Applying Effective Communication in Quality Management for Military Organisation

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Abstract— Quality management (QM) is a management philosophy, which focuses on work process and people with the major concern for satisfying customers and improving organisational performance. It involves proper coordination of work processes, which allows for continuous improvement in all business units with the aim of meeting or surpassing customer's expectations. QM is applicable to any organisation irrespective of size motives. Even public sector organisations are fast in adopting the ideology in order to make them effective in meeting public demands. It adopts the participative approach, which aims at improving competitiveness, effectiveness and flexibility of the entire organisation. This achievement is possible through effective communication anchored on modern communication technology, otherwise known as information technology. Effective communication is logical, rational and persuasive, and it is especially useful in industrial relations, organisational change and relaxation. There is a strong relationship between good communication and successful quality implementation. QM depends on communication that flows in all directions; up and down for an effective and efficient implementation of QM. Military organisation is a good example of QM organisation that recognises the importance of communication in its quality attempts.

Key words: *Quality Management, Effective Communication, Continuous Improvement, Military Organisation*

I. INTRODUCTION

A business can flourish when all objectives of the organisation are achieved effectively. For efficiency in an organisation, all the members of the organisation must be able to convey their message properly. Communication is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of thoughts, messages or information by speech, visuals, signals, writing or behaviour. Emphasis on communication came from the human relation approach of management. The human relation writer conceptualised that if employees knew what is expected out of them, and are aware of the objectives of the organisation and there is regular feedback of their performance, they will invariably be more productive. Communication is defined as the exchange of information and understanding between two or more persons or groups. Without understanding between sender and receiver concerning the message, there is no communication. All information is encoded and prior agreement must be reached on the meaning of the code.

Communication represents the key element in the normal functioning of every military or civil organisation. Nowadays, productive communication assumed a vital role because the complexities of modern warfare that produced larger leading structures and at the same time, multiplying the possible sources of obstacles to essential intelligence flow. Generally speaking, when one examines a problem, it is very useful that he keeps in mind the fundamental human needs that condition it. In the Maslow pyramid for instance, communication manifests itself in two different ways: nonverbally (willingly or unwillingly) and verbally (orally and written). Taking into consideration the nonverbal communication first, it is important to not underestimate it as a useful intelligence source as Frank Tippet argued in his work "Why So Much Beyond Words", that "maybe almost 20% of the human communication is verbal, mainly for experts; where most of the time, the largest part of the

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communication process consists of nonverbal signals". As for verbal communication (orally or written), we have to admit that language is a means through which a person reveals or hides its own intentions (hostile, neutral, friendly), anxiety, fear, frustrations or satisfactions. The capacity of perceiving verbal and nonverbal communication is mandatory in any kind of environment [1].

Quality management can be summarised as a management system for customer-focused organisation that involves all employees in continual improvement. It uses strategy, data and effective communication to integrate quality discipline into the culture and activities of the organisation. Military organisation is an organisation that continually communicates, collects and analyses data in order to improve decision making accuracy, achieve consensus, and allow prediction based on past history. During times of organisational change, as well as part of day-to-day operation, effective communications plays a large part in maintaining morale and in motivating soldiers at all levels. Communications involve strategies, method and timeliness. Effective communication is considered so essential for the implementation of QM in military organisation, and sustainability practices from companies dimension and sustainability practices from environment dimension. In a Total Quality Management (TQM) context, extra-role performance may result in better teamwork and cooperative efforts to continuously improve unit functioning [2].

Military families deal with issues common to all families, including child care, elder care, education, parenting concerns and career choices. However, military families are also subjected to unique stressors, such as repeated relocations that often include international sites, frequent separations of service members from families and subsequent reorganisations of family life during reunions [3].

II.   MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS

The main mission of military communications is to ensure that commanders and staff at all levels are able to maintain continuous control of subordinate forces under any conditions, and to communicate signals to the forces at the proper time concerning the threat of enemy attack and the implementation of combat readiness. The chief demands made on military communications are timeliness of establishment, reliability of operations, speed of action and secrecy of transmitted information [4]. Initially, military communications was maintained through messengers (mounted and foot soldiers) and signal (for example, fires, landmarks and drums).

In the mid-19th century, the electric telegraph was first used in the army. In the early 20th century, radio, radiotelegraph and telephone communications were adopted [4]. In present armed forces, various types of military communications are used. Telephonic, telegraphic, photo telegraphic and data transmission communications are carried out using wire and radio (radio relay and tropospheric) equipment. Messenger and postal communications are performed by mobile means, such as airplanes, helicopters, motor vehicles and motorcycles. Signal equipment, such as rockets, lights, flags and sirens, is used for signal communications, which make it possible to give short commands and to affect mutual identification, target acquisition, identification of friendly forces, and warnings. Reliability in military communications is achieved by the combined use of different types of communications, depending on the battle situation.

Military communications is organised on the basis of the commander's decision, instructions from the chief of staff and orders from higher headquarters, depending on the availability and the condition of the communications forces and equipment. The work is done by signal troops [4].

III.   METHODS OF COMMUNICATION IN MILITARY

Methods of communication in military organisation can be divided as follows:

a.   Verbal communication either between individuals or groups, using direct or indirect methods, such as daily orders and other broadcasting systems and recordings.
b. Written communication in the form of standard operating procedures, directive, information letters, reports, e-mail and recommendations.
c. Visual communication, such as posters, films, video, internet/intranet, exhibitions, demonstrations, displays and other promotional features. Some of these also call for verbal and written communication.

i. Communicating the Quality Message in Military

The people in military organisations fall into one of four audience groups, each with particular general attitudes towards QM:
a.   Formation commanders who should see QM as an opportunity, both for the organisation and themselves.
b.   Unit commanders who may see QM as another burden without any benefits, and may perceive a vested interest in the status quo.
c.   Staff officers, who may see QM as another 'flavour of the period' or campaign, and who may respond by trying to keep heads down so that it will pass over.
d.   Soldiers who may not care, so long as they still have jobs and get paid although these people must be the

custodians of the delivery of quality to the customer and own that responsibility.

The higher management needs to ensure that each group sees QM as being beneficial to them. Quality training material and support will be of real value only if the officers and soldiers are motivated to respond positively to them. The implementation strategy must then be based on two mutually supporting aspects:

a. Disseminating any QM initiatives.

b. A positive, logical process of communication designed to motivate people (discovery, affirmation, participation and team-based learning). The key medium for motivating the employees and gaining their commitment to quality is face-to-face communication and visible management commitment.

ii. Communicating the Quality Strategy in Military

The essence of changing attitudes is to gain acceptance for the need to change, and for this to happen, it is essential to provide relevant information, convey good practices, and generate interest, ideas and awareness through excellent communication process. This change will require direct and clear communication from the military top management to all officers and soldiers to explain the need to focus on quality. Everyone will need to know their roles in understanding processes and improving their performance. An excellent way to accomplish this first step is to issue a total quality message that clearly states the top management's commitment to quality and outlines the role everyone must play. This can be in the form of a quality policy or a specific statement about the organisation's intention to integrate quality into its daily operation.

The following strategies can be used to communicate the quality strategies:

a. Quality in organisation can only be achieved through commitment and dedication to improving the processes applied daily. Education program, training, and teamwork development based on business and process improvement need to be put in place to ensure that everyone moves forward together to achieve the quality goals.

b. Everyone must participate with the highest personal commitment to the quality approach, and must support the mission of quality improvement. Continuous process improvement is critical for organisations survival and continued success.

The implementation of effective strategies can be communicated through the following understanding:

a. Need for improvement.
b. Concept for total quality.
c. Importance of understanding business processes.
d. Approach that will be taken and people's roles.

e. Individual and process group responsibilities.
f. Principles of process measurement.

Recognition of TQM as a critical competitive strategy. There is widespread recognition that the implementation and aggressive refinement of the above management model is a critical competitive strategy and thus, it is a primary concern of all levels of management, including senior management. The role of senior management in providing leadership for the development and deployment of quality management is a natural consequence of recognition of quality management as a critical competitive strategy. There is considerable controversy as well [5].

IV. COMMUNICATION MODEL

This communication model in Figure A indicates the potential for problems through environmental distractions, mismatches between sender and receiver in terms of attitudes towards the information, and each other's vocabulary, time pressure and others.
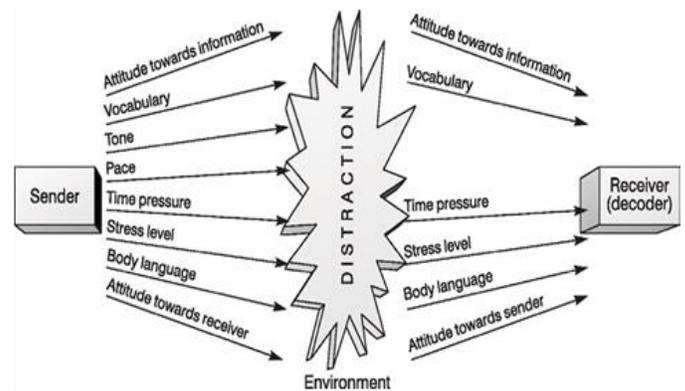

Figure A: Communication Model

V. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is an indispensable instrument for organisational success because without communication, one remains isolated and stranded. Effective communication occurs when a desired effect is the result of intentional or unintentional information sharing, which is interpreted between multiple entities and acted on in a desired way. This effect also ensures the message is not distorted during the communication process. Effective communication should generate the desired effect and maintains the effect with the potential of increasing the effect of the message.

Therefore, effective communication serves the purpose for which it was planned or designed. Possible purposes might elicit change, generate action, create understanding, inform or communicate a certain idea or

point of view. When the desired effect is not achieved, factors, such as barriers to communication are explored with the intention of discovering how the communication has been effective.

The effective communication patterns are one of the most frequently mentioned characteristics of strong families bonding [6]. Rahman and Bullock [6] pointed out that communication skills are a particularly fruitful area in terms of intervention. Skills in communication and teaching families to communicate better have been successful intervention techniques and are the focus of many programs.

Lasswell [7] introduced an important model of five levels of communication identified from his experiences in the second world war; elements of which survive in more developed modern models:

1. Who: the source?.
2. Says What: the message?.
3. In Which Channel: through what channel or medium?.
4. To Whom: the audience?.
5. To What Effect: the desired effect?

i.   The Five Ws

Lasswell's [7] model has been further developed and modernised, and is now referred to as the 'Five Ws'. This model has been widely used, particularly when managing change. However, addressing the 'Five Ws' is an essential element of all communications, and getting this right is the first step in the process as it is dependent upon what is required to be communicated at the time. This is particularly important when managing change in an organisation [7].

ii.   Who should be told?

Everyone who needs to be told about something should be told. It is advisable to communicate to all as soon as possible. Openness is the key to making everyone feel involved although there will always be some things which are not disseminated as widely as others. Where appropriate, communicate widely so that individuals are given the opportunity to influence the process and local ownership is gained. Barriers can also be identified and overcome. [7]

iii.   When should they be told?

The time to communicate with relevant people should be carefully considered. It might be within a set meeting or a one-off arrangement. If the communication covers a wide range of people where possible, it is desirable that discussions take place at the same time to avoid confusion, spread of rumours or misunderstandings. If internal and external stakeholders are involved, internal staff should be communicated with prior to external stakeholders; this is to prevent staff hearing from other sources, including the media. Key communications should be made as soon as possible following a significant event or decision [7].

iv. What should they be told?

Clear messages, related to the subject or problem. In complex situations, it is advisable to create a shared meaning and understanding. This can be done by Lasswell [7]:

- *checking back with the recipients through an iterative process;*
- *let them ask questions;*
- *asking for clarification of what they have understood; being clear that words, behaviours and symbols are not misunderstood or misinterpreted.*

v.   Where should the message be conveyed?

Choose the most effective medium to get your message across. This could be in meetings, seminars, press releases, and etc. Make time to communicate properly and do not do it in the corridor, in the toilet or the car park. This leads to gabbled and garbled messages, and can contribute to the 'grape vine' [7].

vi.   Who should control the communications process?

The most appropriate person depending on the subject. If it involves external agencies, the Press Officer should be included [7].

VI. ROLE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN QUALITY MANAGEMENT

As a life-wire of military organisation, communication attempts to protect and promote the desired image of an organisation through an effective public relations system. Since communication is an act of transmitting information, a rejoinder can save an organisation a lot of embarrassment. The specific role of communication as a tool for quality management with respect to collective quality improvement initiatives is worth mentioning. Here, communication takes a persuasive style. In areas of quality, communication does a wonderful job. There is perhaps no better method of implementing quality management without effective communication. Another important role of effective communication is in the area of change and improvement.

According to Abugre [8], effective communication is an effective system for integrating the quality development, quality maintenance and quality improvement efforts of various aspects of a system so as to enable services at the most economical level and

derive full satisfaction. QM is aimed at the satisfaction of customers' needs in an efficient, reliable and profitable way. It involves a radical direction through which an organisation performs its day-to-day operation to ensure that quality is placed at the top of mind of every employee and department in which they operate. [9] defined effective communication as the synthesis of the organisational, technical and cultural elements of an organisation. They opined that communication is a heart and mind philosophy, which recognises that organisational culture affects behaviour, which in turn affects quality. Chiang et al., [10] described effective communication as an approach to improve competitiveness efficiently and flexibility in implementing quality management. He noted that for an organisation to be truly effective, each part of it must work properly together towards the same goal, recognising that each person and each activity affects and in turn is affected by each other.

The methods and techniques used in communicating QM strategies can be applied throughout the military organisation. According to Rahman and Bullock [6], QM can be defined as a management system, which consists of interdependent units, namely core values, techniques, such as process management, benchmarking customer focused planning or improvement teams and tools, such as control charts. QM as a corporate culture is characterised by increased customer satisfaction through effective communication involving all employees in military organisation.

How it works? Olaf [11] has identified six suggestions on how to improve communication in QM for military organisation. First, identify the target audience or act goal-oriented and effective that may involve not only who is affected, but also how they are affected [11]. However, Olaf [11] also mentioned that the affected individuals are key to success because they could support the organisational change. Besides that, Olaf [11] adopted two approaches in effective communication from 'keeping advised' until 'monitoring closely', such as a military unit that is planned to-be-closed is more affected that a department and inform to everyone, who is relevant. Furthermore, [12] also added that a successful military leader is recognised on how the leader communicates his or her intentions and decisions to others.

Secondly, determine the objectives and design message [11]. All necessary information is included and not just parts of it [11] because it would lead to dissatisfaction among the employees if information changes. According to Olaf [11], it makes sense to distribute written or oral information as there is no room for misinterpretation and misunderstanding for react timely, and planned change should be announced before implementation starts and military organisation should be informed about the recent technological advancement as soon as possible. Thirdly, select the channels [11].

Military organisations should use social networking sites and should provide trained personnel and develop it because this channel is important as a forum for information sharing and cannot be ignored [11].

Fourthly, establish the budget and decide on media mix [11]. The budget and media mix should be well planned, such as through survey so that information can be analysed [11]. Fifthly, measure results through feedback [11]. It is an indication from the listener that the message has been received and understood through social networking sites, such as Facebook. In doing so, the military should implement relevant spaces or options [11]. Last, but not least, manage the integrated marketing communications through professional consulting partners and press [11]. A good contact to the press can be useful in order to support an organisational change and organisational development [11].

VII. CONCLUSION

The impact of effective communication on QM has become a topic of interest in military organisations. Communication is a basic function of all military commanders and leaders in their daily duties communicating with others in order to drive organisation's success.

Effective communication is a tool to understand information and management decisions in order to achieve organisational objectives. Although tablets, smartphones and social media are relatively new, the impetus behind their development is old, as throughout history, humans have developed mechanisms for communicating ideas that transcend inherent temporal and spatial limitations of face-to-face communication [3].

Failures in communication have direct and indirect impacts on individuals and organisations. For this reason, an appropriate communication method is critical for effective implementation of quality management due to the use of open communication in leader and soldier interaction to increase the level of engagement, particularly when leaders have an influence over subordinates' expected outcomes.

The anatomy of "quality assurance" is very similar to that of quality control. Each evaluates actual quality. Each compares actual quality with the quality goal. Each stimulates corrective action as needed. What differs is the prime purpose to be served. Under quality control, the prime purpose is to serve those who are directly responsible for conducting operations to help them regulate current operations [13].

Effective communication has been found to influence employee satisfaction and engagement in the implementation of quality management in military organisation with quality assurance. Communication is an important factor in improvement programs. Communication uses visual management to portray the

goals and approach. It motivates people to commit to change by showing expected benefits and early results. However, wrong or too much communication can also frustrate people, getting them to resist change. Many improvement programs

are run by technical persons in a technical environment.

Communication is undervalued and underestimated, and perceived as difficult. It is something that people are inexperienced in, which makes them feel uncomfortable. The overall requirement of effective communication in military organisation with quality management programme is to develop a quality culture.

Quality should be part of the culture of safety of an organisation. Genuine communication to sustain and nurture quality management is crucial to the success of quality management within military organisation.
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