

**AN EXPLORATION OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN ALGOA BUS
COMPANY, PORT ELIZABETH**

BY

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1. INTRODUCTION

The study explored organizational communication at Algoa Bus Company (ABC) in Port Elizabeth. The exploration exercise was based on flows of communication at ABC. This research project captured the four flows of communication as they colour relations within the company. The four flows of communication are, namely: upward communication which refers to messages that flow from subordinates to superiors, downward communication flow which refers to communication directed to the lower levels of hierarchy by higher levels, horizontal communication flow which refers to communication amongst people who are at the same level of authority and diagonal communication flow refers to communication across the organisational levels. The study also explored the structure of such communication processes and from a normative point of view, it does expose weaknesses though.

1.1 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

ABC is a transport services company which offers cost effective transport solutions to the community of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality and surrounding areas. Communities are dependent on (ABC) on a daily basis and both internal and external communication is very important for the sustainability of their service. In order to sustain its operations there is a need for communication to happen to ensure that both internal and external stakeholders are well informed.

Before any organisation can successfully communicate with the external public it is imperative to prepare a solid ground for communication to happen internally first. The question arose, was this happening at ABC? The researcher having worked at ABC for a period of three years before pursuing other interests observed and had first hand experiences of the gaps that existed in their internal communication.

For example at ABC the tools of communication such as notice boards were not enough and were not strategically located for employees to utilise them effectively. There were also the language barriers which seemed glaring because most of the workers were Xhosa speaking but the language that was used was English language and this created even a bigger gap in communication. There were also other channels that were there but were under utilised and most of the time workers depended more on the information from their union representatives.

The most commonly used form of communication were memoranda that were sent by management when they wanted to inform employees about new policies, announcements, new developments. For

a company to communicate successfully with its employees there need to be a planned internal communication strategy that is rolled out internally to achieve its goals within the company.

Gustav Puth (2002:30) made a profound observation when he said that all levels of leadership had to be involved in making the best possible use of organisational communication and therefore organisational communication is very crucial as it is the backbone of any organisation and it is equally important to note that the success of an organisation as well as its failure depends on how well it communicates with both internal and external stakeholders using channels that are designed for these audiences. Communication in an organisation is initiated at various levels which results in design of messages according to various audience needs, bearing in mind the channels through which the messages travel and feedback to the sender.

According to Fielding (2006:4) all organisations regard effective communication as an essential tool for survival and without communication business would not exist. He further alludes to the fact that through communication in an organisation people are able to coordinate their activities.

Communication in an organisation can only be seen to be effective when messages that are sent reach their intended audience and there is feedback from such audiences which indicates that there was understanding between the sender and the receiver of the messages. This also indicates that there is interaction between the sender and receiver which could lead to building of strong relations because communication is a two way process.

In the 1960's organisational communication shifted its primary focus from the applied aspect of communication in the organisation which involved mainly writing, speaking and persuasion into the broader role of communication in areas such as organisational behaviour and organisational theories (Barker and Angelopulo, 2006: 14)

Fielding (2007:3) argues that communication in an organisation occurs in one – to – one situation, small groups and large groups and all of these vary in demand they place on people. Organisations also have to communicate with customers, suppliers and the general public. For example at ABC there are one to one discussions between an employee and a manager or supervisor, there are small group discussions amongst departmental members and there are large group discussions when there are meetings etc.

Each function in an organisation is dependent on other functions since an organisation is seen as a system. For example, the operations department at ABC is dependent on the planning department for the planning of routes, times for departure and arrival of their buses and the human resources department provides operations plans and communication flow. In an organisation these are of crucial importance for the organisation to function well.

At ABC there are various functions that are carried out and coordination becomes very central in the delivery of those functions in the sense that communication is used to coordinate various activities and information must flow in various directions.

The researcher also established that the following unions were operating within the organisation- SATAWU- which stands for: South African Transport and Allied Workers Union, There was also THOR- which stands for: To Have Oppression Removed and SATWU- which stands for: South African Transport Workers Union.

It is the function of management to disseminate information to subordinates in the form of instructions, as well as to provide information about the vision and the mission of the organisation and ensure that these are implemented.

Subordinates are expected to provide feedback about their performance and offer suggestions to improve their performance. Employees at the same level need to share information which might have taken time to reach them due to administrative challenges associated with bureaucracy within the company. ABC also deals with external stakeholders who are their suppliers, commuters who use their buses on a daily basis and it is important that they have strong relationship with these stakeholders and communication plays an important role in this process

1.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to explore organizational communication within ABC and in so doing provided interventions by way of recommendations for improvement when deemed necessary at the end of the study. The study focused on the structure and the directional flow of information at various levels of the organisation.

Downs and Adrian (2004:62) believe that in a healthy organisation information flows upward, downward, horizontally and diagonally. It is imperative that ABC use different flows of communication for its message to reach the intended audiences.

Different structures and levels of authority in an organisation result in different flows of communication. For example, communication between drivers is horizontal (as they are equals) flow of communication, whilst information from a unit manager to the driver is downward communication. On the other hand diagonal communication flow occurs between workers in a different section of the organisation and where one of the workers involved is on a higher level in an organisation for example at ABC diagonal communication will occur when a branch manager converses with a ticket van cashier/or a cashier at the ticket office.

The researcher has chosen ABC for this study because of the popularity it has sustained since its formation over a century ago and has traded in many different names until it was named Algoa Bus Company in 1990. This company has managed to sustain itself as a viable alternative transport company despite the existence of taxis (a quicker mode of transport) and the imminent Bus Rapid System (BRT). The success gained by ABC has triggered the researcher's curiosity in as far as communication methods within the company. The researcher was also interested to find out the tools of communication that ABC employs for it to be so successful.

The ABC management had been approached by the researcher for the purpose of doing this study and had given approval to this project.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The researcher aimed to carry out an exploration of organisational communication within ABC with an interventionist approach as recommendation for improvement would be provided at the end of the study if deemed necessary. The emphasis was on the four flows of communication namely; upward, downward; horizontal and diagonal flows of information within the ABC.

During the exploration process the researcher wanted to find out, what types of communication channels were being employed at the ABC, and whether the channels were open and effective for the delivery of messages within ABC as well as whether employees at ABC received information that is clear and understandable for them to carry out their duties.

Mersham and Skinner (2001:44) believe that organisations which follow best organisational communication practices will always use vocabulary that is known to the worker, they always check that messages have been fully understood, they provide sufficient information for the job to be done successfully and they avoid at all costs information overload when communicating with their employees.

Mersham and Skinner (2001:45) also allude to the fact that organisations with best organisational communication practices always encourage a culture of open communication and establish convenient and easy to use channels for workers to communicate with management. They also go on to argue that management in these organisations are also prepared to listen to constructive and meaningful feedback as well as to react positively and quickly to suggestions.

In organisations with best practices in organisational communications, the researcher believes that conflict is rare because there is a free flow of information within the organisation which makes it easy to detect any problems and issues are discussed before they escalate into a crisis.

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The researcher earlier reiterated the importance for any organisation to have a solid ground on which it based its communication processes for it to successfully communicate with its stakeholders both internally and externally, but it is absolutely important to begin internally first. The question the researcher asked; is this happening with ABC?

The researcher had to answer a number of principal questions for the study to be successful.

1. What information do you have access to about ABC as an organisation?
2. Who or what is your source of information?
3. How frequently do you receive information?
4. If you were to improve communication/information flow what would you do?
5. Are messages clear and understandable when you receive them?
6. Do you receive information about the vision and the mission of the company?

The aforementioned research questions assisted the researcher in establishing how ABC communicates with its employees. These are some of the questions that were used in the study in order to gather information that assisted the researcher to explore organisational

communication within ABC. It must be noted though that the researcher had different questions for each group participating in the study and he divided them into sections e.g. Section A, Section B and Section C.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.5.1 METHODOLOGY

When exploring organisational communication at ABC the researcher did a qualitative study. A literature review was used and assisted in enhancing the academic understanding of organisational communication and the organisational structure as well as their impact with reference to the flow of messages.

Data regarding organisational communications was collected through interviews from the following units: senior managers, unit managers, fulltime union representatives, supervisors, and drivers who are non union members. A sample comprised of these different groups because each group might have a different view of the organisation with specific reference to various communication flows.

Organisational communication was analysed based on the literature review and empirical research. Recommendations were drawn from employee's suggestions on how to improve the different flows of communication. Six participants per unit were interviewed and no particular characteristics for example if the participant is white or black, their age was not a factor and whether they are male or female as long as they belonged to one of the units specified above.

1.5.2 METHOD AND TECHNIQUES

Focus groups were used to gather information. According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997:97) focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked questions about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a service, concept or an idea.

The interviews with the focus groups were conducted in a semi -structured manner where respondents were made to feel free to give views in their familiar environment.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997:98) the benefit of using focus group discussions was that group discussions produced data and insight that would be less accessible without interaction found in a group setting, also group members discovered common language to describe similar experiences. The focus group also provided an opportunity to disclose among similar others in a setting where participants are validated.

Krueger (1994:6) states that a focus group is a special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition and procedures. It is composed of seven to ten participants who are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic. They all in one way or the other experience some form of communication relating to the organisation and their jobs.

The focus group approach was used for this study because they are cost effective and participants perceive the group as a social unit which shares the same experiences. The groups were made up of people with the same characteristics e.g. fulltime union representatives.

Krueger (1994:10) also believes that focus group interviews work because they tap into human tendencies. As environment determines people's psychological orientation they are also influenced by others around them and another advantage of focus groups is that other people's opinions were listened to and shared in a focus group setting other than in an individual setting. The format allowed the researcher to probe for more information and seek clarity.

1.5.3 TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The target population was drawn from employees of ABC. A stratified sample was used. The sample was drawn from the different levels of the organisation in order to understand how they perceived and understood the structure of the organisation as well as the various flows of communication.

The different strata included the management team, unit managers, full time union representatives, drivers and operational staff. According to Du Plooy (2002:15), "a stratified sample is drawn when we not only want to draw a representative sample but include subgroups in the population. The population can be divided into different strata based on characteristics and variables."

It is important to note that ABC has got a staff complement of approximately 600 employees and more than half are drivers, there is support staff and there are those who are employed to maintain

the buses. In each unit i.e. union representatives, supervisors, non-union members (drivers) unit managers, senior managers etc, six participants were interviewed.

The different categories were chosen for the study because each category varies in terms of the extent to which they can access. Each group has its own needs in the communication processes and groups can also propose improvement based on their levels e.g. unit managers, union representatives, drivers. Each group will be made up of six to ten people depending on the availability employees.

1.5.4 DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

The data was dealt with in a confidential manner. Selecting a representative sample of the employees from different strata was done to ensure validity. As mentioned earlier a stratified sample was used. The sample was drawn from the different levels of the organisation in order to understand how they perceived and understand the structure of the organisation.

The data analysis process was designed to draw logical inferences from the data collected.

Creswell (2003:19) believes that there are various generic steps involved in data analysis, which involve organising, reading through all the data and coding the information into categories.

1.5.5 DELIMITATIONS

The geographical area for this study was ABC headquarters at Perl Road Depot in Korsten, Port Elizabeth. Only a sample of participants were targeted for this study as it was practically impossible to interview every manager, every full time union representative, every driver and the researcher was confident that the sample drawn was representative of the ABC population for the study.

It is important to note that the purpose of delimitation was to make the study manageable from a research point of view.

1.5.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Organisational Communication- This is communication within an organisation, sometimes it is referred to as internal communication.

External Communication- This is communication with external publics/people outside the organisation.

Downward Communication- refers to communication that is directed to lower levels of hierarchy by higher levels.

Upward Communication- refers to messages that flow from subordinates to superiors in the higher levels of the hierarchy.

Horizontal /Lateral Communication- refers to communication amongst people who are at the same level of authority.

Diagonal Communication- refers to communication across the organisational levels. It occurs amongst people at different levels of organisational hierarchy and different departments.

CHAPTER TWO

2. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a literature overview was provided to clarify the concept of organisational communication and related theories and models it was also imperative for the researcher to define the terms “organisation” and “communication” and related terms as well as also dealing with what constitutes an organisation, the structure etc. The review of literature provided the basis for the exploration of organisational communication within ABC. Organisational communication is imperative because communication coordinates all different activities of an organisation to achieve its goals. “Organisational communication” is defined as a subfield of a larger discipline of communication studies and organisational communication as a field is the consideration, analysis, and criticism of the role of communication in an organisation.

Operational communication is the type of communication that is used for operational purposes and operations managers are very useful in communicating messages that will improve the way work is done in any organisation and work place communication is considered very important because it directly affects profitability (www.cuttingedgepr.cc.com)

Organisational communication occurs in the context of an organisation, it is therefore imperative to define an organisation and discuss its characteristics and its roles. The different views will be discussed for the purpose of exploring organisational communication at Algoa Bus Company.

Fielding (1993:27) stressed that effective communication is central to all organisations and went on to reiterate that communication make organisations possible and well motivated people who work together are vital for any organisation.

2.1 DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION

Skinner and Von Essen (2007:85) define communication as a process whereby information is enclosed in a package and is channelled and imparted by a sender to a receiver via some medium and the receiver then decodes the message and gives the sender a feedback. This definition also implies that all forms of communication require a sender, a message and an intended recipient or audience for it to be effective.

Cleary (2003:1) define communication as a process of creating meaning between two or more people through the expression and interpretation of messages and it is therefore an endeavour to reach the minds of others.

Barker and Angelopulo (2006:1) argues that communication is often described as the glue that binds together the various components of an organisation, enabling interaction with its agents, its customers and the broader public

From all the definitions above one gathers that for communication to be complete someone must be the sender of a message which is received by a recipient and that message needs to be understood for feedback to be received by the sender. One also noticed that communication is all about creating an environment of understanding and building long lasting relations within organisations.

In an organisation such as ABC communications plays an important role for it allows workers to be aware of their roles, policies and through a number of channels they are able to access this information for their own benefit as well as the benefit of the organisation. For example management send a message via a memorandum or notice board and the workers read the memorandum or the message on the notice board and try to understand what is required of them by this communiqué and this could be ordering them to do a certain task or providing general information for their own consumption.

The feedback to management will provide them (management) with a proof of whether what they communicated was understood by the workers or not and the medium in which it was sent plays an important role as the right medium for the right audience is very important.

Communication is very important in any organisation because it build relations between stakeholders that operate within the organisation.

Three categories of communication in an organisation are identified. The categories will enhance the understanding of ABC holistically as well as lay the basis for the evaluation communication at ABC

2.2 THREE CATEGORIES OF COMMUNICATION

Byer (1997:5) identifies three categories of communication specific to organisation context namely: internal-operational communication, external operational communication and personal communication.

2.2.1 INTERNAL OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Internal operational communication consists of structured communication within the organisation directly related to achieving the organisations goals. For example, at ABC there are various structures such as top management, unit managers, supervisors and drivers. Communication flow within these structures ensures that the organisational objectives are met.

2.2.2 EXTERNAL OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

External operational communication refers to the communication that an organisation engages in with external stakeholders, such as the public, regulatory and government agencies. The influence by the department of transport is seen as external communication strategy by ABC. It is conducted with entities which exist outside the organisation.

2.2.3 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Byers (1997:4) defines personal communication as that incidental exchange of information and feeling which human beings engage in whichever they come together. The conversation might be related to the job or organisation, or might be social engagement.

Whilst Byers (1997:4) identifies three categories of communication in an organisation, Fielding (2006:46) identifies four major types of messages used in an organisation, namely:

Messages describing tasks

Messages giving instructions

Messages to maintain good relationships

Messages about goals and philosophy and ethics of the organisation

According to Byers the above messages travel in various flows of communication within the organisation. The source of these messages is determined by the nature of the messages. If the message is an instruction related message i.e. it comes from higher authority

2.3 COMMUNICATION IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Fielding (2006:3) argues that communication in an organisation occurs in one to one situations, small groups and large groups and all of those vary in demand they place on people. Organisations also have to communicate with customers, suppliers and the general public.

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:73) remind us that an identification of the aims of communication inevitably leads to the discussion of the different kinds of communication or different communication settings and there are five broad categories: two –person communication, small group communication, public communication, organisational communication and mass communication.

The researcher would like to mention that for the purpose of this study he would only concentrate on organisational communication as his focus.

Organisational communication – It holds the organisational structure together by providing a basis for coordinating the relationships between individuals and reaching organisation’s ultimate objectives.

In order to understand how communication happens in an organisation, components of the communication process are briefly discussed

Whilst Skinner & Von Essen (2007:75) argues that depending on the particular model the components of the communication process may vary slightly but basically, the communication process comprises a triad: a communicator, a message, and a receiver. The researcher support the above statement that for a communication process to be complete you need three things; the sender (communicator), the message and the receiver (or audience).

A SIMPLE MODEL OF COMMUNICATION: FIG. 1

Communicator -----Message-----Recipient-----Feedback to the communicator
(Channel)

According to Skinner and Von Essen (2007: 82) these three aspects, together with closely related factors such as code, medium, context, feedback and interference, are the major components of the communication process.

They go on to reveal that the communicator is the individual who attempts to communicate with another individual or group. The receiver refers to the person to whom the message is conveyed. The message can be described as the information content which is transmitted in such a way as to be perceived by the receiver.

According to Cleary (2003:3) Communication codes refer to all possible signs and symbols used in a communication process to convey a message in such a way as to be perceived by the receiver’s senses.

A distinction is made between verbal and non-verbal codes. Language is the verbal code, while the non-verbal code refers to the non-verbal aspects of the human behaviour.

The term 'medium' is often used interchangeably with that of 'channel' The simplest illustration of this is speaking on the telephone, where the telephone wires which transmit the communicative stimuli constitutes the channel. In face to face communication, that is interpersonal, small group and public communication, the channels are sensory organs, especially hearing, sight, and touch.

In organisational communication the channels include company newsletters, and memorandums. Newspapers, magazines, film, radio and television are primary channels in mass communication and are referred to as the mass media.

On receiving the message the receiver decodes or interprets it that is the message is translated into a form that can be understood. The receiver responds to the message or gives feedback and in the process conveys whether the message has been understood. Interference (noise, disturbance, or barriers) refers to anything that distorts the information transmitted to the receiver, causes a distraction, or prevents receipt.

2.3 FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:83) argue that communication may happen through the formal structure of the organisation, both vertical and horizontal in the hierarchy or through an informal structure often called the "grapevine" The grapevine is that highly informal network involving people, inquisitive people who want to be in the know, in a privileged position. Messages in this network travel like bushfire.

The researcher also argued that as much as grapevine exists in the organisations it cannot be used as a substitute for formal communication channels.

The informal structure according to Skinner & Von Essen (2007:83) generally exists side by side with the formal structure- i.e. the official, recognised line of control. However for the purpose of this study the researcher concentrated on the formal structure of the communication channels but the study also wanted to establish the informal channels of communication that are employed within the ABC.

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:83) believe that effective communication must be planned, and not left to chance as free flow of information and feedback is essential to success.

Gibson & Hodgetts (1991:10) also alludes to the sentiments above that communication begins with a plan, and this plan should help the manager answer three questions: What do you want to

communicate? To whom will the message be directed? What do you want to happen as a result of this message?

For example at ABC a senior level manager may decide to send a memo to the workers/drivers, he must plan in advance what he wants to communicate, and to whom exactly is this messages directed and the purpose of that particular message in that way he/she should be able to believe that she/he has sent adequate information and has communicate effectively because the desired outcome of the message was achieved.

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:85) also believe that in order to establish correctly what kind of information employees would like to receive and the most preferred sources of information, we need to ask ourselves two questions: how well our communication efforts are meeting the employees' information needs and how well our communication programmes are achieving their objectives

THE TOTAL COMPANY COMMUNICATION STRUCTURE

Process	Informal	Formal
Management to workers communication	Effective supervision, House journal, Newsletters, Mass social functions	Briefing groups, Written circulars, Notices, Induction, Disciplinary procedures, Training, Public address system
Worker to management communication	Participative management, Effective working groups	Works /liaison committees Consultative committees Grievance procedures

Source: Institute of Industrial Relations

Table: 1

2.4 SOURCES OF INFORMATION (CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION)

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:99) believe that the source of information (communication technique/channel/tool) selected depends mainly on the subject matter that needs to be communicated. They come up with the following commonly used channels either alone or in some instances together to convey an important message.

2.4.1 Induction programmes

According to Skinner & Von Essen (2007:99) induction programmes assist in the introduction of new employee/employees to the company and this is essentially a Public Relations responsibility although sections of the programme even its control may well be handled by the personnel department. This dual responsibility and interdependence demands a close relationship between the two departments.

Defining induction, Skinner & Von Essen (2007:100) said that it is basically to “to help the newcomer to adjust as quickly as possible to the new social and working environment in order to achieve maximum working efficiency in the shortest possible time” Induction programmes take a variety of forms ranging from a tour of the organisation or factory, a short induction course or an open forum.

2.4.2 Printed and graphic communication

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:100) also argues that an organisation may publish various types of printed matter for use by employees. A distinction can be drawn between occasional publications such as technical manuals, employee benefits handbooks, employee welcome brochures and regular periodicals such as the company newsletters, monthly managerial bulletins, quarterly sports and club magazines, house journals and financial reports.

House journals or staff newsletters

According to Skinner & Von Essen (2007:100) the house journal or staff newsletter has become firmly established as means of communication within the organisation.

There are three types of publications:

1. Internal- usually called a staff newsletter or staff journal, this publication is intended for the staff and created by the staff.

2. External- this publication is usually made available to clients and has proved to be an effective means of communicating the company's products, people and projects as well as being a type of support to the marketing efforts

3. Combination of internal/external- normally referred to as the house journal or house magazine, this publication is usually available to members of staff as well as those outside the organisation, including clients, suppliers, shareholders, pensioners and press.

Annual staff reports

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:101) revealed that few companies of any repute today neglect to produce a staff report on an annual basis. This is a top down strategic communication tool. The annual staff report should address those issues which have had the most impact on staff over the past financial year. I should outline the 'big three' issues:

Vision: where is the company going?

Mission: how it is going to get there?

Values: how does it conduct its business?

It should report on the state of the industry or sector in which the company does business.

2.4.3 Other forms of written and graphic communication

Management letters to employees: management letters discussing significant company affairs can be distributed to employees by supervisors or mailed to the homes of the workers.

Bulletin boards (notice boards)

According to Skinner & Von Essen (2007:102) this one of the least expensive, most neglected and yet most effective medium of group communication with employees is the bulletin board. Properly located and supervised bulletin boards command employee attention, are read by more people than would listen to a public address broadcast and are given several viewing by employees. They should be located where they can be seen and read conveniently in rest rooms, beside passenger elevators and in the cafeteria.

Product exhibits

Exhibits of raw materials, parts, and finished products impress employees with their own role in producing the particular product. They show the organisations willingness to include the employee in all its strategies.

Employee handbook and manuals

Employee handbooks and manuals are used to inform employees of policies, procedures, hours, wages, benefits, and rules and regulations.

They are an important component of operational material that can benefit employees at all levels.

Payroll-envelop insert

A convenient and inexpensive medium of employee communication is the payroll-envelop insert.

Reading racks

An inexpensive medium of communication with employees is reading rack filled with booklets about corporate affairs, social subjects, economic health and safety. Racks are placed in plant locations where they are readily accessible to employees

Suggestion Schemes

Through suggestion and safety schemes, employees can participate directly in company methods of operations by reducing costs, raising productivity levels, and reducing wastage, while providing operational feedback.

Public address system

Public address systems in plants and offices are commonly used to transmit timely and important information quickly, without calling workers from their tasks. Broadcasts from top management are authoritative and impressive, and make a personal appeal through the voice of the speaker.

Telephone and voicemail

The voicemail service allows one to leave a message for a colleague when he or she is not available or unable to pick up the phone. The voice mail will state the time and the date on which the message was left as well as reminder that there is a recorded message on the telephone.

Internet

In a very short time, internet has become the ultimate tool in interactive communication in the corporate sector.

The communication barriers of the time and space have been obliterated through the use of on-line technology and with its multi-media capabilities, and World Wide Web has captured the imagination of computer users globally.

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:104) caution that even with the internet, face-to-face interaction and company publications generally still seem to be the most effective and affordable media to reach and convey information to most employees.

They also go on to argue that the media mix which will be optimal for a particular organisation can be determined only by that organisation itself.

2.4.4 Employee relations programmes

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:104) suggests other methods of improving relations which lead to better communication include:

Open days for employees and their families

An open house for employees and their families provides opportunities for communication with workers. Management and foremen can tell and show workers about the nature and variety of products produced, the capital investment, new and improved machinery and facilities, and the significance of individual's job in the overall company production.

Visits by senior executives to departments

Visits by the chief executive and senior management executives to the offices and plants, for informal talks with small groups of workers, afford opportunities for good two-way communication.

Departmental (or intercompany) relations

Interdepartmental liaison is an important function of the public relations practitioner. A barrier to improved internal communication is the departmental mind that says, 'Why does he or she want to know it?' There is a need for intercompany co-operations for communication to improve.

Meetings of management and employees

Management-employee meetings are a common medium of communication with workers. Meetings give management an opportunity to speak directly to the workers about the new policies, products, methods and internal problems. The programme usually includes panel discussions by executives, questions by employees and roundtable conferences and films.

Intranets

Intranets are having a major impact on internal communications. Memos, newsletters, guideline documents, internal phone books, training manuals, and product and competitor information can all be kept for access by employees internally through the intranet.

2.5 LANGUAGE AS A BARRIER TO COMMUNICATION AT ABC

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:77) believes that the process of communication may be hindered in three main respects: in receiving, understanding or acceptance of the message.

They go on to argue that barriers to reception include certain needs, anxieties and expectations of the listener, his attitudes and values and certain environmental stimuli. For example workers could have a problem with reception of the message because they have an attitude towards the sender; it could be that they do not trust him.

They also argue that the main barrier to understanding include the sender's choice of language and jargon. For example in a place of work like ABC the majority of workers are not highly educated therefore the senders of messages need to use the language that is better understood by the majority of the people and must avoid using overly complex terms (jargon) so that their messages could be understood.

The main barriers to acceptance according to Skinner & Von Essen (2007:77) include the attitudes and values of the listener. For instance workers often question messages that are sent from higher offices, there needs to be a lot of trust by workers of the person or the office that is sending the messages.

2.5.1 The seven Cs of communication

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:77) presents a number of useful guidelines with regard to effective communication, which are:

Credibility: communication starts with a climate of trust. The climate is built by performance on the part of the institution, reflecting an earnest desire to serve the receiver. The receiver must have confidence in the sender and a high regard for the source's competence on the subject.

For instance in a company such as ABC you need to build trust over a period of time and it is not something you achieve overnight it takes time and once an organisation have earned it there is a need to sustain it.

Context: a communication programme must square with the realities of its environment. For example if a communiqué is sent to the receivers it must be simple and the context of the message must be clear to the receiver. It must confirm and not contradict the message.

Clarity: the message must be put in simple terms. Words must mean the same to the receiver as the sender. Complex issues must be compressed into themes, slogans or stereotypes that have simplicity and clarity. The further the message has to travel, the simpler it must be.

Content: the message must have meaning for the receiver and it must be compatible with that person's value system. It must have relevance to the receiver's situation. In general people select items of information that promise them the greatest rewards.

Continuity and Consistency: communication is an unending process. It requires repetition to achieve penetration. Repetition with variation-contributes to both factual and attitudinal learning. The message must be consistent.

Channels: established channels of communication should be used. Different channels have different effects and serve effectively in different stages of the diffusion process.

Different channels are called in for reaching different target audiences.

Capabilities of the audience: messages are most effective when they require least effort on the part of the recipient. This involves factors such as availability, habits, reading ability and receiver's knowledge.

2.6 DEFINITION OF AN ORGANISATION

An organisation is a social arrangement which pursues collective goals, controls its own performance, and has a boundary separating it from its environment. Further more in the discipline of Sociology, organisation is defined by the elements that are parts of it, its communication, its autonomy and its rules of action compared to the outside events (<http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=effective+structure+of+communication+in+organisation>)

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ORGANISATION

According to Fielding (2006:34) an organisation like any other object has specific characteristics:

- People do different jobs and have different responsibilities in an organisation
- In an organisation there will be one or more places where power is held
- Each post in an organisation may be filled by a number of different people
- Different sections in an organization depend on each other
- Different sections in an organisation work together to coordinate their activities
- Different sections of an organisation work together on a regular basis.

Pace & Faules (1994:7) identify the difference between formal and informal organisations. For example, for the purpose of this study the focus will be on formal organisations. The characteristics are linked to a formal organisation which is popularly known as bureaucratic.

Max Weber's analysis of a bureaucracy exhibits the following characteristics. According to Max Weber the notion of bureaucracy involves power, authority and legitimacy. Weber defines power as the ability of a person in any social relationship to influence others and to overcome resistance, power in this sense is fundamental to most social relationships. In other words in an organisation according to Weber, when power is legitimate compliance is effective and complete (<http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?=-max+weber+analysis+of+a+buraeucratic+organisations&d=4666327511205954&mkt=en-ww8setlang=us&w=eb6ccaba,eee16d1a>)

Weber's study of legitimation introduced a whole new dimension to the study of organisational discipline. He uses power to refer to the ability to induce acceptance or orders; legitimation to refer to acceptance of the exercise of power because it is in line with the values held by the subjects; and authority to refer to the combination of the two i.e. to power that is viewed as legitimate.

According to Weber bureaucracy exhibits the following principles:

- Bureaucracy is based on rules and such rules allow for solution of problems, standardization and equality in the organization.
- Bureaucracies are based on the concept of sphere of competence, which means that there is systematic division of labor, each role having clearly defined rights and powers.
- The essence of bureaucracy is hierarchy
- Administrators are appointed on the basis of their knowledge.
- A bureaucracy requires carefully maintained records –a communication issue. Weber’s theory gives implicit ideas of what communication is like in organisations which is criticised by Littlejohn

<http://cc.bing.com/cache.aspx?max+weber+analysis+of+a+buraeucratic+organisations&d=4666327511205954&mkt=en-ww8setlang=us&w=eb6ccaba,eee16d1a>

Formal organisations are seen as:

Having stipulated relationships amongst positions, for example at ABC these will include top managers, middle managers, supervisors, drivers etc. Communication at ABC is directed according to hierachical levels in order for it to have authority and power. These levels therefore become very important when instructions have to be given.

Organizational tasks are distributed amongst various positions in accordance of official duties. Consequently each employee will have specific role to play. For example the engineering department is expected to carry out duties which are related to engineering and thus the separation of tasks. The relationships amongst the departments are structured
(<http://cc.bing.com/cache.aspx?q=effective+structure+of+communication+in+organisation>)

An employee is expected to do what is captured in his/her job description and the delegation of authority. The power is limited to the level or position a person occupies in the organisation.

The lines of authority and the positions are arranged in a hierachical order. Officials are responsible for their subordinates and the lines of communication go upward and downward.

These are formal rules and regulations which regulate the activities of different functions. Administration of procedures is central in functioning of the departments in an organisation.

2.7 THE STRUCTURE OF ORGANISATIONS

Fielding (2006:31) believes that the brief discussion on the structure of organisations below will assist to better understand the use of different flows of communication in an organization.

Mersham & Skinner (2001:32) view structures as an arrangement of components and subsystems within an organisation. They further believe that it refers to patterns of relationships among the units in a social organization and relationships that might be expressed in terms of power status or other variables.

Different types of organisational structures

The structure of an organisation is the manner in which various sub-units are arranged and interrelated. Organisations can be simple to complex structures, depending upon organisational strategies, strategic decisions within the organisation and environmental complexities.

Classical organisational structure

In a simple centralized organisational structure, power, decision making authority and responsibility for goal setting are vested in one person at the top. This structure is usually found in small and single person owned organisations. The basic requirement of a simple centralized structure is that it has only one or two functions, and a few people who are specialists in critical functions. The manager is generally an expert in all related areas of functions and is responsible for coordination. Thus, the organisation has only two hierarchical levels. However, this structure has to become more complex for growth, diversification or other reasons

The bureaucratic organisation

In large organisations and under well defined conditions, organisation structure may be bureaucratic. The essential elements of a bureaucratic organisation are: the use of standard methods and procedures for performing work, and a high degree of control to ensure standard performance. (<http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=effective+structures+of+communication+in+organisation>)

The divisional organisation

Divisional organisational design refers to multiproduct or service design that separate different products or services to facilitate management planning and control. Different divisions in an organisation can further have simple centralized or functional designs, depending upon their size and activities. This type of organisational design is favoured when different kinds of products or services require different kinds of management.

Modern organisational designs

Modern approaches to organisational design include project, matrix and adhocracy types.

Project design

Project design is called the team or task force type. It is used to coordinate across departments for temporary, specific and complex problems which cannot be handled by a single department. This design facilitates inputs from different areas. Members from different departments and functional areas constitute a team, in which every member provides expertise in area of specialization. Such a structure coexists with the more traditional functional designs (<http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=effective+structures+of+communication+in+organisation>)

Matrix organisation

The matrix design blends two different types of designs, namely project and functional organisational design. Since the project type organisational design is not considered stable, the matrix design attempts to provide permanent management structures by combining project and functional structures. The main advantage of this combination is that the matrix design balances both technical and project goals and allocates specific responsibilities to both.

Matrix organisational structures are not without problems: According to (Davis and Lawrence, 1978: 67) responsibility and jurisdiction are not clearly defined in matrix organisation. Bosses are not clearly identified. Consequently, matrix organisations could lean towards chaos and disorder, and even lead to power struggles unless power between line and project manager is skilfully balanced.

Within the organisation, matrix organisations may encourage the formation of cliques since all decisions are made in a group. This could reinforce group loyalties and create inter-group conflicts. Matrix organisations need more human resources, particularly during initial periods. This means

higher overheads and increased expenditure. Matrix organisation forms are usually found at the lower level of the organisation.

Adhocracy

Adhocracy structures are also called 'free form' or organic organisation structures. They stress managerial style which does not depend upon formal structures. They are well suited for complex and non – standard work and rely on informal structures. An adhocratic structure is flexible, adaptive and organized around special problems to be solved by a group consisting of experts with diverse professional skills

(<http://cc.com/cache.aspx?q=effective+structures+of+communication+in+organisation>)

The following different aspects of organisational structures were discussed briefly: Tall Structure/Vertical Structure, Flat and Division into departments, contracting line of communication and Staff divisions Structure.

According to Fielding (2006:40) tall structures are organised to allow for carefully controlled flow of messages up and down a hierarchy of managers and departments. In this structure managers have tight control over subordinates and they also control the flow of messages

In tall structures the more levels there is in the hierarchy, the greater the risk of message distortion. In addition there will be more and more rules to deal with numbers and types of messages generated. In this type of structure horizontal communication or communication amongst managers at the same level in the hierarchy is not encouraged unless special arrangements have been made.

If managers did communicate horizontally, this could be described as contracting lines of communication because vertical flow of communication has been bypassed. Contracting lines of communication might also refer, for example to junior manager who communicates directly with senior manager, leaving out his/her immediate supervisor. In general contracting lines of communication refers to any means of communication that bypasses the normal chain of command in an organisation. A manager might for example, send a direct message to a subordinate or groups and leave out people who would normally pass on such messages. Managers could do this for example by inserting messages in pay packets or addressing staff directly on the public address system, calling a meeting or sending out a notice.

If this occurs this could cause problems managers left out could be angry. It could also mean that not everyone has the same information.

Flat Structure

According to Fielding (2006:40) in a 'flat' Structure a senior manager might delegate a good deal to subordinates, and so have less control. This type of structure simplifies vertical communication by removing some levels in the hierarchy. Few distortions would then result. This type of organisation structure requires high level of communication skills in the field of conflict resolution because of often conflicting tasks and out looks of different sections. Communication skills in a flat structure would need to be rather different from those of the tall structure.

Creation of different departments

Fielding (2006:41) goes on to argue that organisations are generally divided into departments. These may be divided according to their functions or according to the products they produce. The people who do the same thing are grouped together and we would for example have the following sections: personnel section, accounts section, sales and marketing section, public relations and communications section etc.

However care has to be taken that departments do not defend their territories to such an extent that communication between departments becomes difficult.

Line and Staff divisions

Fielding (2006:40) reveals that organisations may be described in terms of line and staff divisions. Line managers control the members of the company who work to achieve its goals. Line manager can also delegate work to groups of staff specialists who work on specific tasks. There are usually specialist departments such as personnel, accounts, computer, research and development. All these specialist departments help the line managers achieve the goals of the organization.

This division between line managers and staff frequently leads to conflict. People in staff sections often feel they are treated as inferior. On the other hand, line managers feel threatened by staff advice. They might also be put off by the overuse of technical terms used by staff sections.

Policies and Procedures

According to Fielding (2006:40) large organizations have to issue policy guidelines and procedures regulating the flow of messages and these guidelines take the form of policy manuals describing the company's objectives and policies for achieving these goals. Guidelines for departments, for

example, how to write messages, specific procedures to be followed to regulate the flow of messages and detailed instructions for performing procedures

There are implications for communication- an atmosphere of trust need to be encouraged. Open and honest communication needs to be encouraged. Specialist staff needs to avoid the use of overly complex terms/jargon. They need to give their advice clearly and simply to avoid intimidating managers who are not experts in their fields. Line managers need to ensure they listen and read carefully and show that they value the advice given to them.

Van Staden, Max & Erasmus – Kritzinger (2002:22) maintain that organisational structures help to make the flow of information more effective and ensure that there are formal communication channels to be followed whenever information needs to be exchanged. However the same structures can impede communication as argued by Fielding above.

People in an organisation work together and take instructions from those who are in authority. The structure of the organisation is implemented through an organogram or organizational chart. The organogram expresses the expected patterns of formal communication. Hence the upward and downward flow of information

This then links the bureaucratic organisation where behaviours of employees are regulated by job descriptions or formal rules. Mersham and Skinner (2001:32) believes that the purpose of the structure is to provide stability, regularity and predictability to the organisation

According to Pace & Faules (1994:7) an organisation has many forms of structures and there are two extremes, the tall or vertical and the flat or horizontal structures. Tall structures have many levels of authority, with managers exercising a narrow span of control.

These structures are characterised by close supervision and personal relationships. Flat structures in organisation have only a modest amount of direct supervision and fewer rules and regulations.

Algoa Bus Company as an organization also subscribes to organizational structures and the research showed the impact of the structure towards communication.

2.7.1 THE ABC STRUCTURE

Algoa Bus Company provides transportation services to the Nelson Mandela Metropole and surrounding areas and it operates from five depots. The company plays an important role in meeting the basic needs of the community in which it operates as well as building the economy of the region.

These depots are strategically placed in order to serve the various parts of the overall community and also make the management of the large fleet of buses and drivers more manageable. Each depot is independently accountable for its own fleet and maintenance system. The Perl Road depot is the largest of the depots and this where the head office of ABC is situated. This depot services the Northern, Western and Southern areas of Port Elizabeth.

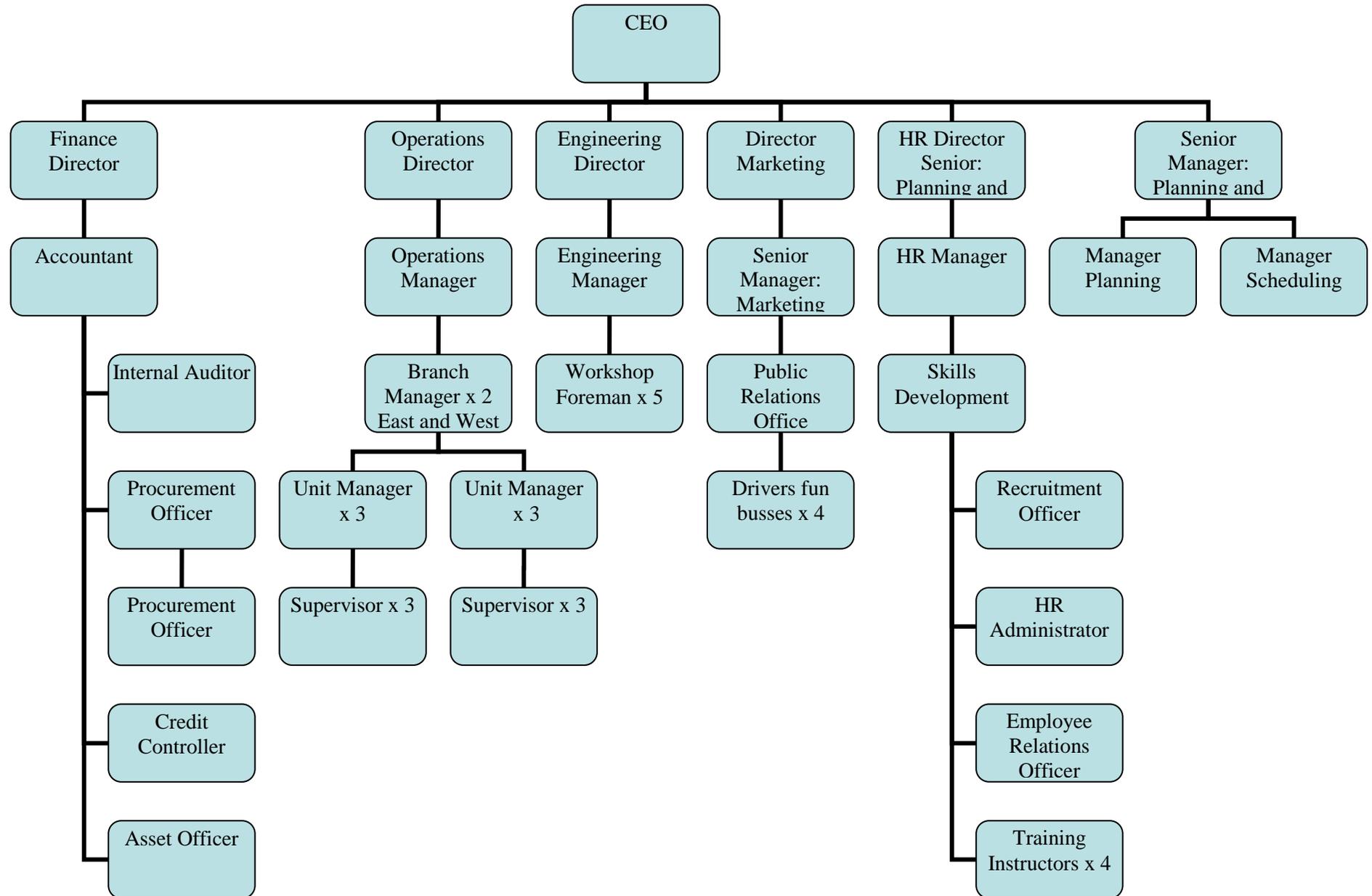
The Bay depot (Struandale Road) services New Brighton and its proximity. The Motherwell depot at Maku Street services Swartkops, Markman and its proximity and the Uitenhage depot services Uitenhage and Despatch areas.

The company currently employs plus-minus 600 employees and of these approximately 350 are drivers. Algoa Bus Company has a fleet of just over 360 buses and there is also a large workforce maintaining the buses. Each depot has a workshop for routine services but major services are done at Perl Road depot. Perl Road depot also has a section where buses are rebuilt and body works done. It is the duty of these workshops to ensure that the buses are in good working condition and repair any defects whenever necessary.

On a daily basis the buses transport about 65 000 to 70 000 commuters in and around the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan area.

The diagram below show ABC management structure which indicates that ABC is a tall structured organization

FIG 1 ALGOA BUS COMPANY'S ORGANOGRAM



2.8 ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Organisational communication is defined as a subfield of a larger discipline of communication studies and organisational communication as a field is the consideration, analysis and criticism of the role of communication in an organisation (<http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=effective+structure+of+communication+in+organisation>)

Fielding (2006:13) sees organisational communication as particularly concerned with flow of information upward, downward and sideways as well as concerned with the effects of managerial styles, leadership and motivation on communication.

Gibson and Hodgetts (1991:12) believe that organisational communication is the transfer of information and knowledge among organisational members for the purpose of achieving organisational goals.

For example if it is a norm that when fares increase are about to be effected all drivers need to be informed about this, so that they understand the fares in the different routes they will be operating on.

The researcher would like to argue that organisational communication should follow a plan for it to be successful for example in an organisation such as ABC management must decide first what they want to communicate, to whom, what is the message they want to communicate, decide on a communication channel e.g. memos, notice boards, meeting, new bulletins etc.

According to Pace & Faules (1994: 21) organisational communication is the display and interpretation of messages among communication units that are part of a particular organization. An organisation is comprised of communication units in a hierarchical relation to each other and function in an environment.

Byers (1997:21) defines communication in an organisation as a process through which people work together, create, sustain and manage meanings through the use of verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols within a particular context. Byers believe that organisational communication can be interpreted from both behaviour and symbols, they can be intentional and un-intentional

If you evaluate the above definitions of organisational communication, one will discover that there are complexities in various definitions by the theorists but they all agree that communication has a coordinating function within the organisation. Others looked at organisational communication from the sender and receiver perspective while others look at the content of communication.

Conrad & Scott Poole (1998:34) state that communication is a complex process and organisational communication is exceptionally complex. For the purpose of exploring organisational communication, Fielding's view of organizational communication will be adopted. His view is particularly concerned with flow of information upward, downward and sideways as well as concerned with the managerial styles, leadership and motivation on communication.

Skinner & Von Essen (2007:83) argue that organisational communication, which takes place downwards, upwards and horizontally through an organisation is concerned with flow of messages within the network of interdependent relationships.

- describing tasks
- Messages giving instructions
- Messages to maintain good relationships
- Messages about goals and philosophy and ethics of the organisation

According to Byers the above mentioned messages travel in various flows of communication within the organisation. The source of these messages is determined by the nature of the messages. If the message is an instruction related message i.e. it comes from higher authority. In order to better understand organizational communication it is also important to consult the following theories

2.10 ORGANISATIONAL THEORIES

Fielding, White and Chapman (1996:2) maintain that the communication messages within an organisation impact on the human relations and rests on the proposition asserting that people's attitudes, values and personal needs are all important in an organisation. The theories are as follows: Bureaucratic theory; Human relations theory and Systems theory.

It is important for the study to understand the context in which organisational communication takes place. The flow of information in an organization is influenced by the organisational style. The three organisational theories are discussed below.

2.10.1 BUREAUCRATIC THEORY

Weber sees a bureaucracy as the most efficient pattern for mass administration. It must also be noted that experience have shown that purely bureaucratic type of organisations from a purely technical point of view are capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. It is therefore imperative to regulate the entire organisation, written documents, organisational charts, corporate manuals, operating instructions, job descriptions and the establishment of guidelines for virtually all organisational activities.

The researcher believe that as much as the organisation should be regulated in a bureaucratic system but communication within an organisation should be allowed to flow and not rely too much on regulated information as this might create tensions within the organisation and people at the lower levels might find it difficult to communicate with people in the management positions.

In a bureaucracy fields of responsibility are clearly defined for employees in the organisation and there is limited room for flexibility. Authority is vested in a position. Subordinates follow orders originating from the superior's office. The communication is mostly downward and upward and the lower levels typically respond with reports. There is almost no control for horizontal communication in the bureaucratic theory.

Pace & Faules (1994:38) also confirm that within an organisation, there are those who still use bureaucracy. Ironically, certain managers prefer clear lines of communication, clear specification of authority and responsibility and clear on whom they were responsible to. Mersham & Skinner (2001: 35) who embrace Max Weber's thinking of bureaucracy imply that bureaucracy is a form of organisation which is seen as superior to all others which then minimises the chances of changing it.

In this type of an organization the most common communication flow is downward communication. Although ABC operates through rules and regulations, power is vested at the top.

2.10.2 HUMAN RELATIONS THEORY

Mersham & Skinner (2004:35) believe that one of management's functions is to keep workers happy thus the phrase that happy employee is a productive employee. The theory is about people who are more responsive to other members of their organisation than they are to the controls and incentives of management. There are written documents to guide the activities of the organisation, but they do not cover complexity or uncertainty of human relations.

Barker & Angelopulo (2006:75) perceive these as informal communication where employees informally exchange information which might be work related, social or personal. The human relations theory emphasises that organisational communication is largely oral, either impersonal or interpersonal. There is less emphasis on written directives and memorandum. Communication is less formal and managers talk to employees face to face or over email to inform them of a new procedure.

This is in contrast to formal communication where managers might present instructions at structured meetings to their employees. Communication is horizontal and the discussions are more casual than the organized deliberations of downward communication.

2.10.3 ORGANISATION SYSTEMS THEORY

The systems theory is based on the view that an organisation is a system of behaviour composed of subsystems that has definite limits within the system. The subsystem interacts with other subsystems and individual behaviours are dependent on their relationships to the various subsystems.

The systems theory maintains that there is not the best way to structure or to communicate within an organisation. Instead the structure and communication clearly depends on such contingencies as the personality's needs of people in the organization and the goals and tasks of the organisation. Mersham & Skinner (2001:25) also view a system as a set of units that has some degree of structure and that is differentiated from the environment boundary.

According to the systems theory, communication generally flows downward when managers issue commands. Occasionally employees suggest cost saving initiatives which is seen as upward communication. White & Chapman (1996:8) see two general functions of communication which are directly related to organizations. The command and the relational function in this case do not necessarily mean an order but rather an instruction. The

communication function is seen as a tool to issue, receive, interpret and act on commands as well as to create and maintain productive business and personal relationships.

The following discussion focussed on communication flows in an organisation. The focus of this study is on the effectiveness of the directional flow of organisational communication at ABC.

2.11 ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND THE VARIOUS FLOWS OF MESSAGES

Fielding (2006:51) maintains that organisational communication occurs in different directions; that is downward which is communication from management to lower levels of the organisation hierarchy; upward which is communication from the lower levels of an organisation up to management and horizontal communication which is among personnel working on the same level.

Downs & Adrian (2004:54) share the same sentiments with Fielding that developed organisations, communication flows down, up and across from the boardroom to the shop floor and back between departmental managers or between sales assistants. They also move diagonally across the different levels of different departments e.g. If we take an example of a bank, a senior manager at the head office could converse with a cashier at one of the bank's branches this is clear example of diagonal communication.

Downs & Adrian (2004:54) further believe that vertical communication describes the principal channel for routing directives, instructions and policies from top decision makers down through the organisation to the people who at various levels will implement.

As mentioned earlier the study focuses on the flows of communication in an organisation namely: downward, upward, horizontal and diagonal flows. These will be discussed in detail

2.11.1 DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION FLOW

Downward communication flow refers to communication directed to lower levels of the hierarchy by higher levels. According to Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers (2001:164) hierarchical structures lead to reinforced control which is linked to the control function that is synonymous with tall structured organisations.

The organisational structure has a major impact on downward communication. The purpose of downward communication flow is to give instructions, provide information about procedures and practices and communicate goals and strategic objectives of an organisation.

Fielding (2006:51) argues that downward communication serves important functions namely:

To provide specific instructions about the duties of the job and how to perform them

To provide the employees with the rationale for doing a particular job and an understanding about how that job relates to other jobs.

To provide necessary data regarding the procedures, policies and practices of the organisation

To provide performance feedback to employees regarding how they are doing

To provide information that will convey a sense of mission and an understanding of corporate goals.

Pace & Faules (1994:127) believe that downward communication in an organization means that information flows from a position of higher authority to those of lower authority. Management communication should be well considered and not just management communication to employees in other words management should decide what they want to communicate e.g. do they want workers do something, learn something, stop something they are doing wrong or attend a public meeting ,it should be clear from the beginning.

2.11.2 UPWARD COMMUNICATION FLOW

Upward communication flow refers to messages that flow from subordinates to superiors. Verwey & Du Plooy-Cilliers (2001:165) believe that effective communication in an organisation is possible only if management not only speak, but also listens. The purpose of upward communication include, among other, the giving of feedback on performance, seeking clarity on task allowing worker participation and providing information necessary for effective decision making.

Upward communication allows for information flow from subordinates to supervisors. The subordinate will direct questions and suggestions on achieving the goals of the organisation through upward communication channels. The request for support can also be solicited through the channel.

This also welcomes the surfacing of employee grievances before they become problematic and enables strong employee involvement with the organisation and with their jobs. Fielding (2006:52) believes that by using upward communication, managers can identify early warning signs.

Whilst there are benefits of upward communication, Gibson & Hodgetts (1991:221) identify problems or barriers of upward communication. They believe that some managers regard upward communication as time consuming and some know how to keep these channels open. Employees sometimes find it difficult to engage in upward communication because they are accustomed to receiving information and not generating it.

Gibson & Hodgetts (1991:224) identify three problems which cause barriers in upward communication, namely:

Fear: of reprisal when in many instances organizations reward people who echo the ideas and support the decision of their managers. As a result people are afraid to speak out or be a voice of dissent. Pace & Faules (1994:21) also identify fear as one of the challenges because the state that employees fear victimization if they send negative messages to their superiors.

Filters: Employees often feel that their ideas and concerns are modified as they are transmitted from their direct supervisors upward through the organisation. In some instances the supervisors change the ideas to fit the organisation and what they would like to hear, fearing that the idea or concern will fail.

Time: many managers give the impression that they do not have the time to listen to what the employees have to say. For example, an employee approaches a supervisors office to tell him/her about an idea and when gets there the supervisor ignores the employee.

Gibson & Hodgetts (1991:224) advise that the most important prerequisite for satisfactory upward communication is trust especially in instances where employees feel they will be punished for their feedback. Superiors should reinforce and reward upward communication by being attentive and provide feedback. Many organisational problems can also be avoided by upward communication channel.

2.11.3 HORIZONTAL /LATERAL COMMUNICATION

Horizontal communication flow refers to communication amongst people who are at the same level of authority. Messages at this level tend to be functional and usually task orientated. Fielding (2006:53) describes this as sideways communication. The purpose hereof is information sharing, problem solving, conflict resolution and coordination

Mersham & Skinner (2001:42) refers to horizontal communication as the communication of messages between equals. For example communication of managers to managers; supervisors to supervisors

According to Downs & Adrian (1990:28) lateral communication is the most frequent and routine communication which occurs between people who operate at the same level. Lateral communication occurs at all levels of an organisation and it is generally marked by increased frankness and ease with which groups at a similar level communicate. For example the management group will communicate to each other at ABC for various reasons.

Barker & Angelopulo (2006:75) sees lateral communication as more relevant across the lower levels of the organisation, where it is meant to focus on problem solving and coordination of work flow and relates to task coordination, problem solving, information sharing and conflict resolution.

Amongst the benefits of horizontal communication is that it builds the social support system of the organisation and it gives a sense of belonging. Horizontal communication also presents interdepartmental conflict resulting from misconceptions, communication distortions and lack of understanding.

2.11.4 DIAGONAL COMMUNICATION

Diagonal communication refers to communication across the organisational levels. Diagonal communication occurs amongst people at different levels of the organisational hierarchy and different departments. Pace & Faules (1994:126) refer to this as a cross channel communication. The purpose hereof is to create relationships related to tasks.

According to Gibson & Hodgetts (1991:225) diagonal communication occurs between people at different levels of the organisational hierarchy and in different departments.

For example, if a communication staff member requires a cheque from the finance department, staff at the communications department will form relations with staff at the finance department irrespective of the level and the grade of the job.

Diagonal communication also reinforces the concept of authority knowledge rather than authority of position. Diagonal communication in organisations facilitates the smooth operation of interdepartmental coordination and saves the organisation time and money by not sending messages up and down successive layers of organisational hierarchy

There are instances where there may be no obvious lines of authority through which a service is required. Consequently, diagonal communication relies heavily on cooperation and goodwill which the proficient communicator will have been careful to nurture by way of friendly greeting or brief conversation. For example at ABC a branch manager could converse with a ticket van cashier/ or a cashier at the depot and this signals diagonal communication.

There is no need to phone the supervisor or manager in this instance and the two employees communicate without considering their positions. Van Staden, Marx & Erasmus-Kritzinger (2002:22) believe that diagonal communication does not take place along normal lines of authority but across the different levels of authority. The challenges facing diagonal communication is the bypassing of other levels of authority. For example at ABC a driver can bypass a supervisor and speak/ communicate directly with the manager. The supervisor, who follows strict lines of authority, might feel offended by the bypassing of authority.

2.12 MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

Steyn & Puth (2000:6) believe that management communication is the only field of study that integrates communication and management. It is the means to an end which is achievement of organisational goals. As alluded earlier in the study that without proper communication of the goals, the achievement of the goals is not feasible. One of the management roles is to ensure proper communication management.

Andrews & Andrews (2004:13) also agree that management communication process aims to achieve an outcome that matches the goals. The core activity of management communication is to analyze, design, create and verify. This then relates to the communication strategy within an organisation which is exactly the purpose of the study.

Once the gaps are identified through the exploration of organizational communication at ABC, the plan will then be designed to address the gaps.

Andrews & Andrews (2004:13) maintain that exploration includes identification of objectives for communication. What is it that the audience would like to hear and also consider the right channels for communication? Messages need to be timed in order to capture the attention of the employees.

Once the intention is identified, communication needs to be scheduled. The communication tasks are prioritized. The message is delivered at the right sequence which ensures that the audience doesn't get lost. Once the audience understands, they stand a better chance to comply with the message. Verifying the communication product will test what have been prepared on three levels which are; outcomes of the audience, the media and timing.

2.13 CONCLUSION

Some organisations are made up of tall structures whilst some are made up of flat structures. Communication differs from one organisation to another depending on which organisational style they subscribe to e.g. bureaucratic, systematic or humanistic style.

Organisational communication serves different roles which includes coordinating various activities to achieve the organisational goals. Information travels through various flows within an organization e.g. upward, downward, horizontally and diagonally. Management communication assists in identifying gaps and designing the right message which will travel through the appropriate channels. There are also complexities around organisational communication which includes power struggle amongst the various levels of authority.

The various flows of information are informed by the authority to communicate meaning as to who communicates to whom. This is the reason why management communication identifies the audience, the channels and messages. In organisational communication the most encouraged flow is downward more than upward as it gives management challenges as it is grievances from the lower levels of the hierarchy.

Chapter three discussed the methodology used to collect data at ABC during the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. INTRODUCTION

The study focussed on the directional flow of organisational communication within ABC as an organisation as well as on the employee's extent of understanding the different flows of communication and their usage. The researcher designed a questionnaire in isiXhosa for the purpose of union representatives and drivers so that they can understand the questions asked and respond accordingly in the language they understood.

The researcher therefore for the purpose of the study has translated the responses that were in isiXhosa into English. However the questionnaire for ABC management and other levels was done in English and the responses are in this language. The researcher wanted to eliminate the element of language as a barrier in this study so that he could be satisfied with the responses of participants. The researcher actually translated the English version of the questionnaire into isiXhosa.

This chapter focussed on the methodology used at ABC in collecting data. As mentioned earlier in the study, the researcher needed to answer a number of principal questions for it to be successful. The questions were as follows: What information do you have access to about ABC as an organisation? Who or what is your source of information? How frequently do you receive information? If you were to improve communication/information flow what would you do? Are messages clear and understandable when you receive them? Do you receive information about the vision and the mission of the company?

Before participating in the study it was explained that their identities would be kept anonymous. The discussions involved their perceptions on information related to the organisation, employees, the job and channels of communication. It is also important to note that the researcher had to develop different sets of questions for the different groups of participants because they had different perceptions as to how they were affected by communication processes within the organisation.

Downs & Adrian (2004:53) hold the view that since organisations are structured in a hierarchical format; it is common to analyze communication the direction in which it flows.

The most common flows are: namely downward, upward, horizontal and diagonal flow of communication.

According to Barker & Angelopulo (2006:75) networks are linked communication channels or lines that the organisation uses to convey information from person to another and communication networks therefore signify the existence of specific patterns by which messages are communicated between three or more individuals. They further allude to the fact that today communication in the organisation focuses on neutralising the negative effects of unstable and changing environments, internally and externally, and on managing and solving conflict that is often the result of change in organisational structures. In dynamic organisations of today, both formal and informal channels of communication are used.

They further site another popular informal communication channel as GRAPEVINE, also referred to as 'the rumour mill'. Messages flow in all directions and are mostly verbal, social or work related.

3.1. RESEARCH PARADIGM

Qualitative Research Method

The qualitative research methods were employed to ensure that the study is done at ABC's natural setting where employees are at their work place, where communication takes place. It is also important to note that qualitative methods are seen as flexible as it is possible to follow up on feedback.

Creswell (2003:191) also argues that the objective of the qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction.

Consequently, qualitative research is utilised to explore organisational communication at ABC in order to gain understanding of the processes and identify gaps/shortcomings with the view of improving organisational communication.

Wimmer & Dominick (1997:43) refer to qualitative research as several methods of data collection which includes focus group, field observation, in-depth interviews and case studies.

Krueger & Casey (2000:7) argue that the intent of focus groups is to promote self disclosure among participants; we want to know what people really think and feel.

They further argue that; the goal for focus groups is to create a comfortable, permissive environment in focus groups; they select participants who have something in common.

The exploratory approach was used to conduct this research. An exploratory research is the type of research conducted for a problem that has not been clearly defined. It should draw definitive conclusions only with extreme caution. The advantage of exploratory research is that it helps to determine the best research design, data collection, methods and selection of subjects

An exploratory research methods are not usually useful for decision-making by themselves but they can provide a significant insight into a given situation (<http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=advantage+of+an+exploratory+approach+when+doing+a+research+study&d=4661487086274346&mkt=enww&setlang=enus&w=8eb5cbb5,f3087ed0>)

3.2. SAMPLE

Wimmer and Dominick (2000:61) define sample as a subset of the population that is representative of the entire population. An important word in this definition is representative because a sample that is not representative of the population, regardless of its size, is inadequate for testing purposes because the results cannot be generalized

The target sample/population was drawn from among ABC employees. The researcher made contact with the human resources department which divided the employees/participants into different categories, for example top management, unit managers, supervisors, drivers (union members and non union members) It must also be noted that at ABC there are top managers who are at executive committee level, middle managers, who are unit managers, supervisors and drivers who belong to union and those who do not belong to any union. In order to have a representative sample and results which can be applicable to ABC, participants were drawn from these categories employees mentioned above.

Wimmer & Dominick (2000:68) state that stratified sampling ensures that sample is drawn from a homogeneous subset of the population. The work force at Algoa Bus Company is plus/minus six hundred employees and our sample was made of six people from each level of the population. This kind of selection has been supported by Krueger & Casey (2000:26) who state that the researcher can plan three or four focus groups with any one type of participants.

The different strata were represented by top managers, unit managers, supervisors, drivers (union members and non-union members). Age, gender and race have not been considered because they were deemed irrelevant to this study. Another advantage of stratified sample, it reduces costs and increases accuracy.

Wimmer and Dominick (2000:64) remind us that it is also important to admit that the disadvantages of stratified sampling are that its application requires time and effort to divide the population into different strata especially when it is large. It is also difficult when the different stratum is made up of subgroups.

However Collis & Hussey (2003:157) maintain that a representative or a good sample is one in which the results obtained for the sample can be taken to be true for the wide population because it is easier to generalize.

The researcher arranged for the availability of participants in this study even though some of them worked shifts especially bus drivers.

3.3. COLLECTION OF DATA

Interviews and focus groups were used for the purpose of the collection of data

3.3.1. INTERVIEWS

Creswell (2003:188) argues that in interviews, the researcher conducts face to face interviews with participants or engages in focus groups.

Krueger & Casey (2000:4) allude to the fact that focus group is not just getting a bunch of people together to talk. A focus group is a special type of group in terms of size, purpose, composition and procedures. The purpose of a focus group is to listen and gather information.

Five groups consisting of six employees each were used at ABC. The researcher drew the population from ABC senior management, unit managers, ordinary drivers, union representatives and supervisors. Six participants were selected randomly from each group. Different sets of questions were developed for each group because the researcher believed that these groups were affected differently by the communication processes at ABC.

The researcher also according to Marshall & Rossman (1999:114) focus group interviews generally range from six to ten people. However, he also says that, smaller focus groups can range from four to as large as twelve.

The interviews lasted about forty five minutes on average. At ABC there is the morning shift and the afternoon shift and the researcher was able to target drivers as they returned from their morning shift at about nine and they were free until twelve noon. This was arranged with the unit managers and supervisors who are assisted the researcher with the availability of the participants. The interviews comprised of semi- structured questions which were meant to solicit employee's opinions on organizational communication.

Krueger & Casey (2000:4) suggests that, the researcher creates a permissive environment in the focus group that encourages participants to share perceptions and points of view, without pressurising participants. The group discussion is conducted several times with similar types of participants so that the researcher can identify trends and patterns.

The researcher used ABC in Korsten for the interviews so as to create a conducive environment for the participants to share information freely. Five focus groups interviews were conducted in order to identify trends in the perceptions and opinions expressed.

Semi-structured questions were used to obtain the information in order to explore organisational communication in ABC. These types of questions also enabled respondents to express views without being restricted.

It is very imperative to note that in formulating the questions, the following was taken into consideration and avoided namely double barrel questions, loaded language, leading questions, incomplete questions and vague questions. The length of questions was also considered when the questions were formulated and there is an annexure as reference.

Interview questions consisted of 3 sections e.g. Section A: Union Representatives, Section B: Supervisors and Ordinary Drivers and Section C: Senior Managers and Unit Managers

Wimmer & Dominick (1994:138) also confirms that the questions be worded in such a way that they ensure accurate transmission of respondent's responses to the researchers. They should be clear and communicate the desired information to the respondent.

3.3.2. FOCUS GROUPS

Krueger & Casey (2000:4) argue that the purpose of employing focus groups is to understand how people feel or think about an issue, product, service or idea and they further argue that six or eight people selected for this group have got something in common.

They further allude to the fact that the intent of focus group is to promote self disclosure among participants. As mention during this study they argue that they want to know what people really think and feel.

A focus group is group of people who are selected from a larger population to enter into facilitated discussion on certain questions. According to Du Plooy (2002:178) focus groups have become popular in recent years because it provides data that is rich in ideas and supplies opinions and attitudes from the subject point of view.

Focus groups are used to resolve problems in organisational communication. It provides an opportunity to those who are illiterate or do not understand the question.

Krueger (1994:6) states that a focus group is a special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition and procedures. A focus group was selected from amongst employees of ABC who share common characteristics relevant to the study.

The focus group interview was chosen for this study because they are cost effective and participants perceive the group as a social unit which shares the same experiences. Krueger (1994:10) also believes that interviews are effective because they tap into human tendencies.

3.3.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF FOCUS GROUPS

According to Krueger & Casey (2000:10) focus group interviews have five characteristics or features and these relate to the ingredients of focus group: namely, the people, who possess certain characteristics and qualitative data, in focused discussions, to help and understand the topic of interest.

In this study the researcher served several roles at the focus group i.e. moderating, listening, observing and analyzing using an inductive process. The questions for this study were formulated by the researcher well in advance.

The respondents were briefed of the objective of the study that is to explore organisational communication at ABC.

This involves identifying directional flow of information within the organisation and as well as challenges faced by the organisation and to address them. They were also informed that the interviews will take about forty five minutes on average and the venue is Algoa Bus Company a covered spot next to the canteen. The place has got a very good atmosphere and the setting is comfortable enough and they were satisfied with the environment.

Ethical considerations were taken into cognisance by the researcher as the researcher understands the obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the respondents. It is also important to note that the employees at ABC were informed that their responses will be treated confidentiality.

3.4 DATA RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

According to Collis & Hussey (2003:58) validity is the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is actually taking place in the situation. A test is valid if it demonstrates or measures what the researcher thinks or claims it does.

Collis & Hussey (2003:186) also maintain that reliability is concerned with the findings of the research. The findings can be considered reliable if (you or anyone else) repeated the study and obtained similar results.

While validity is concerned with the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is happening in the situation, the data collected can also be perceived as a true picture of what is being studied. There is a challenge though with the positivist view, the data might not reveal what is intended to draw due to various reasons such as ambiguity of questions and respondents being bored.

According to Collis & Hussey (2003:59) there are various ways to address the challenge of validity, that is, the most common is face validity which involves ensuring test measures used by the researcher do actually measure or represent what they are suppose to measure or represent.

Creswell (2003:196) suggest that the use of an external auditor to review the entire project can be used as a strategy to check the accuracy of the study. In exploring organisational communication at ABC, the validity was ensured by following the questions and procedures correctly.

Du Plooy (2002:125) states that face validity, which is sometimes called ‘content validity’, is determined by the quality of an item.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis process was designed to explore directional flow of information at Algoa Bus Company which will assist in understanding how the organisation deals with the distribution of messages upwards, downwards, horizontally and diagonally. The steps taken in collecting data for this study included designing a questionnaire which was used for focus groups interviews.

The data analysis for the study of organisational communication at Algoa Bus Company was organised and prepared by recording focus group notes and as mentioned a questionnaire was sorted out according to different strata. Also all the data had to be studied to get the general sense of the information and compile notes on the general thoughts.

The information collected from the focus groups was also categorised into different themes and patterns from various group’s responses. A decision was taken on how the description and themes will be presented. This involved the interpretation of the data, feedback with regard to the four flows of communication and the recommendations on how to improve communication within the organisation .

3.6 DELIMITATIONS

It is important to note that the purpose of a delimitation is to make the study manageable from a research point of view. The geographical area for this study was Algoa Bus Company headquarters at Perl Road Depot in Korsten, Port Elizabeth. Only a sample of participants was targeted for this study as it was practically impossible to interview every manager, every full time union representative, and every supervisor as well as every driver and the researcher made sure that the sample was representative of the population and it was drawn from employees in this depot.

The researcher dealt with managers in scheduling for the study and requests were accepted well in advance and the study went well smoothly without problems.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The researcher worked hard to ensure that the sample was selected correctly; the questionnaire was designed so that the correct responses from the participants were received. Also reliability and the validity of the study was an important factor for this study to be successful. Ethical considerations were also taken into account so that the participants did not feel as if they were being forced into doing something they were not informed about. The researcher is satisfied that the rules and procedures for the study were followed and adhered to.

In the following chapter the researcher discusses the findings of the focus groups and this include detailed information from the discussions held with the different groups selected for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4. INTRODUCTION

At this stage the researcher provided the research findings. It is important to note that this is our chapter four.

Data was collected through focus group interviews. The survey on organisational communication at ABC attempted to answer some of the following research questions for this study to be successful:

What information do you have access to about ABC as an organisation?

Who or what is your source of information?

How frequently do you receive information?

If you were to improve communication/information flow what would you do? Are messages clear and understandable when you receive them?

Do you receive information about the vision and the mission of the company?

These are some of the questions that were used in the study in order to gather information that assisted the researcher to explore organisational communication within ABC. It must be noted though that the researcher had different questions for each group participating in the study and he divided them into 3 sections e.g. Section A, Section B and Section C.

4.1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

4.1.1 UNION REPRESENTATIVES

The researcher designed a questionnaire in isiXhosa for the purpose of union representatives and drivers so that they can understand the questions asked and responded accordingly in the language they understood. The researcher therefore for the purpose of the study has translated the responses that were in isiXhosa into English. However the questionnaire for ABC management and other levels is in English and the responses are in this language. The researcher wanted to eliminate the element of language as a barrier in this study so that he

could be satisfied with the responses of the participants. The researcher actually translated the English version of the questionnaire into isiXhosa.

The researcher learnt at the first session conducted with union representatives that there were three unions that were operating within Algor Bus Company. The discussion was very comprehensive because all the union representatives from the three unions were present.

The following unions are operating within the organisation – SATAWU – which stands for: South Africa Transport and Allied Workers Union, There is THOR – which stands for: To Have Oppression Removed and SATWU – which stands for: South African Transport Workers Union. The researcher sensed that there was rivalry between the three union organisations, but for the purpose of this session, they agreed to set aside their differences and promised to be involved without bias.

There were six participants representing all three unions and the researcher was expecting six and this was a positive sign for the study as more participants were willing to take part in the study. The researcher explained to the participants that the session will take approximately forty five minutes and also explained that the study was aimed at exploring organisational communication within ABC, with purpose of improving communication flow within the company.

It was explained that their identities will be kept anonymous. The discussions involved their perceptions on information related to the organisation, employees, the job and channels of communication. It is also important to note that the researcher had to develop different sets of questions for the different groups of participants because they had different perceptions as to how they were affected by communication processes within the organisation.

SECTION A: UNION REPRESENTATIVES

Participants were asked about the type of information they have access to; that goes through the various channels.

Lwazi luni onalo ngenkampani iAlgoa Bus? (What information do you have access to about ABC?)

83.3% of union representatives believed that they have information as far as operation of the business is concerned and were very concerned that they did not know much about the company's financial performance and also felt that they needed to be informed about the position of the company on the new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. 16.6% of union representatives believed that they need to know more about the company they work for.

Ulufumana njani okanye ulufumana kubani ulwazi? (Who or what is your source of information?)

According to about 66.6% of union representatives agreed that they received information through the notice boards, the unit managers as well as their supervisors and the dispatcher's office. It is also important to note that only 33.3% of union representatives agreed that they also take the role of transferring information to their members, so that they can be informed properly about issues.

Ulufumana kangakanani okanye kanga phi olulwazi? (How frequently do you receive information?)

Over 50% of the union members agreed that when the information is urgent we are asked to meetings by our supervisors who relate information to us from the unit managers. Also they agreed that the information is put up on the notice board for everybody to see and read. 50% of participants argued that they faced a challenge though, in that some of their members do not understand the language that is used in writing the documents. This information comes in the form of memorandums and is put up on the notice boards for all the employees within the company.

Ingaba niyaxelelwa okanye niyaziswa ngemithetho nkqubo elawula inkampani (Are you informed about company policy?)

About 50% believed that they were informed about some company policies but they felt strongly that this is the responsibility of the company management to inform all their employees about company policies.

Another 50% of participants believed that they only became aware of certain policies especially when their members were already affected by some of these policies.

For them as labour representatives they believed that employees should be informed of the company policies upfront especial when they join the company, so that they are aware of the dos and don'ts of the company.

Emva kokubamba iintlanganiso nabaphathi benkampani, niyeniludlulise njani ulwazi kumalungu enu kwaye oko nikwenza kangakanani? (After you had meetings with management, how do you distribute information to your membership and how frequent?)

100% of participants agreed that they distribute information to their members by organising meetings in the various depots and they inform their membership of what is happening. They also said that twice a month as union representatives they make sure that they convene their meetings to discuss issues affecting their members but if something arises that need to be shared they call special meetings.

Ukuphucula inkqubo yezonxibelelwano apha enkampanini ningenza ntoni? (What would you do to improve communication within the organisation?)

Over 66.6% of union representatives who took part in the study were quick to suggest that there need to be a level of transparency and understanding from management that, for them (i.e. workers) to perform their duties they need to communicate with them openly. 33.3% of union representatives also said they would like to be consulted about important decisions that involve them as workers and made the example about the bass pass that was recently introduced by management where they claim that they were not properly trained on how it worked and the company ended up losing a lot of money because the commuters were actually scanning these bass passes and the drivers were blamed for this and ended up facing disciplinary action.

Ngokokuqaphela kwenu nina ingaba niqinisekile ukuba amalungu enu alufumana ngokwaneleyo ulwazi? Ewe okanye Hayi (Do you feel that your members are well informed?) Yes or No

About 83.3% of the union representatives were very vocal on this one as they said that they believed that their members were well informed. "Yes, we distribute information as soon as we receive it and because of that we are confident that they know everything that they need to know as our membership."

16.6% of the union representatives were neither willing to say yes or no because according to them there is a lot that they do not know themselves as representatives, so they did not want to commit to the statement that their members were well informed.

During the discussion one of the union representatives made an interesting statement that; our members know what we know as their representatives and this said in isiXhosa “amalungu wethu azi esikwaziyo nathi”

**Loluphi ulwimi ongathanda ukuba lisetyenziswe kunxibelelwano apha enkampanini?
(What language would you prefer to be used?)**

About 50% of the labour representatives said that more than half of the workforce within ABC is predominantly drivers who speak isiXhosa and would be very happy if some of the correspondence on the notice boards would be in this language and further more many of their members could only read and write in this language.

About 50% of the representatives argued that they needed to accommodate everybody within the company and believed that both English and isiXhosa should be used in the communication mediums within the company. The researcher not wanting to pre-empt the outcome of the discussion also highlighted to the union representatives that in South Africa we have eleven official languages, so therefore they had all the freedom to choose the language of their choice within the company but as long as there is consultation with all the stakeholders and there is consensus on the matter.

The researcher was also very cautious not to drag the discussion as he felt that it was turning into a heated debate between the labour representatives.

Loluphi ulwazi eningathanda ukulufumana rhoqo? What type of information would you like to receive frequently?

About 66.6% of labour representatives said that they would like to receive frequently information that affected the wellbeing of their members, education bursaries, salary adjustments, bonuses, how the future holds for the company, how the company is performing financially in its sector etc.

About 33.3% of labour representatives said all the information about the company they worked for is important, but they would especially like to be informed about new developments within the company

Ngawaphi amajelo onxibelelwano owakhethayo anokusetyenziswa enkampanini? (What channels would you prefer?)

100% of the labour representatives participating in the discussion agreed that face to face meetings were best the channel to engage the labour representatives as well as their membership. They also did recommend the notice boards but mentioned the language barrier as the problem.

They also said that the supervisors were also the right channel to use as they were people who actually worked with them. The Green Area meeting were also said to be the preferred channel. The Green Area meetings are meetings that are held between unit managers and workers once a month, to discuss issues affecting drivers and bus operations generally.

They also mentioned a newsletter, which could be used to inform the working population within ABC of new developments and challenges.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE UNION REPRESENTATIVES

Based on the discussions with the union representatives the researcher found out that a large number of them believed that they only had information that assisted them to do their work and they believed that they needed to know more.

The researcher also discovered that the notice board was the main source of information for the union representatives and they also made use of unit managers, supervisors and the dispatcher's office.

When asked what they would do if they were improve communication within the organisation, a large number suggested that they would like to see a lot of transparency and would like to be consulted more on issues affecting their members. What was also interesting was that they said that their members were well informed and they distributed information immediately after they had meetings with the management.

When asked about the language they preferred, 50% of participants said isiXhosa but the other 50% felt that there was a need to accommodate everybody and both English and isiXhosa should be used.

The researcher also found out that the information they would like to receive frequently is the information that affected the wellbeing of their members apart from the daily information about their duties.

The researcher also decided to include a table with the questions and responses with percentages from the discussion with the union representatives so as to get a better picture of what transpired during the study.

Please note that the table will just show a popular view during the discussion and another view based on the questions that were used during the discussion

SECTION: A - DISCUSSION WITH UNION REPRESENTATIVES

Questions	Responses-Popular view in %	Responses-Another view in %
What information do you have access to about ABC?	83.3% believed had information in as far as their duties are concerned	16.6% believed they needed to know more
Who or what is your source of information?	66.6% mentioned notice boards, unit managers and the dispatcher's office	33.3% mentioned that they also take the role of transferring information to their members
How frequent do you receive information?	50% agreed that they received urgent information	Another 50% believed that they faced challenges as their members did not understand the language used
Are you informed about company policy?	50% believed they were informed	Another 50% did not agree
After you had meetings with management, how do you distribute information?	100% agreed they distributed information to their members	n/a

What would you do to improve communication within the organisation?	66.6% suggested improvement on transparency	33.3% would like to be consulted about important decisions that the company make
Do you feel that your members are well informed?	83.3% said yes	16.6% said no
What language do you prefer?	50% said isiXhosa	50% said there was a need to accommodate everybody so English and isiXhosa should be used
What type of information would you like to receive frequently?	66.6% would like to receive information affecting the wellbeing of their members	33.3% said they would like to receive all the information about the company
What channels would you prefer?	100% agreed on face to face meetings, newsletters etc	n/a

Table: 2

4.1.2 DISCUSSION WITH THE SUPERVISORS

The researcher would like to mention that in order for the study to achieve its objective he decided to compile a different set of questions for each group participating in the study because he felt that each may be affected differently by the communication processes within the same organisation. The supervisors were met by the researcher at one of the offices which belong to another supervisor who was also part of the discussion and all participants were comfortable with the arrangement.

The researcher informed them of the purpose of the study and went on to let them know that the session will be about forty five minutes long. The researcher went on to explain that the identity of the supervisors will be kept anonymous. The researcher also went on to mention that their participation in the study was voluntary and they will not be paid for taking part in the study.

Six supervisors showed up for the session and the researcher was satisfied as they covered the various departments within the company including operations department.

To let them understand the researcher explained that this was part of a communications study aimed at exploring organisational communication within the company. The researcher went on to inform them that if during the study the participants felt that they were uncomfortable to deal with some of the question they were free to excuse themselves and that will not be held against them.

The discussion covered various perceptions such as information related to the organisation, employees, the job and the channels of communication.

SECTION B: DISCUSSION WITH SUPERVISORS

Lwazi luni onalo ngenkampani iAlgoa Bus (What information do you have access to about ABC as an organisation?)

Over 83.3% of supervisors believed that they have access to information about the vision and mission of the company. They also believed that they had access to information involving health and safety issues with which they assisted their subordinates. 16.6% believed that they knew only about the duties they told to do and little else.

Ulufumana njani okanye ulufumana kubani ulwazi (Who or what is your source of information?)

83.3% of supervisors in this study believed that their main source of information were their immediate managers. Over 16.6% also mentioned green area meetings as their source of information. Green Area meetings are meetings that are held once a month by each unit manager where issues such as traffic fines, fraud, absenteeism, and issues arising at such particular meetings are discussed. Notice boards also accounted for over 80% as a source of information for the supervisors.

Ulufumana kangakanani okanye kangaphi olulwazi? (How frequent do you receive information?)

66.6% of supervisors in the study believed that it depended on the type of information because if it was work related like faults on buses, for example they get it on a daily basis, if it deals with finances/salaries we get it weekly because we get paid weekly and major announcements are done as and when there is something that is going to happen. 33.3% of supervisors did not respond to this question.

Ukuphucula inkqubo yezonxibelelwano apha enkampanini ningenza ntoni? (If you were to improve communication what would you do?)

Over 100% of supervisors believed that frequent interaction with workers by top management by way of walkabouts would assist them to understand the feeling of the workers on the ground. The supervisors believed that this would also create an environment where people can voice their ideas on work related issues as well as concerns about their well being in the company. The researcher got the sense that the supervisors wanted to say that, workers needed an opportunity to be listened to; so that they can give suggestions on important decisions in the organisation

Ingaba imiyalezo eniyithunyelwayo icacile kwaye ivakala xa niyifumana? (Are messages clear and understandable when you receive them?)

50% of supervisors in this study revealed that sometimes they received information that was not clear and the only advantage that they had was that they worked closely with unit managers they always ask for clarity from them. The other 50% of supervisors in the study revealed that they actually understood most of the messages that were sent to them especially written messages.

The supervisors who said messages were not clear revealed that this pertained only to written messages as verbal messages were very clear especially in a meeting situation, but written messages were made unclear because of the use of jargon or overly complex terms and were sometimes in the language did not even understand

**Ucinga ukuba yintoni ukubaluleka kokufumana olulwazi kulomsebenzi uwenzayo?
Ingaba olulwazi lukunceda njani ekuphumezeni umsebenzi owenzayo**

(What do you think is the importance of receiving the type of information in your current job? How does this information contribute towards the successful completion of tasks?)

Over 83.3% of supervisors believed it were important to receive this information because it made it possible for them to operate smoothly and this led to successful completion of their tasks and they also said that it helped to monitor the performance of their subordinates to ensure they performed as required.

Ingaba niyalufumana ulwazi ngombono neenjongo zenakampani eniyisebenzelayo? (Do you receive information about the vision and the mission of the company?)

About 66.6% of the supervisors agreed that they received information about the vision and the mission of the company through interacting with their managers during conversations. The remaining 33.3% of supervisors said that there was a need for all the workers to undergo a workshop on the vision and the mission of the company so that they can understand what it means.

Ingaba umphathi wakho uye akuncome xa uthe wenza umsebenzi omhle? (Does your supervisor congratulate you when you have done a good job?)

66.6% of supervisors participating in the study revealed that their managers did congratulate sometimes and went on to acknowledge that as supervisors that kind of acknowledgement motivated them to perform even better. 33.3% of participants revealed that they were seldom acknowledged for a job well done but they were harshly criticised when they made mistakes.

It becomes a problem when you are not acknowledged doing good work but harshly criticized when you make a mistake. According to supervisors during this session positive reinforcement goes a long way.

Lendawo nisebenza kuyo ingaba inayo indima eyidlalayo kunxibelelwan? (How does your physical work setting affect your communication at ABC?)

100% of supervisors unanimously agreed that because they were stationed at the headquarters of ABC, they had the privilege of getting “first hand” information from their managers and they were able to share it with their colleagues but they did allude to the fact that they wonder if it is the same with their colleagues from other depots.

Ingaba niyakholwa na ukuba amajelo asetyenziswayo okunxibelelana apha enkampanini ayasebenza ukuze kubekho unxibelelwano? (Do you believe that the channels that are currently being employed by the organisation are relevant for you to communicate successfully within the organisation?)

50% of participants in this particular group did not believe that all the channels that were currently being employed by the organisation are relevant for them to communicate successfully within the organisation and as far as they were concerned there was a lot of room for improvement. Another 50% of participants in this group believed that all the channels that were being employed by the organisation were relevant for them to communicate successfully within the organisation.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SUPERVISORS

The researcher noticed during the discussions that the supervisors were more likely to receive information because of their position and the responsibility that they carry as a link between the workers and the managers. Supervisors believe that they are seen as “spies” or “informants” for management by their fellow workers and this put them in a difficult situation when dealing with fellow workers. So whatever they report to the workers they have to be absolutely sure it is what they were told to say to the workers.

It is also important to note that supervisors also used unions for information when it is not forthcoming from their immediate supervisors and this sometimes create a lot of tension between these levels as they do not trust each other. The researcher noticed during the various group discussions that the channels that are used by union representatives, supervisors and even drivers who do not belong to any union are actually the same, for example the notice board, face to face meetings, Green Area meetings etc.

The researcher also decided to include a table with questions and responses with percentages from the discussions with the supervisors so as to get a better picture of what transpired during the study

Please note that the table will just show a popular view during the discussion and another view based on the questions that were used during the discussion

SECTION B: DISCUSSION WITH SUPERVISORS

Questions	Responses-Popular view in %	Responses-Another view in %
What information do you have access to about ABC?	83.3% believed they access to the vision and mission of the company.	16.6% believed they only knew about their duties.
Who or what is your source of information?	83.3% believed that their source information were their immediate managers.	16.6% mentioned green area meetings
How frequent do you receive information?	66.6% believed it depended on the type of information	33.3% did not respond to this question.
If you were improve communication, what would you do?	83.3% believed frequent interaction with to management would be the answer.	16.6% said they wanted to be listened to by top management
Are messages clear and understandable when you receive them?	50% said most of the messages are understandable	Another 50% said they did not understand some of the messages
What do you think is the importance of receiving the type of information in your current job? How does this information contribute towards the successful completion of tasks?	83.3% believed it was important because it made it possible to operate smoothly	16.6% did not respond
Do you receive information about the vision and the mission of the company?	66.6% agreed that they received information on the vision and the mission of the company	33.3% said there was a need for all employees to be undergo workshops on the vision and mission of the company
How does your physical work setting affect your communication at ABC?	100% of supervisors agreed that because they are stationed at the headquarters	n/a

	of ABC they got “first hand” information	
Do you believe that channels that are currently being employed by the organisation are relevant for you to communicate successfully within the organisation	50% of participants believed that all channels were relevant	Another 50% did not believe that the channels were relevant

Table: 3

4.1.3 SECTION B: DISCUSSION WITH DRIVERS (ORDINARY DRIVERS – NON UNION MEMBERS)

The researcher arranged well in advance for the session with drivers and as mentioned earlier different sets of questions were prepared for each group participating in the study as they may have different perceptions of how communication processes unfold within the company.

The researcher compiled questions in isiXhosa for this group, so that they can understand and respond accordingly. The researcher therefore translated the responses that were in isiXhosa into English, the researcher wanted to eliminate the element of language as a barrier in this study as much as possible, so that he would be satisfied with the responses of the participants.

There were six participants representing ordinary drivers (non-union members) and the researcher explained to the participants that the session will take approximately forty five minutes and also explained that the study was aimed at exploring organisational communication within ABC, with the purpose of improving communication flow within the company if there was a need.

It was also explained that their identities will be kept confidential and the researcher further explained to them that their participation in the study was voluntary and no money will be paid for participating in the study. He further explained that if the participants felt that during the discussions some of the questions were uncomfortable for them to deal with they were free to withdraw in the study and this would not be held against them.

The environment in which the discussions took place was comfortable, as it was at the Perl Road Depot and surroundings were familiar to all the participants. The discussions involved their perceptions on inform related to the organisation, employees, the job and channels of communications.

Ulufumana njani okanye ulufumana kubani ulwazi? (Who or what is your source of information?)

Over 83.3% of non-union members (ordinary drivers) who took part in the study complained in this regard, saying that for them getting information they relied only on notice boards and their superiors because they do not belong to any union. 16.6% said superiors played their role as a source of information. The participants also argued that they were at a disadvantage because they are always referred to as “Okhwele cingweni” or literal translation “those sitting on the fence” (those who belong nowhere) by their fellow employees.

The researcher also want to add that the non union members have a choice to belong or not belong to a union and are aware that what happens within ABC will always affect them regardless of the consequences, positive or negative. For example, their advantage is that when unions negotiate wages for workers, they are also included when the workers benefit and the disadvantage is that when a non union member is called in for a disciplinary hearing, he is represented and chances of a fair disciplinary hearing could be compromised.

Lwazi luni onalo ngenkampani iAlgoa Bus? (What information do you have access to at ABC?)

About 66.6% of non-union members felt that they are being neglected because they see themselves as actually the ones who deal with people on a daily basis and for them it is important to be able to know everything about the organisation that they work for. 33.3% of participants were very vocal and even one participant said in isiXhosa “Sazi kancinci gqitha ngalenkampani” (we know very little about this company).

The researcher also took cognisance of the fact that some of the information provided by the groups may not be necessarily a true reflection of what is happening within ABC.

Ulufumana kangakanani okanye kangaphi olulwazi? (How frequent do you receive information?)

33.3% of participants in this group did mention that it depended on what was urgent at that particular point in time and most of the information they received assisted them to carry out their duties for example, bus routes, price lists for different routes, bus schedules, special trips etc. The researcher also did realise that the most relevant information for this group would be more operational to assist them with their duties.

About 66.6% of participants also did mention and agreed that they received information that is urgent this was done by way of mass meetings organised by the unions and them assisted by their supervisors when they relate information from their unit managers

Ukuphucula inkqubo yezokunxibelelwano apha enkampanini ningenza ntoni? (If you were to improve communication/information flow what would you do?)

During the session over 50% of drivers (non-union members) in the study suggested that there is a need for transparency and understanding from management that, for them (workers) to perform their duties they need to communicate with them openly. They also argued that it is difficult to give advice to their supervisors because their ideas are always being ignored and they believe that management see them as people who are just there to make money for the company and not capable of anything else.

The researcher accepted the above comment from this group as it is, as he did not have the proof that it was indeed true or not and wanted to avoid a situation where there might be counter accusations from management as this would reduce the study into a mud slinging session and therefore losing the main focus of the study in the first place.

Ingaba imiyalezo icacile kwaye iyavakala xa niyifumana? (Are messages clear and understandable when you receive them?)

About 50% of non-union members were adamant that most of the messages they receive are not clear and they do not understand what is required and the remaining 50% of participants in this session were just confuse as they said they depended mostly on their supervisors.

Ucinga ukuba yintoni ukubaluleka kokufumana olulwazi kulomsebenzi uwenzayo? Ingaba olulwazi lukunceda njani ukuphumeza lomsebenzi uwenzayo? (What do you think is the importance of receiving the type of information in your current job?) (How does this information contribute towards the successful completion of tasks?)

According to all the participants in this group during this session, they unanimously agreed that it was crucial to understand all the messages about the organisation and your work as this assists the workers to work well and want to achieve goals of the organisation.

Ingaba uyalufumana ulwazi ngombono neenjongo zenkampani? (Do you receive information about the vision and the mission of the company?)

According to 100% of non-union members, they do not understand the vision and the mission of the organisation and for them to understand the vision and the mission of the organisation, there is a need for them to attend workshops so that they can be given more information about this vision and mission of the company and they also believed that they would only be able to share the same vision and mission with the company management after this had happened.

Ingaba umphathi wakho ukhe akuncome xa uthe wasebenza kakuhle? Does your supervisor congratulate you when you have done a good job?

Over 100% of non-union members who participated in the study revealed that it would be nice to be acknowledged as they argued that they are never congratulated or acknowledged for the job well done. The researcher listened to a comment by non-union member who said that acknowledgement did not mean only monetary rewards; a pat on the back to say well done would go a long way.

Lendawo usebenza kuyo ingaba inayo indima eyidlalayo kunxibelelwano apha enkampanini? (How does your physical work setting affect your communication at ABC?)

About 83.3% of ordinary drivers (non-union members) believe that the environment in which they work does play a role because most of the time they are on the road and sometimes they get to see important announcements late.

The remaining 16.6% did agree that the environment did affect them positively because sometimes they do come to us with information as we based here at head office (Perl Road Depot).

Ingaba niyakholwa na ukuba amajelo asetyenziswayo onxibelelwano apha enkampanini ayasebenza ukuze kubekho unxibelelwano? (Do you believe that channels that are currently being employed by the organisation are relevant for you to communicate successfully within the organisation?)

Approximately 66.6% drivers in this session voiced their dissatisfaction about current communication channels that are currently being used but also but also mentioned the language as a barrier to understanding some of the messages sent by management. About 33.3% of drivers in this session believed that the current channels were working just fine.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE DRIVERS (NON-UNION MEMBERS/ORDINARY DRIVERS)

During the discussion with the non-union members there was a general feeling from them that the channels that were currently being used within the company were not really working. They also complained about the language which was causing barriers to communication.

There was also a revelation from the discussion that there was no transparency from their management and the researcher once again would like to mention that, he took all the comments as they were and did not want to take sides so as to prejudice ABC management in the study. But a certain percentage of the drivers believed that current channels were working just fine.

During the discussion one driver in the group mentioned that in order to be acknowledged for doing a good job did not only mean being given monetary rewards but also a pat on the back would mean a lot to them.

The researcher also decided to include a table with questions and responses with percentages from the discussions with the ordinary drivers so as to get a better picture of what transpired during the study.

Please note that the table will just show a popular view during the discussion and another view based on questions that were asked during the discussions

SECTION B: DISCUSSION WITH ORDINARY DRIVERS

Questions	Responses-Popular view in %	Responses-Another view in %
What information do you have access to about ABC as an organisation	66.6% felt neglected as they did not have enough access to information	33.3% said they knew very little about ABC.
Who or what is your source of information	83.3% said they relied on notice boards	16.6% said they relied on their superiors
How frequent do you receive information?	66.6% received information that is urgent through mass meetings	33.3% said it depended on what was urgent
If you were to improve communication/information flow what would you do?	50% of drivers said that there was a need for transparency	Another 50% said for them it was difficult even to give advice to their superiors.
Are messages clear and understandable when you receive them?	50% of participants said messages were not clear	Another 50% during the discussion were just confused as they depended mostly on their superiors
Do you receive information about the vision and mission?	100% of participants said they did not understand anything about the vision and the mission	n/a
What do you think is the importance of receiving the information in your current job?	100% of participants agreed that it was crucial to understand all the messages about the organisation and its work	n/a
Does your supervisor congratulate you when you have done a good job?	100% of participants said they were never acknowledged for doing a great job	n/a

How does your physical work setting affect communication at ABC?	83.3% their work setting affected them negatively because they are always on the road, so they got information late	16.6% did agree that the environment affected them positively as they did receive information timely as they are based at ABC HQ.
Do you believe that channels that are currently being employed by the organisation are relevant for you to communicate successfully within the organisation?	66.6% of drivers voiced their dissatisfaction on the current channels of communication	33.3% believed that the channels were working just fine

Table: 4

4.1.4 SECTION C: DISCUSSIONS WITH UNIT MANAGERS

ABC has got five depots in and around the Nelson Mandela Bay region. These depots are strategically placed in order to serve the various parts of the overall community and also to make the management of the large fleet of buses and drivers more manageable. Each of these depots is managed by a unit manager who report to operations manager, who is a senior manager. All five unit managers showed up for the discussion and the researcher was satisfied with the attendance.

The researcher arranged well in advance for the session and it took place at the Perl Road Depot which is the headquarters of Algoa Bus Company in Korsten, Port Elizabeth. We met at the boardroom which is quite spacious, and is a very relaxed atmosphere and all the unit managers were satisfied with the venue.

The researcher introduced himself to the group of five unit managers who made it to this session. Upfront the researcher informed the participants that the session will take approximately forty five minutes. He went on to inform them that their names will kept anonymous for the purpose of this study. The researcher also got an opportunity to explain that the purpose of the study, that is was aimed at exploring organisational communication at ABC with overall purpose of identifying gaps in communication and possibly improving the flow of information within the organisation.

The discussion involved their perceptions on information relating to the organization, employees, the job and the channels of communication.

SECTION C: DISCUSSION WITH UNIT MANAGERS

Participants were asked about the type of information they have access to in order to get an understanding of which formal messages goes through the various channels of communication.

What type of information is at your disposal as a manager?

In this session 100% of participants in the study were unanimous that they had access to the operational processes as a whole. According to them their senior managers in the operations department are the ones who give them information and they are able to implement the decisions taken at their meetings for the benefit of their work force in the different depots.

They also said that they were able to learn about the short term goals of the company, medium and long term goals with time frames included and this put them in a better position to understand a lot about ABC. They also said that they got first hand information about financials, marketing trends and challenges that are faced by human resources from time to time.

Sharing information with employees is important; do you agree with the statement and give reasons?

All the unit managers agreed that sharing information was very important in their operations and the only way for them to succeed in their duties was to share with their subordinates what needed to be done on a daily basis.

100% of unit managers said that their source of information were the senior managers in the operations department, information sessions with the union representatives, as well as notice boards. There is an understanding amongst the unit managers that most information they received was about operational issues and how to deal with disciplinary hearing of drivers who are charged with offences.

The researcher noted the concerns voiced by the unit managers in relation with following up on information as they felt that, lack of the latter created gaps in communication.

How frequent do you receive information?

Over 66.6% of unit managers revealed that they had meetings often with their superiors where they talked about issues that affected the drivers on a daily basis for example accident on the road, problems with defective buses, traffic fines etc. About 33.3% of participants argued that they believed that they did not receive information frequently enough also mentioned green area meetings as way of keeping in touch with the workers and believed that it was working.

If you were to improve communication/ information flow, what would you do?

Over 100% of unit managers believed that there should be road shows where top management visited each and every depot and shared information with workers at all levels. This, according to unit managers would assist in creating a dialogue where workers would be able to express their views about certain policies within the company. This would also assist the company to receive immediate feedback that would provide a very rare opportunity for interaction between company management and the workers.

When sharing information which levels are important?

Over 100% of unit managers believed that they worked hard to ensure that all the information they received was cascaded to all the levels in the company. All participants in group were unanimous as they said that all workers from different levels of the company are consulted on policies.

According to the unit managers some of these policies are designed and first implemented at the headquarters and then cascaded down to the other levels so that everybody could have access to these policies. One of the arguments that came out during this session was that there was no serious commitment from employees who do not even bother to show interest to these policies until they are faced with situations which affect these policies.

Which other sources of information are used by employees?

All unit managers believed that they had a number of channels at their disposal that are also used by employees such as face to face meetings, green area meetings, notice boards, public address systems etc.

They also revealed that they have adopted an open door policy for them (i.e. employees) because they knew that for them to push the policies of the organisation they need the buy-in of workers on the ground.

What are the key messages that you share with employees?

They all believed that they shared key messages that were operational in nature from bus schedules, new routes that need to be attended to, bus accidents, traffic fined, buses with defects, new contracts that have been acquired which needed to be serviced by the company.

What language do you use?

About 50% agreed that the language that was used on official documents was English even though the majority of drivers were Xhosa speaking. But another 50% of the participants in the discussions did say that while documents were written in English but when they addressed individual drivers they spoke in the language they understood which is Xhosa.

How do you measure effectiveness of information you share with employees?

About 83.3% of participants in this session said that the outcomes of the communication that they sent to the employee were a good measure of how effective their messages were. About 16.6% of participants believed that there was a need to improve the tools to measure the effectiveness of communication for the company to succeed in its operations.

What are the feedback mechanisms /bottom-up channels of communication that you have in place within ABC?

Over 83.3% of participants could not point out exactly any feedback mechanisms that are there for them to interact with workers except to say that they believed that the channels that were employed by the organisation were relevant for them to communicate successfully within the organisation.

Another 16.6% of participants in this group did not believe that the channels that were employed were providing enough opportunities for interaction with workers and according to them there was room for improvement before they can openly say with confidence that they had good feedback mechanisms within ABC.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH UNIT MANAGERS

The unit managers seem to be satisfied that they are getting all the information because they are able to interact with their senior management which is an advantage for them and they have a lot of information at their disposal. What is interesting though is that if they do not get information they do share information amongst themselves. They get information about the job from their superiors and about the organisation itself.

There is evidence though that there is some power struggle between the different levels. According to the researcher power depends on where the person is placed in the organization. During the session with the unit managers there was no evidence that workers are allowed to say what they want to say freely to their management. There is evidence that decisions are restricted to those who are higher in the organisational structure.

The unit managers were in agreement with each other that they do get acknowledged for good work and they also said that they did the same with their subordinates, but based on the discussions the researcher had with the workers and supervisors this is very seldom from their managers. For communication to be complete there need to be cooperation between the different levels in organisational structure. The unit managers acknowledge also that, yes there are channels of communication but the researcher's concern is that the available channels are not used effectively. The communication function is very important because it plays the coordination function within the organization.

SECTION C: DISCUSSION WITH UNIT MANAGERS

Questions	Responses-Popular view in %	Responses- Another view in %
What type of information is at your disposal?	100% of participants that they had access to operational processes of the company as a whole	n/a
Sharing information with employees is important; do you agree with that statement?	100% of participants agreed that sharing information was very important in their operations and the only way to succeed in their duties was to share information with their subordinates on what needed to be done on a daily basis	n/a
How frequent do you receive information?	Over 66.6% revealed that they had meetings, often with their superiors and talked about issues that affected drivers on a daily basis	About 33.3% of participants argued that they believed that they did not receive information frequently enough and also mentioned green area meetings as a way of keeping in touch with the workers.
If you were to improve communication/information flow, what would you do?	100% of participants in the discussions believed that road shows where top management visited different depots would improve communication as they could be able to share important information with the workers	n/a
When sharing information which levels are important?	100% of participants said all levels were important to share information	n/a

Which other sources of information are used by the employees?	Unanimously 100% of participants said they had a number of channels at their disposal, such as face to face meetings, notice boards, green area meetings and they also said they adopted an open door policy for employees to discuss anything about the company	n/a
What are the key messages that you share with the employees?	100% of participants said that they shared key messages that were operational in nature from bus schedules, traffic fines, new routes, bus accidents, new contracts that have just been acquired which need to be serviced by the company	n/a
What language do you use?	50% of participants agreed that language used officially was English even though the majority of drivers were Xhosa speaking	Another 50% of participants in the discussions said that whilst documents were written in English but they addressed individual drivers in their language which is isiXhosa
How do you measure effectiveness of information you share with employees	About 83.3% of participants said the outcomes of communication that they sent to employees were a good measure of how effective their messages were.	About 16.6% of participants believed that there was a need to improve the tools to measure the effectiveness of communication
What are feedback mechanisms that you have in place within ABC?	Once again over 83.3% of participants could not point out exactly any feedback	About 16.6% of participants did not believe that the channels that were employed

	<p>mechanisms that are there for them to interact with workers except to say that they believed that the channels that were employed by the organisation were relevant for them to communicate successfully within the organisation</p>	<p>were providing enough opportunities for interaction with the workers.</p>
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Table: 5

4.1.5 SECTION C: DISCUSSION WITH SENIOR MANAGERS

The discussions took place at the boardroom where they normally meet for their meetings at Perl Road Depot, which is the headquarters of ABC. There were six senior managers from various department of ABC for example; operations, planning and scheduling department, marketing and public relations department, human resources department, finance department and engineering department. The researcher introduced himself upfront and laid down the ground rules informing the participants about the fact that their names will be kept as anonymous for this study.

The researcher explained to the participants that the session will take approximately forty five minutes and went on to explain that the purpose of the study is an exploration of organizational communication within Algoa Bus Company. The researcher also informed the participants that they would not be paid for participating in the study and they were also informed that participation in the study was voluntary and if during the session they felt uncomfortable answering some of the question they were free to withdraw their participation. The discussion involved their perceptions on information related to organisation, employees, the job and the channels of communication.

SECTION C: DISCUSSION WITH SENIOR MANAGERS

What type of information is at your disposal as a manager?

All participants (100%) in this group believed that they had access to a lot of information about ABC, because of technological advancements as they were able to get information via email, intranet, and about the vision and the mission of the company. They all agreed that they had access to the whole organisational strategy.

Sharing information with employees is important; do you agree with the statement and give reasons?

Senior managers were also unanimous in their agreement with the statement that sharing information with employees was important and they went on to say that they had adopted an “open door policy” so that there can be free flow of information from the bottom-up (upward communication) and downward to the lower levels of the organisation.

How frequent do you share information with employees?

80% of participants said that they had meetings once every week very early in the morning so that they can catch up on the latest news and they were also vocal about the fact that they always tried to share as much as possible with their staff so that they can also share with their colleagues.

The remaining 20% were cautious to say that they shared everything with their staff because they believed that some of the information they dealt with classified to be shared with everybody.

If you were to improve communication in your organisation what would it be?

83.3% of participants in this group revealed that verbal messages usually had more impact especially coming from top management than the written documents that were not even clear in terms of language for the lower levels. They also believed that meetings with staff members face to face would make a big difference. The other 16.6% believed that there was nothing to improve; things were right the way they were.

When sharing information which levels are important?

Over 90% of participants in this group revealed that all levels in the organisational structure are consulted on organisational policies and at times workers are encouraged to give inputs but in most cases there was no feedback from the lower levels regarding these policies.

About 10% of this group made an observation that the researcher noted with interest that, yes all levels were consulted but they tended to target certain stakeholders especially if some of the matters they were communicating about were sensitive for example salary increases, in this case according to them labour unions were contacted first.

Senior managers participating in this study agreed that they did their best to ensure that messages were cascaded to the lower levels and one of the senior managers did also voice a concern though that unfortunately at times they did meet challenges because those below them were sometimes accused of withholding information but they needed to investigate what caused that so that they could come up with a solution.

Which other sources of information are used by employees?

Approximately 66.6% of participants in this session said employees made use notice boards, face to face meetings, and green area meetings. The remaining 33.3% of participants said that the dispatcher's offices were used to inform employees as these offices were main points of contact by drivers as they go on the field or coming back from the field but also believed that there was room for improvement.

What are the key messages that you share with employees?

About 80% of senior management in the session said that they believed that they operated at strategic level and what they communicated was more on strategic side of things and provided guidance to fulfil the vision and the mission of the company.

The remaining 20% of participants said that they believed that they were there to communicate policy matters and lead from the front to ensure the success of the company.

What language do you use?

About 70% of senior managers in this session were English first language speakers as their mother tongue and they used it to communicate at work. This question caused a lot of discussion as the senior managers said yes, despite their language the messages they sent were clear and understandable but some were saying not always.

About 30% of participants in this group revealed that at their level there were fewer language barriers as they tend to understand the messages but argued that they could not say the same thing with workers at lower levels.

How do you measure the effectiveness of information you share with the employees?

They unanimously said that the effectiveness of information they shared with employees was measured by the feedback on some of the policies and strategies they put in place within the company. They also openly said that they did not have any tool they used to measure except for the above which is just feedback from employees.

What are the feedback mechanisms/bottom-up channels of communication that you have in place within ABC?

All senior managers said there were unions within the company through which they were able to receive feedback on policies and strategies. They also said that they had “an open door policy” where employees were welcome to come with suggestions for improvement but how this was done none of the senior managers were able specifically to point out the mechanisms through which this was done.

SECTION C: DISCUSSION WITH SENIOR MANAGERS

The researcher also decided to include the table with questions and responses with percentages from the discussions with the senior managers so as to get a better picture of what transpired during the discussions.

Please note that the table will just show popular view during the discussion and another view based on the questions that we asked during the discussions

SECTION C: DISCUSSION WITH SENIOR MANAGERS

Questions	Responses-Popular view in %	Responses-Another view in %
What type of information is at your disposal?	100% of participants believed that they had access to all the information about the company, through technological advancement they had information at their fingertips. They also admitted that they also have an overall strategy of the company	n/a
Sharing information with employees is important, do you agree with the statement and give reasons?	100% of participants believed that sharing information is very important and said that they have adopted an open door policy so that they can share information with the employees	n/a
How frequent do you share information with employees?	About 66.6% of participants said they had meetings once every week so that they can catch up on the latest news and also argued that they shared as much information with their staff as much as possible	About 33.3% were cautious to say that some of the information they dealt with was classified to be shared with everybody
If you were to improve communication in your organisation what would it be?	50% of participants said that revealed that verbal messages usually had much more impact especially coming from management	Another 50% said they believed in face to face meetings and this would make a big difference according to them

When sharing information which levels are important?	Over 83.3% of participants said that all levels in the organisation were consulted on organisational policies and times encouraged to give inputs	About 16.6% of participants said yes, all levels were consulted but they tended to target certain stakeholders especially if some matters they were dealing with were very sensitive
Which other sources of information are used by employees?	100% of participants said that notice boards as well as dispatcher's offices which were a main point of contact by drivers as they go on the field but also believed that there was room for improvement	n/a
What are the key messages you share with employees?	About 50% of participants said that they believed that they operated at a strategic level and they also said that their messages that they share is more on strategic issues and guidance to fulfil the vision and the mission of the company	Another 50% said that they believed that they shared a lot of messages on policy matters
What language do you use?	Over 80% of participants in this group were English first language speakers and used it to communicate at work.	Around 20% of participants in this group revealed that at their level there were fewer language barriers as they tend to understand the messages but argued that they could not say the same for workers at the lower levels.

How do you measure effectiveness of information you share with the employees?	Unanimously, 100% of participants in this group said that they measured the effectiveness by feedback on some of the policies and strategies they put in place within the company	n/a
What are the feedback mechanisms/bottom-up channels of communication that you have put in place within ABC?	Unanimously, 100% of participants in this group said there were unions that got feedback from about policies. They also said that they had an open door policy where employees are welcome to come with suggestions for improvement	n/a

Table: 6

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SENIOR MANAGERS

The senior managers believed that they did get information and they were satisfied that they also cascaded the information to the lower levels but some had some concerns as there were always gaps to show that workers on the shop floor are not properly communicated to for them to understand what is required of them in terms of policies of the company until they were faced with the consequences of contravening such policies.

There was also a sign that senior managers did share information at their level which is referred to as lateral communication and this seems to be a popular method of engaging each other on important issues about their work. Another important point is that during the session the researcher found that there was some power struggle between the various levels. The power struggle depended on where the person was placed in the hierarchy of the organisation and the decisions were restricted to those who were higher in the organisational hierarchy.

During this session one of the senior managers did argue that there were processes in place that allowed workers/subordinates to offer suggestions but they never seemed to get any feedback. Another inference which can be drawn from the sessions was that the senior managers seldom acknowledged people that they work with. They also felt that they were not being properly acknowledged. They also raised an important point when they said, even though there were channels of communication; these channels were not used effectively. But it must be borne in mind that managers are there to strike a balance between the organisations needs and its personnel and every effort must be made to fulfil the employees thirst for information.

NB: The researcher has included two charts based on language within ABC and the other one is based on communication channels that are there within ABC.

4.2 CONCLUSION

The chapter has presented raw data from the five focus groups which represented different categories or levels within ABC. It must also be mentioned that the union representatives were interviewed separately as well as non union members. It is also important to note that after each discussion a summary was presented.

The five groups held different experiences about communication but the views were in many instances similar. The main challenge for the groups is trust amongst each other as employees of ABC and this creates difficulties for upward communication to happen. The most popular communication flow is the horizontal flow because most groups felt they can turn to their peers for help.

It must also be mentioned that there is evidence that even though ABC is a tall structured organisation there is definitely flow of communication from the top level of the organisation to the lower levels and each level is responsible for the dissemination of information to the level below but there is definitely room for improvement.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to give an understanding of what the exploration of organizational communication at Algoa Bus Company achieved in terms of the literature that was used in chapter two. Based on the discussions that were held with various levels selected for this study, the discussions involved their perceptions on information related to the organization, employees, the job and channels of communication and we therefore base findings on these.

This chapter also commented on the strengths and weaknesses of various flows of communication at ABC and there were recommendations outlined for the benefit of organisational communication within the company. As mentioned the data collected during the sessions with the focus groups was analyzed in the context within which communication takes place in an organisation.

5.1 FINDINGS ON DISCUSSIONS

5.1.1 INFORMATION RELATED TO ABC AS AN ORGANISATION

According to the research the five focus groups which took part in the study revealed that some groups have information about certain aspects of their work and others have information which encompasses the overall strategy of the organisation. The study also revealed that, this is because of the levels of the hierarchy as people/focus group higher up in the hierarchy had more information at strategic level and policies and those lower down have more information at operational level.

The drivers seem to be the focus group that does not get as much information about policies and they depend more on union representatives and managers who have access to more information than supervisors and operational staff. The participants at the higher level of the hierarchy were more aware about the vision and mission of the organisation and understand fully the goals and objectives of the company that they work for (i.e. ABC).

In our literature review Downs and Adrian (2004:61) alluded to this as they argued that employees need information about the organisation so that they can make informed decisions. They further argue that the information provided by ABC links employees with the organisation.

Although higher ranking members of the company (ABC) were aware of the strategy, there seem to be a lack of commitment from the organisation's side in providing feedback in order for employees to feel like they are part of decisions that are taken in the higher offices of the company. Every communication process is a top-down process and as a result there is no feedback or input by lower levels. Some of the senior managers as well as unit managers defended their position arguing that they did cascade information to the lower level of the structure but they were all concerned that there was always a gap as workers at the bottom did not really come back to them or give feedback

Another issue that came out was that the structure of the hierarchy at ABC was tall and some of the information got distorted before it reaches the last person on the ground. Trade union representatives also felt that whenever they try to open lines of communication with top management, these lines get cut off because they are always seen as trouble makers when they want to talk or arrange a meeting with their top management.

But consequently, it must be noted that messages are sent through various channels and structures which have an impact on the way ABC communicates to its employees. Power is concentrated at the top with the Chief Executive Officer as the highest authority. As these structures go down so does the power of authority. Authority is vested in the position; subordinates follow orders from the office superior. Communication is influenced by the organisational structure.

Once again the researcher wants to mention that there was evidence during this study that even though ABC is a tall structured organisation there was definitely flow of information from the top level of the organisation to the lower levels and each level is responsible for the dissemination of information to the level just below them. There was also evidence that information did go up the structure of the organisation through the use of correspondence by labour unions, meetings with the management but there was also evidence that there was room for improvement so that there could be better communication from the bottom up.

5.1.2 INFORMATION RELATED TO EMPLOYEES

The empirical research revealed that managers held the view that ABC policies were important and they should be ones to ensure that they are implemented. The policies control the behaviours of employees and instil behavioural uniformity amongst employees.

Miller (1999:122) supports the latter view and goes on to state that organizations exert control in the work place through rules and regulations. Discipline through communication interaction results in work groups developing techniques to reward and punish behaviour that conforms with or deviates from the values identified as important by the work group. For example at ABC workers are not allowed to come to work drunk by the very nature of their job especially the drivers and if found to have deviated from the rule, they are disciplined.

Supervisors and managers often monitor activities of workers on the job to ensure that they comply with the policies procedures. The full time union representatives felt that they understood the policies of the organisation because they needed to protect their members as well as their jobs. The non union members felt that their interests are not represented very well even though they benefit when policies that affect all employees are implemented for example annual pay increase.

Miller (1999:121) believes that individuals can be controlled and dominated in an organisation through policies which relate to employees. It is also important to note that union representatives believe that they are consulted when policies are being decided, as well as supervisors but ordinary employees who do not belong to ant union argue that they are not consulted.

The five groups that participated in the study all expressed their concern that they are rarely acknowledged for work well done. They also said that they were severely reprimanded when they have done something wrong. Power emancipates through the policies of recognition and the supervisors are expected to recognize their subordinates meaningfully.

Also what transpired during the sessions with participants from all the different levels was that, personnel feel comfortable with the assistance from their peers. There were also comments from supervisors and unions as well as non union members who feel that their management is not accessible and for them, this makes upward communication difficult.

5.1.3 INFORMATION RELATED TO THE JOB

It is also important to note that all focus groups revealed that they felt comfortable to share information with their fellow workers than getting manager's assistance. Supervisors and operational staff use the union representatives as their source of information. The information from the unions might differ from the original information as they are sometimes biased.

Some of the focus groups expressed concern that their physical environment is not conducive to effective communication for example drivers are always on the road and it is not easy for them to know everything that is happening. Some managers said they were not worried about their physical environment as the distance is minimized by the use of technology, for example emails, mobile, intranet etc.

5.1.4 INFORMATION RELATED TO CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

The empirical research revealed that there are various channels which are used to transfer messages. However, the lower levels of staff members, for example operational staff does not have access to all the channels. They depend on the notice board, face to face meeting, and word of mouth as well as union representatives.

The managers and union representatives utilize various communication channels. The communication channels and tools go with the span of control or authority. The more responsibility you have, the more access you have to the communication tools. There are green area meetings in which senior managers, unit managers, supervisors and union representatives are invited twice a month. It is also important to note that in these meetings very important issues are discussed for example operational, marketing, HR issues and many issues that are important within the company. The only challenge is that, not everybody is available to attend these meetings frequently enough.

The information to which the operational staff members has access to enable them to execute their daily duties; enough for them to carry out their duties is seen as adequate.

5.2 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE FLOWS

5.2.1 DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION FLOW

The researcher discovered during the study that there was evidence that even though ABC was a tall structured organisation there was definitely flow of communication from the top to the lower levels of the structure and each level was responsible for the dissemination of information to the level just below them. There was downward communication taking place but there were gaps which meant that there was room for improvement of the processes. Information did not reach all the employees, although efforts were being made to do so. As mentioned earlier in chapter two, downward communication plays a very important role in the success of an organisation.

Strengths of downward communication at ABC includes: the fact that various communication structures are in place, employees are aware of communication channels.

Weaknesses of downward communication includes: lack of motivation from supervisors, frequency of the messages sent, lack of clarity because of the language used which led to problems understanding the messages sent, lack of feedback on strategies, lack of trust and selective communication and lack of information which comprises the support of the strategies.

The style of management at ABC is regarded as rigid and task orientated than people orientated. It must also be noted that ABC is no different from other organisations as argued by Miller (1999:19) according to the latter; the majority of communication in an organisation flows downward in form of rules, orders and directives. In such instances there is little feedback that moves upward from the lower levels to the higher levels of management.

5.2.2 UPWARD COMMUNICATION FLOW

During the study the researcher found evidence that upward communication flow was used minimally. This type of communication flow was used only when there was a complaint or grievance. The strengths of upward communication at ABC included: established procedures and channels. The weaknesses of upward communication channel at ABC included: lack of trust, fear of intimidation, supervisors do not have time to listen, less feedback is required from the operational staff and the only group who could use this flow successfully were the unions because of their bargaining power.

Employees at the lower levels felt that communication did not give them a chance to generate ideas because the channels were not clear. Communication in organisation such as the ABC is mainly downward and less upward.

5.2.3 DIAGONAL COMMUNICATION FLOW

The different departments used diagonal communication flow to get assistance in accomplishing their jobs. For example the marketing department deal with the finance department at ABC for the purpose of payment of its accounts from suppliers.

The strengths of diagonal flow of communication included: open channels of communication and establish relationships, whereas weaknesses included lack of time to nurture the relationships and diagonal communication was sometimes seen as bypassing authority. Employees, especially union representatives, used diagonal communication effectively. Sometimes managers did get information from union representatives. This concurs with Gibson and Hoggetts (1991:221) in that the purpose of diagonal communication re-enforces the concept of authority rather than authority of the position.

According to Van Staden, Marx and Erasmus – Kritzinger (2002:22) during their study, diagonal communication does not place along the normal lines of authority but across the different levels of communication. For example a driver can communicate with his/her operations manager without first telling a supervisor or unit manager and whatever problem or issue could be solved without having to go through all the channels.

5.2.4 HORIZONTAL COMMUNICATION FLOW

The study revealed that managers would rather talk to their peers than their superiors. The study also revealed that horizontal communication at ABC was effective.

Strengths of horizontal communication flow included: the presence of support base amongst the workers.

Weaknesses of the horizontal communication flow included: lack of trust, people who like working in silos, and reluctance of sharing information with others.

The study also revealed the various levels at ABC are highly dependent on horizontal or lateral communication flow. This is the type of communication where personnel who operate at the same level share information amongst themselves.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was exploration of organisational communication within ABC. The literature review enhanced the understanding of organisational communication and the different flows of communication in an organisation. The literature reviewed also enhanced the understanding and the thinking of different theorists and researchers of organisational communication.

An organisation is meaningless without communication because communication is the backbone of an organisation. The human relations and the systems theory suggested that communication plays a vital role within an organisation. The different flows of communication are managed at different levels of authority in an organisation.

Also very important in this study was the realisation that the inclusion of all levels in the communication process in an organisation creates a very conducive environment for all employees to feel that they are part of the organisation and this leads to the success of the organisation as everybody works towards a shared vision, mission and values. An exploration of organisational communication at ABC provided the researcher with a rare opportunity to understand the communication processes which made this organisation a success in its operations over the years and it would be very interesting to try and find out more about its overall communication strategy with regards to external stakeholders.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION

Downward communication as a matter of clarity, it is perceived as information flowing from management to employees whilst information can also flow from supervisors to the lower levels.

Based on the weaknesses of downward communication recommendations can be implemented to improve downward communication.

Use of written communication

Employees prefer written and oral communication; a message should first be communicated orally and then confirmed in writing. The message can also be translated into other languages such as Xhosa and Afrikaans.

There should also be a newsletter that will serve as a tool for communicating and publishing articles aligned with the vision, the mission, and values of the company. This can also help the company inform their stakeholders about the corporate social investment projects through which they plough back into the community in which they operate. This newsletter could also assist the employees to learn and read about new developments within the company etc.

Communication channels should be kept open so that in case where written channels were used, employees have the opportunity to seek clarity through the open channels such as suggestion boxes as well meetings with union representatives who can take their messages back to the management of the company.

Commitment by top management: There should be support for the communication process at all levels of authority in an organisation. An overall company policy on organisational communication guidelines for managers and supervisors are important.

A communication strategy is essential: Communication must be planned process and should include all stakeholders' issues and desires. The plan should be revised each year and be aligned to the business strategy

Effective communication at all authority levels

The taller the structure of the organisational hierarchy the more levels the message have to pass. Each authority level should ensure that the message is passed on to the next level speedily and with accuracy. By so doing perceptions are managed and information is credible.

Managers and supervisors must be made aware of their responsibilities to ensure effective downward communication. This could be included in their employment contracts as Key Performance Area with which they could be measured and be held accountable if they are not performing.

Communication Audits

Managers at senior level also suggested the use of communication audits where workers in all the levels will be asked questions to asses if they understood information they received from the company management. These audits would also help with feedback as employees would have an opportunity to express their honest opinions through these audits.

Regular evaluation will ensure effectiveness: The communication process should undergo regular evaluation to prove its worth in terms of employee management relations as well as employee performance and awareness of key public issues. It is important that the communication function be tested periodically to determine its effectiveness and to give direction for improvement.

Frequently provide feedback

Some of the concerns of the participants in the study on downward communication were the lack of feedback at ABC. The managers and supervisors did not provide feedback to the employees on matters raised as concerns. Effective feedback can solve emerging problems and ensure effectiveness of messages. For example feedback from management can be measured if the manager understands the problem directed to them. Unit managers and supervisors as well as union representatives have a vital role to play as translators of the policies to lower levels therefore, constant feedback is needed and it is of great importance to building relations and trust in an organization by frequently engaging them on matters that affect them and be transparent on the decisions taken concerning these matters.

5.3.2 UPWARD COMMUNICATION

Communication from the lower levels of authority to top levels of authority tends to face challenges of being undermined by managers or supervisors. Listening is also a skill that managers and supervisors need to acquire by being attentive and willing to always lend a sympathetic ear to their subordinates.

Senior Managers, Unit Managers and Supervisors must be visible

After the study the researcher as a recommendation proposed that senior managers, unit managers and supervisors must visit the work place so that they can interact with subordinates. He also suggested based on the discussions with the participants that managers must dedicate time to listen to employees at lower levels. This could afford the subordinates more opportunities to communicate upward.

Suggestion Boxes

Some of the participants in the lower levels said there should be suggestion boxes placed in strategic positions for employees to give suggestions and ideas on how to do certain things in the company.

This would give the employees the opportunity to level criticism on how things are down and this could also encourage them to praise the company when they feel they are doing things right. Constructive criticism could really build relations within the organisation.

Training in communication

Adult Basic Education Training (ABET) should be provided for those who are illiterate. The managers also need to sharpen up their communication skills and should also attend training on a regular basis. Employees should also go for communication training to enhance their confidence and be able to communicate at higher levels.

5.3.3 HORIZONTAL COMMUNICATION

Employees on the different levels must learn to share information by forming interdepartmental committees/forums where they can be able to discuss issues that affect them at the different levels. If they cannot share information with each other ABC will not meet its objectives. For example managers are employed to fulfil certain roles which complement each other. If the managers did not communicate with each other, they could lose information which would assist them to achieve ABC's goals.

Trust

The basis of all the channels of communication is trust. Transparency and giving accurate information can improve the levels of trust amongst the employees of ABC. Trust must be part of their corporate culture.

5.3.4 DIAGONAL COMMUNICATION

This is the communication flow that is based on relationships rather than authority or position. Therefore it involves trust. Employees must be made aware of the roles of diagonal communication by encouraging them to engage in this type of communication flow and be informed that it is not about bypassing authority but speeding up the communication process.

THE END

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