

RECOMMUNICATION PROCESS OF APPROACH OF THE MUNICIPAL CULTURAL AND PUBLIC BENEFIT ENTERPRISE OF KARDITSA-GREECE (D.I.K.E.K.) WITH THE CULTURAL COMMON

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Abstract

The effective understanding and the implementation of the cultural policy of every state offers a guarantee for creating a series of remarkable cultural products and upgraded cultural contributions thus affording them an added cultural and comparative value at national and international level. It is well known nowadays that the democratization of culture and art dominate, advocating increased participation of individuals and groups in production and consumption. In particularly, the key challenge is to attract the interest of the public, claiming his support and conveying the produced cultural ideas in extended social groups. However, in the Greek reality it is found that the existing structure of the structures of culture, institutions exercising cultural policy, the available resources and the need for action and survival in a demanding and competitive

cultural environment, necessitate a generalized structural restructuring of existing cultural institutions assisted by a cooperative mood of all creative and management factors and actors, but also communicative approach as the cultural "CONSUMER" audience for the best promotion of expressions of culture.

Also particularly problematic was the latest situation on a local level with the direct effect of lowering the importance and quality of cultural goods produced. Although several Local Authorities, as they are important partners in the cultural scene, have created remarkable cultural centers, most of them are showing a communication gap management, resulting in the cultural product supplied to appear weak to attract public attention. Without an exception to the rule, a similar situation is currently one of the leading companies' once cultural and social characters, the Municipal Cultural and Public Benefit Enterprise of Karditsa (DI.K.E.K.).

Given the above problems the aim of this paper is, through a theoretical and research approach, to investigate and determine the extent of the communication gap between itself and the culture of the public in combination with the causes of appearance, and to propose strategies and procedures for improving this situation by developing an effective system for cultural communication with the people and stabilize it, i.e. connecting link between this cultural unit (THE TRANSMITTER) and the public (AS A RECEIVER) at local and regional level.

Keywords : Cultural Enterprises, Cultural Communication, Communication Strategy, Cultural Common, Local and Regional Cultural Development

1. Introduction

The effective understanding and implementation of cultural policy on the part of every nation, provides the necessary prerequisites and conditions for the creation of a series of considerable cultural centers with products and upgraded cultural action as well as contribution, which in turn offer an increasing cultural timeless and comparative value on a local, domestic and international level (Paschalidis, 2002a:225-229). However, in greek reality it is clearly observed, through time lapse, that the existing outline of the cultural structures, of the bodies exercising cultural strategy and policy, the available means and resources, as well as the need for action and survival in a demanding and competitive cultural environment, necessitate, on one the one hand a generalized and dynamic, organizing, functional and productive re-design of the existing cultural

institutions and organizations, assisted by a cooperative perception of all the creative and managerial bodies, for the best promotion of the aspects of culture in all geographical levels, in every latitude and longitude possible (Chambouri-loannidou, 2002a:18-21; Chambouri-loannidou, 2003: 27-29) and on the other hand the ongoing choice and development of certain poles (ELEMENTS) of local and regional activation which will develop a net of cultural events of a permanent character, which will in turn constitute an attraction (Filiass,1988:266).

Given that nowadays globalization and the democratization of culture and art, which reflect the increased individual and collective participation in its production and consumption, dominate, what is primarily aimed at is to attract the interest of the public, to claim the limited time, energy and support and to transmit the produced cultural notions to wider social groups, since it is essential that we detach from a limited, sophisticated elitist perception of offering and indulging in cultural goods, without social discriminations as far as approaching and consuming is concerned (Bryant, 1988; Klamer, 1996; Streeten, 2006; Kakkou, 2009).

Although several Local Government Organizations, as important factors on the cultural scene, have created significant cultural centers, their majority displays a managerial gap, resulting in qualitatively downgrading the produced and consequently offered cultural product weakening its ability to attract the interest of the "CONSUMER" audience (Klamer, 1996; Chambouri-loannidou, 2002a:22; Belias ET AL, 2014a:451-452; Belias ET AL, 2014b). The situation deteriorates undoubtedly due to the weakness of the local cultural action to provide alternative, innovative and competitive forms of cultural events, or by often attempting enterprises which lack a complete and long-term speculation and prospect. Without being an exception to the rule, in a similar situation has been over the last few years one of the once leading companies of cultural and social character, the Municipal Cultural and Public Benefit Enterprise of Karditsa (DI.K.E.K.).

DI.K.E.K was founded (initially under the name D.E.T.A.K.-Municipal Enterprise of Tourism and Recreation of Karditsa) in 1990 based on the town of Karditsa (G.G 298/4-5-90 : 4585-4586) after the decision – suggestion of the Municipal Council. It is a legal person governed by private law (N.P.I.D), the function of which is regulated by special provisions (articles) of the Municipal and Regional Code (Presidential Decree 323/1989). After a series of amending decisions towards the end of 2006 it conformed to its obligatory operation under the new Municipal and Regional Code, as specified in the paragraph about the set up and operation of local government organizations, where it is clearly stated that the allowed form of Municipal enterprises is that of either Municipal

Benefit Enterprise or of Local Government Organization S.A (GG114/8-6-2006, 1213-1216), and where the final profile both of its main and individual goals was outlined and specified.

It is still -to date- an important cultural and social body of the Municipality of Karditsa, aiming at the promotion of activities of cultural creativity and development as well as of social policy, as aspects of the town's cultural being. Nevertheless, the strongly competitive conditions of the cultural surroundings in which it operates, the lack of satisfying and regular financial support by the state and the local entities of jurisdiction, along with its close dependence upon the given municipal authority which makes various decisions by the preference of the occasional principal, compose an organizational and productive background with bureaucratic features, handicapped in setting achievable goals, suffering from the lack of dynamic strategic decisions and plans for action, activity failure and deviations from the consumer audience's expectations, resulting in DIK.E.K displaying a severe deficit in cultural communication and in offering cultural work, thus expressing this deficit through an extended level of communicational introversion, springing from the lack of information exchange with the public, concerning its cultural and social needs and preferences.

Given the references above, the aim of this paper is, through a theoretical and research approach, to develop a communicative model that will contribute to a more fruitful realization and gauging of the assessment of cultural communication of the particular cultural body with the consumer audience of Karditsa and the wider area. On the basis then of the afore-mentioned model, through an analysis of its main parts, the value of the produced and offered cultural product can be better estimated by the cultural "CONSUMERS" of the narrow and wider area of Karditsa themselves, so that through regular communicative feedback both a steady added value on the provided cultural product and the development of strong resistance skills against what makes it vulnerable can be ensured.

Through these efforts it is expected that the profile of D.I.K.E.K. will be fully promoted, creating a sense of unity and focused direction towards cultural action, which will allow it to overcome the current organizational and productive difficulties and be led to a continuous flow and production of high quality cultural works. Thus the assurance towards an effective and ongoing process of solving the arising social problems and towards satisfying the local cultural needs becomes plausible, the strong discrepancies which create an atmosphere of tension and disappointment decrease, dialogue and trust on the part of the public, followed by participation in the cultural events, are reinforced

(Klamer, 1996; Paschalidis, 2002a:47-52; Chambouri-Ioannidou, 2002b:80; Ekonomou, 2003:92-93).

2. Methodological Approach

2.1 Cultural Communication

Communication is a complex and necessary process of information or message transmission and understanding. Its main goal is to build a common linking device between two or more persons for the exchange of information, ideas, views, emotions, etc (Koontz ET AL, 1983b:126; Varner, 2000). If the notion of human communication functions in many cases somehow restrictively, the notion of cultural communication acts as an organized activity which refers to a wider bipolar frame of a communicative relationship between the cultural unit on the one side and the cultural audience on the other, aiming not exclusively at promoting the cultural products to the audience, but mainly at creating a network of essential contact with it, including as many of its groups as possible (Athanasopoulou, 2003:116).

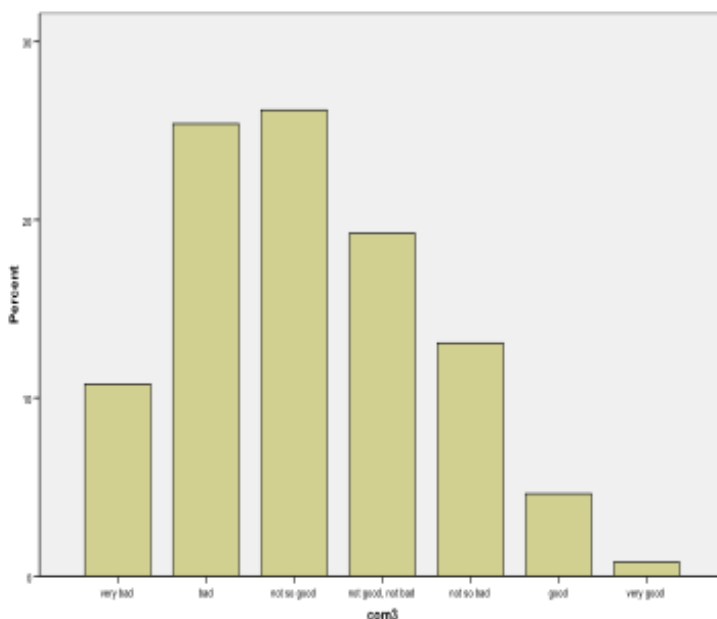
This kind of relationship is mutual and clearly interactive and refers to the human wish to confront the individual cultural unit so as to specify its readiness and efficiency in producing and providing cultural products and the frequency and the means of providing them, which acts as a way to satisfy its cultural needs (Hein, 2006), while the unit itself seen as a "CULTURAL AGENT" is expected to build a network of communication and message and information exchange with the audience, to search for the audience's cultural needs, for its awareness and willingness for a creative intervention through its ideas and suggestions on the designing, managerial and informative process of the cultural product (Kastoras, 2002; Athanasopoulou, 2002; Athanasopoulou, 2003).

2.2 The process of cultural communication

The process of cultural communication has to do with the fundamentally well known communicative model. The adaptation of such a model on the features of the communicative environment of DI.K.E.K and its detailed analysis was considered necessary for the specification of the relationship and the degree of its **cultural communication** with its consumer audience. The use of questionnaires and interviews^[1] was considered to be

the most supportive tool for getting the assessment of this communication evaluated by the consumer audience in Karditsa and the surrounding area. Based on the form which the afore mentioned model takes, one can –through an analysis of its main parts- conclude the following (Sdrolias, 1992; Kakkou, 2009; Wöhe, 2013) (Figure 1) :

- The cultural communication of DI.K.E.K takes place in a framework mainly characterized by the quality of the involved parties, by the size, the quality and the value of the provided cultural product. The cultural environment, under the given at times predominant conditions, sustains and affects significantly this process. For the on the whole assessment of the level of the provided cultural communication, the most valid judge is the “consumer” audience itself, which takes parts in the process as the second agent of the communicative relationship. In the **question** to the audience “HOW DO YOU EVALUATE, IN TOTAL, THE COMMUNICATION OF DI.K.E.K WITH THE CONSUMER AUDIENCE OF THE AREA IN WHICH IT ACTS?”, the audience (n=131) presented with its answers a “NOT SO GOOD COMMUNICATIVE RELATIONSHIP” (**mean=3,15** και **Std Deviation=1,389**). Moreover, a significant percentage of the persons asked (**cumulative percent : 62,3%**) fluctuated in the span from “VERY BAD ” to “NOT SO GOOD COMMUNICATIVE RELATIONSHIP” .The audience’s total attitude is presented in the form of the following bar chart (BAR CHART 1) :



Bar chart 1: Visualized presentation of the assessment, on the part of the audience, of DI.K.E.K.'s cultural communication

In this communicative environment one of the basic agents, the **transmitter**, is DI.K.E.K itself as a cultural unit responsible for the specification not only of the current but also of the future ways of action on a cultural and social level, as well as of the communicative techniques for the transmission of its cultural products. What is researched however is from the one hand the extent to which during its effort, DI.K.E.K manages to measure the needs of the audience it addresses and from the other what is the final degree of satisfaction. Data collection is discouraging and concordant with our personal initial presuppositions about DI.K.E.K as a communicatively introvert enterprise, since for the first part of the **question** concerning the frequency of collection of the audience's opinion **about the kind of the cultural and social activities**, the answer is "SELDOM" (mean=1,69 and standard deviation=1,215). Besides, a percentage of 64% of the people asked, answered "NEVER". For the second part of the question concerning **the extent to which their cultural and social needs are met**, the participants answered "PARTLY" (mean=3,16 and standard deviation=1,429) with a significant Cumulative Frequencies of 63,4% spanning from "not at all" to "partly".

Within the dominant communicative environmental conditions of the existing communicative model, it is necessary to determine both the **communicative frequency** and the **communicative means**. Of special interest is the **degree of direct communication between** DI.K.E.K and the cultural audience, the frequency of which actually appears very rare (usually every two years) and has the form of debriefing reports. Hence, the phenomenon of partial or total citizen disinterest in the administration's debriefing invitation (similar to that in February 2009) is commonly observed, so that, as an employee in the Municipal Cinema where this initiative took place, stated, "*.....only the first rows of the seats was full and those were taken by the prefect, the mayor and the municipal councilors...they were speaking and listening by themselves*".

Concerning the **kind of the most usual communicative means** used by DI.K.E.K for the **promotion of the provided cultural and social products**, the public, in a percentage of 83,2% answered, as expected, that the main communicative means are the local mass media and Internet (MOSTLY THE MASS MEDIA WITH 55,7%), and only a small part (16,8%) attributed its getting informed to friends or other random incidents. What needs special attention, is the assessment, on the part of the audience, of DI.K.E.K's basic communicative means, as it was depicted by the seven grade Likert scale. Its results were placed on low evaluation standards [the mean was 3,05 (in the case of internet), 3,62 [(in the case of advertising posts in the local mass media), and slightly more positive 3,67 (brochures and posters)], while it revealed serious weakness as far as the level of a direct

and personal approach is concerned [2, 04 (phone call contact), 2,14 (open discussion) and 2,37 (questionnaire distribution)].

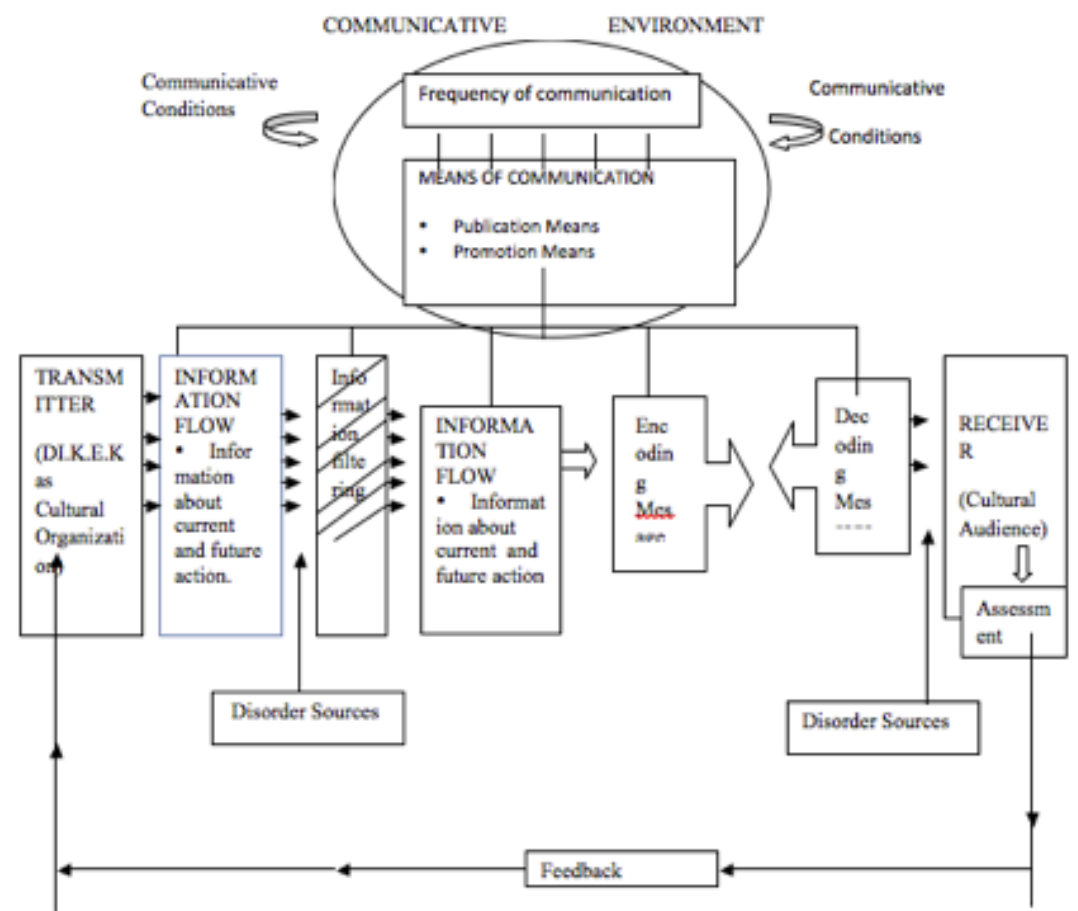


Figure 1: DI.K.E.K's Communicative Model

In the process of promoting its information and messages, DI.K.E.K appears to have a relative quantity of flow **concerning the current and future aims and actions**. On the **question** about whether **this cultural enterprise takes care of the promotion of its cultural and social activities**, the result of the questions answered gave mean=3,57, which presents an almost neutral estimation on the part of the audience. Even if we accept that the wide consumer audience doesn't always receive such messages, deliberately or not,

this information becomes widely known and naturally causes reactions towards specific centers – receivers of those messages which act as **disorder sources** (e.g. minorities in the municipal council, local mass media, public placement of those directly involved with the citizens' cultural affairs etc). As a result, in the cases of negative or hesitant attitude, some interferences arise which make its administration carry out a process of **filtering** the flowing messages, so that their volume is eliminated and focused on the most achievable and viable actions.

The remaining - reduced by the filtering- information and message flows go through an **encoding** process, that is processing of their format and content so that DI.K.E.K's messages alter the **receiver's** (Cultural Audience's) behaviour, (Fiske,1992; Kastoras, 2002; Fiske, 2011). At this point, a problem which raises concerns the **processing of the messages** addressed to the cultural audience which gave the choice "OFTEN" a higher percentage (26%) compared to the other choices (Mean = 4,89 Namely) "not so rare" (Which Moves Towards The Same Direction), when asked to answer the **question about how often it lacks information about cultural and social actions, not on its own fault, but due to mistakes and omissions of DI.K.E.K. itself.**

The more or less successful message **encoding** affects through a chain reaction the **decoding** process, the level and quality of which is directly linked to a wide range of personal social and psychological factors (educational level, social status, favorable or not attitude towards the principal's political placement, financial status, professional activity, cultural refinement, culture, which as has already been stated, has deep roots, thus raising great expectations, etc) which either predispose the audience positively towards the incoming messages, or contribute to its distancing itself from them , constituting another form of **disorders source**.

In direct contrast to the communicative dipole is DI.K.E.K's cultural audience as a **receiver** of the former's cultural information and messages, which is also partly responsible for the communicative dimension concerning DI.K.E.K and mainly for the way it operates. The correct **decoding** of the received messages, the audience's positive or not response to them, along with the active participation in planning cultural actions , contributes both to information flow from the part of the **receiver** to the **transmitter** and the gentle function of the **communicative process**, which is disrupted and finally cancelled, when facing the cultural audience's (RECEIVER'S) unwillingness to participate and its distancing itself from the planning and the final creation of the cultural product. A relevant **question** to the public about **the frequency of making recommendations concerning the cultural and social action they suggest**, 57,3% was answered negatively ("NEVER") and only approximately 25% of the persons asked showed a somehow active participation ("sometimes" 19,8% and "often" 3,8%).

2.3 Results-Assessment of Cultural Communication

A further obligation for DI.K.EK's cultural audience is the reasoned **assessment** both of the various parts (e.g message content, means and frequency of communication etc) and the whole communicative process, so that it supplies the necessary informative material for the process of **feedback**, which will assist the adoption of remedial actions. This process is meaningful only if DI.K.E.K takes into consideration the **cultural and social suggestions** of its audience, and encourages the latter's participation, a factor contributing to the establishment of a participatory process.

Through the two relevant **questions**, it was revealed that as far as the utilization **of the suggestions** is concerned, the audience gave answers between "DISAGREE" and "RATHER DISAGREE" (with mean=2,50 and standard deviation=1,489), with high percentages (76,7%) extending in the span from "STRONGLY DISAGREE" to "RATHER DISAGREE", while with regard to **the encouragement of suggestion making**, the audience responded "RATHER DISAGREE" (with mean=2,92 and standard deviation=1,485) with an also high percentage (67,9%) extending in the same span.

When completing the process of providing **feedback**, it is essential that DI.K.E.K itself **inform the audience about the possibility and the degree to which the suggestions made are utilized**, so that a basis for an ongoing brainstorming process is built, which if used –even partially- will benefit both parts, establishing an effective communicative relationship. In the relevant **question** however, the cultural audience stresses with a high percentage (61,8%) the absence of **a process of providing information** concerning the outcome of the recommended on its part cultural and social action.

3. Review -Conclusions

Although DI.K.E.K. is still to date the main cultural social body of the Municipality of Karditsa, with a long cultural and social experience, aiming at the promotion of actions of cultural and social creativity and development, it displays a mediocre total communicative acceptance by its cultural audience because of its conscious inability to gauge the needs of the audience it addresses, thus showing an excessive introversion trend.

More specifically, this trend is proven through a series of incomplete communicative processes, such as the absence of means concerning the **frequency of direct collection of the audience's opinion about the kind of the cultural and social**

activities, and further the **degree to which its cultural and social needs are met**. Therefore the phenomenon of partial or total citizen disinterest is observed leading to its distancing itself from the planning and the final creation of the produced cultural product.

An additional obligation of the cultural audience, namely reasoned **assessment** not only of the various communicative parts (EG MESSAGE CONTENT, COMMUNICATIVE MEANS AND FREQUENCY ETC) but also of the total communicative process so as to supply DI.K.E.K with informative material essential for the process of **feedback**, which will help in the adoption of amending movements, doesn't seem to contribute positively to DI.K.E.K since it doesn't take into consideration and thus doesn't make use of the **cultural and social suggestions** of its audience while it doesn't also encourage the rendering of such recommendations.

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4.1 Institutional Texts

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[1]The amount and range of the problems under research concerning the productive outcome of DI.K.EK, create a situation for which in terms of research there is no empirical approach to the whole issue through hypotheses testing and in general characterized by the inflexible features of the Positivist Approach (Siomkos ET AL, 2005 : 22;Gantzias: 8-10). In the case of such characteristics, for the detailed inquisition and effective approach to the whole problematic situation, what is suggested is the direct specification of the various problems as they are observed through the researcher's in situ observation and general reports accompanied by the support of data from the use of international biography, interviews and questionnaires from all parties involved in this cultural institution. Therefore, the methodological approach to the subject of this paper is carried out on the basis of an EXPLORATORY STUDY and aims at the development of knowledge in terms of an analytical and integrative process of the organizational and productive structuring of organizations like DI.K.E.K, which have some special features (Kosiol, 1962; Sdrolias, 1991).

The research was carried out with the use of a questionnaire. The questions were mainly scaled questions (THE SEVEN GRADE LIKERT SCALE WAS USED), while some of them were dichotomic and some others were multiple choice questions. The distribution, completion, and collection of the questionnaires took place from 14 to 22 March 2009. 180 questionnaires were distributed in different times and places in Karditsa city with the method of personal interview (intercept interview) and they were filled in by 142 persons , from which 9 questionnaires were incomplete .Therefore, the final sample of the fully completed questionnaires was 131.

The process of data processing was carried out with the help of the statistic package SPSS16 (Siomkos ETAL, 2005; Howitt ET AL, 2006), and particularly with the method of DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS, where its main tools were primarily used, namely Mean, Std Deviation, Frequencies-Percent, after it was first realized that the reliability coefficient Cronbach's of the scales that were used to measure the multifaceted notion of cultural product is 0,879, higher than 0,700, which is the normal questionnaire limit (Bishop ET AL, 2007; Hair ET AL., 2010). For a better presentation of the results of the process , the processing and the drawing of relevant conclusions a bar chart was also used

Finally, in the whole process of the Research Approach a series of interviews addressed to the staff of DI.K.E.K took place as a means of capturing the indoor atmosphere, given the clear unwillingness and hesitation of the temporary staff towards their participation in the process of questionnaire filling. The main reasons for this attitude

are claimed to be the sense of insecurity concerning the future of their employment relationship, the recurring recent payment default along with the potential of a mandatory relocation to a lower employment position.