Communication failure

" Communicationis not an easy process. It involves verbal and non-verbal attempts to assist the other person to understand what we are trying to communicate. Yet it often fails. " The communication occurring between two people as discussed in the statement above is known by academics as ' interpersonal communication'. Interpersonal communication can be defined as a two-way, transactional process in which two people, occupying a shared space, continue to send information to each other and receive information from each simultaneously. DeVito, 2008; Firth, Berry & Irvine, 2010; Hartley, 1999). The above statement refers to the process of interpersonal communication. Three clear assertions regarding the process of interpersonal communication are put forth in the statement above. Firstly, it is declared that the process of interpersonal communication is not simple. Secondly, it is declared that both verbal and non-verbal means are employed to foster the process of interpersonal communication. Lastly, it is declared that the process of interpersonal communication often is unsuccessful.

This essay will discuss and analyse the above statement and the three assertions it puts forth in regards to the process of interpersonal communication. The interpersonal communication process is said to be comprised of five basic elements, which are: the sender of the information; the receiver of the information; the encoding of the information by the sender; the decoding of the information by the receiver; and the shared means or channel through which the information is sent (Shannon & Weaver, 1949, as cited Firth et al. , 2010).

DeVito (2008) states there are additional elements which also have some part to play in the interpersonal communication process, these being:

feedback from the receiver; feedforward by the sender; noise or interference impacting the interpersonal communication process; and the context or setting in which the communication process takes place. The statement above states that the process of interpersonal communication is often unsuccessful. DeVito (2008) suggests that such unsuccessful communication would be attributed to some of the elements of interpersonal communication either being present, absent or employed ineffectively by ender or receiver. Due to the process of interpersonal communication comprising of a number different elements, it can be concluded that the interpersonal communication process does have a certain degree of complexity as declared in the statement above. The statement being discussed also declares that for the process of interpersonal communication to be successful, verbal and non-verbal forms of information are broadcast by both the sender to facilitate understanding.

DeVito (2008) states that verbal forms of information are essentially the actual words used by the sender and are chosen to: convey facts and inferences; express the connotation a word is being used in; and express sincerity or criticism. Hartley (1999) adds that the words a sender chooses to employ can communicate assertiveness and social standing. Though verbal communication is important in the interpersonal communication process, non-verbal communication conveys a far greater amount of information to the receiver (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010; Hartley, 1999).

DeVito (2008) states non-verbal means of information transfer between sender and receiver include: body movements and gestures such as pointing with a finger; facial expressions and gestures such as smiles and frowns; the

amount of and nature of eye contact present such as pupil dilatation and breaking or initiating gaze; the actual physical space between sender and receiver where closer space often indicates a greater level of intimacy between sender and receiver; the presence or absence of touch such as shaking hands or embracing; the use of paralanguage which involves the rate, tone and volume at which the sender speaks or the use of utterances; the sender's view of the importance of time; artifactual communication which involves how one's physical appearance, clothing, makeup, and material possessions are made known to the sender; and smell such as the presence of perfumes, deodorants, body odour, mouthwashes. Therefore a great amount of information is sent though verbal and non-verbal communication, which is also made up of many elements. As indicated before, a greater number of elements often results to a greater level of complexity, which is declared in the statement discussed. Though many forms of verbal and non-verbal information sent intentionally to the receiver, sometimes additional verbal nd non-verbal information sent to a receiver is sent unknowingly and unintentionally (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010). Most intentional information sent to a receiver is sent verbally and most unintentional information broadcast by a sender is unwittingly sent through non-verbal means (Firth et al. , 2010). Information that is unintentionally expressed by the sender impacts the message decoded and comprehended by the receiver, often leading to ineffective, unwanted or failed communication (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010; Hartley, 1999). Therefore, if the amount of unintentional information sent during the process of

communication is reduced, the high chance of communicationfailure, suggested in the statement above, will be lessened to a degree.

While encoding and conveying information in the interpersonal communication process, the sender employs a language they deem to be recognisable easily decoded by the receiver in an attempt to foster successful communication (Firth et al. , 2010). A language can be defined as any verbal or non-verbal manner or means employed to transmit information and understanding between groups of people (Firth et al. , 2010). Verbal and non-verbal messages expressed by should ideally have congruency, meaning they complement each other (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010). Incongruent verbal and non-verbal messages often lead to confusion in the receiver, hindering successful reception and comprehension of the information being communicated and therefore resulting in a failure in the communication process (Devito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010).

Hence, congruent verbal and non-verbal messages encoded and communicated by sender will also aid in reducing the likeliness of communication failure. It has been suggested that a failure or breakdown in the interpersonal communication process can be further reduced if both the sender and receiver possess satisfactory levels of what is termed ' emotional intelligence' (Goleman, 1998; Lynn, 2002). Emotional intelligence may be defined as a person's ability to recognise, control and evaluate their own feelings and emotions as well as the feelings and emotions of others (Goleman, 1998). Goleman (1998) states that emotional Intelligence is made up of five lements, these being: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and the possession of social skills. Self-awareness

comprises of: the ability to recognise one's emotions; awareness of one's strengths, weaknesses and potential; and one's ability to maintain a satisfactory sense of self-worth and confidence (Goleman, 1998). Self-regulation involves: one's desire to maintain honestly; one's ability to keep distracting emotions at bay; one's ability to ensure a high level of performance in tasks; and the ability to manage and adapt suit to change (Goleman, 1998). Self-motivation requires one to have: a desire to excel; initiative to grasp given opportunities; and the desire to continue pursinggoalswhilst barriers are met (Goleman, 1998).

Empathy involves one's ability to: perceive other's feelings; understand others points of view; and nurture others in developing their abilities (Goleman, 1998). A person with a high level of social skills will be able to: listen openly and effectively send messages; negotiate well with others in times of conflict; inspire, guide others or successfully persuade others; collaborate well with others; bring about change; and effectively deal with change (Goleman, 1998). Therefore, possessing a high level of emotional intelligence involves possessing numerous skills. Lynn (2002) states that possessing emotional intelligence enables one to be aware of their own emotions and abilities, and allows one to hold confidence themselves, enabling the person to communicate confidently and effectively.

It can be concluded that someone who possesses emotional intelligence is able to manage how they send, receive, encode and decode information. Elements which are of great importance in the interpersonal communication process (DeVito, 2008). Emotional intelligence in the sender and receiver will also impact the remaining elements of the interpersonal communication

process. Feedforward is an element of the interpersonal communication process which enables the sender to attract the attention of the receiver before conveying their full message (DeVito, 2008). Feedforward can indicate to the receiver the nature or the importance of the information which is about to be provided to them by the sender (DeVito 2008).

DeVito (2008) states that in the interpersonal communication process, feedforward can: open communication channels; provide a sample of what is about to be conveyed; disclaim the message; and altercast which lets the sender and receiver to assume specific roles during the interpersonal communication process. Feedforward therefore, is a good tactic the sender can employ to gain the attention of the receiver before important messages conveyed, heightening the chance of successful information reception. After conveying their message, the sender can make note of feedback given to them by the receiver (DeVito, 2008). Feedback is an element of interpersonal communication that relates to the information which is continually broadcast either immediately or after short delay by the receiver during the course of the interpersonal communication process (Devito, 2008).

Feedback can come in the form of: body language such as hand gestures; eye contact such as breaking or initiating gaze; facial expressions such as smiles; silence which may indicate the receiver is disinterested in the interpersonal communication process; and the variation of distance the which may indicate how involved the receiver wants to be with the sender (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010). Feedback may be intentional or unintentional just like other forms of information broadcast during the

interpersonal communication process (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010). By making note of of feedback, the sender can gain and understanding of how the receiver perceives the message (DeVito, 2008). The context associated with communication also affects how messages are encoded and decoded by the sender and receiver in the interpersonal communication process (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010).

DeVito (2008) makes note of four dimensions communication takes place in: the physical dimension, which is theenvironmentthe sender and receiver communicate within and whether or not the environment promotes successful communication; the social-psychological dimension, which deals with the status, class or relationship between sender and receiver and how formal the communication should be; the temporal or time dimension, which deals with whether it is the appropriate time for a sender to convey a message; and the cultural dimension, which refers to beliefs, values, traditions and expectations that exist in the cultures of the sender and receiver whether certain forms of communication are appropriate. The channel or medium through which the information between sender and receiver is relayed has much influence upon successful encoding, decoding and comprehension (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010; Hartley, 1999). DeVito (2008) states some channels used in the interpersonal communication process are: verbal; non-verbal; auditory, which relates to sound; olfactory, which relates to smell; and tactile, which relates to touch.

Different mediums include: letters; emails; phone calls; mobile phone text messaging; radio; television; the Internet; and print media such as newspapers and magazines (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010; Hartley, 1999).

Proper use of the communication channels ensures that information travels between sender and receiver in a manner that facilitates accurate encoding and decoding (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010; Hartley, 1999). Therefore, it can be concluded that successful use and management of communication channels would further lessen the significant chance of communication failure that is alleged to exist in the interpersonal communication process by the statement being analysed.

Failure in the interpersonal communication process can also be attributed to differing types of noise or interference that work against or and act as a barrier to successful communication (DeVito, 2008; Firth et al. , 2010). DeVito (2008) mentions four categories of noise: physical noise, which includes the noise occurring in the environment around the sender and receiver, along with apparel such as sunglasses which would interfere with eye contact; physiological noise, which includes physical disabilities the sender or receiver may have such as poor eyesight, hearing and tiredness; psychological noise, such as preconceived notions and other mental distractions; and semantic noise, which is where the receiver does not understand the language employed by the sender.

It has been shown that the interpersonal communication process comprises of various complex elements which either facilitate or hinder successful communication. Successful communication requires information to be properly encoded by a sender, transferred with all attached meaning through a channel to a receiver who must successfully decode and comprehend the information sent to them as intended by the sender. Though there are barriers that obstruct successful communication, the possession of emotional

intelligence, communicating effectively and maintaining congruency between non-verbal and verbal messages have been argued to reduce the great likelihood of communication failure, as declared in the statement being discussed.

The success of interpersonal communication is decided heavily by the skills possessed by other the sender and receiver. References DeVito, J. A. (2008). The interpersonal communication book (12th ed.). Boston, MA: PearsonEducation. Firth, G. , Berry, R. , & Irvine, C. (2010). Understanding intensive interaction: Context and concepts for professionals and families. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Goleman, D. (1998). Working with emotional intelligence. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing. Hartley, P. (1999). Interpersonal communication (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge. Lynn, A. B. (2002). The emotional intelligence activity book: 50 activities for developing eq at work. New York, NY: American Management Assosication.