

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

There can be different types and reasons of complaints in University of Malaya. It may be about the quality of works, delivery or completion period, level of services or may also be due to poor inspection, poor production process or poor method of resolution.

The absence of proper response and follow-up about the complaint received may cause the Department to lose its public confidence in the face of the University community. The Department should pay attention on every complaint received. Therefore, the staff should be coming little more customer friendly by getting quick to response to the complaints. The staff should realize the importance of the complaint handling even though the Department may not be facing any competition with the same operation function. But, in many cases complaints involving expenses, increase the operating expenditures of the Department.

There are also tendencies of the Department staff making no effort to bring hidden complaints to the surface. The most serious thing is that the opinions of people who want to complain do not reach those in the Department who really need to hear them. In their opinion, the quantity of complaints reflects their performance. The implication is, if the hidden complaints are not

carefully being dealt and considerably, it may turn into service liability problems.

The Department should realize as danger signal if they does not received any complaint since it does not mean the quality is satisfactorily. Maybe, the users have resigned themselves to poor quality and regarded it as pointless to complaint.

5.2 Summary of Findings

From investigation performed on the existing complaint handling system, the study found that the Department has routinely underutilized complaint data. While staking the claim that the Department did a reasonable job at handling complaints, the Department admitted that they did not measure post-remediation satisfaction i.e. their opinions are based on gut feelings. The Department also agreed that there were enormous potential in improving the complaint handling system especially for better handling, measurement and monitoring of complaints.

The main weakness of this system is less monitoring on the complaint status and analysis on the collected complaint data. Emphasized on this weakness may able to identify and rectify main problem area.

In line with the primary objectives, the study seeks to find out the level of awareness and understanding of the Department staff towards the complaint handling system. Two null hypotheses were established and tested. First, the Department staff does not aware and understands the existing complaint handling system. Secondly, less experience staff tends to be more aware of the complaint handling system than the more experience staff, due to computerization of system.

The t-test analysis stipulates that administration staff or non-technical staff seemed to have better understanding and agreed in the procedures of the system such as guidelines of receiving and resolving complaints and identification of complaint handling staff.

The administration staff also more agreed that the complaint handling staff has been trained satisfactorily such as in the procedures, communication skills and computer illiteracy. And, they tend to be more aware of the importance of the coordination between sections in the Department to ensure the system satisfactorily functioned.

The analysis on data collection indicates that the administration staffs are more satisfied on the level of existing complaint form, categorizing of logged-in data and report statistics of complaint trends. They also more agreed on the importance of good relationship and communication between complaint handling staff and technical staff. And, more satisfy on the level of the Department formulating future planning based on collected complaint data.

However, the technical staff tends to be more aware and satisfied in informing the complainants if the complaints have not been resolved within reasonable period of time i.e. at the point of contact. They also tend to be more aware in giving feedbacks to improve the existing system.

The ANOVA analysis in testing the second hypotheses explained that the more experience the staff, the higher level of awareness and understanding the importance of response and feedback of complaint handling system.

This study also discovered several interesting findings. The reliability analysis-scale (alpha) performed summarizes that the most important statements in determining each six common aspects of complaint handling system. In policies and procedures aspects, specific guidelines in receiving

and resolving complaint are the most important variables. In contributing response and feedback, determining and informing the complainants for satisfaction resolution at reasonable period of time are the most important variables.

All statements are critical in pertaining the selection and training of complaint handling staff. In term of organization of system, the statements related level of coordination between sections is the most important variable. Meanwhile in data collection aspect, two statements are the most important variables, namely, monitoring the status of complaint and analysis of logged-in complaint data. Finally, all statements seem to be less important in determine evaluation and planning of the existing complaint handling system.

5.3 Conclusion

A complaint handling system varies widely depending on the nature of the services. The Department should view quality system as a central theme, which are not only limited into received complaints, but to be extended to all types of customers' dissatisfaction. Information on complaints and dissatisfaction should be collected and analyzed.

There is no single formula to provide universal solution for dissatisfied customers. The commitment and continuing involvement of the management of the Department is critical to ensure the success of complaint resolution and the optimum use of complaints as a management tool. The review and involvement of the management may discover new ways to improve the existing complaint handling system and the fairness of remedies of complaints.

The complaints received are an opportunity to correct immediate problem and restore good will and must be resolved fairly. Customer who does not complain may criticize the Department to others because they are skeptical of fair resolution or negative word-of-mouth publicity. Others may not lodge a complaint because they do not know where or how to complain or not worth it. An unregistered complaint may do as much harm as one that is mismanaged or unresolved.

As a conclusion, the study performed on the complaint handling system has fulfilled the primary objectives. However, recommendations for improvement should be considered.

5.4 Consideration for Improvement

To improve the existing complaint handling system, the Department should consider two major aspects of suggestion as follows.

5.4.1 Internal Aspects

Aspects to be emphasized are recurrence prevention by eliminating the symptom, immediate cause and root causes, handling the accounting side by instituting a system of accountability and disposition of products/service about which the complaints have been made.

5.4.2 External Aspects

Aspects to be emphasized are keeping the customer/complainant satisfied that requires speed, sincerity, and prevention of recurrence and sound investigation.

From the Department experience, if priority is given to recurrence prevention, the quality as service provider in term of satisfying user requirements will gradually rise. The process consists of redesigning the quality of services with the cooperation of the user feedback and complaints received, improving process control and inspection method, thus improving overall quality.

If this is not being done, the staff including their skills in design, technical, workplace, inspection methods will become complacent. They will concentrate on quality characteristics that do not concern users and remain ignorant the characteristics that are actually causing problems to the users. As a result, gradually decreases the public confidence to the Department services.

5.4 Recommendations

For reliable and well-organized complaint handling system, there are needs of effective strategy for complaint handling and inquiries to enhance the Department's reputation to build consumer and public confidence. Thus, the Department should consider the following recommendations: -

Recommendation 1. To Establish Policies and Procedures of Complaint Handling System

The Department should establish capacity, policies and procedures to provide effective complaint review and resolution. The management of the Department is responsible to prepare a written policies and procedures for speedy and fair complaint resolution. The strategy and policy should be depends on the nature of the services provided. The complaint handling system and its flowchart should be formulated and drawn.

The written policies and procedures shall be communicated throughout the Department at all levels with emphasize on accountability of individual staff especially the technical staff for courteous and fair complaint resolution. Guideline must clearly state the empowered level of the staff to resolve complaint at the point of contact.

All the Department staffs have responsibility in satisfying customers. Due to that, all the staffs must be well trained and empowered for quickly and fairly resolve complaints and to handle inquiries. Although, the complaint handling system is functioning and operates centrally within the Department, interaction between the complainant and the responsible staff must be adequate. The staff shall follow through to ensure the complaints are correctly referred and handled.

Recommendation 2. Review and Improvement of Procedures

The management of the Department should review regularly and find ways to improve the complaint handling procedures. Particular attention should be emphasizing on refining communication and coordination between the system and the responsible operating section. Periodic survey on customer satisfaction should be done to evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures.

However, the staffs should understand the management's philosophy and their own responsibility for effective effect to eliminate customer dissatisfaction in filing repeated complaint.

Recommendation 3. Selection of Complaint Handling Staff

The selected staff must be patient, articulate and be able to balance fairly the interests of the Department and the complainant. The staff shall also be able

to communicate and giving feedback to the management of the Department with the objective of improving or changing the policies and procedures.

The staffs shall be familiar with the operations of the Department and with its services. The staff shall be trained in strengthening interviewing and communication skills and heightened the staff's awareness. Technical staff is recommended on routinely basis to be attached to the One Stop Complaint Center to assist the complaint handling staff especially in technical scope of work.

Recommendation 4. Hotline Telephone Number

Hotline telephone numbers are one of effective tools. The existing hotline should be increased from one hotline number into various hotline numbers. This is to avoid engaged tones. Hotline number gives complainant an uncomplicated, immediate, personal and free means of resolving problems. Barriers can be reduced and be able to increased customer satisfaction. Increasing hotline number may involve operating cost to the Department but the ability to respond immediately to complain and inquiries may reduce expenses and increase profit in a long run. Such direct contact to customer may provide opportunities to prevent problems from escalating or occurring in the future.

Recommendation 5. Establish Tracking System in Supervising and Monitoring of Complaint

The procedures shall include the reporting, supervision and monitoring the operation of the complaint and request the complainant to response or feedback to the services provided.

Day-to-day responsibility for complaint processing and resolution shall be assigned to the respective staffs that are normally accessible to the complainant and able to monitor until the final resolution. However, staffs at all level shall be prepared to receive and if possible resolving or assisting the complainant.

Recommendation 6. Complaint Handling System to be Well Publicized and Easy Accessible.

The system shall be publicized and explained to all the Department staff. A visible and accessible system is needed to serve customer better and to accomplish the Department's goals. One of the methods to be considered is circular letters to all the University's staff from the Dean, Head of Department, and lecturers and to administration staff. Another alternative is to use poster at strategic places in the Faculties.

However, the customers shall be instructed and informed of their responsibilities to avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary complaints. Educating and instructing customers may established realistic expectations and increase customer satisfaction.

Recommendation 7. Evaluation on Customer Satisfaction

The Department shall supplement survey to understand the customer's perspective. Customers are to be surveyed to determine the level of satisfaction with existing services, delivery of services, helpfulness of the staffs and overall performance of the Department. The Department should anticipate the needs and problems of customers with regulatory limits that are beyond the policies of the Department or the University. The Department should be professional and considerate the customers even when the customers may be disappointed with the outcome.

Recommendation 8. Adequate Annual Operating Budget

For short and long term planning, adequate annual budget should be included in resolving complaints. From interview, it is found that the annual operating budget is usually based on previous annual operating budget. The complaint trend shall be used as a basis in increasing operating budget. The M&E section experiencing that the approved annual budget only adequate for first six months operation because most the complaints are associated with cost in providing a remedy. And, additional paperwork must be done for additional budget approval, which is time consuming.

According to Mann. Jr, Lawrence (1981), the operating budget should be increased based on approximately 3% to 7% of costs of new building or installation. For example if the cost of building and M & E installation is about RM100 million, the annual operating and maintenance budget for building and M&E maintenance should be increase from RM3.0 million to RM7.0 million, respectively.

Top management of the University especially the Central Administration and the Bursar Office should give their full commitment and supports to the Department in order for the Department to optimized their operation as required by the faculties.

Recommendation 9. Technology Utilization in Periodic Analysis of Complaint Data

The complaint handling system shall be served to reduce the causes of complaints. The complaint data shall be analyzed periodically to obtain complaint trend thus alerting the management of the Department to problems that required prompt attention and correction. A well planned system with effective and efficient screening and recording besides providing the service

quality shall indicates a long range opportunities for innovation and prevention.

However, to obtain this valuable feedback, the reporting operation of the system must generate information swiftly and systematically to the management of the Department. On other word, the initial screening should be able to trigger immediate actions, if possible, and statistical analysis should be able to explained trends and long-term courses of action.

The complaint database must be fully automated and integrated information system. The analysis of data must be able to determine and fix root causes of dissatisfaction and identify the future directions for service improvement. With technology utilization, the Department may capable to align their services in enhancing customer expectation. It shall also be incorporated into strategic planning processes to ensure future competitiveness. One of software available is Computerized Integrated Maintenance Management that cost approximately RM350, 000.

Recommendation 10. Supervision on Contractor Performance

Due to insufficient staffs, most of the complaints are resolved through out source parties i.e. the selected contractors. Still, it is important for the Department staff to coordinates the complaint handling system with involved parties in the distribution network – the complainant, the staff and the contractors. These parties should have mutually benefit by informing each other of the complaint's status and its trends and cooperating to ensure the complaints are fully and satisfactorily resolved.

Direct, swift and informal complaint resolution is advantageous to all involved parties and resolving complaints at this level may avoids complainant

frustration and preserves the Department/customer relationship. Thus, it is likely to be relatively easy, quick and economical.

The Department shall keep track the performance of contractors and their services against customer satisfaction factors. The Department may use a shorter contract and expecting greater accountability for performance. Performance level must be specified in the awarded contracts.

Recommendation 11. Training as Investment

The Department shall view training as an investment. The complaint data may be used to identify the training needs. Based on the concept of human resource management, organizations should devote three percent of its staff emolument for training purposes.

Training for different categories of skills is crucial. For example to enhance individual interpersonal relationships, training must cover active listening, behavioral interviewing, cross culture communication, correction and building relationships. To develop group relationship, training must covers facilitation, negotiation, leading team and coaching. And, training for personal growth skill must covers effective writing, software training and personal presentations. This type of training can be expected to enhance teamwork and team building. Process management must also to be developed such as training in process mapping, operation effectiveness and measurement.

Recommendation 12. Benchmarking

Embarking on a series of benchmarking studies shall be done. Benchmarking means to determine which organization either private or public are doing the best job in complaint handling system or customer complaint resolution. Understand the gap between the Department's own performance before

finally take action to eliminate the gap. Once the best in business were identified, the Department should determine and take action to improve the Department to be better than the benchmarked organizations in complaint handling systems.