DETERMINING STRATEGIC EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENT

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Magister Technologiae in Public Relations Management

in the

FACULTY OF INFORMATICS AND DESIGN

at the

CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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Cape Town

September 2015

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation hereby submitted by me for the Magister Technologiae in Public Relations Management at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology is my own independent work, and has not previously been submitted at another academic institution.

DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to my parents who sent me to school and encouraged me to fulfil my dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the extent to which strategic employee communication existed in Parliament of the Republic of South Africa during the period of transition. Its objectives were to test the communication skills of the parliamentary supervisors in various divisions; to investigate communication satisfaction amongst employees; to establish communication channels to get the message through, and to discover how often feedback was provided.

This study sought to achieve the research objectives by using a quantitative research methodology in order to measure the level of communication skills. The researcher collected data using questionnaires as a measuring instrument in order to determine the levels of communication satisfaction. Questionnaires were distributed to 45 participants in all divisions irrespective of race, gender or age.

The results of the study revealed that communication at Parliament needed to be aligned. It was also revealed that employees and supervisors were not familiar with the vision of the institution. It was recommended that Parliament needed to conduct SWOT analysis before bringing about any changes. Employees should be provided with communication skills training. Managers should pay serious attention to internal communication. There should be constant feedback regarding progress when a process of change is embarked upon. It was also recommended that Parliament, as the highest democratic institution in the country, should lead in putting strategic internal communication in place in order to set an example for other institutions.

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Glossary of abbreviations

MPs   Members of Parliament

NA   National Assembly

NCOP   National Council of Provinces

PCS   Parliamentary Communications Services

POs   Presiding Officers

RSA   Republic of South Africa

Salga   South African Local Government Association

SWOT   Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

1. __Chapter 1:__ __Background to the Research Problem__

1.1 Introduction

Parliament is a constitutional institution that consists of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. The National Assembly is elected to represent the people and to ensure government by the people under the Constitution. It does this by choosing the President, by providing a national forum for the public consideration of issues, by passing legislation and by scrutinising and overseeing executive action.

The National Council of Provinces represents the provinces to ensure that provincial interests are taken into account in the national sphere of government. It does this mainly by participating in the national legislative process and by providing a national forum for the public consideration of issues affecting the provinces (Constitution of the RSA, 1996:27).

This institution has the workforce of approximately 1400 employees supporting the functioning of the 400 Members of Parliament (MPs) of the National Assembly (NA), 54 Permanent Delegates of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), 36 Special Delegates from the Provincial Legislatures and 10 representatives from the South African Local Government Association (Salga). According to the Constitution, Parliament exercises oversight over executive.

Members of the Cabinet are accountable collectively and individually to Parliament for the exercise of their powers and the performance of their functions (Constitution of the RSA, 1996:55).

It is from these premises that the Administration of Parliament established and implemented its vision for employees to effectively and efficiently support Parliament in the execution of its mandate. The vision needed to be strategically communicated in order to reach all employees and to get a buy-in from them for the purpose of smooth implementation.

In 2004, the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa implemented its strategic vision. This required its employees to know and practice it in order to effectively and efficiently serve all the people of South Africa. The aim of Parliament was to represent and act as a voice of the people in fulfilling its constitutional mandate of passing laws and overseeing executive action. Parliament's vision reads: "To build an effective peoples' Parliament that is responsive to the needs of the people and driven by the ideal of realising a better quality of life for all the people of South Africa" (Parliament's Strategic Map, 2004).

Parliament's vision had three strategic objectives entailing tasks that needed to be performed in order to fulfil the vision. The three strategic objectives read: "To build a quality process of scrutinising and overseeing government's action; to further build a people's Parliament that is responsive to the needs of all the people of South Africa; and to build an effective and efficient institutional improvement" (Parliament's Strategic Map, 2004).

Most employees, including supervisors did not know how to implement the strategic objectives at an operational level. Employees did not know how to align their jobs with the strategic objectives. Some viewed the strategic objectives as suitable for politicians and not employees. The aims of the vision were crippled by the fact that they were not communicated in a way that could make them easily accepted and welcomed by all employees. The key challenge was about aligning jobs with the strategic objectives.

This study sought to determine the nature of strategic communication amongst employees, supervisors and the management of Parliament during the period of transition.

1.2   Background to the research problem

Parliament had hitherto functioned without any strategic employee communication protocol in place. New circumstances indicated that one had to be established in order to successfully fulfil the communication needs of the institution. A formal effort was made to facilitate internal communication within Parliament through the Public Affairs section. As the role of Public Affairs was not clear, it was then changed to become Parliamentary Communications Services (PCS).

Parliament had eight divisions, namely: The Office of the Speaker; The Office of the Chairperson of the NCOP; The Office of the Secretary to Parliament; the NA Table Division; the NCOP Division; Legislation and Oversight Division (with sections such as Legislation and Proceedings, Information Services, Language Services

and Committees); Corporate Services Division (with Human Resources, Information Technology Services and Public Affairs sections) and Institutional Support Division (with Provisioning, Protection Services, Documentation, Household Services and Telephone Services sections).

The Public Affairs section within the Corporate Services Division was responsible for communications in the institution. Parliament was in the process of transformation into a peoples' parliament. It wanted to focus mostly on public participation and oversight in the process of promoting democracy in the country.

This was also strengthened by the fact that new programmes were initiated to bring Parliament closer to the people. These programmes included, among others, the Taking Parliament to the People by the NCOP. This meant that Parliament gave itself leave to hold its proceedings to extraordinary places, especially the deep rural areas where communities did not have access to some basic services. The seat of Parliament is Cape Town, but an Act of Parliament enacted in accordance with section 76(1) and (5) may determine that the seat of Parliament is elsewhere (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:27).

The Taking Parliament to the People programme normally took place in March and November each year in different provinces. The programme in March was normally addressed by the Deputy President and the November programme by the President. Site visits and public hearings were conducted in order for parliamentarians to have a first-hand experience of the difficulties experienced by communities.

Another programme was the Provincial Week, also conducted by the NCOP. This involved MPs from specific provinces spending the week in their provinces visiting areas not adequately supplied with the basic municipal services. This was meant to enable the national government to understand the difficulties experienced by municipalities and provide help where necessary. It also served to encourage the provincial departments to work with municipalities. The exercise made it possible for municipalities and the provincial departments to be assisted in order to avoid interventions by the provincial and national departments under Sections 100 and 139 of the Constitution.

Another programme was the Oversight Week, also by the NCOP. MPs collectively visit certain areas where a crisis was encountered in order to ascertain the extent of the matter. They were required to report back to Parliament and find solutions in order to avoid national intervention. Another programme was the People's Assembly conducted by the NA. This programme followed the same pattern as the Taking Parliament to the People programme. This was when the NA decided to sit in an area outside Parliament to conduct its business.

These programmes supported the principles of democracy under oversight, accountability and public participation. Such programmes were necessary to foster cooperative governance and intergovernmental relations among the three spheres of government. All spheres of government and all organs of state within each sphere must co-operate with one another in mutual trust and in good faith (Constitution of the RSA, 1996:25).

It has been noted that no strategic employee communication existed amongst the employees of Parliament, including supervisors and managers. A communication audit was conducted to ascertain what needed to be done to ensure the success of the institution during the period of transition, as millions of rands of taxpayers' money would be utilised for such a programme.

An amount of R5 million was set aside to develop such communication strategy which was not supposed to fail the citizens. The strategic role meant that communication would be integrated into the organisation's strategy and be recognised for its strategic implications and effects.

PCS was required to strategically, effectively and efficiently communicate the nature and process of change from the way things were done before to the new methods in order to accommodate the new programmes. Muller & Lee (2002) in Jensen (2004:5) note that the communication systems and practices must be carefully designed and implemented. This is because excellent communication is vital to all organisations, especially during transformation (Jensen, 2004:6).

All that was needed was for parliamentary employees to understand and support the intention of the institution to be driven by public participation under oversight, and to sell this idea to their colleagues and to external stakeholders. A characteristic of "excellence practice" is that employees of excellent organisations share a strong participative culture (Jensen, 2004:6). Indirectly, the degree of communication satisfaction amongst employees influences their understanding of and support for their organisation's strategic intentions (Jensen, 2004:6).

Parliament's management had to recognise that its employees were critical stakeholders in transforming Parliament into a customer-orientated organisation rather than a self-centred organisation. In order to follow the principles entailed by MPs being elected by the public, MPs and Parliament should recognise the public and its employees as primary stakeholders.

According to Jensen (2004:8), an employee who is satisfied defends the organisation against criticism and avoids conflict, works harder, costs less, generates new ideas, performs other tasks beyond those required by the job description and speaks well of the company. Jensen (2004:2) maintains that among the stakeholders who are most important to any organisation in achieving its vision are its own employees. They are directly affected by the decisions made by the organisation and are directly responsible for their implementation.

If organisations are to realise their visions efficiently and withstand competition or other external threats, it is essential to have continuous and relevant internal communication. Parliament had to use strategies of education and communication in this regard. Information about change and the reasons for it could take the form of reports, memos, discussion, etc, on an individual or group basis.

Employees who are sufficiently informed accept change and transformation more readily. A change strategy of education and communication is based on the assumption that if people are given the rationale for change, they will see the need for it and therefore accept it.

In the past, Parliament used the strategy of manipulation rather than of negotiation. This strategy was based on the conscious structuring of events so that others would behave in the way the manipulator wished. This is in contrast with the way things happen under the rubric of negotiation, where people with conflicting interests come to an agreement about how they will behave with respect to one another (Bowman & Asch, 1987:227). Parliament needed to ascertain its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) before bringing about any changes.

Hamermesh (1983:201) observes that top management reassesses its current strategy by looking for opportunities and threats in the environment and by analysing the company's resources to identify its strengths and weaknesses. According to Barrett (2002:4), a strategic employee communication approach should be used to work from inside the organisation in order to determine what is needed, and to design the appropriate change communication programme to fit those needs.

The researcher is of the opinion that internal communication is a pattern of messages that is shared between workers within an organisation. It comprises the exchange of information, ideas and feelings amongst employees. The primary task of internal communication is formal task development, co-ordination and the achievement of business objectives in support of organisational objectives, policies and programmes.

Internal communication should also be focused on meeting the employees' needs, by knowing what information they want and how they prefer to acquire it. Organisational communication can be considered as excellent when it contributes to organisational effectiveness, by aligning organisational goals with the expectations of its strategic stakeholders.

1.3   Problem Statement

This study addressed the question of the extent to which communication existed among employees of Parliament during the period of transition. An informal pre-study in the form of a communication audit indicated that Parliament's management was not aware of how effectively to communicate its new vision to its employees. They also did not know which elements of strategic communication needed to be utilised or improved. The methods used for communication took the form of advertising on parliamentary television and publication on the intranet.

Parliament was still using the route of one-way asymmetrical communication, characterised by a lack of feedback and a desire to pass messages in order to manipulate employees' actions. Information transmitted in this manner only serves to satisfy the needs of top management, covering themselves without satisfying stakeholders. Parliament should follow the route of two-way symmetrical communication that stresses the importance of feedback and constant interaction during communication.

The research thus originates from a problem. Questions arise from the perception of a problem, how the problem is observed and the extent to which a researcher is aware of the components inherent in the problem needing to be investigated (Struwig & Stead, 2001:31). In the present context, management was not informed of the communication skills other managers and supervisors possessed or which supervisory communication skills needed to be improved in order to communicate their objectives effectively. In short, supervisors did not know how to implement the organisation's strategic objectives at an operational level.

Parliament should first have ascertained the extent to which strategic communication existed amongst its employees. Its failure to do so resulted in an asymmetric, imbalanced system of internal communication (Jensen, 2004:4). Employees did not know how to align the strategic objectives with their jobs. As Conrad & Poole (2002:3) point out, at many times during their careers, people feel powerless because they simply do not understand the events that are taking place around them. In some cases, they are victimised by those events.

According to Foy (1994:44), you can't empower people until they know what is going on in the organisation. You can't achieve real quality until everyone feels informed. You also can't change a culture or make an organisation more flexible until you get two-way, face-to-face internal communication right. Thus, as Barrett (2002:6) indicates, the success of any change communication programme will depend on an organisation having a clearly stated, a believed in, understood and meaningful vision statement which the management should be involved in developing and communicating.

This study therefore sought to develop and describe a form of strategic employee communication that could change employees' lives by enabling them to contribute to the decisions made on their behalf, and thus feel valued by the institution.

1.4 Research question

The main research question in this study is:

To what extent has Strategic Employee Communication existed in the South African Parliament during transition?

The study also addressed the following sub-questions:

- *To what extent are you satisfied with the way information is communicated?*
- *To what extent does your supervisor talk about the vision in line with your job?*
- *To what extent is communication encouraging a two-way feedback?*
- *Which communication channels are being utilised by the institution?*

1.5 Research objectives

The research objective or aim delineates the scope of the research effort and specifies what information needs to be addressed by the research process (Struwig & Stead, 2001:35). The aim of this study was to determine the strategic communication of Parliament with its internal stakeholders. In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives needed to be addressed:

- *To determine the extent to which employees were satisfied with the way information was communicated.*
- *To investigate the extent to which information about the vision was communicated.*
- *To examine the extent to which feedback was brought to employees.*
- *To establish what communication channels were utilised by the institution.*

1.6   Significance of the study

This study sought to raise awareness on the part of the management that strategic communication was the only way for the institution to succeed in getting the message across. Parliament's one-way selected communication has affected the way employees perform their duties, as there were many bosses giving instructions.

As the highest institution in a democratic country, Parliament should at all times strive for transparency and ensuring that its stakeholders are kept abreast of pertinent issues. Other institutions should learn from Parliament about how to open platforms for participation in democracy, rather than vice-versa, as has been the case.

The researcher is of the opinion that an organisation's success depends on effective communication. When communication is planned strategically, choices need to be made about the types of messages, types of channels, styles of delivery in a way that demonstrates the communicator's understanding of the organisation's values and needs.

This study also addressed the necessity of affording employees with feedback in order to bring them on board during the period of transition. Employees need an opportunity to participate in the change process and contribute their own ideas. The essence of communication in all contexts is that people exchange messages to accomplish goals and objectives. People bring different goals, backgrounds, styles, habits and preferences to the process. Communication is necessarily interaction amongst people. It is the transmission of information from one individual or group to another (Giddens, 1989:724).

1.7   Chapter summary

If supervisors are in a state of doubting the progress of change in the organisation as the result of a lack of proper and strategic communication, it will be worse for employees as they put their trust in supervisors. Communication in its broadest sense is the process of sharing information, a process that involves gathering, processing, disseminating and storing information.

Parliament failed to employ a communication strategy capable of sending the right messages about its vision. It therefore needs a plan on how to align and put a good communication strategy in place. It needs to go back to the drawing board and ascertain the best methods to be employed and work to avoid future embarrassment. Parliament needs to move away from an operational focus in terms of communication, and towards outcome-based behaviour change.

Chapter two of this study will focus on a literature review, explaining the notions of strategic employee communication and supervisory communication which lie at the heart of this study. Chapter three will deal with the research design and the methodology used to collect data. Chapter four will deal with the findings of the study. Chapter five will offer a conclusion and recommendations, and assess whether or not the aims and objectives of the study have been achieved.

<u>Chapter 2:</u>   Literature review

2.1   Introduction

A literature review shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the one being undertaken. It provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results with other findings (Creswell, 2014:27-28).

Employees influence the quality of external relationships and are critical stakeholders in organisational goal achievement. Grunig (1992c:559) insists that strategic objectives must be effectively communicated for an organisation to avoid fostering closed, suspicious relations with its employees. A two-way symmetrical communication system needs to be implemented and enforced throughout the institution.

2.2   Communication

Puth (1994:57 & 59) points out that in public relations, communication is the exchange of messages between the organisation and its many publics. The major elements of communication include *who* says *what* using *which* channels to *whom* with *what* effect.

This means that, you do not communicate *to* someone – you communicate *with* someone; you do not *originate* communication – you *participate* in it. Conrad & Poole (2002:4) suggest that communication is the process through which people acting together, create, sustain, and manage meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal signs and symbols within a particular context. Fielding (1993:22) confirms that people have to work together to create a meaning.

Oral, written and visual communications are necessary for the organisation to function properly. Troutt, Jesus, & Bateman (1995:1-2) maintain that often the success or failure of an organisation lies in the ability of management and employees to communicate with each other. Communication in its broadest sense is the process of sharing information with each other. This process involves gathering, processing, disseminating and storing information. It is very seldom that quality improvement succeeds if communication is sidelined and not considered central to its implementation. Communication enables people to have control over their destiny and to understand why change is necessary. It also functions to suppress the fear of change. Communication is the bedrock of any organisational change.

The researcher is of the opinion that communication involves managing customers and the public the institution is dealing with. Having an open column on the institution's website is one of the best boundary spanning methods. Boundary spanning is one of the important tools communicators need to be familiar with in order for the organisation to be aware of how it is perceived out there. Stakeholder management is the process of managing the expectations of anyone who has an interest in a project or will be affected by its deliverables or outputs.

Another useful communication channel arises from the provision of suggestion boxes, indicating that the organisation is interested in knowing how its actions are perceived. Employees should be allowed to criticise and make suggestions anonymously, including on the organisational website. The organisation could learn from such suggestions and constructive criticisms and improve where necessary.

Organisations should provide stakeholders with information regarding the operations that they are interested in. At the same time, existing and prospective customers need to be supplied with information regarding the products and services as well as changes that might be expected in the near future. It is important that organisations provide each stakeholder group with specific information, yet at the same time, that projects are unified through the application of a clear and single corporate identity.

2.2.1 Vertical communication

Vertical communication occurs between hierarchically positioned persons and can involve both downward and upward communication flows (Lakin, 2007:1). Communication takes place between workers and the management at different levels of the organisation (Erasmus, Bowler & Goliath, 1996:42). Downward communication is more prevalent than upward communication. Downward communication is most effective if top managers communicate directly with immediate supervisors and immediate supervisors communicate with their staff.

On issues of importance, top management should then follow up by communicating with employees directly. Lakin (2007:1) adds that downward communication should involve effectively managing the tone of the message, as well as showing skill in delegation to ensure the job is done effectively by the right person.

According to Lunenburg (2010:3), communication that moves through a chain of command is typically vertical in nature. Rules and mandates come down from the top leadership to management and trickle down to the front-line supervisors to eventually reach the workers. When workers have an issue, they usually talk to their immediate supervisors first. The chain of command dictates that supervisors report the issue to their managers, who then are responsible for conveying the information up to the executive offices.

Erasmus *et al* (1996:42) agrees that vertical communication includes downward communication in the form of instructions given to employees by management, as well as an upward flow from the shop floor to the higher levels of management in the form of suggestions, queries or feedback reports. Vertical communication can take place in a form of newsletters to the workers, interviews, meetings, lunch with management, grievance procedures and memoranda. Top-down communication usually consists of orders, mandates, policy decisions, directions and instructions. If a smooth flow of communication is maintained at all times, it will ensure a healthy work environment, free of conflict and frustration (Erasmus *et al,* 1996:42).

The researcher is of the opinion that the main purpose of operating with a vertical communication system is to control the flow of information and decision-making. In large organisations, this can have a delaying function as the exchange of information must negotiate long chain of command.

2.2.2 Diagonal communication

Diagonal communication is the sharing of information among different structural levels within a business. It could involve the management communicating with lower level management about a shift in organisational objectives, as well as the ensuing dialogue about how best to achieve the new goals. Diagonal communication takes place across different levels of authority in the organisation (Erasmus *et al*, 1996:42). Diagonal communication can also refer to communication between managers and workers located in different functional divisions (Lakin, 2007:2).

Lunenburg (2010:6) observes that organisational communication is the process by which information is shared within organisations. Outside of informal social interactions, individuals in an organisation communicate with co-workers in their departments who have attained the same status they have. They also communicate with their direct superiors or subordinates. Diagonal communication routes depart from these hierarchical norms by engaging individuals who work at different levels and in different departments. The aim of diagonal communication is to discuss matters pertaining to the execution of the plans and policies of an organisation in order to meet its business objectives.

According to Lunenburg (2010:5), the advantages of diagonal communication are that it is the most direct method of communication, and one of the most selective and fastest methods of communication in critical situations. It seems to be the most essential and logical type of communication. The disadvantages are that it can destroy lines of authority and formal chains of command.

It can also leave immediate superiors uninformed about what their subordinates are doing. Diagonal communication can lead to conflicting orders and deepen confusion, and since it is usually verbal, it is untraceable if things go wrong.

2.2.3 Horizontal communication

According to Erasmus *et al* (1996:42), horizontal communication takes place across departments between people of about the same level of authority. A smooth flow of horizontal communication between departments ensures that there is a culture of cooperation and team work between departments. This contributes to the general productivity and success of the organisation. Clampitt & Downs (1993:7) describe horizontal communication as a co-worker communication.

Horizontal communication takes place in the form of interdepartmental meetings, promoting interpersonal relationships between group members with various functions or team-building exercises and business lunches. Skinner, Mersham & Benecke (2013:106) maintain that inter-departmental liaison is an important function for the public relations. Social and sporting events can assist greatly towards improving interdepartmental relations. Upward and downward communication flows generally follow the formal hierarchy within the organisation (Lunenburg, 2010:5)

Upward communication consist of the flow of performance reports, grievances and other information from lower to higher levels. Downward communication consists of policies, rules and procedures that flow from top administration to lower level (Lunenburg, 2010:5 & 6).

Downward communication involves the sending of messages of information about the mission and goals of the organisation, feedback to subordinates on their performance, procedures to be followed and instructions for specific tasks (Fielding, 1993:7).

The greater the size and complexity of organisations, the greater the need for communication laterally or diagonally across the lines of the formal chain of command. This is referred to as horizontal communication. Lunenburg (2010:5) observes that such communication is informational too, but in a different way from downward and upward communication.

Horizontal communication is the extent to which the grapevine is active in the organisation. Horizontal communication flows exist to enhance coordination. This horizontal channel permits a lateral or diagonal flow of messages. It enables units to work with other units without having to follow rigidly up and down channels (Abdullah, 2014:61).

2.2.4 Informal communication

Informal communication takes place in the form of rumours and gossip that circulate amongst staff. Canteen lunches and social gatherings are the ideal opportunities for the unofficial exchange of ideas, complaints and suggestions (Erasmus *et al*, 1996:44). According to Conrad & Poole (2005:18), informal communication is a link with other employees enabling one to obtain and send information without following the chain of command. A sensitive manager can learn a lot regarding staff attitudes, aspirations or grievances from such situations.

Managers become worried when they notice informal gatherings during lunch breaks. They get curious to find out whether the gatherings are organised by the union and perhaps try to identify those who are often in attendance. They may get intimidated and even refer negatively to such gatherings in staff meetings. The employees who have been attending the gatherings may in turn be intimidated when participating in formal meetings, whereas in fact their informal discussion may have been productive in a manner that could change the organisation for the better.

The researcher is of the opinion that good managers who like to improve and see the organisation change should join such gatherings for the purpose of information gathering. They can influence change through such gatherings as they are effective in persuading others in order to increase production. Managers can benefit from such gatherings by learning what dissatisfactions exist amongst employees, and helping to clarify them and providing a positive way forward.

Although leaders may be reluctant to use the grapevine, they should always listen to it. The grapevine is a natural phenomenon that serves as a means of emotional release for staff members and provides the administrator with significant information concerning the attitudes and feelings of employees (Lunenburg, 2010:5). The researcher is of the opinion that visits by top management and management to divisions and offices for informal talks with small groups of workers afford opportunities for good two-way communication. It can afford management with surprising insight into the institution. This can be possible only if employees are able to freely express themselves without fear or intimidation.

Prior research indicates that Parliament failed to evaluate its processes of communication regularly to prove their worth. This is crucial because such evaluation helps to manage employee relations and performance, and to create awareness regarding key issues. Skinner *et al* (2013:98) emphasise that communication function needs to be tested periodically to determine its effectiveness and to give direction for improvement.

The researcher believes that professional organisations should conduct surveys on a regular basis to monitor the effectiveness of their internal communication channels. Failure to do so will means that the grapevine will remain the single most influential tool in disseminating both personal information and company news of a sensitive nature.

2.3   Communication satisfaction

Communication satisfaction is an overall index of an individual's satisfaction with information flow and relationship variables. Clampitt & Downs (1993:6) define communication satisfaction as an individual's satisfaction with various factors of communication in an organisation. Abdullah (2014:60) observes that employees who are well informed by their supervisor and the organisation are more likely to understand their job requirements and expectations of their contribution to the organisation's success. Communication satisfaction provides an outcome criterion for assessing process variables and a means for organising communication strategies.

Downs & Hazen (1977:64) refer to communication satisfaction as a measurable and a meaningful tool in advancing one's understanding of organisational communication. Communication satisfaction is multi-dimensional as it implies that employees can express varying degrees of satisfaction regarding different dimensions and/or types of communication. The multi-dimensionality of communication satisfaction means that employees are not simply satisfied or dissatisfied with communication in general.

Communication satisfaction can be measured by conducting surveys and interviews with questions covering communication climate, media quality, organisational integration, personal feedback, job information, supervisory communication, subordinate communication and horizontal communication. Communication satisfaction is concerned with the extent to which horizontal and informal communication is accurate and free-flowing (Downs & Hazen, 1977:67).

There will be no communication satisfaction if there are individuals who always block certain information from reaching employees. Such persons are known as gate-keepers. Gate-keeping is the process through which information is filtered for dissemination, whether for publication, broadcasting, the internet or other modes of communication. According to Schoeman & Vos (2009:1), gate-keeping is a process by which countless messages are reduced to a few. This also happens in our daily newspapers and television news programmes: it can be called the act of deciding what will appear in the media.

The role of a gate-keeper is a powerful one because it determines what gets transmitted and what does not. The gate-keeper is therefore the sole determinant of the quality of message material as well as the value placed on each bit of information. According to Schoeman & Vos (2009:22), the gate-keeper decides what information should be passed onto the groups or individuals and what information should not. The gate-keeper has social, cultural, ethical and political influence. Information deemed unwanted, not sensible or controversial is removed by the gate-keeper which serves to control the society or group and steer it along a particular path.

The gate-keeper sometimes leak information to a group or individuals for the sake of personal or social influence. Schoeman & Vos (2009:15) use the example of an editor as gate-keeper who selects and rejects stories according to the criteria of fit and appropriateness. Such decisions are invariably also to a degree based on idiosyncratic and subjective perceptions. The editor also approves only those stories that, in terms of the cultural context, are believed to be true.

2.3.1 Communication climate

Abdullah (2014:60) observes that communication climate measures the general response to the workplace on both organisational and personal levels. It describes communication in the organisation according to how much it motivates and stimulates employees in order to meet organisational goals. Communication climate reflects satisfaction with communication to the extent to which attitudes towards communication are perceived to be good. It is also about the extent to which supervisors know and understand the problems that are faced by subordinates, as well as information regarding how employees are assessed (Jensen, 2004:39).

O'Hair, Friedrich & Dixon (2005:36) suggest that the ability of an organisation to achieve an ideal climate depends on the knowledge it has of its own shortcomings. The recognition of the gap between the actual and the ideal is the first step towards establishing a desired climate. According to Barrett (2006:267), managers should pay serious attention to the internal communication climate by providing each employee with adequate information and the opportunities to speak out, get involved, be listened to, and participate actively.

2.3.2 Organisational integration

Organisational integration refers to the degree to which employees receive information relevant to their jobs. It reflects the satisfaction of employees regarding the information they receive about the organisation, their work and work environment and related items, such as policies and benefits (Abdullah, 2014:60). Clampitt & Downs (1993:6) characterise organisational integration as essentially corporate in nature.

2.3.3 Job information

Job information deals with the broadest kind of information concerning the organisation and its functioning as a whole (Downs & Hazen, 1977:67). According to these authors, job information includes information regarding government actions and other circumstances affecting the organisation.

Job information also includes notifications of changes, information regarding the organisation's financial standing and information pertaining to the overall policies and goals of the organisation. This concept is also described as the organisational perspective by Pincus (1986:399).

2.3.4 Media quality

Media quality reflects the degree to which employees perceive major forms of organisational media as functioning effectively, including how meetings are organised, whether publications are helpful, and if the right amount of communication is received (Jensen, 2004:40).

Media quality looks at communication as it travels through various channels, including publications, memos and meetings. Employees are asked about the helpfulness and clarity of these information sources and the quantity of information (Abdullah, 2014:60). E-mails, telephone calls and personal meetings are means accepted by all users. Communication should be integrated into the business processes, with communication milestones included in the business planning process.

2.4   Employee Communication

Communication is the way of ensuring that successful change can take place, helping to overcome ambiguity and uncertainty. It also provides information and power to employees who are the subject of change. According to Skinner *et al* (2013:98), the effectiveness of the company's communication needs to be regularly measured. Barrett (2006:274) agrees that employee communication should happen company-wide, formally and frequently against clearly defined goals on an ongoing basis and throughout the key stages of any major change.

The role of internal communication is not only to disseminate information, but also to provide mechanisms through which employees will be inspired and able to deliver discretionary effort (Skinner *et al,* 2013:96). Internal communication is the exchange of information, ideas and feelings amongst employees (Jensen, 2004:25). It is not so much about creating awareness, but about behaviour change. Communication enables people to have control over their destiny by learning why change is necessary. Through open communication channels, people can express their doubts with regard to the effectiveness of the proposed changes and come to understand the necessity for new ideas.

According to Jensen (2004:32), an employee who is satisfied defends the organisation against criticism, avoids conflict, works harder, costs less, generates new ideas, performs other tasks beyond those required by their job description and speaks well of the company. Employees who are sufficiently informed accept change and transformation more readily.

Both oral and written communication should be seen in terms of the negotiation of meaning. Foy (1994:44) observes that you cannot empower people until they know what is going on in the organisation. You cannot achieve real quality until everyone feels informed. You cannot change a culture or make an organisation more flexible until you get two-way, face-to-face internal communication right. In order to empower people, one needs to give and receive many kinds of information, to know what is expected of employees and how well they are performing.

The empowering organisation, in turn, needs to listen, to find out what prevents peak performance and how this can be addressed. Top management should set an example by being accessible, sharing important information and encouraging the upward flow of information and ideas, even if these are negative.

The researcher is of the opinion that communication must always be prompt and efficient with a response time of not more than five days, otherwise employees will question the credibility of organisational communication. Organisations which are serious about effective employee communication should even have staff newsletters or journals. These publications should be intended for staff and created by staff. They will help improve internal employee-management relationships and generally strengthen the spirit of cooperation through shared information and achievements. The more frequent they are, the better, a monthly basis being preferable.

2.5   Strategic employee communication

Barrett (2002:2) claims that strategic employee communication provides the analytical tool to assess and improve employee communication, and thus facilitate change. This includes diagnosing a company's communication strengths and weaknesses, framing change programme and making recommendations to improve employee communication so to help drive change. Barrett (2002:3) adds that strategic employee communication can be used to help management understand the strategic role that communication plays in the day-to-day success of any company, as well as during a phase of major change.

Communication must be a planned process. It must be a strategy that involves both communication professionals and key management. Skinner *et al* (2013:97-8) argue that the development of a strategic plan, including short and long-term goals, is necessary in order to put the management communication function professionally on a par with other management functions. Ideally, the plan should be revised each year. Communication should be integrated into the business processes with communication milestones included in the business plan and as part of the business planning process.

According to Barrett (2002:4), strategic employee communication and change communication approaches should be used to work from inside the organisation to determine what is needed and to design the appropriate change communication programme to fit those needs. Barrett (2002:6) notes that strategic communication is aimed at informing and educating employees at all levels within the company's strategy. It also motivates and positions employees to support the strategy and performance goals.

The researcher is of the view that if communication accomplishes these objectives, it is meaningful, contributing to the company's financial success and helping the company to be high-performing one. There should be a one-on-one correlation between what the company has established as its strategic objectives and what are listed as the objectives for communication. In addition, communication must be structured to translate the central strategic messages, from vision to performance to all employees.

For employee communication to play a strategic role in an organisation, the leader must realise its importance in accomplishing the organisation's strategic objectives and performance goals and integrate them into the organisation's overall strategy and business process (Barrett, 2006:268). Communication to employees needs to support the strategy and performance goals. All communication with employees needs to position them to help achieve the organisation's goals. Employees need to be educated in the organisation's vision and strategic goals. They need to be motivated to support the strategy of the organisation. In order to accomplish these goals, communication and/or messages need to be clear, consistent and targeted.

Strategies of facilitation may involve providing training in the new skills demanded by the change, providing counselling and support for those affected by change or providing the necessary environmental conditions for individuals to change.

2.6   Corporate identity

Corporate image originates from the fact that organisations realised that the world was changing and the way business was done had changed. Companies wanted to do business in a modern way, which meant that image and identity was crucial. According to Barrett (2006:296), organisations need to be conscious of the corporate identity that they project to external stakeholders in order to achieve a strong and favourable reputation among them. It is something that must be both nurtured and readjusted to keep up with the events and times as well as with changing business realities.

Puth (1994:194) observes that corporate image is the net result of interaction among all the experiences, impressions, beliefs, feelings and knowledge people have about the company. This means that corporate identity needs to be managed, informed and guided by the core values associated with the organisation's identity.

Organisations should ensure that corporate identity is rooted in their actual identity. This will ensure that it only offers a distinctive edge in the market place, but also that the image projected is not cosmetic, but authentic, and shared and embraced by all the organisation's members (Puth, 1994: 194). Whenever change is envisaged in the organisation's corporate identity, strategic communication is the best tool to inform employees.

When an organisation has to reposition its image, it is critical for future success that these changes are efficiently and professionally introduced and that the ultimate results reflect management. According to Barrett (2006:310), stakeholder groups reckon the value of the organisation through its corporate reputation. Such corporate reputation should be in line with the communicated corporate identity. It should thus be broadly consistent with the way in which the organisation wants itself to be understood.

For corporate identity to be successful, there is a need for attention to be paid to:

- *A total commitment and active participation on the part of senior management;*
- *The development and selection of suitable and relevant visual concepts which can be promoted and communicated to achieve the desired objectives;*
- *A high standard of control both in the implementation of the programme and in the ongoing management of the programme;*
- *The quality and standard of the design of the visual elements which in turn are themselves dependent on an accurate establishment of objectives, adequate research and systematic and creative approach in the actual design process;*
- *The impact and clarity of the messages being communicated;*
- *The institution of systems and processes to ensure that the communicated image is reflected in all the activities of the organisation, and that the organisation is in fact how it views itself.*

It is important to first know the background of the company and its business in order to lay a foundation for a corporate identity, including its long-range plans, the image to be projected and the audiences to be addressed. This means conducting research and information gathering for a total audit that evaluates all the various factors. These can involve company name, trademark, logo or signatory. The next phase is to draw up a manual, specifying exactly how all the visual items are to be used.

To become successful in the development of a corporate identity, a series of logical phases need to be followed and to become an ongoing process.

2.6.1 External communication

According to Lunenburg (2010:6), external communication takes place between the organisation and clients, suppliers, shareholders, the media and the public. External communication involves press releases, press conferences, interviews with clients, advertising, business correspondence, presentations and consultation. External communication flows between employees inside the organisation and a variety of stakeholders outside the organisation.

Erasmus *et al* (1996:44) maintain that external communication is very important for the general growth and success of any organisation. External stakeholders include other administrators external to the organisation such as, parents, government officials and the community. Many organisations create formal departments, such as public relations or corporate affairs in order to coordinate their external communications.

2.7 Organisational communication

Andrew & Herschel (1996:13-14) describe organisational communication as an evolutionary, culturally independent process of sharing information and creating relationships in environments designed for manageable, cooperative and goal-oriented behaviour. Organisational communication is used by management and employees in a business to achieve organisational goals.

Erasmus *et al* (1996:42) argue that communication effectiveness needs to be evaluated as part of each employee's individual performance appraisal, with recognition being given for excellence. They define organisational communication as a process wherein mutually interdependent human beings create and exchange messages, interpret and negotiate meanings while striving to articulate and realise mutually held visions, purposes and goals.

Andrew & Herschel (1996:10) point out that the effectiveness of an organisation with respect to the achievement of its goals is closely related to its effectiveness in handling information. Communication is not a secondary or derived aspect of an organisation, but a close ancillary of the other presumably more basic functions. Communication is every organisation's lifeblood. An effective internal communication strategy is central to organisational effectiveness and should form an integral part of the strategic planning process of all organisations.

The strategic direction of an organisation is determined by a decision-making process that requires communication experts who are aware of classical decision-making theory. Good communication departments are said to be managed strategically in order to increase their contribution to the organisation's effectiveness. According to Erasmus *et al* (1996:1), communication is used to solve problems, give instructions, resolve conflicts, motivate employees, persuade clients, chair meetings and interview prospective employees. Managing communication strategically implies a two-way symmetrical communication as it requires identification, segmentation and the management of stakeholders (Jensen, 2004:29).

In an attempt to manage issues strategically, an organisation with a two-way symmetrical model for communication uses research and dialogue to manage problems and conflict, and improve understanding and relationships with stakeholders. By using the two-way approach, both the organisation and its stakeholders can be persuaded to change their behaviour (Jensen, 2004:29).

The importance of communication in organising is crucial. It influences a variety of sub-functions such as the structuring of the organisation, division of work, departmentalisation and coordination. Organisational communication can be considered excellent when it contributes to organisational effectiveness and to align the organisation's goals with the expectations of its stakeholders (Jensen, 2004:28).

Communication thus contributes to effectiveness by building quality, long-term relationships with strategic stakeholders (Grunig & Dozier, 1992:117). Clearly, organisations are effective when they attain their goals, but the goals must be appropriate for the organisation's environment. If not, stakeholders within the environment will constrain the autonomy of the organisation to meet its goals and achieve its vision.

The researcher is of the opinion that organisations should help employees understand their job and their company. They must help employees realise that their personal success is inseparable from the company's success. Organisations should also help employees realise that their job is worth doing because their company's products are essential to society.

The role of internal communication is not only to disseminate information, but also to provide mechanisms through which employees will be inspired and able to deliver discretionary effort (Skinner *et al*, 2013:96). The role of internal communication is not only to create awareness, but also to change behaviour.

2.8   Supervisory communication

Supervisory communication refers to an immediate supervisor's vertical communication that mainly facilitates delegation and reporting functions in the organisation. Supervisory communication includes the components of upward and downward communication, openness and receptivity to communication on the part of supervisors (Abdullah, 2014:60).

Pinscus (1986:399) recommends that supervisors have an open door policy and be able to accommodate ideas from subordinates. This enables employees to participate willingly in projects and thus improve their performance. Line managers' and supervisors' communication skills have an impact on the effectiveness of internal communication from the top to the bottom of an organisational hierarchy. Andrew & Herschel (1996:42) add that communication should be extended within groups, messages from subordinates to supervisors, and interaction that stresses good managers as listeners and not just order-givers.

Supervisors' openness to ideas and willingness to listen affects supervisory communication. It helps to build trust and confidence in work relationships. Jensen (2004:43) suggests that this type of communication helps employees solve problems and encourages them to develop new skills and participate in important decisions.

Employees prefer one-on-one communication with their supervisors first. This includes the conveyance of expectations for performances, rules and regulations, strategies and goals, safety and productivity advice and benefits. After that, these matters can be discussed in small group meetings and then via senior executive (Skinner *et al,* 3013:98).

According to Puth (2002:108), poor communication skills are the major barrier to internal communication. Supervisors should: possess the skills to motivate; possess leadership skills; have the ability to communicate change; possess interpersonal communication skills; possess problem-solving and decision-making skills; have planning and organisational skills as well as negotiation skills.

Puth (2002:108) maintains that, at the same time, supervisors should act on and encourage feedback, be active listeners, channel information to those accountable, be able to clarify meaning, demonstrate empathy at all times, encourage input, be able to facilitate cohesion, be able to manage conflict, provide guidance, be able to motivate employees and become mentors. At the same time, if people trust you, they will believe what you say. If that trust has been damaged and people do not believe what you say, it will not matter how well you communicate your point.

When people believe that their own supervisors know what is going on, they usually believe that most managers up the line know what they are doing, and that the company is being open with them.

According to Evans (1979:7), for organisations to become more efficient and effective in communication, they must become aware of what they are trying to achieve and of the outlooks and interests of the people with whom they communicate.

Clampitt & Downs (1993:244) claim that under-scoring and exploring strategies are the most effective communication strategies during change. The quality of information can be enhanced by involving employees in as many aspects of the change process as possible. Jensen (2004:245) maintains that if line managers understand the importance of effective communication through communication skills training, they will automatically practice effective two-way communication.

Meetings between management and employees afford an opportunity to speak directly with workers regarding new policies, products, methods and internal problems. In the long term, this should alleviate the current perception amongst employees that communication and information within is not disseminated on time, and that line managers are failing to effectively communicate upwards with senior management.

The communication skills of an organisation's leaders and their understanding of leadership communication directly influence all other management functions in the organisation (Puth, 2002:11). Planning, for example, will be ineffective without the anticipation of stakeholder reactions. Leaders who use visionary content in their communication are more effective than those who use more pragmatic content.

Leaders need to consider strategy in communication just as they do in other areas of their business (Barrett, 2006:22). Leaders need to determine their goals and develop plans to achieve such plans. They should realise the consequences that come with communication. Leaders need to make sure that the results they produce are those intended. Just as there is a need to determine a strategic vision for the organisation, they also need to establish a clear purpose or direction for their communication.

Jensen (2004:245) lists the skills needed to improve the communication ability of line managers as: acting on feedback, active listening, clarifying meaning, encouraging feedback and input, facilitating cohesion, motivating employees, providing direction and conducting effective meetings. Leaders are the men and women who influence others in the organisation or the community.

Leaders command other's attention. Leaders persuade others to follow them and the goals they define. Leaders control situations. Leaders improve the performance of groups and organisations. Leaders get the results. Leading is viewed as a managerial function that directs and influences the task-related activities of organisational members. It incorporates the ability to change the attitudes and behaviour of employees.

Puth (2002:12) argues that the quality and effectiveness of management's communication will determine the success of the organisation as a whole. The quality and effectiveness of this communication can be influenced by the degree to which it satisfies communication expectations. Management communication combines communication and management. It supports the goals set by the organisation and focuses on the decisions made by management.

Management communication is therefore a subfield of internal communication, referring specifically to communication flows between managers/supervisors and their subordinates (Jensen, 2004:27). It also focuses on internal communication processes, like informal interpersonal communication between supervisors and subordinates. Its purpose is to enable managers and supervisors to manage more effectively through communication.

Mueller & Lee (2002:8) discuss the upward and downward model of organisational communication as opposed to the top bottom model. They refer to this kind of communication as leader-membership exchange. Such communication affects subordinates' perceptions of communication satisfaction between employees and their supervisors. Leaders and supervisors have a limited amount of personal, social and organisational resources like time, energy, role and discretion in leader-membership exchange. They distribute such resources selectively amongst their subordinates. Over time, this results in leader-membership exchanges that vary in quality.

According to Mueller & Lee (2002:10), leader-membership exchange not only affects subordinates' satisfaction with communication from supervisors, but also their satisfaction with communication practices within the groups and in the organisational context as a whole. Organisational direction comes from leaders who create and communicate a clear and meaningful vision effectively. Employees are motivated when the leader carefully translates the vision and strategic goals of an organisation into terms that are meaningful to all employees through words and action.

In order for employees to be motivated, leaders need to listen to them with emotional intelligence that will enable them to connect with their employees. Barrett (2006:267) emphasises that leaders who appreciate the importance of connecting with all employees through communication and through action see results. Leaders with the ability to establish and communicate the mission and the vision effectively strengthen their position in leading their organisations.

2.9   Change in the organisation

The changing of structure in an organisation is generally a massive process. It is a process that affects the lives of employees and their families. Employees need to be involved from the beginning of the process so that they are aware of its implications. They need to know what benefits and/or disadvantages that change will bring. They need to know what is expected of them and how the new levels of performance translate into meaningful work, job security and possible promotion (Puth, 2002:112).

People may resist or give lukewarm support to a change initiative unless they see how they will personally benefit (Manning & Curtis, 2009:331). Miller (2006:226) asserts that it is crucial for a wide array of organisational participants to be informed about change so that they can feel that they are part of the decision-making process.

Employees will wonder why there is a need for change when everything is working normally. Change becomes a problem when it is not communicated via a strong vision. The only way to move from boardroom discussions to on-the-job reality is to help managers and workers understand, share and commit to a vision for change (Manning & Curtis, 2009:332). According to Miller (2006:224), the quality of information is the strongest predictor of workers' openness to organisational change attempts. This quality can be enhanced by involving employees in as many aspects of the change process as possible.

2.10   Challenges during change

As rumours go around the corridors about impending change, affected employees become more frustrated if the nature of change is uncertain or unclear. Groups are formed to defy anything regarding change. That serves to sabotage something that might have benefitted employees should it have been communicated properly. This has the potential to run the institution into a huge loss (Manning & Curtis, 2009:331). Employees close to management are suspected of knowing what will transpire from the new structure and are thought to be guaranteed to benefit. This can divide a good workforce that has been a pillar of the organisation and can cause it to collapse (Manning & Curtis, 2009:331).

Those who are not management's favourites think that they might be targeted and lose out on lucrative positions as a result of structural change. Proctor & Doukakis (2003:2) add that resistance to change emanates amongst others from fear of the unknown, lack of information, threats to status, fear of failure and lack of perceived benefits. There is a common practice known as 'withhold and uphold'. This is when management withholds information about change as much as possible, and when confronted with questions or rumours, they uphold the party line (Miller, 2006:225). Proper communication can eliminate the fears that this tactic might provoke.

2.11   Comparative study

A similar research project was conducted by Ingrid Jensen in a company called 'The Utility' that supplied portable water in Gauteng. Jensen's study was positioned in the communication domain, more specifically, the sub-domain of management and supervisory communication skills. Jensen's main findings were that there was insufficient communication among employees.

Employees found communication and information slow. It seemed that carriers of messages did not understand the messages and thus communicated them late. Moreover, there were too many stages through which messages had to go. This resulted in information losing its momentum and impact. Employees received information about the organisation from unreliable external sources. There was a lack of trust between employees and managers of The Utility as a result of the lack of feedback from management and input from employees.

Employees suspected that there was conduct reflecting racism, nepotism, favouritism, preferential treatment, not getting the same information at the same time, and too much inconsistency (Jensen, 2004:84).

With regard to the findings of her study, Jensen concluded that effective communication could not take place without mutual understanding. Organisations first needed to understand the attitudes, expectations and opinions of their employees before they could even attempt to make the employees understand or accept the organisation. Employees had a need to be heard, not only on a personal level, but so as to share their valuable work experience with the organisation. Jensen (2004:243) recommended that the current internal communication strategy of The Utility be re-assessed.

Appropriate communication training was required for middle and lower management of the organisation. The recommendation was that a programme of communication training that was aimed at empowering managers, supervisors and site communication officers with appropriate communication skills needed to be developed and implemented (Jensen, 2004:245).

The skills needed to improve the communication ability of line managers, according to Jensen (2004:245), were acting on feedback, active listening, clarifying meaning, encouraging feedback, encouraging input, facilitating cohesion, motivating employees, providing direction and conducting effective meetings. A training needs analysis would assist the organisation and its employees to become more participative with regard to employees' jobs and job performance.

Jensen (2004:244) believes that the implementation of this recommendation will correct the current negative perception that employees have of internal communication, as well as the perception that supervisors and managers were barriers to effective communication.

Jensen (2004:245) maintains that if line managers could understand the importance of effective communication through communication skills training, they would hopefully automatically practice effective two-way communication. In the long term, this would alleviate the current perception that communication and information were disseminated too slowly and that line managers were failing to effectively communicate upwards to top management.

2.12   Chapter summary

Organisational structure influences communication patterns within an organisation. Downward communication consists of policies, rules, and procedures that flow from the top administration to lower levels. Upward communication consists of the flow of performance reports, grievances, and other information from lower to higher levels. Horizontal communication is essentially coordinative and occurs between departments or divisions on the same level.

External communication flows between employees inside the organisation and a variety of stakeholders outside the organisation. Communication can mean anything and everything in the organisation. It can involve a vision, strategy, business planning, management meetings, information flow, knowledge management, etc.

There is an eight-element process to help guide a change agent to produce a successful change. The elements are vision, ability, enthusiasm, stability, concern for others, self-confidence, persistence, vitality, charisma and integrity. Manning & Curtis (2009:334) point out that the first four steps help the organisation and employees to familiarise themselves with the process of change and the need for change.

The last four steps pertain to the actual implantation of change, which includes changes in the institutional culture new to everyone in the organisation. This is when the need to educate and involve everyone affected by the change becomes crucial. All questions about change should be answered with integrity, and this will build trust in the organisation.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study was written to determine the extent to which strategic employee communication existed at Parliament during the period of transition, to examine the communication skills of supervisors, to investigate communication satisfaction amongst employees, and to establish what communication channels are utilised to get messages through from the top down and from the bottom up. A quantitative research method was employed in the study.

The reason for the use of a quantitative research approach was that Parliament had many different divisions performing different tasks. Some were not in the least concerned with how communication was designed. They were not even concerned whether there was anything wrong with communication. They did not see themselves as contributing by supporting the MPs to fulfil their constitutional mandate. Unskilled, semi-literate and illiterate parliamentary employees constituted approximately 30% of the workforce. This group had the greatest need for personal interaction and face-to-face communication. Although all 11 South African languages were spoken at Parliament, communication was mainly in English.

3.2 Research design

Bless & Higson-Smith (1995:63) state that a research design is a programme to guide the researcher in collecting, analysing and interpreting observed facts. It is the most adequate operations to be performed in order to test specific hypotheses under given conditions.

In this study, the researcher collected data through completed questionnaires. The researcher used the research design to ensure that the study fulfilled a particular purpose and that the research could be completed with available resources.

Johnson & Christensen (2000:233) describe research design as the outline, plan, or strategy the researcher will utilise to seek an answer to the research questions. The design will ensure the collection of data that will adequately test the hypotheses, ideally in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure.

In sum, a research design is a blue-print for fulfilling research objectives. It determines, inter alia, the research techniques, sampling plans and data collection procedures (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:81). The blue-print specifies exactly how the research will be carried out, while the flexible guide for action specifies an interactive process in which the researcher will engage.

3.2.1 Quantitative research approach

A primary role of quantitative research is to test an hypotheses. An hypotheses is a proposition or statement regarding the relationship between two or more variables. Quantitative research is a form of conclusive research involving large representative samples and fairly structured data collection procedure (Struwig & Stead, 2001:4).

Quantitative research examines constructs that are based on an hypotheses derived from a theoretical scheme and that can be measured.

A quantitative research approach focuses on the deductive component of the scientific method because the focus is generally on hypotheses and theory testing. It is also said to be confirmatory because researchers test or attempt to confirm their hypotheses. According to Bryman (1988:11), the tradition of quantitative research exhibits many of the hallmarks of a natural science approach.

A quantitative research methodology was selected for this study in order to measure the level of communication skills amongst supervisors and management. The researcher sought to discover the way in which communication flows from the bottom-up and the top-down. The study also sought to determine the effectiveness of the communication tools that were utilised to get the messages across.

The researcher intended to establish how satisfied employees were with the information they received regarding change, and to determine how knowledgeable line managers were regarding this change. In short, a quantitative research approach was chosen in order to explore certain concepts and constructs of communication satisfaction. Surveys and experiments are the principal vehicles of quantitative research. The survey has the capacity to generate quantifiable data on large numbers of people who are known to be representative of a wider population.

Struwig & Stead (2001:6) observe that one of the characteristics of a quantitative study is replication. The replication of a study provides a way of determining the extent to which its findings are applicable to other contexts. It also serves as the means of checking the biases of the investigator.

The researcher's biases inevitably affect how data is gathered and interpreted. A study is replicable when the research process is clearly and accurately described. This enables other researchers to repeat the study should they wish to do so. Bryman (1988:37) adds that the replication of established findings typically regarded as a characteristic of the natural sciences.

Quantitative researchers are influenced by positivism and view reality as identical to the natural order. Positivism is a research paradigm that combines a deductive approach with precise measurement so that researchers can discover and confirm causal laws that will permit predictions about human behaviour (Struwig & Stead, 2001:5). Positivist researchers prefer precise quantitative data and often use experiments, surveys and statistics. They seek rigorous, exact measures and test hypotheses by carefully analysing numbers from the measures (Neuman, 2003:71).

Positivism entails the belief that the methods and procedures of the natural sciences are appropriate to the social sciences. Scientific theories are seen by positivists as providing a kind of backdrop to empirical research in the sense that hypotheses are derived from them, usually in the form of postulated casual connections between entities which are then submitted to empirical tests. Science is deductive, in that, it seeks to extract specific propositions from general accounts of reality (Bryman, 1988:15).

Johnson & Christensen (2000:19) suggest that a quantitative research often uses a narrow-angle lens in the sense that only one or a few factors are studied at the same time. Quantitative researchers operate under the assumption of objectivity. They try to remain objective and avoid human bias wherever possible.

3.3   Research methodology

The communication audit method of this research provides an objective report on an organisation's internal communication. A communication audit is a comprehensive and thorough study of communication philosophy, concepts, structure, flow and practice within an organisation (Emmanuel, 1985:50).

3.3.1 Data collection and method

Neuman (2003:174) observes that the measuring process in quantitative research is a straightforward sequence: first conceptualisation, followed by operationalisation, that is, applying an operational definition and measuring to collect the data. Quantitative researchers have developed several ways to rigorously link abstract ideas to measurement procedures that will produce precise quantitative information about empirical reality.

The most common forms of quantitative research are exploratory, descriptive experimental and quasi-experimental. Observations and asking questions are the two basic methods of collecting quantitative data. Data can be collected through structured questionnaires, which are administered by personal interviews, telephone interviews and mail surveys (Judd, Smith & Kiddler, 1991:215).

This data is often the type that measures attitudes, gleaned from true or false or Likert-type response formats using rating scales from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

In this study, the researcher collected data using structured questionnaires as a measuring instrument. The questionnaires were designed to maintain the interest of respondents and contained precise and clear instructions on how to answer the questions (Struwig & Stead, 2001:89). The questions enquired about the relationships among variables that the researcher sought to know (Creswell, 2014:143).

Data is the basic material with which the researcher works. It is essential that the researcher obtain sound and valid data to analyse and interpret in order to draw valid conclusions. Once the data has been collected, it is analysed so that the casual connection specified by the hypotheses can be verified or rejected (Bryman, 1988:18).

Quantitative researchers choose from a specified set of data analysis techniques and their analysis is highly developed, building on applied mathematics (Neuman, 1997:419). Quantitative researchers do not begin data analysis until they have collected all the data and collated it. Quantitative researchers manipulate numbers that represent empirical facts in order to test an abstract hypotheses.

This research should be seen as a base-line study since no other research to determine similar aspects of strategic employee communication in Parliament has been conducted thus far.

3.3.2 Questionnaire distribution and design

Judd *et al* (1991:215) note that the advantages of written questionnaires for data collection are that: "they cost less, they help in avoidance of potential interview biases, and they place less pressure for immediate response on the subject". This suggests that respondents should be given ample time to consider each question carefully rather than give the response that springs immediately to mind. Written questionnaires also have the benefit of granting respondents a strong sense of anonymity, thereby encouraging open responses to sensitive questions.

For the purpose of the research, the questionnaire was divided into the following five sub-sections.

a)   *Communication satisfaction*

b)   *Supervisory communication*

c)   *Feedback*

d)   *Communication channels*

e)   *General enquiry.*

The full questionnaire is attached in the addenda to this research paper. The questionnaire in this study consists of closed questions and Likert-scale questions.

3.4   Population and sample

All participants approached consented to taking part in this study. Confidentiality and anonymity in answering the questionnaires was guaranteed. The research was carried out once and within the parliamentary precincts.

Parliament had a population of approximately 1400 employees, including management. Questionnaires were distributed to different levels of employees in various sections of the organisation. The 45 participants selected represented all the levels of employees falling within the scope of the study, and were chosen regardless of race, gender or age. This number was made up of 15 supervisors at C1 to C3 levels, 20 administrative staff at B1 to B3 levels and 10 general workers at A1 to A3 levels. A questionnaire comprising 30 questions was distributed to the participants.

Parliament comprised of eight divisions. Each division had different sections that performed different functions that were interdependent and interrelated. The research questionnaire was distributed amongst employees of each division at different levels. When participants were selected, it was important to include not only individuals who had research skills, but also those who wished to participate in the project but had few or no research skills.

In the Office of the Speaker, questionnaires were distributed to an Administrative Assistant and a Service Officer. In the NA Division, questionnaires were distributed to a Procedural Officer and an Administrative Officer. In the Office the Chairperson of the NCOP, questionnaires were distributed to an Administrative Officer and a Service Officer. In the Office of the Secretary to Parliament, questionnaires were distributed to the Executive Secretary, an Administrative Officer and a Service Officer. In total, nine questionnaires were distributed in these Offices across the different levels.

a) ***Legislation and Oversight Division***

Questionnaires were distributed to a Library Assistant and an Administrative Assistant. Three Language Practitioners in the Language Services received questionnaires. These participants were from the Reporting, Translation and Interpreting units. In the Committee Section, questionnaires were distributed to a Committee Secretary and a Committee Assistant. In total, seven questionnaires were distributed in this division across the different levels.

b) ***Corporate Services Division***

Questionnaires were distributed to Administrative Assistants, Human Resources, Job Level Management, Training and Development, Labour Relations and the Employee Assistance Office. An Administrative Assistant in the Information Technology Services section received a questionnaire. An Administrative Assistant in Financial Management Office also received a questionnaire. In total, seven questionnaires were distributed in this division across the different levels.

c) ***Institutional Support Division***

A questionnaire was distributed to an Administrative Assistant in Procurement. An Administrative Assistant in the Stores and Inventory Unit also received a questionnaire. A questionnaire was also distributed to an Administrative Assistant in the Protection Service section. An Administrative Assistant in the Documentation section received a questionnaire. Practitioners in Registry, Printing, Binding and Conservation received questionnaires. In total, seven questionnaires were distributed in this division across the different levels.

In the Household Services section, a Controller and Administrative Assistants in the Auxiliary Services, Maintenance Services and Mail Services as well as the Cleaners in each of these units received questionnaires. An Operator in the Telephone Operations Office, as well as a Chef and each Caterer in the three restaurants received questionnaires. In total, 12 questionnaires were distributed in this section across the different levels.

d) *National Council of Provinces*

A Provincial Liaison Officer, a Procedural Officer, an Administrative Officer and the Usher of the Black Rod each received a questionnaire. In total, four questionnaires were distributed in this division across the different levels.

Senior management and MPs were excluded from this research as they are the joint decision-makers in the institution under investigation. Detailed information was collected by means of questionnaires over a period of time and then analysed. The researcher was guided by the way in which participants responded to questionnaires for data analysis and interpretation. The aim was to find detailed descriptions and explanations pertaining to the research question.

Blanche *et al* (1999:49) note that sampling is the selection of research participants from the entire population. It involves decisions regarding which persons, settings, events, behaviours and/or social processes to observe. Exactly *who* or *what* will be sampled in a particular study is influenced by the unit of analysis.

According to Johnson & Christensen (2000:148), quantitative observations frequently involve the standardisation of each of the following procedures: who is observed, what is observed, when the observations are to take place, where the observations are to be carried out and how the observations are to be done.

Non-probability convenience sampling was used in this study as participants were carefully selected subject to their availability. A convenience sample was chosen purely on the basis of availability. Respondents are selected because they are accessible (Struwig & Stead, 2001:111).

Johnson & Christensen (2000:174) observe that researchers use convenience sampling when they include in their sample people who are available or volunteer or can be easily recruited and are willing to participate in the research study. In many experiments, only convenience sampling is possible because the investigator must use naturally formed groups or volunteers. When individuals are not randomly assigned, the procedure is called quasi-experiment (Creswell, 2014:168).

Subjects in a non-probability sample are usually selected on the basis of their accessibility or according to the purposive personal judgment of the researcher. This approach is often employed when the researcher must make use of available respondents, or when randomisation is impossible. It can be used to demonstrate that a particular trait exists in the population.

Non-probability sampling is appropriate when the research does not aim to generate results that will be used to create generalisations pertaining to the entire population. It is also useful when the researcher has limited budget, time and workforce. Blanche *et al* (1999:49) note that a sample size is determined in part by practical constraints, the number of persons the researcher has access to, and how much money and time is available for the study.

According to Bless & Higson-Smith (1995:96), a very small random sample may be quite unrepresentative, but the same is true of a large non-random sample. A large sample is more representative but very costly. A small sample is less accurate but more convenient. The aim was to select a sample that would be representative of the population which the researcher aimed to draw conclusions from. Thus for the purpose of this quantitative study, non-probability was the most suitable method. The researcher used an element to select participants.

3.4.1 Element

According to Jensen (2004:52), an element refers to what particular information the researcher needs to collect. This means that a sampling element is the unit of analysis or case in a population. It is a choice which the researcher has to make in identifying preferred particular persons or a group to participate in the research. Sometimes the researcher is guided by a symbolic message or even a social action or setting that is to be measured.

3.5 Data analysis and interpretation

The aim of data analysis is to transform information into an answer that responds to the original research question and sub-questions. A careful consideration of data analysis strategies will ensure that the design is coherent with the purposes of the research and to the research paradigm (Blanche *et al,* 1999:52). In this study, the researcher chose an *illustrative* method to analyse data.

Neuman (1997:427) notes that data analysis involves examining, sorting, categorising, evaluating, comparing, synthesising and contemplating the coded data as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data. In the process of analysis, the researcher will attempt to describe the data, explore the relationships that exist in that data, and generally see if the data is consistent with the hypothesis and theories (Judd *et al*, 1991:354). The researcher ensured that there was no missing or incomplete data as a result of the sampling method used.

Struwig & Stead (2001:172) remark that data interpretation focuses on holistic illumination, understanding and extrapolation. It gives meaning to the raw data. It is not merely the reporting of the data, but provides the reader with reasonable insights that were not obvious at first glance. Data interpretation should always stick to the research aims. According to Creswell (2014:163), this means that the researcher draws conclusions from the results in relation to the research questions, hypotheses, and the larger context.

Babbie (2004:360) observes that data interpretation clarifies the meaning of an experience. Interpretation lays the groundwork for understanding which is the process of interpreting, knowing and comprehending the meaning of an experience.

In this study, the researcher interpreted, as accurately as possible, participants' perception of employee communication, i.e. their satisfaction with the change in organisational culture, with supervisory communication, and management communication as well as the means and methods of communication employed. The researcher ensured that the interpretation of the data did not deviate from the study's research objectives.

When data is interpreted, it is important to focus on all the data and not only those aspects that appear interesting. Researchers must provide an accurate account of the information, which according to Creswell (2014:99), may in quantitative research require debriefing between the researcher and participants. Once the data has been analysed and the findings formulated accordingly, the researcher must critically review the data to detect any errors of measurement, bias or other mistakes that might have distorted the description of the aspect of reality under study (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:143).

In this instance, the researcher went through the interpretation with a fine-tooth comb after getting the questionnaires back. The researcher identified and revisited parts of the interpretation that were just summaries and nothing more.

3.5.1 Reliability

According to Struwig & Stead (2001:130), reliability is the extent to which an experiment, test or any measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials. It is also the extent to which the test scores are accurate, consistent or stable. Other researchers should be able to perform exactly the same experiment under the same conditions and generate the same results. Without this replication, the research has not fulfilled all of the requirements of testability. Reliability is the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it measures and is about the accuracy of the actual measuring instrument or procedure. According to Bless & Higson-Smith (1995:130), the reliability of measure is the degree to which that instrument produces equivalent results for repeated trials.

It became evident in this study that there was a high level of consistency, as all the participants responded in almost the same way to questions in the questionnaire. This meant that the measuring tool was reliable in investigating communication satisfaction, supervisory communication, access to communication channels and feedback during the period of transition. Johnson & Christensen (2000:100) maintain that reliability refers to the consistency or stability of the scores we get from our tests and assessment procedures. If a test or assessment procedure is reliable, it will produce similar scores or responses on every occasion.

Neuman (2003:178) characterises reliability as dependability or consistency. This suggests that the same thing will be repeated or recur under identical or very similar conditions. The questionnaire used to collect data in this study was compiled to calculate the extent to which all the tests reflected the same attribute.

Internal Consistency Reliability was used in this study. This reflects the extent to which the tests or procedures assess the same characteristic, skill or quality. Struwig & Stead (2001:132) note that Internal Consistency Reliability is based on one form of test and requires participants to complete the test on one occasion. This type of reliability often assists researchers to interpret data and predict the value of scores and the limits of the relationship among variables. Johnson & Christensen (2000:21) observe that quantitative researchers usually describe the world by using variables, and they attempt to explain and predict aspects of the world by demonstrating the relationship among these variables. Variables are a condition or characteristic that can take on different values or categories.

According to Creswell (2003:141), reliability indexes the quality of the measurement method in terms of its ability to ensure that the same data would have been collected each time in repeated observations of the same phenomenon. Internal consistency reliability refers to how well a test measures a single construct or concept (Johnson & Christensen, 2000:104). Reliability is necessary in order to have a valid measure, but it does not guarantee that a measure will be valid: a measure can be reliable, but not valid.

3.5.2 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the meaning of the concept under consideration (Struwig & Stead, 2001:138). Validity encompasses the entire experimental concept and establishes whether the results obtained meet all of the requirements of the scientific research method.

According to Neuman (2003:179), validity suggests truthfulness and refers to the match between a construct and a measure. It refers to how well an idea about reality fits with actual reality, or how well the social reality being measured through research matches the constructs researchers use to understand it.

Validity also refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure, or how well the conceptual and operational definitions mesh with each other (Neuman, 1997:142). Another view is that of Johnson & Christensen (2000:107), who characterise validity as a judgement of the appropriateness of the interpretations and actions we make based on the score or scores we get from a test or assessment procedure.

McGarth & Brinberg (1998:39) insist validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques; rather, it is like integrity, or character a quality to be assessed relative to purposes and circumstances. Validity in quantitative research includes the application of statistics to questionnaire construction as well as the use of statistical hypotheses testing (Struwig & Stead, 2001:136).

Predictive validity was chosen for this study. This refers to the relationship between the scores of a test and the scores of another test to be measured sometime afterwards (Struwig & Stead, 2001:140). Predictive validity was chosen because this study will be conducted again in few years' time in order to ascertain whether communication by supervisors, communication channels and feedback in the institution in question have improved.

3.6   Chapter summary

In this chapter, the main research question, research design and research methodology were examined. The quantitative method according to which the study was designed was also discussed. There was quantitative data collection and examination in respect of the way in which strategic communication existed in the institution under study; communication skills of supervisors; communication satisfaction amongst employees, and the communication channels utilised in order to get the messages across regarding the envisaged change. Data interpretation, data analysis, reliability and validity were also discussed.

CHAPTER 4:   FINDINGS

4.1   Introduction

Internal communication audit was conducted from 5 May to 6 June 2014, using a quantitative research method. Information was obtained from employees at various levels in order to assist the organisation in aligning and improving its strategic employee communication.

This chapter therefore focuses on the findings of the research regarding the extent to which communication satisfaction existed amongst employees; the extent to which a lack of communications skills existed amongst supervisors; the extent to which communication tools were available within the institution; the extent to which employees received feedback from management and the effectiveness of communication and communication tools during the period of transition.

4.2   Questionnaire distribution

Questionnaires were distributed to participants in all divisions at Parliament. The job level of participants was from A- to C-bands. The level of education for participants at A-band was standard eight and less, Matric for B-band and a post-matric qualification for C-band employees. The selection of participants was carefully limited to those with the service of five years and above in the institution under investigation. The researcher ensured that all the questionnaires were available and completed. The data analysis method used enabled the researcher to organise and bring meaning to the large amount of data gathered (Struwig & Stead, 2001:169).

Explanation

The graph at the end of each heading represents questions asked under that heading and its subheadings. The scale employed ranged between zero and three. Zero to 0.9 represent strongly disagree or to 'no extent' one to 1.9 represent disagree, two to 2.9 represent agree, and three and above strongly agree. The levels of employees are indicated in the scale and the explanation of how much each level has scored is indicated below. At the beginning of the scale are responses from the A-band employees, followed by responses from the B-band employees, while responses from the C-band employees always appear at the end of the scale.

4.3   Findings

4.3.1 Communication satisfaction

a)   To what extent are you satisfied with the way information is communicated?

Findings from A-band

The general feedback from all the respondents at this level was that they were not satisfied with the way information was communicated. They felt that they were not valued by the institution in terms of the level of the tasks they performed. They indicated that they were allocated one office to share, yet were servicing the entire building. They had no computers to access the intranet in order to be aware of issues and events taking place in the institution. There were no notice boards to read at least the posted information.

No information was distributed to offices in the form of memoranda, as Parliament was embarking on the process transforming into a paperless institution.

They heard information from other employees who received information through their managers or supervisors. The only information communicated to them was the Secretary to Parliament's quarterly meetings. These meetings had no agenda and platform for employees to raise their concerns. Supervisors ensured that employees were informed of the Secretary's meetings in order to add numbers. Managers were asked about staff attendance at such meetings in terms of control. The generic response was "to no extent".

Findings from B-band

There were mixed responses among this level of employees, as some were secretaries to managers and MPs, and some were Administrative Assistants. The general feeling from the respondents was that they were partially satisfied with the way information was communicated. They indicated that information was not sent immediately for their attention. An example of this was with the internal advertising of jobs. They indicated that in most cases, they did not even receive the adverts and became aware of the vacancies only after the due date for applications. When they actually receive the information in time, they received it sometimes only two days before the due date, which disadvantaged them in applying for the vacant positions. The generic response was "to no extent".

Findings from C-band

The same situation as that reported by B-band respondents was experienced by respondents in this band. The general feeling was that they were partially satisfied with the way information was communicated. They indicated that information was not sent immediately for their attention. An example cited was again the case of internal advertisements. In most cases, they did not even receive them and became aware of them after the due date, or they received them sometimes only two days before the due date which put them at disadvantage as potential applicants. The generic response was "to no extent".

b)   *Do you feel that communication reach employees on time?*

Findings from A-band

According to the responses from these employees, no communications reached them as they were not perceived as important in the organisation. Their task was to keep the institution clean and cook for MPs and other staff members. The only communication they received timeously pertained to the Secretary to Parliament's meetings in order to ensure their attendance. Organised labour in the institution ensured that they received information regarding labour issues through their shop stewards. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B-band

There were mixed perceptions from respondents at this level. Some responded that communication reached them very late, as a result of which they missed out on many things.

Others felt that they did receive on time. This was as a result of some employees at this level being secretaries to MPs, while others were Administrative Assistants.

Secretaries or administrative assistants to managers received information on time as they needed to inform and prepare diaries for their managers. They indicated that the information they received was mostly relevant to their managers, and they did not receive general information very often. Those who were secretaries to MPs did not receive such information as it was not relevant to MPs. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from C-band

Respondents at this level agreed that they received most information, but they were not sure whether this was generally on time as there was no consistency in the dissemination of information. The generic response was "agree".

c)   *Does communication reach the management without being distorted?*

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level indicated that they never conveyed any communication to management. Only union representatives or their supervisors raised issues on their behalf to the management. They felt that management was hardly even aware of their existence. Their presence was only acknowledged if there were complaints or some crisis relating to their work. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B- and C-bands

Respondents at both levels were not sure if information reached the management without being distorted as they never questioned management regarding the information they conveyed. They received feedback through their supervisors and only very rarely directly from management. The generic response from these levels was "disagree".

d)   *Do you often receive communication regarding the institution's vision?*

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level indicated that they could not remember getting information about the vision. If it was conveyed to them, this was not done clearly. They heard about the vision only at the end-of-year functions and did not understand its relevance. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B-band

The response was that they received information about the vision of the institution occasionally. Even then, the information was not clear and its relevance could not be understood. Maybe this was the result of its being communicated by incompetent communicators. It remained unclear and confusing. The generic response was "agree".

Findings from C-band

Information about the vision was only communicated when there had to be compliance on certain issues: for instance, in the case of policies that would be introduced with an indication that they supported the vision of the institution.

This information was particularly vague for those who were not in Parliament's employ when the vision and mission were introduced. No workshops were conducted for new employees. Employees thought that the issue of the vision was dealt with and forgotten about as some of the documentation regarding it was gathering dust in the paper stores and some offices. The generic response was "disagree."

Graph No 1

1. *Communication satisfaction*

	A – band	**B – band**	**C – band**

a) *To what extent are you satisfied with the way information is communicated?*

Answer: a 　　　 0.1 　　　　 0.2 　　　　 0.5

b) *Do you feel that communication reaches employees on time?*

Answer: b 　　　 0.1 　　　　 1 　　　　　 2.6

c) Does communication reach the management without being distorted?

Answer: c   0.1   1.2   1.2

d) Do you often receive communication regarding the institution's vision?

Answer: d   0.3   2   1.8

The graph above indicates how each level of employees responded to each of the above questions relating to communication satisfaction amongst employees in the institution under examination.

4.3.2 Supervisory communication

a) Does your supervisor talk about the vision in line with your job?

Findings from A-band

Nothing had been communicated regarding the vision, as the function of cleaners and catering staff was not strategically aligned. Respondents at this level indicated that they were just told that the institution had to be kept clean at all times and the food should be of a good standard and/or quality. The respondents also claimed that they often expressed concern regarding the quality of food as the menu never changed. No training was offered on new methods or dishes to cook. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B- and C-bands

Respondents at both levels indicated that they were reminded by the management, especially by those managers who were present during the time of the introduction of the vision and mission that certain tasks were aligned with certain strategic objectives of the institution. New managers never related any matter or task to strategic objectives. The generic response from both levels was "strongly disagree".

b)   Do you have a clear understanding of where your section fits within the vision?

Findings from A-band

There was no clear understanding as no one had made the effort to explain anything about this to respondents in this band. Existing understanding of the vision was not clear, or seemed complicated and needed some explanation from an experienced communicator who was involved in this regard.

Respondents indicated that the section performed duties the way they had always done, cleaning offices and passages and preparing food. The only change they reported was that no new employees were engaged when others retired. Instead, a contractor was brought to assist with the cleaning and a new cafeteria for staff was opened by a private company. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B-band

Respondents at this level were not sure as they were not involved when the matter of the vision was discussed.

They indicated that they only heard about the vision when casual reference was made with no proper explanation. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from C-band

Respondents at this level agreed with the statement, as most were involved when the vision was introduced. Employees at this level were more aware as they were sometimes involved in tasks that were aligned with the vision and sometimes attended meetings with the managers. The generic response was "agree".

c)   *Can you openly discuss issues relating to the vision with your supervisor?*

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level disagreed, because even their supervisors did not show any signs of being aware of the vision. Supervisors did not initiating discussion regarding the vision of the institution. The generic response was, "strongly disagree".

Findings from B and C-bands

Respondents at both levels indicated that they sometimes discussed issues relating to the vision. This only happened when supervisors were informed by management that a particular task was aligned with the vision. If management did not mention anything about the task being related to the vision, no mention was made of it. The generic response from both levels was "disagree".

d) *Does your supervisor understand what is required of him or her in terms of the vision?*

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level did not know as their supervisors were often critical of seemingly unnecessary changes when everything was working well. Changing people's attitudes to the way they were doing their work would be extremely difficult without any suitable communication. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B and C-bands

Respondents at both levels answered "partly", because supervisors did not show any interest in or understanding of the requirements of the vision. Supervisors only conveyed messages when instructed to do so by management. Some supervisors even stated that when management had informed them of this matter, they had indicated clearly that it was not something they understood. Supervisors could not elaborate on such an issue, and were not even willing to entertain any questions regarding it The generic response from both levels was "disagree".

e) *Does your supervisor communicate well upwards representing employee needs which are raised at staff meetings?*

Findings from all bands

All respondents indicated "sometimes", as supervisors did not report back on management's response on the issues raised in the staff meetings.

There were instances when supervisors communicated issues with staff present during the general staff meetings. In such instances, supervisors would ask staff to add if there were any issues that needed to be added. The only issue was how well the matter had been communicated in the absence of employees as the feedback was sometimes negative. The generic response from all participants was "agree".

e) Does your supervisor clarify issues you do not understand regarding the vision?

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level disagreed, indicating that nothing had ever been done in this regard. They claimed that they had never engaged with their supervisors regarding the vision as its relevance was not clear and they were not familiar with its requirements. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B and C-bands

The indication from both levels was "partly", after supervisors had been informed by management as to how a certain matter was aligned with the vision, they then explained to the staff that certain tasks needed to be performed as required by the vision. Supervisors were unable to elaborate beyond the instructions given by management. The generic response from both levels was "disagree".

g)   ***Do you see yourself contributing to the vision of the institution?***

Findings from A-band

The vision was not clear, and the way in which this level might contribute to it had not been explained. Instructions were sometimes given on how certain tasks were to be performed so as to be aligned with the vision, but with no clear explanation in this regard. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B-band

The indication from the respondents at this level was "partly", because the level of understanding was different. Those who understood the vision statement were able to tell that certain tasks were aligned with the requirements of the vision. Those who were not familiar with it, especially new employees, could not say. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from C-band

Respondents at this level were sometimes involved in meetings that discussed the strategic objectives of the institution. They also contributed towards the institutional monthly, quarterly and annual reports. As a result, their contribution towards the vision was greater and better informed than that of other levels. The generic response was "agree".

h) ***Has your way of thinking changed as a result of the vision of the institution?***

Findings from A-band

Nothing had changed as the respondents at this level indicated that they were still performing their duties the way they had done before. The only change experienced was the fact that their Units were being outsourced and they were concerned about the possibility of job losses as a result of that. A person cannot easily change their way of thinking unless informed and persuaded to do so by way of examples, including the benefits to be received as a result of change. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B-band

Respondents at this level indicated that they had changed to a certain extent because when performing certain tasks, their knowledge of vision made them aware of the value of their contribution. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from C-band

Respondents at this level agreed that they had changed their way of thinking. Having to attend strategic meetings with management created an understanding in regard to the performance of certain tasks. Employees at this level sometimes acted on behalf of their managers and had to learn how certain duties were aligned with the vision. Employees tried to learn as much as they possibly could as they were in a position to become managers, especially in the sense that they sometimes acted on behalf of their managers.

Their way of thinking had changed as they were aware of most of the requirements of the vision. They were also aware of the benefits that could be brought about through the proper implementation of the vision. The generic response was "agree".

Graph No 2

2.   Supervisory Communication

| | **A – band** | **B – band** | **C – band** |

a) *Does your supervisor talk about the vision in line with your job?*

Answer: a   0.2   0.5   0.5

b) *Do you have a clear understanding of where your section fits within the vision?*

Answer: b   0.2   0.3   2.6

c) *Can you openly discuss issues relating to the vision with your supervisor?*

Answer: c   0.1   1.5   1.5

d) *Does your supervisor understand what is required of him or her in terms of the vision?*

Answer: d   0.1   1.5   1.5

e) *Does your supervisor communicate well upwards representing employee needs which are raised at staff meetings?*

Answer: e   2.3   2.4   2.5

f) *Does your supervisor clarify issues you do not understand regarding the vision?*

Answer: f   0.2   1.4   1.5

g) *Do you see yourself contributing to the vision of the institution?*

Answer: g   0.9   1.5   2

h) *Has your way of thinking changed as a result of the vision of the institution?*

Answer: h   0.2   1.5   2

The graph above indicates how each level of employees responded to each of the above questions relating to supervisory communication in the institution under examination.

4.3.3 Feedback

a)   *Is communication encouraging a two-way feedback?*

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level indicated that no engagement occured in their section. Employees had noticed no feedback regarding issues that were raised through the union representatives or supervisors. It seemed to depend on what the communication was about. When it worked for management, positive feedback was received; if not, there would be no feedback at all. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B-band

Respondents at this level indicated "not really", because communication came from the top with instructions and direct orders that were not supposed to be questioned. Employees were reluctant to ask for feedback as that would be taken as questioning management's decisions and could result in victimisation and even job losses. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from C-band

Management did not entertain suggestions from employees at this level. Management appeared to believe that they were the only ones who could come up with suggestions about the institution. No inputs were accommodated from employees, even though they pretended to be encouraging such inputs through an open-door policy. Power created barriers between this level of employees and management. Managers appeared to feel threatened and regard suggestions as instructions.

This level of employee constitutes the crucial link between management and staff. Relationships here needed to be open and trusting because employees at lower levels relied upon employees at this level to challenge management. Employees at this level sometimes acted as spokespersons for employees at lower levels.

Employees at other levels were not even listened to as they seemed to lack value in the eyes of management as a result of their positions. Respondents at this level felt that there should be constant feedback between management and employees in order to encourage the flow of information. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

b) *Does your supervisor bring feedback regarding employee needs from top management?*

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level indicated "partly", because it depended on the matter that was communicated. In most cases, issues that benefitted the institution would be communicated to employees, but otherwise no feedback was received. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from B and C-bands

Respondents indicated "sometimes", because for some of the issues raised, feedback was received, even though it was negative in most cases. This created problems as employees were not aware whether their concerns were conveyed correctly or distorted along the way.

Some supervisors delivered selected feedback, trying to side with management or not look bad in front of their subordinates. This was dependent on the feedback that needed to be communicated or the influence they received from management regarding the matter. The generic response from both levels was "disagree".

c)   ***Does top management give serious consideration to suggestions that are made by employees?***

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level indicated "sometimes". Certain suggestions were given priority, but only when they also benefitted management. In most cases, such suggestions got changed and were made to reflect badly on employees, making them look as if they were always challenging management's decisions.

Certain channels were not available on in-house television and radio as management chose the stations they preferred without considering employee preferences. South Africa is a diverse country with 11 official languages. Employees were never asked what they would prefer to watch or listen to. The perception was perhaps that employees would waste time listening to the radio and watching television instead of performing their duties. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B-band

The response from respondents at this level was "partly". It was suggested to management that all parliamentary papers be published in all 11 official languages. Staff members were employed for the purpose and the language policy was adopted. Other languages were not prioritised as management still did not regard African languages as important as English and Afrikaans. However, it appeared that the language policy was gathering dust and not being implemented. Documents were only published in Afrikaans and English. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from C-band

The indication by the respondents at this level was that management always passed the blame onto politicians when confronted with difficult questions. They always described the matter as needing a political decision, whereas politicians wondered why certain things were done in the way they were done. The response was therefore "sometimes", unless the suggestions favoured and/or suited the management. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

d)   Does top management give feedback to employee concerns?

Findings from A and B-bands

The respondents indicated "sometimes". It depended on what concerns were raised. If they favoured the institution, feedback was received, if they were staff issues and did not favour management, no feedback was likely to be received. If it was forthcoming, it was negative. The generic response from both levels was "disagree".

Findings from C-band

The indication was "partly". When suggestions were made, management pretended to be listening to them, but no action was ever taken. Feedback was of a kind that suited management and not employees. The generic response was "disagree".

e)   Is top management available to answer to employee concerns?

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level indicated "sometimes", because it depended on the concerns raised. The management was always busy with strategic and political matters and had no time to attend to minor issues. There were many issues that were left unresolved for a very long time. This resulted in frustration amongst employees who would blame the union for not doing enough, whereas the backlog was caused deliberately by management because the issue was not in their favour. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from B and C-bands

Respondents at this level indicated "partly, because sectional staff meetings were held when management called them. Contributions and suggestions in such meetings were not even entertained, unless they were in favour of management. Agenda items sponsored by employees were not allowed if they were about issues management was not in favour of. Should staff contributions be unwelcome in such meetings, staff would be ordered to raise the issues in other fora. Management did not take into account the fact that these fora were already engaged, but could not solve the problem. The generic response from both levels was "disagree".

f) ***How many times does top management convene a meeting with employees in a year?***

Findings from all bands

The answer from respondents at all levels was "sometimes", because the union had got management to agree to hold quarterly meetings with staff. This agreement was sometimes honoured, but in many instances, such meetings were postponed until further notice and only took place in the next quarter. The disadvantage of such meetings was that the agenda was imposed on employees by management. Employees were not given the opportunity to sponsor agenda items. Issues raised outside the agenda were not entertained.

Employees were referred to certain platforms when raising matters in such meetings. Management ignored the fact that such platforms were already utilised and/or could not help or were the ones against which the complaint was being made. The meetings that took place most regularly were the year-end functions, where no concerns were raised, but everyone was thanked for the contributions made throughout the year. The generic response from all levels was "twice".

g) ***Are employees given the opportunity to personally raise their concerns with top management regarding the vision?***

Findings from A and B-bands

Respondents from these two levels indicated "a little", because the vision was the product of management. Any concerns regarding it were viewed as challenging the decisions of management and/or politicians.

But politicians were not familiar with or even aware of the vision of the institution as no proper workshops were held with them. The management always blamed the busy schedule and time constraints on the side of politicians. The generic response from both levels was "strongly disagree".

Findings from C-band

The C-band respondents answered "partly", because the vision seemed to have been formulated in order to point employees in the direction that management desired. Politicians were used in order to achieve the mission. The vision was like the standard operating procedures which every institution draws up for employees to follow when performing their duties.

MPs who started during the Fourth Parliament were never taken through any workshops about the vision. They never even knew that there was something called the vision statement outlining the strategic objectives of the institution. Respondents at this level doubted that MPs of the Fifth Parliament would be taken through workshops regarding the vision. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Graph No 3

3. *Feedback*

| | A – band | B – band | C – band |

a) **Is communication encouraging a two-way feedback?**

Answer: a   0.2   0.5   0.3

b) **Does your supervisor bring feedback regarding employee needs from top management?**

Answer: b   1   1.2   1.2

c) **Does top management take serious consideration of the suggestions that are made by employees?**

Answer: c   0.5   1   0.3

d) **Does top management bring feedback to employee concerns?**

Answer: d   1   1   1.3

e) **Is top management available to answer to employee concerns?**

Answer: e   1   1.5   1.5

f) **How many times does top management convene a meeting with staff in a year?**

Answer: f   1   1   1

g) **Are employees given the opportunity to personally raise their concerns to top management regarding the vision?**

Answer: g   0.2   0.2   0.5

The graph above indicates how each level of employees responded to each of the above questions relating to feedback to employees by management of the institution under examination.

4.3.4 Communication channels

a)   **Are communication channels available to employees?**

Findings from all bands

Respondents at all levels indicated that there were no suggestion boxes, no slots on the intranet for anonymous suggestions, no notice boards and no facilities for the blind. Employees felt that even whistle-blowers were not protected as it became known by everyone who had said what, to whom and when. Employees felt that information was accessed and communicated by certain individuals (gate-keepers), and disseminated to the few who would use it for the benefit of management. The general response from all levels was "strongly disagree".

b) *Are communication channels easily accessible to all employees?*

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level indicated that they did not have individual offices, computers or telephones. They claimed that the nature of their work did not seem to require them to use computers, be computer literate or to communicate outside the institution. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B-band

Respondents at B-band answered "partly", because only certain levels of employees at this level had access to intranet or computers. Television sets, where information was sometimes published were provided to certain offices. Employees at this level were provided with communication tools to a certain extent to avoid the incitement of employees at lower levels. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from C-band

Respondents at this level agreed as they occupied offices with telephones, computers and television in order to follow House proceedings, etc. This gave them the opportunity to view communication on the intranet and in-house television and were able to communicate with stakeholders. The generic response was "agree".

c)   ***Are notice boards available for employee information regarding the vision?***

Findings from all bands

All respondents indicated that no notice boards were available. Some information was not intended for MPs to see as they would question the political status of the information in an environment where things should be done in accordance with the Constitution.

A democratic institution, which should be an example and set a precedent for other institutions including Provincial Legislatures and state-owned enterprises, was lagging behind in this regard. The generic response from all levels was "strongly disagree".

d)   ***Are suggestion boxes available for employees to submit their inputs?***

Findings from all bands

Suggestion boxes were not available for employees to submit suggestions anonymously. It was alleged that suggestion boxes were not made available intentionally because management was interested to know who was saying what. They were not aware that this would have been a good boundary spanning exercise. The generic response from all participants was "strongly disagree".

e)   *Is there a suggestion column available on the website for anonymous suggestions?*

Findings from all bands

All respondents indicated that no suggestion column was available. The website was only used by management to issue information alerts regarding what needed to be done. They did not realise that some staff had no access to computers and the blind could not read such alerts. For employees to post information on Parliament's intranet, it needed to be approved by two managers. The two managers would first scrutinise the information and consult other managers to verify its suitability before allowing it to be posted.

The information would be screened to ensure that it did not dent the image of the institution or management. Even the union struggled, and had to find other means to communicate with the labour force, unless management stood to benefit from the communication that needed to be posted on the intranet. The generic response from all levels was "strongly disagree".

f)   *Do you prefer communication to be available through intranet, notice boards, pamphlets, in-house television or in the form of meetings, etc?*

Findings from all bands

All the respondents indicated that all of the above should be utilised to ensure that information got through to employees. Those without access to computers were no less entitled to receive information.

Special pamphlets should be printed in braille in order to accommodate the blind. The free dissemination of information was something that employees would welcome. But management seemed reluctant to open such channel and preferred to share information verbally, in that way avoiding being held accountable, especially with written communication. The generic response from all levels was "all the above".

g)   *Is communication in the institution transparent?*

Findings from A-band

Respondents from this level indicated that catering and household responsibilities had been outsourced to outside companies, but no-one had informed them about this move. They reported that they had noticed existing staff deployed in other areas, while new people from outside the institution were brought to clean the offices and service in the cafeterias. They felt that their future was in the hands of management, who had let them down by communicating nothing in this regard. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B-band

Respondents at this level indicated that they had witnessed new employees walking in the passages without any introduction by management. They indicated that in most instances, they were asked to support certain projects without being involved from the beginning or when no information had been communicated about them. They claimed that they were informed in a single meeting about their participation, and simply had to take instructions with no opportunity being given for their inputs. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from C-band

Respondents indicated "partly", because it depended on which information needed to be conveyed. Certain information was only intended for certain levels and got changed before it could reach the lower levels. There seemed to be gate-keepers who determined what information was suitable for whom. The generic response was "disagree".

Graph No 4

4.   Communication channels

A – band   B – band   C – band

a) *Are communication channels available to employees?*

Answer: a   0.1   0.1   0.1

b) *Are communication channels easily accessible to all employees?*

Answer: b   0.1   1.5   2.6

c) ***Are notice boards available for employee information regarding the vision?***

Answer: c   0.1   0.1   0.1

d) ***Are suggestion boxes available for employees to submit their inputs?***

Answer: d   0.1   0.1   0.1

e) ***Is the suggestion column available on the website for anonymous suggestions?***

Answer: e   0.1   0.1   0.1

f) ***Do you prefer communication to be available through intranet, notice boards, pamphlets, in-house television or meetings, etc?***

Answer: f   2.9   2.9   2.9

g) ***Is communication in the institution transparent?***

Answer: g   0.2   1   1.5

The graph above indicates how each level of employees responded to each of the above questions relating to access to and availability of communication channels in the institution under examination.

4.3.5 General enquiry

a)   ***Does your union representative explain what is expected of you from the vision of the institution?***

Findings from all bands

All the respondents disagreed that union representatives explained what expectations were consequent on the vision. Union representatives were themselves not familiar with the issues comprehended in the vision.

It was difficult for them to explain anything as no workshops were conducted regarding this matter. It was possible that those representatives who were in the employ of the institution when the vision was formulated may have been involved, but no one has made any mention of the vision to new employees. The generic response from all levels was "strongly disagree".

b)   ***Have you been taken to any communication skills training?***

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level disagreed, saying that this was not relevant as nothing they were involved in required good communication skills. Employees at this level did not even have access to computers and telephones as they were in the household and catering services sections. Employees at this level had to ask employees from other levels with access to communication tools to type letters, send e-mails or make telephone calls, irrespective of the confidentiality of the matter. This is unsatisfactory because, firstly, the persons asked were inconvenienced and secondly, the person asking had to sometimes beg and expose confidential information to other employees in order to be assisted. The generic response was "strongly disagree".

Findings from B-band

Respondents at this level answered "to a certain extent", as some of them were Administrative Assistants and some were supporting MPs. Training was provided to a certain extent in order to enable them to fulfil certain functions. MPs would be irate if the services provided were not adequate as a result of lack of skills.

Should services not be rendered adequately, it would reflect badly on management as funds were always available for training, though seldom utilised for the purpose. Management knew that if a manager lost favour among MPs, he or she could easily be transferred to another section or even dismissed, as what MPs said was prioritised and valued. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from C-band

Respondents at this level agreed and indicated that training was encouraged. When employees requested training, an effort was made to accommodate them. Skills investment was necessary in order to avoid embarrassment, as employees at this level sometimes represented managers and interacted directly with internal and external stakeholders. The generic response was "agree".

c)   *Would you like to see any changes happening regarding the vision?*

Findings from all bands

All the respondents agreed, indicating that employees needed to be made a priority. There was a need for the sharing of information in order to get everyone on board. Workshops regarding policies and the vision should be conducted for all employees, including supervisors and management, rather than separate workshops for managers and supervisors only. All the respondents wanted the vision to be communicated, especially to new employees via workshops. All felt that employee needs were not adequately taken care of by the institution.

The respondents felt that the vision should be made a living legacy of the institution. It should not only be invoked in certain instances where a certain group needed to benefit from it, or used it as a tool to threaten employees to gain their compliance. The generic response from all levels was "strongly agree".

d)   Are you proud to be part of the parliamentary workforce?

Findings from A-band

Respondents at this level felt that there was no openness and transparency regarding information. Certain information was communicated but some was reserved for certain levels in order for them to impose management decisions. It felt as if employees were not entitled to information, but were being done a favour by being communicated with.

Respondents at this level sometimes felt proud to be part of the institution, especially when they were promised future benefits. They became negative towards the institution when such promises were not fulfilled and implemented. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from B-band

Respondents indicated that employees were not involved in the decision-making of the institution. Management decisions affected these employees directly as they were the ones expected to perform their duties in line with the decisions. Respondents felt that they were very important stakeholders of the institution.

They also believed that stakeholders could affect the institution in the same measure that they were affected by the decisions of the institution. Respondents at this level also had mixed feelings as they were sometimes involved in the dynamics and politics of the institution.

They alleged that there were huge salary gaps between the different levels. They felt that if such gaps could be closed and other basic conditions of employment resolved, then they could indeed say that they were proud to be part of the institution. The generic response was "disagree".

Findings from C-band

Respondents at this level felt some pride in being part of the institution as they earned average salaries and sometimes acted on behalf of their managers, which came with certain benefits. They were mostly prioritised for training and involved in many projects within the institution. They were valued by management as they constituted a critical level from whom management had to get buy-in first in order to implement its policies successfully.

Respondents at this level sometimes participated in interview panels and had an opportunity to interact closely with management. This level of employees also had some influence in management decisions and were sometimes referred to as 'extended management'. They conducted presentations during the induction of MPs and to visitors from other parliaments.

They were also privy to information compared to employees at lower levels. They were provided with communication tools, including cellular telephones and laptops. Management sometimes first discussed issues with them to ascertain the prevailing mood as most of the executive members of organised labour came from this level. The generic response was "agree".

Graph No 5

5. General enquiry
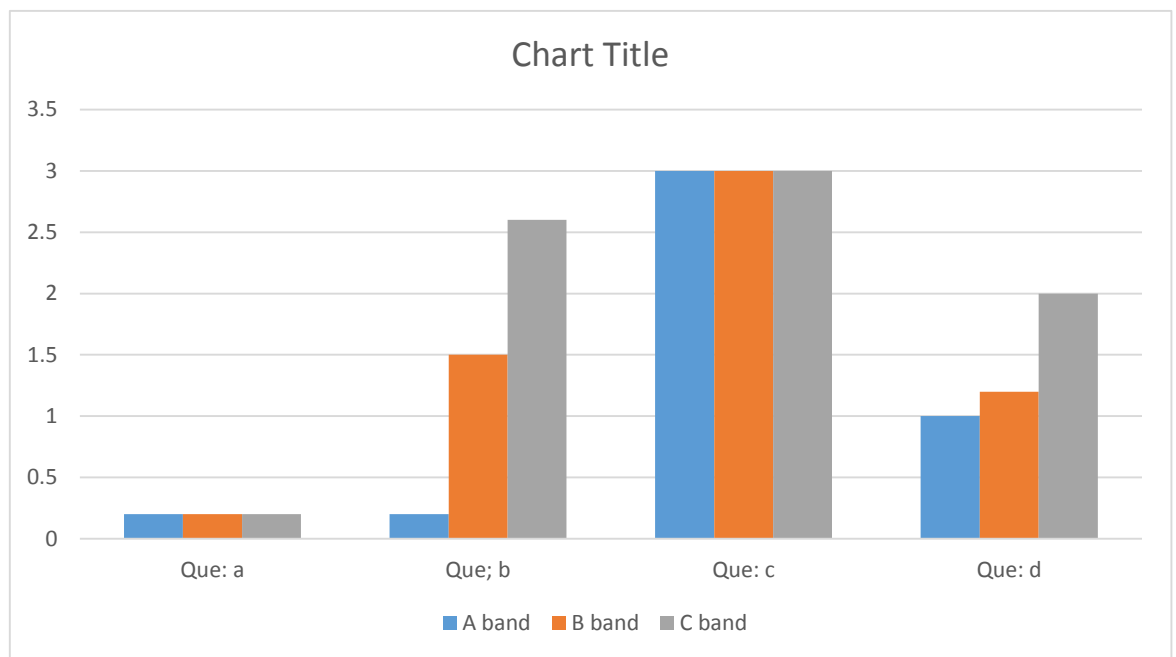
A – band   B – band   C – band

a) Does your union representative explain what is expected of you from the vision of the institution?

Answer: a   0.2   0.2   0.2

b) Have you been taken to any communication skills training?

Answer: b   0.2   1.5   2.6

c) Would you like to see any changes happening regarding the vision?

Answer: c   3   3   3

d) Are you proud to be part of the parliamentary workforce?

Answer: d   1   1.2   2

The graph above indicates how each level of employees responded to each of the above questions relating to the general views and feelings of employees regarding the institution in which they spent their working lives.

4.4   Chapter summary

It is evident that communication at Parliament needed to be aligned in order to reach all employees. Employees were not satisfied with the way in which information was communicated. They argued that it did not reach them on time, which resulted in their missing out on crucial issues. Certain levels of employees did not even receive information as they had no access to communication tools. This sometimes compromised their privacy as they had to ask other employees for assistance. Supervisors and union representatives were not familiar with the vision as no workshops had taken place after the initial implementation. The blind were not catered for.

Employees felt that management was insecure and did not have the interests of employee at heart. As a result, information was communicated generally while other information reached certain levels. Promises made were not fulfilled, which created a lack of trust between management and employees. There seemed to be selective feedback from management regarding the issues raised by employees.

Supervisors were unable to communicate the change introduced by the vision as they were not clear about the matter. Information was not transparent and two-way communication that required constant feedback was non-existent. Management only attended to staff issues and held meetings when it suited them.

CHAPTER 5:   **Conclusion**

5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the study, findings and makes recommendations on the basis of these. The overall extent of communication satisfaction amongst employees of the institution under investigation was determined. The manner in which supervisory communication took place was investigated, together with its effects and impact on the institution, especially during the period of transition. Feedback regarding employee concerns was examined.

The availability of communication channels for employees to utilise when conducting their daily business was investigated. Access to information about or by the institution, and communication with other stakeholders was also examined.

As mentioned earlier, some employees were initially reluctant to participate in this research. The use of personal interviews was not ideal as participants did not feel they could answer freely and honestly. Instead, they preferred to answer questions anonymously by placing completed questionnaires in, at the box that was provided.

5.2   Findings

Chapter Four focused on the results obtained from the questionnaire distributed to participants, offering an overall diagnosis of the state of communication at Parliament.

5.2.1 Communication satisfaction

Findings from the respondents at A-band regarding communication were that they were not satisfied with the way information was communicated. Findings from the respondents at B-band indicated that there were inconsistencies within the institution in terms of information dissemination. Respondents at C-band shared the same sentiments as B-band, claiming that information was not sent immediately. The overall impression regarding the level of satisfaction with communication was that respondents were not altogether satisfied.

Communication is the process of sharing information with others. This process involves the gathering, processing, disseminating and storing of information (Conrad & Poole, 2002:4). It is recommended that Parliament should immediately implement a strategy that would work across all levels of employees in order to ensure that this happens. Parliament should make sure that communication reaches employees on time.

Vertical communication includes downward communication in the form of instructions given to employees by management and a flow upwards from the shop floor to higher levels of management in the form of suggestions, queries or feedback reports (Erasmus *et al*, 1996:244). It became evident that there was a lack of strategic communication as the section responsible for communication was incapacitated and incompetent. Maintaining a smooth communication flow can ensure a healthy work environment, free of conflict and frustration.

5.2.2 Supervisory communication

Approximately 80% of the respondents indicated that not much has been communicated by supervisors regarding the vision. When certain tasks were to be undertaken, employees were reminded by management that such tasks were aligned with certain strategic objectives. New managers never related any matters or tasks to strategic objectives.

Strategic employee communication and change communication approaches need to be implemented from inside the organisation. This would enable the organisation to determine what was needed and to design an appropriate change communication programme to meet that need. In order for the vision to be realised, communication strategies need to be in place to convey clear messages. Supervisory communication plays a critical role in organisational success. Line managers' and supervisors' communication skills have an impact on the effectiveness of internal communication from the top to the bottom of the organisation (Pinscus, 1986:399).

Supervisors were incompetent and had no direction on what to clearly communicate to subordinates. Supervisors assumed that their role was only to give instructions concerning tasks that needed to be performed. They were not familiar with communication needs pertaining to the vision of the institution, especially during the transition period. It is advisable that supervisors possess: skills to motivate, leadership skills, the ability to communicate change, interpersonal communication skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills, planning and organisational skills as well as negotiation skills (Puth, 2002:108).

5.2.3 Feedback

Approximately 92% of the respondents indicated that when a matter works in favour of management, positive feedback was received; if not, there was no feedback. All the participants responded negatively in this regard because communication came down from the top in the form of orders that could not be questioned. They also indicated that there was no regular feedback between management and employees in order to encourage and improve the flow of information.

Communication should follow the route of two-way symmetrical communication that stresses the importance of feedback and constant interaction during communication. Good communication departments are said to be managed strategically in order to increase the contribution of communication programmes to the organisation's effectiveness. Managing communication strategically implies two-way symmetrical communication as it requires the identification, segmentation and the management of stakeholders (Jensen, 2004:245).

5.2.4 Communication channels

Respondents at all levels indicated that there were no suggestion boxes or slots for anonymous suggestions, no notice boards and no facilities for the blind. Employees felt that information was kept by certain individuals and disseminated to a selected few who could use it for the benefit of management. A gate-keeper selects and rejects certain stories based on the criteria of fit and appropriateness (Schoeman & Vos, 2009:15).

The website was only used by management to alert staff to what needed to be done, ignoring the fact that some staff had no access to computers and the blind could not read such alerts. Employees preferred communication channels to include the intranet, notice boards, pamphlets, in-house television and meetings.

All of the above should be utilised in order to ensure that information reaches all employees. Those without access to computers would nevertheless be able to get information. Special pamphlets should be printed in braille in order to accommodate the blind.

5.2.5 General enquiry

Respondents indicated that union representatives were not familiar with the vision of the institution as no workshops were held. Only employees at the C-band were prioritised for communication training as they were involved in stakeholder management and sometimes represented their managers in meetings.

All the respondents wished to be valued by the institution. They all felt that the vision of the institution should be made a living legacy. They sometimes felt proud to be part of the institutional workforce, but only when promises made by management were kept. They indicated that they would be more proud to be part of the institution's workforce if they could be involved in the decision-making of the institution, when such decisions affected them. People have to work together to create meaning (Fielding, 1993:22). Respondents felt that they should be recognised and valued as important stakeholders by management of the institution.

5.3   Recommendations

Parliament needed to conduct SWOT analysis before embarking on the process of organisational change in order to ascertain its opportunities, strengths, weaknesses and threats. Jensen (2004:243) emphasises that the organisation first needs to understand the attitudes, expectations and opinions of their employees before they can even attempt to make the employees understand or accept the organisation.

The success of any change communication programme will depend on an organisation having a clearly stated, believed in, understood and meaningful vision statement, which management should be involved in developing and communicating. A meeting procedure should be developed and implemented to encourage two-way communication. This requires a change in management's attitude in order to give employees the opportunity to contribute input to help move the institution forward.

Management should prioritise employee interests in order to restore trust. In order to avoid closed, suspicious relations between management and employees, a two-way symmetrical communication system needs to be implemented throughout the institution (Grunig, 1992:559).

Employees should have access to a computer and a telephone, even if this is a pay phone. Employees should be prioritised of old computers when the institution procures new ones, instead of being promised to schools and charities that never get them.

Auctions for equipment should start internally, as external companies which sell such equipment are expensive to deal with. Employees should be prioritised and a debit facility be arranged so that they can purchase such equipment for their families. Management should take employees seriously and have their interests at heart.

Employees should be provided with communication skills training. Appropriate communication training was required for the middle and lower management. According to Jensen (2004:244), a training needs analysis would assist the organisation and its employees to become more participative regarding their job performance. Information should be shared in order to get everyone on board. A programme of communication training that is aimed at empowering managers and supervisors with appropriate communication skills needs to be developed and implemented.

Notice boards should be installed and utilised as they are the cheapest medium of communication and can be accessed by many employees. Such notice boards should be constantly updated by dedicated employees so that they can keep employees abreast of new developments in the institution. Information should also not be excessive, and take too long for employees to read.

Funds should be made available for communication skills training for supervisors, managers and communication practitioners. Parliament needs to determine which communication channels should be utilised to best serve employees. The credibility of the information received would be enhanced if it came from good and experienced communicators.

The principles of Batho Pele should be implemented, especially: Consultation, 'employees should be consulted about the level and quality of service received'; Access, 'employees should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled'; Courtesy, 'employees should be treated with courtesy and consideration'; Information, 'employees should be given full and accurate information about the services they are entitled to receive'; Openness and Transparency, 'employees should be told how the institution is run'; Redress, 'if promises are not fulfilled, an apology, a full explanation, or a speedy and effective remedy should be delivered'. When complaints are made, they should be accorded a sympathetic and positive response (Ministry for the Public Service and Administration Handbook, 2000). There was currently no openness and transparency regarding information transmission in Parliament.

The vision of the institution should not only be invoked in certain instances to benefit certain groups, or used as a tool to threaten employees to obtain compliance, but should be a living presence in the institution. Workshops should be conducted for all employees, including supervisors and management, rather than separate workshops for managers and supervisors only.

New employees should be inducted through workshops on the vision, in order for them to find out about issues from official sources and avoid confusion. The vision and its strategic objectives should be displayed on the notice boards in order for all to read and understand. The policies should apply to management as they are also employees. Workshops should be attended by all at the same time in order for employees and management to arrive at consensus.

Barrett (2006:267) maintains that managers should pay serious attention to the internal communication climate by providing each employee with adequate information and the opportunity to speak out, get involved, be listened to and participate actively. The effectiveness of the company's communication should be measured company-wide, formally and frequently against clearly defined goals on an ongoing basis and throughout the key stages of any major change. Effective internal communication provides organisational direction and employee motivation.

Change is the label under which we file all the things that we have to do differently in the future (Manning & Curtis, 2009:329). Communication is the way of ensuring that successful change can take place. It helps to overcome ambiguity and uncertainty and provides information and power to employees who are the subject of change.

Barrett (2002:2) maintains that strategic employee communication can serve as an analytical tool to assess and improve employee communication, thus establishing a foundation for using strategic employee communication to facilitate change. This includes diagnosing a company's communication strengths and weaknesses, and framing the change programme so that communication can be positioned to help drive the change.

As the process of change is going forward, employees should be taken on board so that uncertainties that might hinder or delay the process can be clarified. Managers should play open cards about their vision regarding change and inform employees accordingly.

Employees need to participate every step of the way in order to help those who are resistant to change to adapt to the situation. Change should be introduced gradually so that employees get used to it. Hasty change can result in employees who have done things in a certain way for many years being left behind. Involve people who are affected by the change, go slowly and keep people informed through constant personal communication (Manning & Curtis, 2009:331). A change in tasks assigned or the way employees have been doing things needs to be outlined and discussed with the employees involved. Management should make sure that everyone is clear about what is expected of them.

Along the way, recognition should be accorded to those committed to change, in order to encourage others. Praise is like sunlight to the warm human spirit; we cannot grow and flower without it. Praise the slightest improvement and praise every improvement (Carnegie, 1981:219 & 223). Employees should be complemented for taking part and supporting the change as they are the ones who could sabotage the whole plan. Manning & Curtis (2009:332) recommend that, as change is accomplished, supervisors and managers should take time to recognise people and show their appreciation. Acknowledge the struggles, sacrifices and contributions people have made. A word of thanks goes a long way.

A leader must be able to communicate effectively. If leaders can communicate effectively, it is possible to correct the current negative perception that employees have of internal communication as well as the perception that supervisors are barriers to effective communication. Great leaders achieve success in managing people by coaching, motivating and supporting them, and not by commanding and controlling them.

The researcher is of the opinion that there should be constant feedback regarding progress once the organisation has embarked on the process of transition. Meetings and workshops need to be conducted in order to clarify uncertainties, to answer questions and to ensure that everyone is on board. Miller (2006:225) observes that management should focus on fundamental issues relating to successful change and allow employees the creative freedom to explore various possibilities.

Management needs to be present to assure employees that they are in this together. There should be no hidden agendas. Puth (2002:111) points out that change also threatens top leadership. Executives should never forget that the transition will be much easier if they can persuade all their followers that the eventual benefits stemming from the changes, with job security being a major factor, make them worth the risk and pain involved.

Considering the negative picture painted by this study, it was recommended that all the above should be prioritised for the institution to succeed. Management and supervisory communication skills needed urgent attention.

5.4.   Recommendations for further research

As this research investigated communication satisfaction, supervisory communication, feedback, communication channels and effective communication during the period of transition, it was recommended that another study be conducted two years from now.

This would be to ascertain whether there have been improvements, as this study was shared with management of the institution in question. The study also serves as a guide in this process of improving communication, especially during the period of transition.

The objectives of this research have been met as it has been established that the institution under investigation has been deficient in most of the areas investigated, and that urgent action needs to be taken.

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ADDENDUM

Questionnaire

Please answer all questions as honest as possible. All responses are strictly confidential. You need not include your name. Please submit fully completed questionnaires in the box provided.

Personal information

Please tick an appropriate box.

Division:

☐　　Office of the Speaker

☐　　Office of the Chairperson

☐　　Office of the Secretary

☐　　National Assembly Division

☐　　National Council of Provinces Division

☐　　Legislation and Oversight Division

☐　　Corporate Services Division

☐　　Institutional Support Division

Job level:

☐　　A1 – A3

☐　　B1 – B3

☐　　C1 – C2

Qualifications:

☐　　Standard 8 and less

☐　　Matric

☐　　Post-matric

Years of service:

☐   Less than a year

☐   1 to 5 years

☐   5 to 10 years

☐   10 years and above

1.   **Communication satisfaction**

a) *To what extent are you satisfied with the way information is communicated?*

     ☐   Large extent

     ☐   Fair extent

     ☐   Small extent

     ☐   No extent

Comments:

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b) *Do you feel that communication reach employees on time?*

     ☐   Strongly agree

     ☐   Agree

     ☐   Disagree

     ☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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c) *Does communication reach management without being distorted?*

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Agree

☐   Disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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d) *Do you often receive communication regarding the institution's vision?*

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Agree

☐   Disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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2.   **Supervisory communication**

a) *Does your supervisor talk about the vision in line with your job?*

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Agree

☐   Disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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b) *Do you have a clear understanding of where your section fits within the vision?*

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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c) *Can you openly discuss issues related to the vision with your supervisor?*

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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d) *Does your supervisor understand what is required of him or her regarding the vision?*

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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e) Does your supervisor communicate well upwards representing employee needs which are raised at staff meetings?

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Agree

☐   Disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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f) Does your supervisor clarify issues you do not understand regarding the vision?

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Agree

☐   Disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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g) Do you see yourself contributing to the vision of the institution?

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Agree

☐   Disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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h) Has your way of thinking changed as the result of the vision of the institution?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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3. Feedback

a) Is communication encouraging a two-way feedback?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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b) Does your supervisor bring feedback regarding employee needs from top management?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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c) Does top management take serious consideration of the suggestions that are made by employees?

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Agree

☐   Disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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d) Does top management bring feedback to employee concerns?

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Agree

☐   Disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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e) Is top management available to answer to employee concerns?

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Agree

☐   Disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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f) *How many times does top management convene a meeting with employees in a year?*

☐ Quarterly

☐ Twice

☐ Monthly

☐ Once

Comments

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g) *Are employees given an opportunity to personally raise their concerns to top management regarding the vision?*

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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4. **Communication channels**

a) *Are communication channels available to employees?*

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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……………………………………………………………………………

b) Are communication channels easily accessible to all employees?

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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c) Are notice boards available for employee information regarding the vision?

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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d) Are suggestion boxes available for employees to submit their inputs?

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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e) Is a suggestion column available on the website for anonymous suggestions?

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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f) Do you prefer communication to be available through intranet, notice boards, pamphlets, in-house television or in the form of meetings, etc?

☐ All of the above

☐ Some of the above

☐ One of the above

☐ Neither of the above

☐ Other

Comments:

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g) Is communication in the institution transparent?

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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5. **General enquiry**

a) *Does your union representative explain what is expected of you from the vision of the institution?*

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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b) *Have you been taken to any communication skills training?*

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments:

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c) *Would you like to see any changes happening regarding the vision?*

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

Comments

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d) Are you proud to be part of the parliamentary workforce?

☐   Strongly agree

☐   Agree

☐   Disagree

☐   Strongly disagree

Comments:

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Total number of questions: = 30