Orignal Research Article

Open Access

Investigating Hindrance to Effective Communication between the Management and Academic Staff of Universities in Malaysia: A Qualitative Case Study

Sadia A.[1]
Salleh B. M.[2]
Zulida A. K.[3]
Sazuliana S.[4]

Abstract:

Communication is the exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another, communication takes place persistently within an organization. Effective communication occurs only if the receiver understands the exact information or idea that the sender intended to transmit. To investigate the effectiveness of communication in the organization as it possibly will rally staff productivity and satisfaction. Analysis showed that internal communication has been ignored by some Malaysian organizations, low level of communication satisfaction of academic staff, means communication satisfaction is undermined by a lack of senior leader transparency and commitment to principles. This case study assesses the hindrances between academic staff with higher management. The study used qualitative survey approach because of its emphasis on qualities of entities, processes, and meaning that cannot be experimentally examined. Out of whole academic staff, a sample size of 40 randomly selected from two categories academic staff (lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor and professor) and former heads of department. These outcomes indicate a need to develop new approaches to assessing internal communication effectiveness also encouraged to focus on employee communication needs in terms of content as well as a channel among staff and management. This study might contribute to enhancing the understanding of communication effectiveness in overcoming the hindrance among management and academic staff of Universities. Findings of this study might be used as a recommendation for leaders of academic organizations in order to consider approaches such as communication effectiveness when they call for improvement and progress.

Key words.: *Academic Staff, Communication Hindrances, Effective Communication, University Staff*

Article History: *Received: 27th April 2018, Revised: 15th May 2018, Accepted: 25th May 2018, Published: 30th June 2018.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a very imperative element in the imperceptible organization (Ritter, 2003, p. 50). Most of the time problems in any organization occur because of ineffective communication. Usually, management who keep everything confidential or not communicating properly makes employees confusing to figure out what they may possibly, or may possibly not Beauty (2013). This is called the catastrophe of higher management in communication (Baldoni, 2003). Communication problems are more frequently the indicator of a deeper problem that leads to uncertainty about the organization's direction (Koontz, 2001). Person (1999) stated that the problem of communication interferes with work and hinders the organizational progress and makes the production of the whole system almost impossible. Inadequate effective business communication affects employees, senior management. These are the main performers of the organization. The management is mainly fretful because they are difficult to obtain and provide relevant information for execution. As stated by Antony (2011) internal communication usually ignored by Malaysian organizations. Moreover, it is difficult to translate the perseverance of the organization into departments' goals. In addition, poor relationships with staff of the organization due to inefficient communication mean that the organization is not meeting objectives and that its development objectives are not being met Beauty (2013).

Communication problems are also occurring at universities. **Andrade (2017) said, "One of the major difficulties in the communication between the head of department and academic staff is overlapping layers of communication; sometimes the information that has been conveyed by the head of the department is subsequently disseminated by other individuals in the organization."** Education institutes are quite different in the way they regulated, their operative style, on both layout of virtual or ground, these organizations requires endless evaluation and needs effective communication to build an effective relationship with individuals and at team level Sharma (2015). Universities handle various folks from very diverse backgrounds who have the motley achievement. To be an effective, advanced and healthy form of communication is important, as in organization they transfer not only the message or information but also their impact on communication staff along with its effectiveness.

[1]Faculty of Science, Technology and Human Development, University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia, Email: ayshasaadia@gmail.com
[2]Faculty of Science, Technology and Human Development, University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia
[3]Faculty of Science, Technology and Human Development, University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia
[4]Faculty of Science, Technology and Human Development, University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia

II. HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN MALAYSIA

The developments of higher education have seen from the last decade in Malaysia. Main focus on education was because of an increasingly competitive advantage in the world market. For the development of the educational system, universities entail advancement of academic staff in institutions. One element for the advancement of staff is effective communication. The history and development of public higher education institutions in Malaysia started with the establishment of the University of Malaya (UM). Subramani and Kempner (2002) stated that upon independence, the main thrust for national economic development focused on industrialization and the creation of employment for large numbers of graduating seniors from secondary schools. The authors asserted that education in technology and sciences was deemed essential to create a strong industrial sector to achieve the national goals.

Hence, the Science University of Malaysia or Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) was established in 1969. In the 60's, demands were also made for the establishment of a university that could meet the educational needs of Malays and the development of their language, and technical requirement for industrialization. However proper technical educational network recognized in early 2000, MTUN specializes in higher technical and technology programs which are practical-oriented. The four university colleges then were KUiTTHO, KUTKM, KUKTEM, and KUKUM. For mutual benefits, the Technical University Colleges Network (TUCN) of Malaysia was officially formed in March 2006. Later on, all four university colleges go through a rebranding resourcefulness and henceforward arisen as full universities (Source MTN network).

III. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Communication style is continuously changing at the organizational level. At the passage of time organizational structure is becoming more complex, so effective communication has facing new challenges, and need to require adapting change rapidly to make communication effective. All the way from history till now so many methods and thoughts shaped for the organizational system, which include Classical, Human Relations, Human Resources, Systems, and Cultural approaches (Moyer, 2011). Communication at the workplace is called organizational communication or internal communication. The focus of this research is to explore problems in the communication effective or internal communication in within the organization. The term organizational & internal communication is the same thing used by Moyer (2011). Then a general sense of organizational communication is sending messages, information through formal informal methods that helps in developing work-related matters for the individual as well as groups in organization Hoy & Miskel, (1991).

According to Education Portal (2003-2015), Ober (2001) Internal communication is the process of organization that utilities sharing information, developing a relationship and also building values and cultural norms in the organization Deetz (2001). In organizational active communication play a vital role. Communication can be in several forms like verbal, nonverbal or either in written form to accelerate plans and goals. Internal communication effectiveness depends on the healthy atmosphere of an organization where employees can share ideas and emotions spontaneously. As effective communication can helps employees to know organization in a better way (Moyer, 2011). According to the Young Executive magazine survey results, the most aggravating practice found among American supervisors was poor communication. The poor communication was the most frequent cause of anger and misinterpretations (Antony, 2001). Formal or informal communication both play a vital role in the organizational development as it gives comprehensive gazes of what the organization is (Admin, 2007). It is very important to differentiate one organization from other organization.

IV. COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Communication capabilities are needed to be meant for the accurate running of academic institutions because educational institutes are just as important as every single organization Hoy and Miskel (2008). As Te'eni (2001) stated that communication is necessary towards evolving a strong affiliation to attaining the objectives of the organization. He believed that organization have to make a strategy for effective communication in the organization

Though there is a two method to exploring educational organization: latest method is to the observed organization as a supportive, reciprocal, and two-way structure, on the other hand, controlled hierarchical traditional method where information continually proceeds by the leaders at top Owens (2004). He also highlights the important requirements for institutional leaders to appreciate their staffs' deeds, as for how much they impact on organizational accomplishment. According to the organizational definition if wants to know the organizational environments requires observing the behavior of humans they work in it owns (2004). Though merely interpersonal skill is not enough, leaders in the organization have to cultivate the attitude of empathic listening dynamically that put emphasis on the features of scrupulousness and confidence convey (1989). Leader communication is a very strong forecaster of communication satisfaction for the staffs Madlock (2008). According to Wińska (2010) that based on the research on internal communication, work appreciation and communication feedback play an important role in communication satisfaction among employee.

V. EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION NEEDS

Most of the time in every organization employees likes to interconnect sharing ideas, on the other hand very minimal attention given to them in the organization. Chen, Silverthorne, and Hung (2006) stated in the review of organizational process research "satisfaction with organizational communication practices has been ignored". As TowersWatson (2010) said, "Most firms do well at

communicating about the business; however . . . less than half of firms report they are effective at communicating with employees regarding how their actions affect the customer or increase productivity".

Furthermore, Truss et al. (2006), verify the idea that organization doing well at effective communication level, for development purpose, according to the half of the staff said their manager ask our analysis on important matters frequently or "keeps me in touch with what is going on". On the other hand, 42% replied that they are not up-to-date properly about organizational process, 25% said that they hardly feel that their manager acknowledged their work

VI. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION POLICIES

Effective communication is an element of technical process in the organization. Though this element of communication is defined by policies because policies can maintain the relationship between staff and management through pleasant and understanding behavior. The national culture played a very vital role in communication effectiveness. Al-Nashmi, Rahman, and Zin (2011) stated in one study at universities of Yemen where the faculty has different cultures were measured. The study showed that level of communication satisfaction was at low ranged. The faculty has Yemeni and Iraqi staff members were feebly satisfied with communication in their universities. And the Egyptians and Malaysians were moderately satisfied. However, the Indians remained very satisfied because Indian staff in the study had longer tenure, seniority and were more experienced. Al-Nashmi et al. suggested the importance of considering cultural differences among the staff of multicultural members to achieve an effective communication experience (2011).

Organizational policies create the culture of organizations and that cultures influence on staffs behavior and bring together for developing strong working relations. And this can be only possible through effective communication police that leads to effective communication. Effective communications enable the superiors to communicate even challenging message without creating conflicts and destroying the trust of their employees Alan S.L (2003). For that reason, management and staffs are necessary to be conscious and more open to the organizational culture in order to improve effective communications to build strong relations.

VII. METHODOLOGY: POPULATION AND SAMPLE

To investigate effective communication hindrance qualitative survey was conducted to explore the research question. The study population comprised academic staff (lecturers, professors, associate professor) and former head of department from one of the technical university of Malaysia. Sample selection aimed to cover a diverse range of communities to enhance the generalizability of data. Approximately 1000 academic staff, in this research, the unit of analysis is an employee for this study use random sampling of 20 former head of department and 20 academic staff.

Findings

The result indicates that the majority agreed that the management and staff have loads of communication hindrances. About 2 respondents disagreed that communication is not going well in university and according to the university has good opportunity to promote effective communication. The finding revealed that majority of the staff said there are no regular staffs meetings conducted and therefore is not a commonly used method of communication at the university, one of the employees quoted as saying: "No common platform to communicate each other's."

Another staff member said, "No platform or medium to express the ideas, opinions, and comments regarding issues, problems, and others to top management."

According to Faraz H. (2012) claimed that lack of communication leads to failures in work and difficult to manage work positively and very hard to make bound between employees. One respondent replied; "Lack chain of command from top management to staff. This will cause miscommunication between staff occur"

The use of communication skills in the workplace is essential to certify staffs about clear and brief message related to work, that makes helpful to perform work effectively. To achieve goals requires a prime level of effective communication in the organization, but failure in communication reasons confusion. According to (2%) of staff members said that management has university has bureaucratic issues. As Drucker (1989) said academic staffs are "knowledge workers" and those workers most of the time know well than their superiors in their area of expertise. So the academic staff "knowledge workers" do not just want to be told what to do. They not only want freedom of work in their expertise are as well as prefer to participate in decision-making and problem-solving process.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Effective communication is essential to various aspects of the proper functioning of the organization. The continuous evaluation of effective methods and the development of a communication practice plan for the departments of the institution (higher education institution) through cooperation with other members of the organization can contribute to effective communication. Supervisors can provide better communication practices by creating communication opportunities, using different media or communication channels so that their subordinates (staff) can interact, contribute, participate in the improvement process and find solutions.

The finding of this study leads to the understanding of communication hindrances in academic staff and also reveals the role of effective communication in the organization. This study highlights the importance of examining effective communication among the academic staff and management at the university level. Moreover, this study only focused on the academic staff of technical university; hence the generalizability of this research finding may be limited. Consequently, future studies might incorporate other types of universities, such as public universities, private universities,

or include countries like Europe countries communication satisfaction at the educational level, and so forth, for a more representative result.

IX. REFERENCES

- Al-Nashmi, M. M., Rahman, H. S., & Zin, H. S. (2011). Variation in communication satisfaction of academic staff in universities in Yemen depending on national culture, Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal, 18(1), 87-105. doi: 10.1108/13527601111104313

- Antony, J. (2011) "Six Sigma vs Lean: Some perspectives from leading academics and practitioners", International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management, Vol. 60 Issue: 2, pp.185-190, https://doi.org/10.1108/17410401111101494

- Andrade Diaz Andrade (2017) email short interview. AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

- Baldoni, J. (2003). Great Communication Secrets of Great Leaders

- Beauty, M. (2013). Factors hindering effective communication between top management and employees, a case of Ilala Municipality. Master's thesis, The Open University of Tanzania.

- Chen, S. H., Yang, J. Y., Shiau, H. H., & Wang, C. C. (2006). The development of an employee satisfaction model for higher education. The TQM Magazine, 18(5), 484-500

- Covey, S. R. (1989). 7 Habits of highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal care (1st ed.). New York, NY: Free.10.1108/095447806106685467

- Deetz, S. (2001). Conceptual Foundations. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research and methods (pp. 3-46). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Drucker, 1989. The new realities: In government and politics, in economics and business, in society and worldview. NJ: Transaction Publishers.

- Education Portal (2003-2015) Retrieved on June 2, 2014, from http://educationportal.com/academy/lesson/internal-communication-in-an-organization-definition strategies-examples. html#lesson

- Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. G. (1991). Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice

- Koontz, H. (2001). Management: A global perspective. 10th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill. Person (1999)

- Malaysian Technical University Network (MTUN) from https://mtun.uthm.edu.my/en/about-us.html

- Moyer, J. (2011). Employee/organizational communications. Institute for Public Relations. Retrieved on March 12, 2014, from http://www.instituteforpr.org/employeeorganizational- communications/

- Madlock, P. E. (2008). The link between leadership style, communicator competence, and employee satisfaction. Journal of Business Communication, 45, 61-78. doi: 10.1177/0021943607309351

- Ober, S. (2001). Contemporary business communication (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. (4th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

- Owens, R. G. (2004). Organizational behavior in education: Adaptive leadership and school reform (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

- Ritter, J.R. (2003) Behavioral finance Department of Finance, School of Business Pacific-Basin Finance Journal Volume 11, Issue 4, September 2003, Pages 429 437 https://doi.org/10.1016/S0927-538X(03)00048-9

- Subramani, S., & Kempner, K. (2002) Malaysian Higher Education: Captive or Post-Western? Australian Journal of Education Vol 46, Issue 3, pp. 231 - 254

- Sharma, Priti R., (2015) "Organizational Communication: Perceptions of Staff Members' Level of Communication Satisfaction and Job Satisfaction" Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 2481. https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/2481 ...

- Towers Watson, 2010. Capitalizing on Effective Communication. 2009/2010 Communication ROI Study Report.Truss, C., Soane, E., Edwards, C., Wisdom, K., Croll, A., & Burnett, J. (2006). Working life: Employee attitudes and engagement 2006, research report. Chartered Institute of Personnel and DevelopmentAlan S.L (2003).

- Truss, C., Soane, E., Edwards, C., Wisdom, K., Croll, A., & Burnett, J. (2006). Working life: Employee attitudes and engagement 2006, research report. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

- Te'eni, D. (2001). A cognitive-affective model of organizational communication for designing IT. MIS Quarterly, 25(2), 251-312. doi: 10.2307/3250931

- Wińska, J. (2010). Influence of superior-subordinate communication on employee satisfaction. Journal of Positive Management, 1(1), 110-124.