



## Students' Evaluation of the Communication Skills of Faculty Members of the Faculties of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Sari

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### ABSTRACT

Since nowadays, one of the most basic indexes of measuring the development of countries in their share of knowledge production, evaluation of the performance of educational units and consequently, promotion of their efficiency have become quite crucial. Assessing the educational performance of university faculty members is considered to be a proper and effective tool for fulfilling educational goals by using which one can measure the efficiency of programs and fulfillment of goals. This assessment can also be used for changing programs by either editing them or improving them. The main purpose of this study is to review the university students' evaluation of communication skills of the faculty members of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources of Sari University. The present study is an applied one in terms of purpose and it is a descriptive - survey in terms of the method used in it. According to the research results, students have evaluated the communication skills of the faculty members of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources has been higher than average.

**Keywords:** Educational Performance, Communication Skills, Evaluation of Faculty Members

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### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, universities and higher education institutions play an important role in the education of an efficient human force who also play crucial roles in the economic, social, cultural and political development of a country. Therefore, experts and specialists, such as university professors, are responsible for nurturing this valuable group of people so that they would have great special, education and communication skills and so on. That is how they would be guided based on their talents and abilities and the needs of the society.

Thus, the quality of higher education seems to be of significant importance so that no human capital, monetary and financial resource would go to waste and so that a coordination would exist between the development of an education system and its efficiency. The more organized and meaningful the teaching of the faculty members is, the more successful the university students will be.

In today's world, universities and higher education institutions play an important role in various dimensions of society, including economic, social, cultural and political dimensions, by accomplishing three main missions which are education, training and providing services. Thus, making sure that their performance is of high quality and paying sufficient attention to each of these functions are particularly important and play significant roles in the effectiveness of a university as well. As Maroofi (2007) has pointed out, if sufficient emphasis is not put on education, as one of the important functions of higher education, can lead to development of disabled and inefficient

human forces. In this respect, faculty members are the most important educational factors, thus, the quality and quantity of their responsibilities in the universities are quite significant (Shabani Varaki, Hossein Gholizadeh, 2006).

Therefore, if efforts are not made in the respect of improving the educational performance of the faculty members, including teaching skills, communication skills, special skills, teaching plan and individual and social skills, the quality of teaching/learning would considerably decrease and lead to the dissatisfaction of faculty members and students. In this case, the outcome of the education won't be desirable and the social, economic, political and cultural development of the society would be at risk.

Thus, some researchers believe that students are the most important source of information for the evaluation of the educational performance of the faculty members (Ziyaee et al. 2006); because they believe that both the student and the professor are present in the classroom and have a direct interaction with one another and students are individuals who have been directly taught by professors (Shakoornia et al. 2007).

What has attracted the attention of this researcher is the investigation of the educational responsibilities of the faculty members and communication skill is a part of it and would be discussed in this research.

Surely, logical communication plays an important role in the quality of education and if no effort is made in the respect of moral and communicative growth of the faculty members, the quality of teaching/learning would considerably decrease and lead to the dissatisfaction of faculty members and students. In this case, the outcome of the education won't be desirable and the social, economic, political and cultural development of the society would be at risk. Thus, conducting researches in the field

of the evaluation of communication skills of the faculty members seems essential.

Perhaps, the most complex type of evaluation is evaluating employees, especially teachers and professors. This method is complex because of the evaluation of low creditability and inaccuracy of the measurement tools and methods used in this type of evaluation, because none of the sources of information used in the assessment of professors don't provide us with accurate and unbiased information which is essential for having a healthy evaluation. Therefore, assessment specialists suggest that in order for the teachers' evaluation to be healthier, all of the information sources must be used in order to collect data and the ultimate judgment must be done based on a combination of them (Seyf, 1999).

**Research Method**

This research is an applied one in terms of the method used in it and it is a descriptive survey in terms of the subject matter of the research. In terms of time, it is a cross-sectional study and it includes extensive studies. In this research, the library method and the field method have been used. In the library method, the books, articles and documents associated with the research have been reviewed and in order to collect the necessary data, the researchers have referred to the available documents and library sources. In the field research method, the data related to the statistical sample has been collected using questionnaires. The questionnaire used in this research has been designed by the researcher and it has 30 questions and five items and is answered using a 5-point Likert scale (1=very high, 2=high, 3=average, 4=low, 5=very low) has been used.

The obtained data has been analyzed using a descriptive and an inferential method through SPSS software.

| Option            | Very low | Low | Average | High | Very high | Theoretical mean |
|-------------------|----------|-----|---------|------|-----------|------------------|
| Order of responds | 1        | 2   | 3       | 4    | 5         | 3                |

According to the central limit law, when the total number of samples is more than 30 and approaches infinity, the statistical distribution of the samples is considered to be normal and that is why parametric tests (t-test) are used for analyzing research questions.

Components of communication skills:

- Having easy access to the professor outside of the classroom
- Continuous interaction with students during the time of teaching
- The skills and ability of the professor regarding paying attention and hearing the questions of students and answering them
- Providing students with guidance and direction for doing assignments and activities
- Motivating students to study and research
- Creating equal opportunities for the learners to learn
- Professor's familiarity with the moods and behaviors of the students
- Reacting logically and reasonably to the views and suggestions of the students
- Professor's social behaviors while interacting with the students and presence of a mutual respect and positive behavior while honoring students
- How the professor dresses and what are his/her catchwords
- Whether or not the teacher's voice and dialect are suitable
- Knowing the students on the first and second name basis

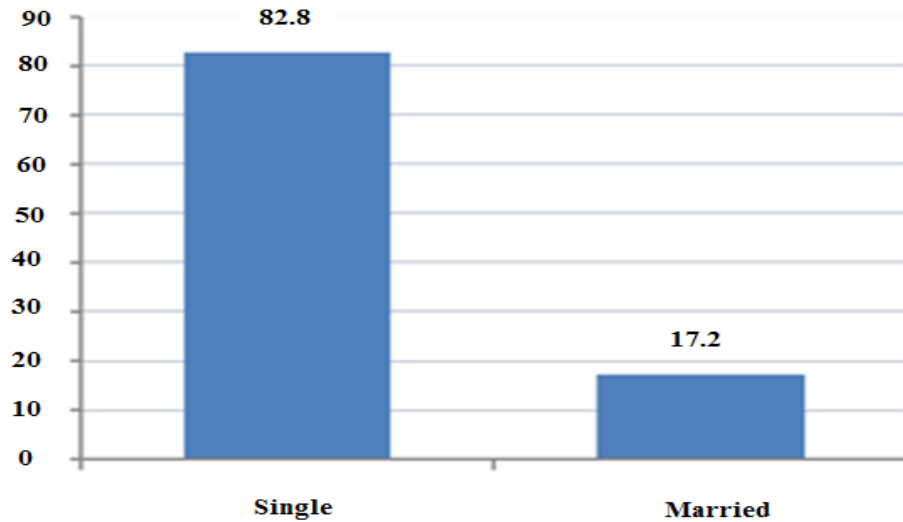
**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Given that the 5-point Likert scale has been used for answering the questions in the questionnaire and the scale is ordinal, thus, by taking into consideration how the responds are ranked which has been presented in the table below, the theoretical mean of the responds was calculated to be equal to 3 which has been taken into consideration in analyzing the research questions.

**Describing the research testees in terms of their marital status**

**Table 1: frequency distribution of the marital status of the testees**

| Marital status | Number | Percent |
|----------------|--------|---------|
| Single         | 284    | 82.8    |
| Married        | 59     | 17.2    |
| Total          | 343    | 100     |



Graph 1: comparing the percent of frequency of research testees in terms of their marital status

As it can be seen in table 1 and graph 1, it can be seen that 284 of the samples were single (82.8%) and 17.2% of them were married. Three of the testees did not respond to the question related to marital status.

**Descriptive review of the research variables**

Table 2: descriptive results associated with communication skills

| Type of performance-related skills | Total  | Communication |
|------------------------------------|--------|---------------|
| Mean                               | 165.79 | 37.31         |
| Number of questions                | 53     | 12            |
| Theoretical mean                   | 159    | 36            |

The information presented in table 2 shows that the mean of educational performance of the faculty members of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources has been equal to 165.79 and it has been higher than the theoretical mean (159). The mean of communication skills, special skills, educational skills and management skills of the students in the classroom has been higher than the theoretical mean.

**Research question:** how have the students evaluated the communication skills of the faculty member of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources of Sari university?

**H<sub>0</sub>:** the communication skills of the faculty member of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources of Sari university is not higher than expected.

**Research hypothesis:** the communication skills of the faculty member of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources of Sari university is higher than expected.

$\bar{x} = \mu$  **H<sub>0</sub>:**

**H<sub>1</sub>:**  $\bar{x} > \mu$

Table 3: results of the one-sample t-test for evaluating the second research hypothesis

| Mean of communication skills | Standard deviation | t    | Degree of freedom | Significance level | Allowable error |
|------------------------------|--------------------|------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 37.31                        | 9.45               | 2.49 | 322               | 0.013              | 0.05            |

**Table 4: results of prioritizing the condition of communication skills of faculty members (second question) based on the Friedman test**

| Row                                      | Type of skill   | Rank | Priority |
|--|---|------|----------|
| 1  | Continuous interaction with students throughout the time of teaching                            | 6.92 | 4        |
| 2  | Professor's ability to pay attention and to listen to the questions and answers of the students | 7.41 | 2        |
| 3  | Expressing pleasant and desirable words   | 6.38 | 7        |
| 4  | Turning the class atmosphere to a friendly environment with respect                             | 6.52 | 6        |
| 5  | Using words based on admiration and support   | 6.28 | 8        |
| 6  | Professor's familiarity with the moods and behaviors of the students                            | 5.47 | 12       |
| 7  | Reacting logically and reasonably to the students' views and suggestions                        | 5.76 | 10       |
| 8  | Behaving well and respecting the students   | 6.67 | 5        |
| 9  | Being fair with the students  | 6.04 | 9        |
| 10                                       | Making eye-contact with the students  | 7.39 | 3        |
| 11                                       | Knowing the students on the first and second name basis   | 7.66 | 1        |
| 12                                       | Paying attention to the individual differences of the students                                  | 5.52 | 11       |
| X <sup>2</sup> =193.54    df=7    P<1.01 |   |      |          |

According to table 2, the mean of communication skills of the faculty members of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources in Sari University has been equal to 37.31. given that the significance level (0.013) has become lower than the allowable error (0.05), the difference between the mean of communication skills of the faculty members and the theoretical mean has become significant. Therefore, the H<sub>0</sub>, indicating that the communication skills of the faculty member of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources of Sari university is not higher than expected, is rejected and the opposite hypothesis is accepted. Thus, it can be inferred that students have evaluated the communication skills of the faculty members of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources has been higher than average. According to table 4, in the prioritization of the components of communication skills, knowing students on the first and second name basis, professor's ability to pay attention and listen to the students' questions and answers, making eye-contact with students have achieved the highest ranks.

## RESULTS

Students have evaluated the communication skills of the faculty members of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources has been higher than average. In the classification of the components of communication skills, the following factors were

mentioned as the most important features in the faculty members of faculties of agriculture and natural resources:

behaving well and respecting students, continuous interaction with students throughout the time of teaching, knowing students on the first and second name basis, professor's ability to pay attention and listen to the students' questions and answers. The scores given to the communication skills of the faculty members of the faculties of agriculture and natural resources are indicative of high levels of communication skills. This matter will affect the level and quality of the university. In this regard, Ahmadi (2014), in their study, reported that communication skills training impacts the improvement of self-regulation of the learning of learners. Rahmanzadeh et al. (2013) have conducted a research called the study of the relationship between the communication skills of professors of faculty of engineering in Valiasr School for girls and the effectiveness of education and found out that the more the communication skills of professors are reinforced, the more significant the increase in the effectiveness of the scientific groups, motivating students to learn more and academic improvement of students and also, the more the verbal and nonverbal communication skills are reinforced, the more effective the scientific groups would be.

According to the results associated with communication skills, we present the following suggestions:

- Professor should pay more attention to the intelligence, talent, creativity, personality, motivation, gender and cultural limits of the learners;
- Professors should avoid comparing learners with one another;
- Professors should not pay individual attention to learners and they should establish one-on-one interactions and they should react logically and reasonably to the students' views and suggestions.

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