

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Public Health Institute (PHI) is an institution under the Human Resources and Training Division of the Ministry of Health. Apart from many other activities, it also conducts training courses. The courses conducted at the PHI are as follows: (1) Diploma in Environmental Health for the Health Inspectors: (2) Post Basic course in Environmental Health for the In-Service Health Inspectors: (3) Post Basic course for the nurses: (4) Certificate for Health Personnel, and (5) Post Graduate Certificate in Health Promotion for the Health Education Officers.

As in other institutions that are involved in training, the quality of training at the PHI may be influenced by the leadership qualities of the managers such as the Division Heads and the Director. The academic and supporting staff is continuously in need of motivation and direction from their Heads. According to the literature, an important factor that can ensure success of the various courses and activities conducted at an institutional organization would be through effective leadership which in turn depends on good communication styles of the managers. The characteristics of the managers are continuously under the observation of the subordinates and their perception of the managers influence the subordinates' attitude and commitment to the organization.

The Director is the top manager of the PHI and as such is expected to display high management skills that include good communication skills and work etiquette in order to achieve the organizational goals. The Director communicates his intentions to the Heads of Divisions, who in turn transmit the message to the rest of the staff. The Division Heads act as the 'buffer' or link in the organizational structure as they have constant and direct communication with both the top manager and the subordinates. Due to their role as Head of Division, they tend to neglect their equally important role in teaching and perform more as the middle range educational managers thus performing the various duties as planners, organizers, coordinators and evaluators.

In implementing the training curriculum in the PHI, the leadership skills of the Division Heads have to be based on the foundation of good understanding and internalization of the curriculum philosophy and goals of the PHI. The managers should involve the tutors and other subordinates in implementing the PHI goals and philosophy appropriately. Besides the need to have positive characteristics such as being highly knowledgeable, skillful, dedicated, creative and innovative, the Heads should also provide guidance, support, encouragement and recognition for the subordinates.

One main factor that can enhance the quality of work and relationship between the subordinates and the Division Heads is good communication style. McFarland (1979) has said "communication is a fundamental aspect of all human interactions". In any organization individuals, irrespective of their hierarchical/functional position, communicate to transmit information so as to

achieve individual as well as the organizational goals. This implies that individuals should establish interpersonal relationship with one another. Communication processes can also help to establish a more conducive and positive environment in the organization. Good interpersonal relationship due to good communication style can lead to a more effective and efficient working climate. Communication is a critical aspect of any organization since it is through good communication that one gets the management's point of view to the subordinates and thereby makes them motivated and committed to their work

#### Background Information of Problem

Communication is part of every function of management in any organization and PHI is no exception. There is a lot of communication and interaction between people at different levels during the process of implementing programs and training activities at the institutional and division levels. There is communication between people in small and large groups. To communicate effectively, McMohan, Borton and Piot (1980) suggested that a person or a group should see and feel as the other party sees and feels. In all cases, good communication can take place only if both parties feel at ease and understand one another.

The communication between subordinates, Division Heads, and the Director must be clear and everyone "sees and feels" the same message. The Division Heads act as mid-level managers, implementing directives from the

Director. He has to communicate the expectations of the director to the subordinates in his division clearly and so as to avoid misunderstanding or ambiguity. Clear and objectively transmitted information could inspire the subordinates to attain the intended goals of the organization.

#### Statement of the Problem

The Secretary to the Human Resources and Training Division at the Ministry of Health, Malaysia, during his speech at the 1998 graduation ceremony for the Health Personnel Tutors among other, highlighted the complaints he had received from various levels of staff about the failure of the heads of institutions to communicate effectively with their staff. According to him, this was one of the important factors that have led to the low level of motivation and commitment on the part of the staff.

Since the researcher is an academic staff in one of the institutions, (i.e. PHI), it was felt that it may be useful to carry out a study on communication styles of Head of Divisions and organizational commitment of the subordinates (staff) in the institution. It is hoped that findings of this study would help to enhance the working climate and commitment of staff in the institution.

Informal discussions and fact finding by special committees have indicated that there are discontentment and dissatisfaction causing low morale among staff members at the PHI due to the failure of the Division Heads in disseminating information promptly and accurately to them. The common



weakness of the Division Heads relate to their failure or rather their indifferent attitude in disseminating important information related to policy matters which they obtained during the meetings with top officials in the Ministry of Health. This weakness of the Division Heads has inadvertently created a hostile and unproductive working climate in the organization. The ultimate victims of this communication weakness are the clients (students) because the students may not receive quality input from the teaching staff.

However, the breakdown in communication cannot be solely blamed on the Division Heads. There are many subordinates who failed to use appropriate communication skills when interacting with their Heads and colleagues. Since such weaknesses do exist among the subordinates, it is the duty and responsibility of the Division Heads to identify subordinates who have problems in order to counsel or provide them with courses to improve their interpersonal communication skills. The Division Heads must at all times remember that effective communication is important at every level in the organization. Dessler (1985) has stated that communication involves both "shooting information and hitting a target with it". The fact that communication always involves a sender, a channel and a receiver helps to explain why there are always certain communication barriers that can impede and distort communication. As such, it is the role of the Division Heads to try to minimize such barriers and act as effective communicators between the Director and down-the-line staff of the organization

The importance of effective communication between the Division Heads and the subordinates is further emphasized by the fact that both parties are

involved in directing, coordinating and conducting teaching and training activities at the PHI. Thus, the Division Heads must convey information/messages from the Director to the subordinates accurately, adequately and without undue delay. The subordinates should also play their role and contribute to the process through their prompt and constructive suggestions or feedback.

In conclusion, it is important to realize that subordinate staff play a vital role in achieving the organizational goals. In view of this, it is imperative that they are kept informed of the issues and matters involving the organizational core businesses. This will help to harness their full cooperation, commitment, and dedication to the organization. It is obvious that Division Heads play an important role in the communication process in the organization. They must play their role effectively by employing proper communication style. This can enable them to establish holistic and greater allegiance of the subordinates to PHI.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the communication styles of the Division Heads and how the communication styles affect the organizational commitment of subordinates.

Specifically, the study attempts to: (1) identify the communication styles of Division Heads as perceived by the subordinates. (2) Determine the level of organizational commitment of subordinates, and (3) find out if there is any relationship between the communication style of the Division Heads and the level of commitment of subordinate staff.

## Theoretical Framework of the Study

The study attempts to use the Human Relationship Theory to seek an explanation about the relationship between the communication styles of Division Heads and the organizational commitment in the PHI. According to this theory, the humanistic behaviour and attitude of the head of an organization, plus good communication styles can improve the individual worker's performance.

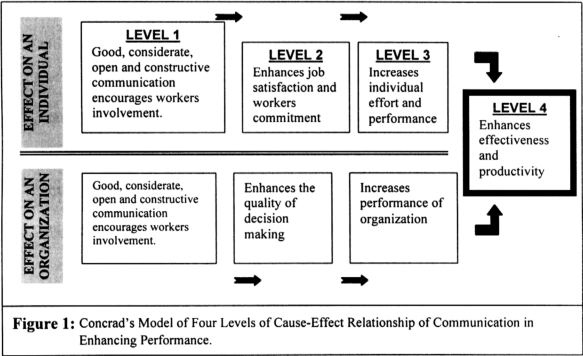
In relation to an aspect of the human relationship theory, McGregor (1965) suggests that human beings are complex and creative and as such, workers in the lower ranks if given an opportunity will put to use their highest skill and best effort during their work processes. The managers should provide such opportunities. Goldhaber (1992) has further strengthened the above mentioned theory by stating that organizations and sub-units within the organization which give high output tend to: (i) give emphasis to the human aspects while tackling the problems that are encountered by the workers, (ii) communicate to inspire the workers to achieve the organizational goals and do not pressure the workers to meet the target, (iii) provide ample space and time for the workers to perform their tasks, (iv) display care and concern for the workers' welfare in their work as well as in their personal lives when required to do so, and (v) encourage workers to participate actively in decision-making.

McGregor's has stated that there is a relationship between the workers' satisfaction and organizational commitment. The heads of an organization possess

certain characteristics such as tolerance, openness, being constructive and considerate, willingness to listen to opinions and feed backs, and are 'workers-orientated', tend to instill and enhance the satisfaction of workers. While Concrad,(1985) has contented that good communication between the workers and their heads is important because they need clear instruction (information) in order to produce quality output

Good communication would also enhance the level of trust between the head and the subordinates. Openness also means that the head would encourage a two-way communication among the workers. It can be concluded that the success or effectiveness of the human relationship model depends two aspects, that is, "trusting one another and encouraging open communication" (Concrad, 1985).

In this study, the researcher has used the human Satisfaction-Performance model (as illustrated in Figure 1),created by Concrad,(1985). Concrad's model



lists four levels of cause-effect relationship of communication in enhancing individual performance. The four levels are as follows: (1) job satisfaction will increase through considerate, open and constructive communication, (2) job satisfaction means that there will be increased involvement, hard work and commitment from the workers, (3) commitment will increase effort and performance of an individual, and (4) increased effort and performance will contribute to effectiveness.

### Significance of the Study

Since communication is a fundamental aspect of all human interactions, the research in this area is important. It is hoped that the findings will shed some light on the communication styles of the Division Heads of PHI as perceived by the subordinates and the influence of communication styles on the organizational commitment. This may enable the Division Heads to create a more effective and efficient organization.

According to Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, and McGrath (1997), good communication between the Division Heads and the subordinates is important because it can be used to inform, coordinate, and motivate people. If one could not communicate with employees, one could not in anyway possibly practice human relations, motivate people, or exercise the functions of leadership.

## Scope of the Study

This is a case study of the PHI in Kuala Lumpur. The sample in this study is the academic and supporting staff at the institution. It attempted to explore the communication styles of the Division Heads. The communication styles includes both verbal and non-verbal forms as perceived by the subordinates. This information was gathered through a questionnaire that contained close-ended questions. The questionnaire used as the data collecting instrument was adopted from Mohd. Tahir et al (1998). They have developed their instrument by referring to the "Communicator Style Measure" of Norton (1983). The dimensions on organizational commitment were adapted from the instrument developed by Cook and Wall (1980).

PHI has a total of 125 staff members, and since the population under study was small, the researcher decided to include all the staff. However, only 93 of the respondents completed the questionnaire and returned them to the researcher.

## Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of the study is that its only instrument was the questionnaire. As such the information was limited to the respondents' interpretation of the questions. The reliability of the findings therefore depends on the understanding, perception, sincerity and willingness of the respondents to respond to the items in the questionnaire accurately even though the language was modified to suit the respondents.

Moreover, the "10 Communicator Styles" instrument was developed by Norton to study communication styles and organizational commitment of workers in the business sector that could possess some peculiar differences in the communication styles of the Division Heads as compared to their counterparts in government owned institutions such as the PHI. However, the instrument was the best available to the researcher.

Since this study was confined to PHI, the findings cannot be generalized to other training institutions under the Ministry of Health.

### Definitions of Terms

#### (a) *Communication style:*

Communication style relates to a set of behaviours of an individual that is unique to a particular situation. Every communication style comprises a group of behaviours that are applied to interact in certain context (Koehler, et al 1981). It is in the opinion of Reece and Brant (1988) that communication style means the perception about an individual based on his gestures and speech.

Norton (cited in Mohd. Tahir bin Mustapha, 1998) provides a more comprehensive description of communication style. He contented that communication styles of an individual is how he interacts verbally or non-verbally to transmit signals to ascertain true meanings, interpret, filter and understand the message. As such, the researcher has selected Norton's Communicator Styles instrument. This instrument contains the following communication style dimensions: (1) Dominant style focuses on the strong

influence of the communicator on others. The communicator is more inclined to dominate the social interactions. (2) Dramatic style relates to someone who possesses good communication skills and is an effective communicator. The dramatic communicator manipulates imagination, stories, metaphors, rhythms and voice in creating a close and conducive relationship with others. This style also enables individuals to control anxiety, positive self-esteem, status, popularity, tolerance, suspicions and other critical group functions. (3) Likes to discuss (consultative) style: someone who likes to consult and confer uses this communication style. In comparison to the dominating style, this one prefers to provide clear information to make the listener understand the message clearly. (4) Expressive style includes physical, bodily gestures and other non-verbal communications. (5) Leaves an impression style focuses on the lasting effect on someone's memory about the style that a communicator has displayed. This styles also influence the perception of the receiver, and gives an impression of the communicator due to the lasting effect his communication styles, both verbal and non-verbal have made. (6) Relax style portrays a cool, calm, steady and do not get tensed when engaged in conversation with another person. (7) Gives attention style describes a communicator who is sensitive and shows empathy to others. He "puts himself in other person's shoes" and lets the affected party know that he understands the situation well. (8) Open style describes a person who is easy to approach, likes to exchange and share information with others and direct to the point. He is also perceived as can be trusted and can compromise. (9) Friendly style describes a communicator who is friendly, readily establishes interpersonal



relationship with individuals. He is caring, humble and very humane in nature. (10) Accurate style describes a person who prefers to be accurate in disseminating information, facts and evidences in an informative interaction. The ten perceived communication styles are conducted through eye contact, facial expression, hand gestures and body movements.

(b) *Commitment:*

Commitment has been defined as the “*dedication to or involvement with a particular doctrine, course of action*”(Oxford Dictionary 1984). Similarly, Porter (1969) defined commitments as the readiness of an individual to enhance his effort, dedication to work and ready to accept the organizational goals wholeheartedly.

Cook and Wall (1980) have stated that there was inter-relationship between commitment and certain components of humanistic feelings. Three such components are: (1) *Feeling proud*, that is, the feeling of pride to be associated with the organization and regards highly of the organizational values and goals, (2) *Involvement*, that is the integration of the individual's activities with that of the organization, and, (3) *Loyalty*, that is, the sense of belonging and strong attachment to the organization as manifested with the wish to remain with the organization.

Mowdays et al.(1982) described organizational commitment as: (1) the level of readiness to remain as a member of the organization, (2) willingness to

work hard for the sake of the organization, and (3) strong believe and readily accept the organizational value and goals.

The study focused on these three components (feeling proud, involvement and loyalty) in relation to the level of the organizational commitment and relationship with the communication style of Division Heads.