brok, Tartwijk, and Levy, 2012). Positive student-teacher relationships serve as a resource for students at risk of school failure, whereas conflict or disconnection between students and adults may compound that risk. Student-teacher relationships provide a unique entry point for educators and others working to improve the social and learning environments of schools and classrooms. Lecturers who convey emotional warmth and acceptance as well as make themselves available regularly for personal communication with students foster the positive relational processes characteristic of support. These supportive relationships help maintain students' interests in academic and social pursuits, which in turn lead to better grades and more positive peer relationships (Wubbels, et al, 2012).

Strahan and Layell (2006) noted the importance of "establishing a learner-centered environment that featured warm, supportive relationships with students" McEwan (2002: 30) stated that: "Effective teachers appear to be those who are... 'Human' in the fullest sense of the word. Their classrooms seem to reflect miniature enterprise operations in the sense that they are more open, spontaneous, and adaptable to change". In the same vein, Koplow (2002) proposed that effective student-teacher relationships encourage greater confidence and classroom engagement in much the same manner as sensitive parenting encourages a greater sense of security and confidence (Knoell, 2012). Saul (2005), in his study on "Canadian students from the Atlantic coast and the Pacific coast",

found that all students interviewed for the study noted the vital importance of the student-teacher relationship to their success. One of the students stated that:

“The teacher needs to be willing to have a relationship, and not just be assessing us. It makes a big difference if they take the time to understand how you are feeling, if they understand and connect” (Knoell, 2012: 19).

Linking Lecturer-student relationship to academic performance of students, Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) in “Classroom Management that Works - Research-based strategies for every teacher”, found out that among the four general components of teachers’ effectiveness “teacher student relationship was the keystone for student academic performance” (Knoell, 2012). Knoell (2012) in his study “The Role of Student-Teacher Relationship in the Lives of Fifth Graders”, using a mixed method analyses, found out that students’ needs and the resulting trust that is developed on the teachers ability to solve them can contribute to students’ academic success.

Kaufman, (2012) on a study “Improving Teacher Students Relationship with Teachers to provide Essential Support for Learning” reported that improving students' relationships with teachers has important, positive and long-lasting implications for students' academic and social development. Students who have close, positive and supportive relationships with their teachers will attain higher levels of achievement than those students with more conflictual relationships. If a student feels a personal connection to a teacher, experiences frequent communication with a teacher, and receives more guidance and praise than criticism from the teacher, then the student is likely to become more trustful of that teacher,

show more engagement in the academic content presented, display better classroom behaviour, and achieve at higher levels academically. Positive teacher-student relationships draw students into the process of learning and promote their desire to learn (Kaufman, 2012). Britt (2013) in his study entitled "Teacher-Student Relationships and Student Achievement in Grade Six and Seven Mathematics" reported that teachers who had a positive relationship with students had higher results in student achievement on the mathematics SOL tests. The survey was given to forty middle school students who answered questions about the mathematics teachers in the following categories: leaderships, helpfulness, understanding, freedom, uncertainty, dissatisfaction, admonishment, and strictness of teachers' behaviour.

Another study by Boateng (2012), "A Sociological Analysis of Student-Lecturer Interaction in the Wake of Contemporary University Dynamism" states that lecturers not only pass onto their students the expertise they have acquired in their respective fields of learning, but also guide them directly and indirectly through the intricacies of the university system, lend moral support, and provide academic and career counseling. Formal student-lecturer interaction and communication is therefore an important precursor for overall quality teaching and learning experience. A study carried out by Martin and Dowson, (2009), on the "Review of Educational Research" shows that when the need for belongingness is fulfilled in a relationship, this fulfillment produces positive emotional response from the student. Addressing this from Martin et al. point of view shows that students need to have a sense of belonging or connection with the lecturer and as a result positive responses would be generated rather than fear. Gettinger and Kohler (2006) report that

clarity of communications and consistency of classroom management practices early in the academic year tend to predict positive academic and social outcomes in elementary and secondary level classrooms throughout the year. It is reasonable to assume that the degree to which students pursue goals valued by lecturers is dependent on whether lecturers communicate clearly and consistently their values and expectations concerning classroom behaviour and performance (Shindler, 2009).

Theoretical Framework: Theory of Pedagogical Communication

Pedagogical communication is an action in which the body, being a part of a relational whole, performs a fundamental role. As such, instructional communication (pedagogical communication) is often conceptualized as a form of interpersonal communication. Various studies on the interaction between teacher and student confirm that there is a strong correlation between the teacher's nonverbal behaviour (such as immediacy), as well as verbal behaviour (such as out of class communication (OCC) and the students' level of motivation and proficiency. Nonverbal communication serves as a vehicle for the teacher's affections, intentions and attitudes towards students, and vice-versa.

For this reason, the concept of "immediacy" is often studied in pedagogical communication. Immediacy is the perception of physical, emotional or psychological proximity created by positive communicative behaviour. In the pedagogical relationship, it refers specifically to the communication between teachers and students (Richmond, 2002; Sibii, 2010). Studies examining interpersonal communication in instructional communication are published in *Communication Education* (Hagenauera and Volet, 2014). Good communication between teachers and young students is thought to improve the test scores of the students. Some parents of students at

the William T. Harris School were interviewed and stated that they can tell how good a teacher is just by watching them in the classroom setting. Observing how teachers talk to their students and how they promote communication between their students can lead to conclusions about how well these students will score on standardized tests. Parents of students at The William T. Harris School have admitted that they do not always trust the publicized rankings of teachers. However, they stated that there are strong similarities between their children's grades and their impressions of their children's teachers (Hagenauera and Volet, 2014). This theory presupposes that improved relationship between lecturers and students will inadvertently affect students' academic performance either positively or negatively.

Methodology

The qualitative research method was adopted for the study. This involved the use of focus group discussion with students and in-depth interview with lecturers from the institution to assess the influence of interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students on University of Ibadan students' academic performance. The qualitative method was adopted to get diverse opinion, critical observation and analytical views to the issue of discourse.

Sampling and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised students and lecturers from the University of Ibadan. The study adopted the purposive sampling methods with the focus group discussion and in-depth interview. This method is considered appropriate to ensure that the research is thorough.

Step 1: Six students Halls of residence (3 female halls and 3 male halls) were randomly selected due to the sensitive nature of the study.

Step 2: A total of 24 students (12 females and 12 males) were randomly selected and divided into three groups (8 students with 4 males and four females per group) for the focus group discussion (FGD) sessions. Hence, three FGD sessions were held with students drawn from the selected Halls of residents from the institution.

Step 3: Six lecturers from various departments within the university who serve as wardens in the six selected hall were drawn for the in-depth interview sessions.

Step 4: An FGD guide and in-depth interview guide with 10 questions each were developed to elicit the needed information from lecturers and students for the study.

Step 5: Data collected during the FGD sessions with students and in-depth interviews with lecturers were tape recorded, transcribed and issues of interest were collated and analyzed to establish findings for the study. However to maintain confidentiality, names of lecturers and students were not mentioned in the findings.

Result of the Qualitative Analysis

The In-depth interview guide and FGD guide employed in this study contained eight and seven open-ended questions respectively. For the in-depth interview, Research questions One and Three were combined with ten open-ended questions. Research Question Three contains seven open-ended questions to elicit the needed responses from lecturers while for the FGD sessions Research questions One and Three were also combined with ten open-ended questions.

Research Question Three contains seven open-ended questions to elicit the needed responses from students.

Findings/Discussion

Effect of Lecturers 'efficiency on interpersonal communications on the nature of relationship with students

In order to find out the effect of lecturers' efficiency on interpersonal communications on the nature of relationship with student, an in-depth interview was conducted on six lecturers and focus group discussion with twenty four students in three FGD sessions. The in-depth interview guide contains ten open ended questions while the FGD guide also contains eight open ended questions to elicit the needed responses. The data were analyzed through thematic mapping of the various responses of the interviewees. A sample of in-depth interview with lecturers from the Faculty of Education is hereunder presented:

“the lecturing job involves interpersonal communication, so if you don't do it right you have not satisfied the criteria of being called a lecturer and the individuals frequently involved in this communication process are your students whom you have been employed to teach so before you can say a relationship has been established, you need to have had a couple of discussions with the other persons which you find meaningful and could go on and so if you're not able to go in and communicate with your students in a way that is productive and to be able to find methods to teach those students, well I can't say how you will truly developed a relationship with them”.

This was buttressed by another lecturer from faculty of Arts who connected lecturer-student relationships with effective communication and stated that:

“If you don’t have good relationships with your students as well as effective communication, you will not have successful learners. I cannot just be teaching without getting responses, so I make my class interactive and encourage those who have difficulty understanding some particular aspect to see me after class for more clarification”.

Based on this assertion, interpersonal communication between lecturers and students is reciprocal. The level to which lecturers relate to students will eventually spur a positive response from the students which will create a favourable academic environment conducive for learning. One of the lecturers explained, “if one doesn’t create a good relationship and doesn’t communicate effectively with the students, then those students might not really perform well in their academics”. This means that when a lecturer has a good relationship with his/her students, then the lecturer is going to get students who excel. This shows that a good interpersonal relationship cannot be formed without proper interpersonal communication between the sender and the receiver. A lecturer from faculty of Science stated that:

Relationships are formed with communication. This is because the relationship involves frequent conversation among the parties involved. I cannot say I’ve built a good relationship with my students if we don’t get to talk and this doesn’t necessarily have to be in the classroom alone, it could be anywhere.

This means effective interpersonal communication is a precursor to positive interpersonal relationship. He further buttressed this assertion that interpersonal communication can have a positive influence on his relationship with his students in the area of helping students who are not really doing well in their academics. He said:

There are students who are bright but they need to be helped. It is not only dull students that do need some measure of help. Communicating with them helps me detect areas which they have difficulty or in which to concentrate (*Lecturer faculty of Science*).

The lecturer believed that creating and maintaining relationships with his students was a central component of his teaching philosophy. He suggested that relationships should be an important component of teaching and that a lecturer-student relationship involves a mutual relationship. He believed so strongly in creating relationships with his students that he suggested that the best lecturers maintain relationships with their students. This revealed that the type of communication that exists between lecturers and students influences interpersonal relationships and also enhances the learning process which will eventually breed successful learners.

Hence, lecturers are responsible for building the relationships that will enhance learning among students which will eventually improve their academic performance. Focus Group Discussion sessions were conducted with 24 students in 3 sessions. The data from the sessions were analyzed through thematic mapping of the responses. The FGD sessions with the students revealed that the lecturer's positive or negative interpersonal communication will

determine the extent to which the students will relate with them. One of the students stated that:

If the lecturer encourages interactive sessions in his class and does not teach as if he is talking to himself alone or a lecturer who makes you feel bad and worthless because you didn't get a question right especially during presentations or an interactive session.

Judging from these responses means that the effective use of interpersonal communication skills plays a vital role in lecturer-student interpersonal communication. This means that, lecturers' efforts to learn about their students positively affected student's effort and relationship with such lecturers and lack of it could negatively affect their relationship. One of the students stated that:

Lack of interpersonal communication between lecturers and students can prevent students from learning practical aspect of their course when it is not well communicated. Some of the lecturers really need to work on their communication skills because not all of them are good teachers. The fact that a lecturer is a professor does not mean he or she is a good communicator.

Another student added other factors that could hinder lecturer-student communication as shyness, language barrier, pride, inferiority complex and over confidence which could hinder interpersonal communication. The importance of lecturer- student interpersonal communication is reiterated in the principle of pedagogical communication theory which emphasizes that good communication between teachers and students will greatly improve the academic performance of the students (Richmond, 2002; Sibii,

2010). Hence, the interaction between a teacher and a student confirms that there is a strong correlation between the teacher's nonverbal behaviour (such as immediacy), as well as verbal behaviour (such as Out of Class Communication (OCC)) and the students' level of motivation and proficiency. This was shown in the various comments of both lecturers and students in the study. Kaufman (2012) in a study of "Improving Students Relationship with Teachers to Provide Essentials for Learning" established that if a student feels a personal connection to a teacher, he/she experiences frequent communication with a teacher, and receives more guidance and praise than criticism from the teacher. Then the student is likely to become more trustful of that teacher, shows more engagement in the academic content presented, displays better classroom behaviour, and achieves at higher levels academically. Hence, positive teacher-student relationships draw students into the process of learning and promoting their desire to learn because without meaningful communication, a relationship cannot be developed to support successful learning.

Influence of Lecturer-student Interpersonal Communication on Students' Academic Performance

In order to find out the influence of interpersonal communications on students' academic performance, an in-depth interview was conducted on six lecturers and focus group discussion with twenty four students in three FGD sessions. The in-depth interview guide contains seven open ended questions while the FGD guide also contains seven open ended questions to elicit the needed responses. The data were analyzed through thematic mapping of the various responses of the interviewees. The study shows that lecturers' interpersonal communication influences students' academic

performance either positively or negatively. In some of the interviews conducted with the lecturers, they acknowledged that students' high academic performance depends on the existence of positive relationships with them. One lecturer had this to say:

A lecturer needs to portray an inviting attitude and this would encourage your students to draw close to you. When students feel secure and comfortable with their lecturers they tend to improve and excel in their academics.

The establishment of positive lecturer-student relationships aids students' cognitive, social and emotional growth and enhances their mental well-being. Another lecturer suggested, "if universities could actively promote cordial relationship between students and lecturers there are host of benefits that could be reaped from such initiatives. This will bring significant contributions in increasing their intellectual and professional development". Another Lecturer buttresses this point that:

Positive teacher-student relationships draw students into the process of learning and promote their desire to learn because without meaningful communication, a relationship cannot be developed and there will not be successful learners. Hence, good interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students will contribute immensely to students' academic learning and overall performance in their studies

Three sessions of Focus Group Discussion were conducted with 24 students (8 students per session). The FGD reveals that the students share the same views with the lecturers' assertion. This is captured in the response of one of students who stated:

Good interpersonal communication with our lecturers will boost our morale and we will see them as approachable. This will also help us to show more engagement in our academics as regards individual projects, group projects, assignments and all, display better classroom behaviour, and also prepare well in advance for tests or exam.

Another student explained that better lecturer-student' interpersonal relationships will promote students' willingness to learn and definitely this would reflect on their grades. A male student shared his view:

To me if we have a good level of interaction with our lecturers, we tend to find our academic programme more interesting, exciting and enjoyable which will also help us in our career later in life. If you like a lecturer, you'll like his course and always strive to perform well. So communicating with our lecturers can help us to model ourselves after our lecturers, which is using them as a role model and friend who makes us want to try hard to be as successful as they are even more than them.

The results of these findings have shown that interpersonal communication plays a key role in students' success in their academic performance. Lecturers engaging in frequent conversation with students, allowing students with problems an access and sharing ideas with students help them more in their academic performance. Fraser, Aldridge, and Widia (2001) in a study of "Instructor-Student Interpersonal Interaction and Student Outcomes at the University Level in Indonesia" established that the

Dissatisfied, Admonishing and Strict scales of the QTI were statistically significantly ($p < 0.05$) and negatively related to student course achievement scores, while the Helpful/Friendly and Understanding scales were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) and positively related to student course achievement scores. This shows that the positive or negative interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students will significantly result in low or high academic performance among students. One of the lecturers while talking about his opinions on how to improve lecturers-students interpersonal communication stated that:

It is important for us as lecturers to show genuine interest in students' responses by spending time listening, asking follow-up questions, and remembering key information. I have had some of them say, "Can I talk to you personally?" "We can easily convey interest without sacrificing productivity by saying something such as, "I'm really interested in hearing more about that. Let's talk about it some more after we are done with this.

However, he believes that "students' consultation with them should centre mainly on academic matters, stressing the fact that issues pertaining to social and career counseling should be directed to the appropriate professionals on campus". He also believes that "making an effort to spend time individually with each student, especially those who have difficulties or hard time in their course can help create a more positive relationship with them. He stated that:

One way to do that is by actively seeking and facilitating opportunities for students to share their views and thoughts on academic subjects. Since

teaching does not end in the classrooms, lecturers should set a specific time to interact and communicate with students.

The practical suggestions on ways to improve the quality of the relationship between lecturers and students were given by some of the students. They called on the school management to ensure that student-lecturer communication is supported and students given opportunity to engage in academic discourse with their lecturers after the classroom engagement and if possible that seminars should be organized solely for the purpose of improving lecturers' communication and relationship with students. This shows that effective interpersonal communication, mutual respect, interest, willingness to help and creating time for interaction inside and outside of the classroom will promote positive lecturer-student relationship and eventually influence improved academic performance. Britt (2013) also established this in a study of: "Teacher-Student Relationships and Student Achievement in Grade Six and Seven Mathematics" that those teachers who had a positive relationship with students had higher results in student achievement on the mathematics SOL tests. This revealed that positive interpersonal relationship between lecturers will produce high academic performance among students.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Interpersonal communication forms a basic element in every interpersonal relationship. This study shows that interpersonal communication is a panacea for effective lecturers-students' relationship. The implication is that interpersonal interactions between lecturers and students will encourage and motivate students to improve in their studies. There is a need for lecturers to cultivate

the habit of communicating effectively with their students in order to know areas they might need help in their academics which can be achieved by showing personal interest in them.

They should ensure that relevant and comprehensible information is given in a respectful manner. Students on their part should be positive about their interactions with lecturers and believe that a healthy interpersonal relationship with their lecturers is possible while frequent orientation programmes should be organized for students of institution of higher learning to enlighten them on the importance of interpersonal relationship and its disadvantages in not assessing the quality of that relationship for their academic pursuit.

References

- Abdulrahman, K. (2007). Students Views on Student-Teacher Relationship. *Journal of Family Community Medicine*, 14 (2), 81–87.
- Bartholomew, N.G., Hiller, M.L., Knight, K., Nucatola, D.C and Simpson, D., D. (2000), Effectiveness of communication and relationship skills training for men in substance abuse treatment. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 18 (3), 217–225.
- Bethami, A. D and Roger, C. P. (2006). *The Communication in a Changing World* McGraw: The McGraw-Hill Companies
- Boateng, W. (2012). A Sociological Analysis of Student-Lecturer Interaction in the Wake of Contemporary University Dynamism. *International Journal of Applied Sociology*, 2(3): 25-29
- Britt, J. (2013). Teacher-Students Relationships and Student Achievement in Grade Six and Grade Seven Mathematics. Lynchburg: Liberty University, p. 23-39.
- Chepcheng, M. C, Mbugua, S. N. and Kariuki, M. W. (2006). University students' perception of lecturer-student

- relationships: a comparative study of Public and Private Universities in Kenya, *Educational Research and Reviews*, 1 (3): 80-84.
- Chen i-Chien and Chyi-in W. (2003), The Mobile phone as an interpersonal Contact: From perspective of gender difference. http://www.ios.sinica.edu.tw/ios/people/_personal/wupaper/MobilePhone (Accessed on 25th July, 2015).
- Craig, B. and Dickenson, P. (2003). Helping Pupils to Manage Their Behaviour and Engagement", Lecture to Trainee Mathematics Teachers, Manchester Metropolitan University, http://www.partnership.mmu.ac.uk/cme/Student_Writings/ETL/CraigB/CraigBootz.html#(Accessed on 28th August. 2015).
- Fraser, J. Aldridge, M and Widia, S. (2001). Instructor-Student Interpersonal Interaction and Student Outcomes at the University Level in Indonesia. *The Open Education Journal*, 3: 21-33.
- Gettinger, M. and Kohler, K. M. (2006). Process-outcome approaches to classroom management and effective teaching. In C.M. Evertson & C.S. Weinstein, (Eds.) *Handbook of classroom management*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p.73-95.
- Hagenauer, G and Volet, S. E. (2014). Teacher–student relationship at university: an important yet under-researched field, *Oxford Review of Education*, 40 (3), 370-388.
- Knoell, C. M. (2012). The Role of The Student-Teacher Relationship In The Lives of Fifth Graders: A Mixed Methods Analysis (Unpublished PhD Thesis University of Nebraska)o
- Koplow, L. (2002). *Creating schools that heal*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to students learning: Inside the National Survey of Student Engagement. *Change*, 33 (3), 10-17.
- Laible, D. and Thompson, R. A. (2007). Early socialization: A relationship perspective. In Grusec, J & Hastings, P (Eds.), *Handbook of social development*, New York: Guilford, p.181-207.
- Landsford, J. E., Antonucci, T. C., Akiyama, H and Takahashi, K. (2005), A quantitative and qualitative approach to social relationships and well-being in the United States and Japan, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 36(1), 1-22.
- Lee, J. and Lee, J. N. (2009). Understanding the product information inference process in electronic word-of-mouth: An objectivity-subjectivity dichotomy perspective. *Information & Management* 46(5), 302.
- Marzano, R., Marzano, J., and Pickering, D. (2003). *Classroom Management that works*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Martin, A.J and Dowson, M (2009), Interpersonal Relationships, Motivation, Engagement and Achievement: Yields for Theory, Current Issues, and Educational Practice. *Review of Educational Research*, 79 (1), 327-365.
- McEwan, E. (2002). *10 traits of highly effective teachers*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Newton, R. R. (2002). For-Profit and Traditional Institutions: A Comparison. *International Higher Education*, 1, 17-19.
- Nikitina, L and Furuoka, F. (2009). Teacher-Student Relationship and the Conceptualization of the 'Good Language Teacher': Does Culture Matter?, *Asian EFL Journals Quarterly*, 11 (2),163-187.
- Richmond, V. P. (2002). Teacher nonverbal immediacy: Uses and outcomes. In Chesbro, J. L & McCroskey, J.C (Eds.), *Communication for teachers*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. p.65-82.

- Rimm-Kaufman, S and Sandilos, L (2015). *Improving Students' Relationships with Teachers to Provide Essential Supports for Learning*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Rubio, C. M. (2009). Effective teachers-Professional and personal skills, ENSAYOS. Revista de la Facultad de Educación de Albacete, 24: 35-46. http://www.uclm.es/_ab/educacion/ensayos/ensayos (Accessed on 15th July, 2015).
- Saul, D. (2005). Education unplugged: Students sound off about what helps them Learn, *Education Canada*, 45(2): 18-20.
- Sibii, R. (2010). Conceptualizing teacher immediacy through the 'companion' metaphor. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15: 531–542.
- Shindler, J. (2009). *Transformative Classroom Instruction and the Pedagogy-Management Connection*, <http://web.calstatela.edu/faculty/jshindl/cm/Chapter11pedagogy-final.htm>, (Accessed, on 28th Aug, 2015).
- Shotter, J. (2000). Inside dialogical realities: From an abstract-systematic to a participatory-wholistic understanding of communication, *Southern Communication Journal*, 65, 119-132.
- Strahan, D. B. and Layell, K. (2006). Connecting caring and action through responsive teaching: How one team accomplished success in a struggling middle school, *The Clearing House*, 79 (3), 147-153.
- Thapa, A, Cohen, J., Higgins-D'alessandro, A., and Guffey, S. (2012), *School Climate Research Summary: August 2012*. New York: National School Climate Center.
- Wasserman, I. C. (2004). Discursive Processes That Foster Dialogic Moments: Transformation in the Engagement of Social Identity Group Differences in Dialogue. (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Fielding Graduate Institute, Santa Barbara, CA).

- Wubbels, T, Brok, P, Tartwijk, J and Levy, J. (2012). *Interpersonal Relationships in Education: An Overview of Contemporary Research* (Ed). Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers.
- Zolten, K., and Long, N. (2006). *Parent/Child Communication*. Center for Effective Parenting. <http://www.parenting-ed.org/>. (Accessed on 15th July, 2015).