



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**THE MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS
OF HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SEREMBAN**

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By

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February 1998

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This study is undertaken to ascertain the perception skill of Heads of Departments, to find out the strategies used by Heads of Departments to lubricate the communication flow in schools and to determine whether Heads of Departments possess team building characteristics.

Two sets of questionnaires were distributed to thirty three Heads of Departments and ninety six teachers from nine Grade A secondary schools in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. One set of questionnaire was designed to determine the perception skill and the managerial communication skills and the team building characteristic of the Heads of Departments. The respondents to this questionnaires were Heads of Departments. Another set of questionnaire was designed to determine the motivating language scale of Heads of Departments. The respondents to this questionnaire were the teachers from the various Departments.



The findings indicated that majority of the Heads of Departments have low perception skills, high managerial communication skills and a high level of characteristics of team building spirit. The Heads of Departments also use a high level of motivating language in direction giving, empathetic language, mean making language and in communication satisfaction when communicating with the teachers in their Departments.



Abstrak projek yang di kemukakan kepada Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan, Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains.

KEMAHIRAN BERKOMUNIKASI
KETUA BIDANG DI SEKOLAH MENENGAH
DI DAERAH SEREMBAN

oleh

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Kajian ini bertujuan mengetahui kemahiran persepsi Ketua Bidang di sekolah menengah di Negeri Sembilan, strategi yang di gunakan untuk melicinkan komunikasi di jabatan masing-masing dan jika ketua bidang mempunyai ciri-ciri bekerja berpasukan.

Dua set soal selidik di berikan kepada tiga puluh tiga Ketua Bidang dan sembilan puluh enam guru dari sembilan sekolah menengah gred A di Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. Responden satu set soal selidik ialah Ketua Bidang. Soal selidik Ketua Bidang di bahagikan kepada latar belakang, kemahiran persepsi, kemahiran berkomunikasi dan ciri-ciri bekerja berpasukan. Responden satu lagi set soal selidik di bahagikan kepada latar belakang dan bahasa motivasi untuk pengurusan.



Keputusan menunjukkan yang majoriti Ketua Bidang mempunyai kemahiran persepsi yang rendah, cara berkomunikasi yang efektif, dan ciri-ciri bekerja berpasukan yang tinggi. Ketua Bidang juga menggunakan bahasa motivasi yang tinggi terutamanya dengan guru-guru di jabatan mereka.



CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
Preamble

In order to communicate effectively, communicators need to identify and realize the importance and complexity of the communication process. Communication is a complex, dynamic event involving a speaker who has learned how to create messages intentionally and to express meaningful discourse which is perceived, understood, and responded to by one or more human beings. This complicated process may be influenced by the specific situation in which the event occurs, by the personalities involved, and by the culture in which participants operate (Benjamin, J.B. 1986).

One of the most important ability of human beings is the ability to recognize the difference between oneself and all the rest "out there". While each human being is a part of the world, yet each individual is also separate from the world. Perceiving is the process of becoming aware of objects and events and distinguishing between others and ourselves (Melvin L.S.,1994). The ability to perceive is crucial to communication. To hear the words spoken by another person requires the ability to sense the



sounds and to have something to say requires the ability to perceive the world; to understand what another person is saying about the world requires the ability to perceive.

One is not able to communicate with others if one is not able to sense, to pay attention, to coordinate sensory experience, and to interpret those experiences and to have a sense of self. The traits, attitudes, needs and motives provide a basis for communicating. In addition, past experiences and the influences of other people also contribute to the ability to communicate.

The concept of communication in schools in Malaysia is no more in just passing of information from the principal in the school to the staff but in forming proper channels of communication in the different communication networks existing in schools today. Channels of communication that will lead to better understanding of the information passed and the need to build good interpersonal relationships.

Statement of Problem

The school is an organization that calls for the different levels of communication. Although the hierarchy of communication is mostly top down as far as instructions or decisions are concerned as school administration is bureaucratic nevertheless the different levels of communication are prevalent in schools.

Malaysian schools have come a long way from just a teaching institution to an organization that caters for the needs of its teachers, students, parents and the country. The school is an organization that competes to withstand the demands of society and progress of the information and knowledge of the world.

Today if schools in Malaysia neglect their communication channels and proper communication skills, then the various departments within the schools will face a dilemma of the incoming information and the carrying out of instructions.

A school that has high performance in the examination will have good communication networks within the different Departments. The channel of communication is usually on paper from the top down but information within the Department calls for proper communication skills. The different Departments face a lot of barriers in communication and the Heads of the Departments carry the middle manager status and he or she needs to communicate effectively between the top management and the teachers at the grass root level. Many Departments in schools face serious problems in communication. Many teachers share their grievances of the poor communication and public relation skills of Heads of Departments that cause teachers to lose respect for

them and communication flow becomes stilted between the Heads and the teachers. This ultimately results in dissension among the teachers which results in poor interpersonal skills.

On the other hand, a Head of Department with good communication skills will be able to coordinate well between the school management and the teachers. She is able to minimize barriers in communication, consider interpersonal skills, activate good listening skills and develop good communication strategies.

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the definition of communication is that of the stimulation of meaning through the exchange of shared symbols (Infante, 1990) and it focuses on human symbolic activity (Cronkhite, 1986). The term subordinates relate to the teachers who report directly to the Head of Department (Reddin, 1986). Teamwork means interaction between two or more people with high emphasis on both tasks and relationships orientations.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to :

1. ascertain the perception level of Heads of Departments.
2. identify the managerial communication skills of Heads of Departments, namely motivating language, empathetic language, mean making language and the communication satisfaction of teachers.
3. determine whether Heads of Departments possess team building characteristics.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception skill of Heads of Departments?
2. What is the managerial communication skills of Heads of Departments?
3. To what extent do Heads of Departments possess characteristics of team building spirit in them?
4. What are the variations of communication in the aspect of direction giving, empathetic language, mean making language and

communication satisfaction of Heads of Departments in achieving the schools' objectives?

Significance of the Study

This study will encourage Heads of Departments in schools to understand the importance of good communication skills in their interaction with their subordinates. It will create an awareness of the how to communicate and what are the required considerations in communication in order to communicate ideas and run organizations at a higher order.

The rationale of this study is to discover the perceptive levels of Heads of Departments. The organizational chart of schools has the principal as the Head followed by the Senior Assistant of Academic Affairs and the Senior Assistant of Student Affairs followed by the Heads of Departments and the teachers. Bureaucracy prevails in the education set up, thus communication is top down. The know how of communication is very important. How a particular message is imparted will decide on how a project will be carried out in a school. The Heads of Departments in the schools need to know how to perceive, be clear in their instructions and facilitate communication in order to meet the demands of the different expectations of the different personalities in their Departments.

Limitations of the Study

This study is based on library research and it is a survey of communicative skills of Heads of Departments in Grade A secondary schools in Seremban district.

Scope of the Study

This study is conducted to ascertain the awareness of Heads of Departments of their perception level, the managerial communication skills, the team building characteristics and the motivating language used by the Heads of Departments namely, in direction giving, empathetic language, mean making language and in communication satisfaction.

The subjects for this study are Heads of the Departments, viz Languages, Technical and Vocational, Social Science and Humanities and Science and Mathematics. The Heads of Departments are from Grade A secondary schools in Negeri Sembilan. The Heads of Departments were given a set of questionnaire and the teachers from these schools were required to answer a questionnaire in which the findings reflected the managerial communication skills of the Heads of Department from the view point of the teachers. Therefore, two sets of questionnaires were distributed to conduct a survey in nine schools and data collected were tabulated in terms of averages and percentages.

Conclusion

In Chapter One the importance, objectives, the research questions, the significance, the limitations and scope of this study are discussed. In Chapter Two, the literature review covers the definition of communication, the importance of good public relations in communication, the barriers of communication, the strategies of communication, and the styles of communication and the factors to be aware of in communication. In Chapter Three, the methodology for this study is discussed. The instruments used were two sets of questionnaires. The questionnaires consist of items that will fulfill the objectives of this study. The findings of the questionnaires are tabulated in Chapter Four. Interpretation and discussion of the findings are discussed. Other findings that were not expected but pertinent to future researches are also included. In Chapter Five, a summary of this study, how the objectives of this study have been achieved and conclusion, discussion, recommendations and implications are included.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The organizational structure of schools have become more complex and specialized over the years. Communicating information or getting a feedback is not directly from the principal to the teachers but through varied networks existing in the school system. Presently the Grade A secondary schools in Malaysia have four Heads of Departments who work with the teachers in their departments.

Definition of Communication

There have been numerous attempts to define communication (Dance, 1970). Communication is the stimulation of meaning through the exchange of shared meanings (Infante,1990). It is one which focuses on "human symbolic activity" (Cronkhite, 1986). Stevens (1950) states that communication is the discriminatory response of an organism to a stimulus (Stevens, 1950). " The transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, etc by the use of symbols - words, pictures, figures graphs, etc." is also a definition of communication (Berelson & Steiner, 1964). To be able to " elicit a response through verbal symbols" (Dance, 1967)



is communication. " Communication has its central interest in behavioral situations in which a source transmits a message to receiver(s) with conscious intent to affect the latter's behaviors. " (Miller, 1966). " Human communication has occurred when a human being responds to a symbol." (Cronkhite, 1976).

The Importance of Communication

Communication is very important in enabling people to coordinate their efforts and to produce a variety of goods and services which would be impossible if people were to work independently (Cronkhite,1976). Communication skill is a factor to get cooperation and to control interpersonal relations. There is a need to control in interpersonal relations (Schutz, 1958). If this need is not satisfied, there exists powerlessness.

Erich Fromm 's theory of character (1947) provides insights into certain kinds of cooperative communication behavior. There are four nonproductive character orientations. The receptive orientation describes individuals who believe that good things are only received from others. This type of person depends on others to receive what is worthwhile and does not feel he or she has anything of value to give, relationships are rather one sided. This person behaves pleasantly and acts favorably to maximize the chance that others will cooperate, but he or she is unable to reciprocate.



The exploitive orientation thinks it is necessary to take things from others by force or cunningly. Individuals with this orientation generally employ subtle or even overt threats when asking for cooperation. Deception is also a common tactic. The person may misrepresent a situation in order to get something from you.

The hoarding orientation changes the focus for receiving what is good. This type of person believes he or she possesses what is good and wants to save, hoard and protect it. Such individuals value orderliness and security. This individual will cooperate if he believes cooperation will help fortify his position and will not involve intrusion. This individual will ask for cooperation and give it on matters which involve restoring order or putting things back in the proper place.

The marketing orientation centers around the belief that the individual possesses what is good. An engaging personality and attractive physical appearance are prized because such characteristics make an effective way of cooperation through barter exchange.

These four character types are seen as unproductive (Fromm, 1947). More desirable and satisfying cooperative communication behavior would indicate sincere respect and concern



for the other person , a desire to realize one's potentialities, and a sense of how one's behavior will enhance his or her environment.

In a study conducted by Lau (1996), on the communication flow of branches within ANZ Banking group in Australia, the subordinates reported that they received small amount of motivating messages and relatively more work related information from their managers. Another interesting finding of this research is that managers agreed that some of their Heads of Departments do not share all information with their subordinates, however, the majority of the the subordinates disagreed with this viewpoint. This contrary result could be attributed to the difference in the perception each employee has about their level of communication with others. This could support a similar research (Marshall & Cacioppe,1986) which showed that senior level employees do not communicate as mich as they think they do and lower level employees would like them to communicate more.

Theory of Communication

The Palo Alto Group

Most relationship theorists acknowledge the importance of the work of Gregory Bateson, Paul Watzlawick and their colleagues in communication. Bateson's early followers were known as the



Palo Alto Group because they founded and worked at the Mental Research Institute based in Palo Alto, California.

Watzlawick, et. al. (1967) presents five basic axioms about communication. First, "one cannot not communicate." This point is important because it emphasizes that we are always affecting others' perceptions, whether we want to or not. Example, if you are not in the mood to have a conversation, you might open a book and begin reading. This signals that, " I am not available to talk"

The second axiom is that every conversation, no matter how brief, involves two messages - a content message and a relationship message. For example, on the content level, a professor may announce an upcoming test. Many possible relationship messages could be gathered here. I am the authority in this classroom; I need feedback on your progress. The students' responses also include a relationship dimension, which might express compliance, defiance, respect, fear or anything else.

The third axiom is called punctuation, i.e. interaction is always organized into meaningful patterns by the communicators. For example, consider a marriage involving nagging by the husband and withdrawing by the wife. This sequence can be punctuated in two ways. The wife's withdrawing could be seen as a response to



the husband's nagging: nag - withdraw, nag - withdraw. Or the husband's nagging could be viewed as a response to the wife's withdrawal: withdraw - nag, withdraw - nag. In the first cause, the punctuation of "nag - withdraw" implies ignoring - imploring.

The fourth axiom is that people use both digital and analogic codes. Sounds, word and phrases are digital signs arranged to communicate meanings. Non-verbal signs like gestures are digital.

The analogic code resembles the object itself as an example, the case of drawing a picture in the air with your hands. In interaction with communicate digitally but they comment above their relationship analogically. For example, a father at a playground sees his daughter fall and scrape her knee. Immediately, he says, "Don't cry. Daddy is coming." The content meaning is clear, but what is the relationship message? It depends on how the message is delivered. The father might communicate his own fear, worry, anger, boredom or dominance. At the same time, he might communicate a number of perceptions, including "You are careless," "You are an attention getter," "You are injured" and so on.

The final axiom of communication deals with the matching or meshing of messages in an interaction: when two communicators in a relationship behave similarly and differences are minimized,

