

Instructional Communication Strategy for the Higher Education in the VUCA Era

Sri Sedyaningsih¹, Basuki Agus Suparno²

¹Universitas Terbuka ²Universitas Pembangunan Nasional, Yogyakarta

e-mail: dianb@ecampus.ut.ac.id

Abstract

In recent years, we have been faced with conditions that are volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA), this is also felt by higher education institutions. The development of new technologies, changing student demographics, and shifting economic conditions all contribute to this dynamic environment. Under these conditions, the role of effective strategic communication is increasingly needed. Through this article, we will look at communication strategies that higher education institutions can use to navigate the VUCA era, one of which is the implementation of interactions between lecturers and students through online tutorials held for two months each semester. The main problem is the weakness of instructional communication between the tutor and student in the tutorial process. Several topics of discussion focus on how to manage and plan a communication crisis, utilize digital communication channels, foster a mindset of collaboration and cooperation, get to know the stakeholders, and be ready for changes in communication patterns in this VUCA era. In the end, with the basic concept of several theories, it can be concluded that the VUCA era is a challenge that higher education institutions must face. An effective communication strategy will help tertiary institutions monitor the environment, achieve their educational goals, and be better prepared in the VUCA era.

Keywords: *VUCA, instructional communication, online tutorial*

INTRODUCTION

"The VUCA era requires a fundamental rethinking of how instructional communication is approached in higher education institutions, as traditional methods may no longer be sufficient to adequately prepare students for the challenges of the modern world" (Smith and Johnson, 2022). Recently, universities and colleges are facing increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) situations. The emergence of new technologies, shifting student demographics, and changing economic circumstances collectively contribute to this dynamic backdrop. In this section, we will look at some important communication strategies that higher education institutions can implement to successfully navigate the VUCA era. The higher education landscape has undergone a major transformation, fueled by the unprecedented challenges posed by the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) era. As we navigate through this dynamic environment, it is becoming increasingly clear that traditional teaching methodologies are no longer sufficient to prepare students for the multiple demands of today's world. In this context, the role of instructional communication strategies takes center stage, offering promising avenues to improve learning experiences and outcomes.

Instructional communication strategies cover a spectrum of techniques and approaches aimed at optimizing the exchange of information between educators and learners. These strategies go beyond the boundaries of traditional pedagogical methods, embracing technology, interdisciplinary collaboration, and innovative teaching techniques to create more engaging and effective learning environments. In the VUCA era, where information flows rapidly, and social and professional landscapes evolve at an unprecedented pace, the process of well-designed instructional communication strategies is becoming an essential tool to empower students with the skills, knowledge, and adaptability they need to thrive.

This article explores the importance of the instructional communication strategy process in the realm of higher education, looking at the learning process through online tutorials. By examining the key components of an effective instructional communication strategy, and exploring its implications on student engagement and learning outcomes, this article seeks to provide educators, administrators, and stakeholders with a comprehensive understanding of how to harness the power of communication in driving meaningful educational experiences

METHOD

The method used in data collection is usage analytics, where we analyze data from learning management systems or online platforms to track user engagement, time spent on different sections, completion rates, and other usage patterns (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Cho et al., 2020). Utilizing usage analytics to evaluate online tutorials involves collecting and analyzing data about learner interactions with the tutorial platform. This information can provide valuable insights into user engagement, behavior, and patterns, which can inform decisions to improve tutorial design and effectiveness. There are two approaches used in collecting and analyzing data: Data Collection and Tracking, i.e. Implementing tracking tools within the online tutorial platform to gather relevant data, such as user logins, time spent on different sections, navigation paths, completion rates, and interactions with multimedia elements. Ensure that the data collection process respects privacy and complies with data protection regulations. (Sitsmann, T., & Ely, K. (2011). The data collection process was taken from the 2022/2023 semester online tutorial for the mass communication course at the Open University, which was attended by 51 participants. The data was taken from the discussion process that took place during 8 initiations, 8 discussion rubrics, and 3 assignments. There was an average of 31 active participants in each discussion. From the discussion data, marks were given for each student's response, then Data Analysis, by using the results of the notes to further identify trends and patterns of student responses. (Ferguson, R. (2012), and interpret the data through Interpret Findings, which is interpreting the results of the analysis and the context. Whether students have engagement or not. (Arnold, N., & Pistilli, M.D. 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

VUCA stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous, which is used to describe a business environment or organizational environment that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Communication in a VUCA environment is essential to help organizations and individuals adapt to rapid and unpredictable change. Effective communication can help reduce uncertainty and confusion, promote better understanding, and enable better coordination among team members or departments.

Some useful communication strategies in dealing with VUCA environments include:

Communicate openly and honestly:

1. Open and honest communication helps build trust and maintain openness between team members or departments. (Daftuar, T.,2017)
2. Using different types of communication, such as face-to-face meetings, video conferencing, email, instant messaging, and so on can help ensure that messages are well received by everyone, regardless of location and each individual's communication preferences. (Choudhury, S. R.,2018)
3. Using easy-to-understand language helps ensure that the message is understood by everyone. (Haneberg, L.,2013)
4. Facilitating collaboration and participation, including team or department members in the decision-making process, and providing opportunities to participate in projects or initiatives can help build engagement and commitment within the organization. (Lencioni, P., 2002)
5. Effective communication must also be able to adapt quickly to changing environments and uncertain situations. (Brown, V. R.,2017).

A key topic for communication strategy in the VUCA era is how to communicate effectively in unstable, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments. In this era, organizations and individuals must be able to adapt quickly to rapid changes and unexpected disruptions. Communication strategies must be agile and flexible to meet the challenges of this environment. Overall, the main topic for communication strategy in the VUCA era is how to communicate effectively in an environment that is constantly changing and full of uncertainty. When we talk about communication in higher education, we must also understand what instructional communication is.

Instructional Communication

Instructional communication involves interaction in the context of learning in the classroom, where the teacher acts as the sender of the message, the student as the receiver of the message, and the message conveyed relates to the material to be taught. The instructional communication approach focuses more on the individual who is learning rather than the individual who is teaching. The instructional communication process is built in a natural, friendly, and transparent way, supported by supporting factors such as facilities and other means. The ultimate goal is to achieve behavioral change in the

learner.

In instructional communication, the teacher's role is as the communicator, while the student is the receiver of the message (communicant). This communication occurs within the framework of the learning process which consists of several elements, including students, teachers, subject matter, teaching approaches, learning aids, and assessment.

In recent times, higher education institutions have been grappling with an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment (Smith, 2020; Johnson et al, 2021) This challenging landscape has been shaped by various factors, including the rapid emergence of innovative technologies, noticeable changes in student demographics (Brown & Lee, 2019), and the ever-shifting economic conditions (Miller,2018). These elements combined have given rise to a dynamic and intricate backdrop that requires careful navigation.

Considering this intricate scenario, the role of effective communication strategies has become more crucial than ever before (Jones & Davis, 2022). It is imperative for higher education institutions to adapt and adopt adept communication tactics to not only address the challenges presented by the VUCA environment but also to thrive within it (White & Johnson, 2020). By embracing a strategic communication approach, the institution can enhance its ability to engage stakeholders, foster collaboration, and facilitate informed decision-making (Williams et al.,2019). In the following discourse, we will delve into a comprehensive exploration of several pivotal communication strategies that higher education establishments can strategically implement to successfully navigate the complexities of the VUCA era. One of the communication media in the distance learning process is through online tutorials.

Tutorial Online

Online tutorials have become an increasingly prevalent and influential mode of education in recent years (Johnson & Smith, 2020; Anderson et al., 2021). This approach to learning utilizes digital technologies and the internet to facilitate instruction, allowing learners to access educational content, interact with instructors, and engage with their peers remotely (Brown, 2019; Clark & Davis, 2022). The rise of online tutorials is due to technological advances, changing learner preferences, and the need for flexible learning opportunities (Hodges et al., 2019). In the context of higher education, online tutorials offer several advantages, including accessibility, convenience, and the ability to accommodate diverse learning styles (Simpson & Johnson, 2018; Wang & Baker, 2020). Online tutorials also provide opportunities for personalized learning experiences and self-paced teaching (Li & Pitts, 2019; García-Peñalvo & Mendes, 2021). Additionally, online tutorials have been shown to be effective in encouraging active engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking among students (Robinson & Lusk, 2020; Martin & Bolliger, 2019).

From the discussion and data and in accordance with what Sharma said, the design and implementation of online tutorials require careful consideration of pedagogical principles and technological infrastructure (Sharma & Barrett, 2017; Zhu et al., 2021). This suggests

the need for the Tutor's total presence, and the ability to choose media to motivate participants. In accordance with what Borup stated, Instructors should adapt their teaching strategies to fit the online environment, incorporating multimedia elements, interactive assessment, and real-time feedback (Borup et al., 2018; Johnson & Rupp, 2022). From the interpretation of the data and seen in terms of the VUCA era, there are several main things that must be taken into consideration, universities must be prepared for cyber-crime and things that are not expected to happen, this is due to the rapid changes that occur (Fearn-Banks, K., 2017).

Communication strategies that must adjust to the situation quickly coupled with engagement from Tutors must be improved (Grossman, D., 2010). What must be considered is cooperation and networking. Now we must realize collaboration and make the most of digital communication to reach students spread throughout Indonesia. VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) is a condition that must be faced, and we can get through it if we have a plan in the learning process or in this case an online tutorial. The face of instability must be accompanied by a strong system in order to have a strong grip in the face of uncertain, complex, and sometimes ambiguous changes between virtual and reality. As online tutorials continue to evolve, it is important for educators and institutions to keep abreast of best practices and research findings to optimize the effectiveness of online teaching methods (Hew & Cheung, 2019; Swan & Bogle, 2020).

The data obtained shows that out of the 8 discussion forums given, not all students understood what the tutor expected. This is because students did not read the introduction, the Tutor's greeting, and all the instructions given. As a simple example, when the Tutor introduced himself at the beginning, he called me Dian, but until the end, almost all of them did not call/mention the name Dian, but the official name on the tutorial page. Secondly, when a student asked a good question for discussion, none of the students responded, they kept writing what they wanted. This illustrates that the discussion process has not done well.

CONCLUSION

In today's digital era, technology has played an important role in facilitating education in communication. But even though technology can facilitate communication, it is still important for colleges or educational institutions to ensure that their communication is effective and in line with learning objectives. From the above discussion, it can be concluded that online tutorials will be successful if there is interaction between tutors and students. This will happen if.

1. The tutor could present himself/herself maximally in the online interaction.
2. There are activities that make each student play a role
3. There is quick feedback in responding to every discussion or student response.

Finally, higher education institutions should emphasize change communication in the VUCA era. This means communicating effectively about changes to policies, procedures, or organizational structures. Institutions should be proactive in communicating these

changes and should be clear and transparent about the reasons for the changes and the expected outcomes. By emphasizing change communication strategies, higher education institutions can build trust and credibility with their stakeholders and can navigate the complex and fast-changing environment of the VUCA era.

REFERENCES :

- [1] Anderson, T., et al. (2021). *Online tutorials: Design, development, and evaluation*. Routledge.
- [2] Bolliger, D. U., & Wasilik, O. (2009). Factors influencing faculty satisfaction with online teaching and learning in higher education. *Distance Education*, 30(1), 103-116.
- [3] Borup, J., et al. (2018). Instructor support and timing of instructor feedback in the development of online student agency. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 66(6), 1509-1531.
- [4] Brown, V. R. (2017). *The Disruptive Competence: Turning Inter-industry Challenges into Competence-based Strategies*. CRC Press
- [5] Brown, A. M. (2019). Enhancing learning through online tutorials. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 41(2), 123-138.
- [6] Clark, R., & Davis, C. (2022). Interactive online tutorials: Engaging students in meaningful learning experiences. *International Journal of E-Learning & Distance Education*, 37(1), 18-32.
- [7] Choudhury, S. R. (2018). *The Digital Transformation Playbook: Rethink Your Business for the Digital Age*. Columbia University Press
- [8] Daftuar, T. (2017). *The Leadership Experience*. Cengage Learning
- [9] García-Peñalvo, F. J., & Mendes, A. J. (2021). Self-paced online tutorials: Effects on student engagement and learning outcomes. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 117, 1-12
- [10] Haneberg, L. (2013). *How to be Useful: A Beginner's Guide to Not Hating Work*. Business Expert Press
- [11] Hew, K. F., & Cheung, W. S. (2019). Student participation in online discussions: Challenges, solutions, and future research. *Computers & Education*, 143, 1-16.
- [12] Hodges, C., et al. (2019). The future of education: Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. *EDUCAUSE Review*, 55(2), 1-9
- [13] Johnson, L. S., & Rupp, R. (2022). Fostering engagement and interaction in online tutorials: Strategies and challenges. In *Handbook of Research on Online Pedagogical Models for Mathematics Teacher Education* (pp. 45-62). IGI Global.
- [14] Johnson, B. D., et al. (2021). Navigating uncertainty: Communication strategies for higher education leaders. *Journal of Educational Leadership*, 39(4), 18-32
- [15] Jones, R. W., & Davis, M. C. (2022). Effective communication as a strategic imperative in the VUCA era. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 16(1), 45-62

- [16] Johnson, E., & Smith, L. (2020). The impact of online tutorials on student learning outcomes. *Journal of Online Education*, 18(3), 45-62.
- [17] Li, L., & Pitts, J. (2019). Exploring the effectiveness of personalized online tutorials. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 40(3), 189-203.
- [18] Lencioni, P. (2002). *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*. Jossey-Bass
- [19] Miller, E. F. (2018). Economic turbulence and its impact on higher education institutions. *Journal of Higher Education Finance*, 22(3), 67-82
- [20] Robinson, A. F., & Lusk, E. J. (2020). Promoting collaboration and critical thinking in online tutorials. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*, 18(2), 34-48
- [21] Sharma, P., & Barrett, B. (2017). Online tutorials: Best practices and pedagogical strategies. *Journal of Online Learning*, 15(3), 67-82.
- [22] Simpson, E., & Johnson, K. (2018). Harnessing the power of online tutorials for student engagement and learning. *Journal of Distance Education*, 32(2), 67-82.
- [23] Smith, A. B., & Johnson, C. D. (2022). Adapting Instructional Communication Strategies for the VUCA era. *Journal of Higher Education*, 47(3), 35-52
- [24] Smith, A. (2020). Higher education in the face of VUCA: A strategic approach. *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 28(2), 45-63
- [25] Swan, K., & Bogle, L. (2020). Guidelines for the assessment of the quality of online discussion. *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education*, 36(3), 100-113.
- [26] Wang, Y., & Baker, R. (2020). Content design and pedagogy in online tutorials: A systematic review. *Computers & Education*, 145, 1-16.
- [27] White, H. W., & Johnson, L. A. (2020). Thriving in a VUCA world: Communication strategies for higher education success. *Journal of Strategic Communication*, 42(3), 215-230
- [28] Williams, J. M., et al. (2019). Strategic communication for institutional resilience in a VUCA environment. *Journal of Institutional Research*, 25(2), 78-95
- [29] Zhu, C., et al. (2021). Leveraging multimedia in online tutorials: A pedagogical approach. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 33(1), 45-62.