

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION IN BOJANALA  
EDUCATION DISTRICT OFFICE

BY

I.M.S Dandashe

16112563

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SUPERVISOR: Prof C. Van Wyk

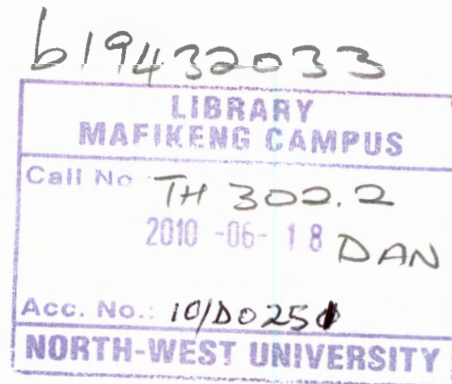
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## DECLARATION

I, Dandashe Ida Masodi Sebediko, hereby declare that the mini-dissertation for the Degree of Masters in Education at the North West University is my own work and has never been submitted before. All the material used has been acknowledged.

Dandashe

Dandashe I.M.S



## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the people who encouraged me to study.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the help of several individuals and groups of people.

- My supervisor, Prof C. Van Wyk for his efforts in encouraging me to complete my study.
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- My colleagues who supported me with sources relevant to the theme of the research.
- Above all, I would like to thank God, who gave me strength and courage to be strong in all the difficult situations that I came across.



## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine empirically the perception of managers and staff members about ways to ensure effective communication strategies in Bojanala Education District Office. The nature and functioning of communication as well as barriers to communication is determined.

Many researchers agree that communication is a central feature of organisations. Thus, understanding the importance of communication in educational organisations is an essential tool for managers who wish to build and develop their organisations and staff within these organisations.

Qualitative research methods and interpretation of data have been used to discover important aspects pertaining to the effective flow of communication in Bojanala Education District Office. These include: motivation and praise, the role of listening, building relationships and teams, communicating using e-mails and technology, as well as keeping notes of meetings.

The findings of the study reveal that communication is a primary method that managers can use to influence and persuade staff members to give their best to the organisation. However, barriers to effective communication include not having enough time, stress and the challenges of physical space.

It is recommended that managers and staff members should make communication process in the office work positively.

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## **Chapter 1: Orientation**

### **1.1 Background and context of study.**

Communication is a word with a rich history. It comes from the Latin word *Communicare*, meaning to impart, share, or make common (Peters, 1999: 7). We understand our world, make sense of it, analyse it and grapple with it by using words. The need for effective internal communication systems is crucial when organisations or governmental departments are operating in a turbulent environment of rapid and sustained change. Organisations must be innovative to be able to respond and adapt to the challenges. It is now increasingly evident that organisations which promote good internal communication reap positive dividends in meeting these challenges. However, there is a need for hard data on the nature, structure, flow and practice of communication to ensure that the most effective systems are put in place and working to the optimal level (Tourish and Hargie, 1998: 178).

The researcher is a manager of thirty clustered schools in Bojanala District of Education and is employed as a Circuit Manager. A circuit manager has to ensure that principals of schools manage their schools effectively by implementing regular and proper communication. Communication strategies and skills are major points that are emphasised to the managers and school principals in order to cope with their work. Although working with schools, in this study, the researcher is not going to look at communication in schools but communication as it happens in Bojanala Education District office.

In the Province of North West, the enlarged educational areas are called districts and there are four educational districts. These are Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati, Ngaka Modiri Molema, Dr Kenneth Kaunda and Bojanala. Each district is led by District Executive Managers. The Districts are further sub divided into Area Project Offices which are led by Area Project Managers. The Area Project Offices are further subdivided into clusters or circuits. The cluster is made up of an average of twenty seven schools and led by a circuit manager.

Bojanala District office is located in the most dynamic and fastest growing zone of the North West Province, Rustenburg. The office offers professional support and institutional curriculum services, auxiliary services in terms of infrastructure and resources, corporate services such as human resource administration and management services, employee and labour services.

In terms of the organisational establishment of Bojanala District Office, there is an Executive District Manager at the top of the organisation. Then there are also senior level managers such as the District Director who is responsible for Professional Support and the Deputy Corporate Service Manager who is responsible for Corporate Services. Middle management consists of Chief Education Specialists, Area Managers, Deputy Chief Education Specialists and Assistant Managers to ensure delivery of the district services.

All the employees of the District office are supposed to work together harmoniously in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the Department of Education in the North West Province. The Department of Education expects complete service delivery from all employees, therefore it is up to the managers to create good relations amongst the staff and communicate effectively.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

As stated by Lunenberg and Ornstein (1991:185) “communication is the lifeblood of every school or organization”. If this statement is true, the following questions can be asked in this study. How is communication done in the Bojanala District office? Are there offices and units in the district which experience ineffective communication? What role do managers and staff have to play and what tools do they need to act effectively?

The services that the District officials have to perform are many and have become so complex and demanding that for the district to be successful, employees need to have and know the right channels of good communication. According to Van der Westhuizen (2005: 430) the communication methods and channels determine the effectiveness of communication between the various groups working together in an organisation.

As already mentioned, the services offered by the Bojanala District office include professional support, auxiliary services, human resource administration and management, employee and labour services led by different senior managers and middle managers. It is also important to mention that there are also junior or lower level staff members who are attached to these various service divisions or sections.

Communication in the District is expected to flow smoothly from one section to another in order to secure correct information that will allow the North West Provincial and the National Department of Education to make correct decisions. The role of every manager and staff member is therefore important to ensure effective implementation of communication in their workplace.

Therefore, the main problem posed by this study is to determine how effective communication is in the Bojanala Education District office and the following areas are the more specific concerns of the study with regard to the main problem.

- The nature and functioning of communication;
- The importance of communication in organisations;
- Communication channels;
- Communication strategies and
- Communication Barriers.

### **1.3 Aims of the study**

**Aim: 1** To determine from the literature the nature and functioning of communication, the importance of communication in educational organisations, channels and strategies, as well as the barriers to communication.

**Aim: 2** To determine empirically the perception of managers and staff about ways to ensure effective communication strategies in the Bojanala Education District Office.

**Aim : 3** To make recommendations regarding communication in the Bojanala Education District Office.

### **1.4 Methods of Research**

#### **1.4.1 Literature Review**

A thorough study of primary and secondary sources has been done with the purpose of gathering more information on the nature, functioning and the importance of communication in educational organisations as well as barriers to communication.

## **1.4.2 Research design**

The research design of the study is interpretive and qualitative methods, namely participant observation, interviewing and analysis of written documents were used to collect data.

### **1.4.2.1 Instrumentation**

For the purpose of this study, a semi structured interview was used to collect data. Observation of participants as well as examination of documents was done to collect data.

### **1.4.2.2 Population and Sampling**

For the purpose of this study stratified purposeful sampling was used where the population at the Bojanala District Office was divided into strata (senior managers, middle and low level staff members) and participants were selectively chosen in order to obtain candidates who would be able to provide a rich source of information in relation to the objectives of the study.

### **1.4.2.3 Data analysis**

The following procedures were used: developing units, developing categories, developing patterns, as well as theorising. Units were developed by placing particular concepts or happenings and identifying them as they are without adding any information. Categories were developed by grouping similar concepts as well as separating unlike concepts. Then, repeated relationships between dimensions of categories were identified in order to give theory specifications.

## **1.5 Format of study**

### **Chapter 1 – Orientation**

This chapter outlined the background and the context of the study, the statement of the problem, the aims as well as research methods.

### **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

The chapter deals with literature review. The reviewed literature covers the following areas: the nature and functioning of communication, the importance of communication in educational organisations, channels and strategies of communication, as well as communication barriers.

### **Chapter 3 - Research Methodology**

The chapter deals with methodology of the empirical component of the study. Observation, examination of documents and interviews are the main activities used to gather empirical data.

### **Chapter 4 – Data analysis and interpretation**

In this chapter the data collected from empirical study is analysed and interpreted to determine the perception of managers and staff members on ways to ensure effective communication as applied in Bojanala Education District Office.

### **Chapter 5 – Summary, findings, recommendations and conclusions**

This chapter gives the summary of the study, the findings on the aims of the study, recommendations and conclusions.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

In this introductory chapter, a brief orientation to the study is provided, outlining the problem to be investigated, and formulating the aims of the study. The format of the study is also provided. The major focus of the study is to determine the effectiveness of communication in Bojanala Education District office in the North West province.

The following chapter deals with the literature reviewed to highlight more understanding on the nature and functioning of communication, the importance of communication in educational organisations, channels and strategies of communication, as well as communication barriers.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

A literature review refers to a scrutiny of all relevant sources of information (De Vos, Strydom, Delpont and Fouche, 2005:127). An extensive study of various books, journals, magazines and internet materials were used for data. Primary and secondary sources were used for collecting information. Sources were scrutinised with the aim of drawing out only relevant information to determine the nature and functioning of communication in an educational organisation.

This chapter gives an overview of communication and its importance in Educational Management as provided and revealed by related literature. The chapter deals with:

- The nature and functioning of communication.
- The importance of communication in an educational organisation.
- Communication channels.
- Communication strategies.
- Communication barriers.

### **2.2 The nature and functioning of communication**

The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) defines communication as “the imparting, conveying, or exchange of ideas, knowledge, information (whether by speech, writing or signs)” In other words communication can be imparting knowledge, receiving it or undertaking communion.

Communication is about the sharing of information, attitudes and beliefs. Within organisations and government offices this can cover both internal and external events involving speaking, listening, meeting, writing, discussing and reading.

The first aim of this study is to determine the nature and functioning of communication in an educational organisation. In an attempt to understand the nature and functioning of communication, the literature review will cover information relating to the definition of communication and the purposes of communication in an educational organisation.

The term communication is used to describe the process of the sending and receiving of messages between managers and those who are being managed (staff members). Communication here includes a one-on-one process, messages sent from one-to-many and any kind of communication in an organisation. In addition the focus of communication in this study is on what the managers and staff perceive to be the importance of communication and how to ensure effectiveness of communication.

Coming to terms with what communication really is, is not an easy task since communication is often defined not so much as a single entity but as an idea, a process and a product of processes. It is usually defined as imparting information with a specific plan or result in mind, as in Barrett (2002: 220) where communication is defined as “the process by which an idea is transferred from one source to a receiver with the intention of changing his or her behaviour”.

Palmer (1992:354) also states that communication is the process involving the acquisition and use of information for planning, organising, leading and controlling. Communication objectives relate directly to intention. The ultimate goal of all communication is to obtain a response from the recipient of the message or evoke a certain behavioural reaction.

The term communication is also used to describe the process of sending and receiving of messages as a tool of management in an organisation or school. It is the transfer of information and understanding among the stakeholders. (Van der Westhuizen, 2005: 423). It is a way of reaching others by transmitting ideas, facts, thoughts, feeling and values. Its goal is to have the receiver understand the message as it was intended. When communication is effective, it provides a bridge of meaning between people, so that they can each share what they feel and know.

Palmer (1992:354) further stresses communication as an important method that managers use to influence groups or individuals and persuade them to give their best to the enterprise. Managers communicate tasks while employees feed back information on which management decisions are based. This implies that involvement of other employees in the sharing of information is important and it can make the organisation to live long.

According to Rensburg (1996:101), communication is defined as the process by which the organisation is brought into existence and given personal, social and professional meanings. It creates the nature of the organisation and influences the way the organisation is perceived by its members and society. The focus is on how the messages are sent and received and what other factors play a role in the effective sending and receipt of those messages.

It is vitally important to acknowledge that individuals or groups bring many factors to a communicative exchange. According to Quinn and Hargie (2004: 150) there are several factors affecting how people exchange messages. They indicate that people's motives, thoughts, decisions, skills, knowledge, attitudes and socio-culture all have the potential to affect the way a message is encoded or decoded. Peters (1999:267) supports this by indicating that these intangible variables can differ greatly between individuals who draw on their unique background knowledge to interpret messages, making communication "a risky adventure without guarantees".

More specifically, communication is the " sorting, selecting, forming and transmitting of symbols to create meaning in another person's mind" (Quinn and Hargie, 2004: 153). Symbols are used to explain the bigger "concepts" that are formed when people hear and try to understand words or groups of words.

Communication involves the accurate sending and receiving of information, full comprehension of the message by both parties and appropriate action taken upon completion of the information exchange. At all levels in an organisation, effective communication is essential to reduce conflict to a minimum and to increase the effectiveness of employees in carrying out their daily tasks. Further, effective communication can be used to control behaviour, explain duties, or to establish or

reinforce authority relations. It also provides information used for decision making, motivates workers and reflects emotions and feelings about actions and decisions within an outside and organisation (Van der Westhuizen,2005: 433).

Bojanala Education District office is located in the most dynamic zone of the North West Province. In Rustenburg, the fastest growing city is the heart of the Region as there are a number of socio-economic challenges. Therefore, the educational district office is run like a business. The service delivery in schools and offices is expected to be fast and correct in order to address the fast growing needs.

In this section definitions of communication and its purpose have been noted.

Communication is regarded as a process of acquiring knowledge in order to carry out duties correctly. However, it is also important to acknowledge that there are factors to consider in order to have an effective communication exchange.

### **2.3 The importance of communication in educational organisations.**

Organisational communication is described by Fielding (2003:21) as the level of communication which involves communication within an organisation such as a school, a university, a business or a government department. It would be particularly concerned with the flow of information – upward, downward and sideways. It would also be concerned with the effects of managerial styles, leadership and motivation on communication.

Numerous management texts demonstrate the importance of communication as part of daily human life and its role in managing both people and tasks. Tasks such as delegation, planning, organising, leading and evaluation need to be carried out through effective communication.

This section serves to demonstrate that the role that communication plays in organisations has often been ignored in the past. Since communication is often dismissed as being as natural a human function as breathing, it is easy to understand how this perception has been perpetuated. But communication is a very important part of managing people and organisations while enhancing productivity and keeping workers happy.

Nkonyane (2007:83) also indicates that communication is one of the challenging activities in the life of a manager or a school principal. It is about how information is transmitted to the staff and the other stakeholders. It not only involves what a manager says to the intended audience, but also how the information is received.

Semler (2003: 113) says that in an organisation, profit, growth and quality will happen only once employees feel it is worthwhile to get up for work. Communication is an important part of developing the relationships that make staff members want to get up and come to work day after day. This implies that it is important for the employees to enjoy work since they spend a lot of hours at work. Therefore, communication should involve everyone in the organisation.

Hoogervorst(2004:299) asserts that communication within organisations is particularly difficult and explains this assertion as follows:

An organization may be considered as a system of overlapping and inter-dependent groups... Each one of the subgroups within an organisation demands allegiance from its members. The groups in an organization often represent different subcultures, each of which develops along with its peculiar value system a somewhat specialized system of meanings. What is required to communicate effectively to members of different groups is a system of simultaneous translation like that employed by the United Nations.

Communication within an organisation is complex, of that there is no doubt. Apart from the difficulties individuals may have in understanding one another, yet another possible reason may be the numerous directions in which communication must travel. Van der Westhuizen (2005:422) distinguishes between three types of organisational communication: downward, upward and horizontal communication.

In organisational settings communication occurs not just between individuals (upwards, downwards and horizontally) but also between different groups and between the explicit goals and implicit communication of the 'real' goals within an organization. In this case the concept of "noise" takes on a more complex meaning since it refers to the potential for miscommunication between individual members, different groups, and between the organisational goals and perceived goals.

Hoogervorst (2004:288) stresses the need for consistency between what an organisation claims to want from its employees and what impressions executives give of what they want from employees. If organisations can minimise the possibilities of internal miscommunication then more effective staff relations and more productive work environments are likely to result.

Nevertheless, recognising that many factors such as inconsistency, power differences, and individual affective features can inhibit free conversation is not enough to prevent organisational misunderstandings. A permissive communication culture is necessary to help promote upward communication (van Staden, Marx, Erasmus – Kritzinger, 2002: 20). Van Staden *et al.*(2002:23) suggest several hints for more effective communication across levels in organisations. Among them are: constantly keeping communication routes open; encouraging and enabling lower-level staff to gain access to their superiors; and a shorter communication chain that avoids the broken-telephone effect and flattens the communication hierarchy pyramid.

Whatever the ultimate cause for the communicative misunderstandings there is a need to understand more about how communication happens in order to prevent misunderstandings in future. Quinn and Hargie (2004:151) point out the importance of overcoming misunderstandings and learning from them:

‘Well it was just a breakdown in communication. Over and over again we hear this comment as an explanation for things that go wrong both at home and at work – rows, bad feelings, inefficiency, poor service to customers, labour disputes, mistakes which take their toll in extra work, frustration, lost tempers and strained relationships. Communication is always blamed – perhaps because it is the easy way out. But are we justified in leaving it there? Simply blaming the process of communication as if there was nothing further we could do? Could we learn from the mistakes of the past and used that knowledge to avoid committing the same mistakes again?’

It would appear that organisations are intent on learning more about communication.

While this is still a new field it is growing steadily and constantly. One type of popular communication research at the moment is the communication audit, “a complete analysis of an organization’s internal and external communications systems” (Quinn and Hargie, 2004: 156). This is a popular tool currently being used to help managers gain an accurate picture of the communicative situation within their organisation. It can tell organisations with whom, how, and what they should be communicating versus with whom, how and what they actually do communicate (Quinn and Hargie, 2004: 148). Tourish and Hargie use the communication audit in schools to highlight the importance of the staff’s need for information and upward communication, the importance of visibility of senior managers, the need for proper communication channels and the power of the grapevine (1998:179-180). Quinn and Hargie use a communication audit for the Police Service for Northern Ireland (Quinn and Hargie, 2004:146-158) which shows staff indicating a clear need for more information, openness, directness and contact with the organisation, particularly with senior management.

Van der Westhuizen (2005:205) stresses that no management can take place without communication. Accordingly communication is one of the important management tasks of the educational or organisational leaders. These leaders, according to Van der Westhuizen (2005:205) spend eighty percent of their time each day in situations of interactive communication. Therefore, it is clear that organisational and educational leaders spend the better part of their daily tasks on communicating and the importance of good communication can hardly be over emphasised.

Whether a manager in an organisation is seen as possessing management or leadership abilities he/she nonetheless needs to help staff achieve consistently productive and efficient behaviour. Peters (1999:178) believes that ‘the manager’s role is to determine what motivates and what turns off each employee’. He further suggests that good quality internal staff communication helps create a happier and more motivated staff and affects such job performance factors as ‘ greater commitment, higher levels of innovation, reduced absenteeism, greater productivity and higher profitability’. In addition; losing good employees is costly. It is good business to maintain a motivated work force (Peters,1999: 181).

Theories of motivation also apply to communication. A motivated staff member is more likely to achieve high results. According to Giles (1991:41) motivation is a word that derives from the Latin *movere*, which means to move and deals with personal differences, and with the ways in which workers respond to different rewards.

Fielding (2003:38) further stresses that, managers need to study how and what to communicate to ensure that their staff members are highly motivated. Furthermore, effective communication can, for example, help someone to change her or his self- image so that she or he looks at the world differently. Good communication combined with training can help change a worker's abilities and skills. Levels of aspiration can also be changed through effective communication.

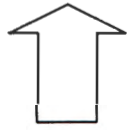
There are various theories which have tried to establish more about how motivation works. These theories of motivation largely derive from and expand upon the work of Abraham Maslow who designed a five – tier 'hierarchy of needs' based on the idea that basic physical and safety needs must first be met before individuals can go on to fulfil social needs, needs for esteem and needs for self- actualisation (Giles,1991:41).

According to Fielding (2003:39) Maslow theorised that:

- People have needs and these needs form a hierarchy.
- Only when the basic need is satisfied, will people seek to satisfy the next need.
- Once a need is satisfied it no longer motivates. Only unsatisfied needs motivate.

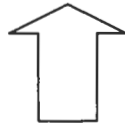
**SELF- ACTUALIZATION NEEDS**

Full realization of one's position



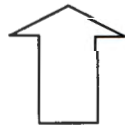
**ESTEEM NEEDS**

Need for a feeling of self- esteem and competence



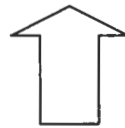
**SOCIAL NEEDS**

A desire for companionship



**SAFETY NEEDS**

Need for safety, protection from danger



**PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS**

Basic needs for water and air to ensure survival

Fig.1.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs ( Fielding, 2003: 39)

Fielding (2003: 40) further mentions that a theorist, McClelland identified three major needs that suggest why people in organizations behave as they do:

- The need for achievement.
- The need for affiliation, or close interpersonal relationship.
- The need for power

McClelland's motivation theory indicates that people do things in order to fill a need. For instance, people with a high need for achievement are likely to seek tasks where they are fully responsible. They set goals for themselves and value competent colleagues. People with a high need for affiliation strive to develop pleasant relationships with others. Finally, people with a high need for power are strongly involved with controlling others (Fielding, 2003:40).

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y is a more business- focused motivation theory. It proposes that workers have one of two basic natures: X workers are lazy and irresponsible and Y workers ' like work, are able to direct their own efforts, and can be creative at work if properly motivated' ( Giles, 1991: 50). Managers therefore need to establish whether their staff are X or Y workers and motivate them accordingly, by giving them encouragement(Y) or threatening them with repercussions (X) or a combination of both.

These days, employers seem to be considering employees' needs from employees' perspectives more and more often. Tourish and Hargie (1998:176) found that ' staff working within an open and communicative management structure were three to four times more likely to express satisfaction with their position and twice as likely to be committed to that organization ' . Ricardo Semler, author of The Seven-Day Weekend has found one way to get employees truly involved which is what he calls 'a democratic company'. Such as company embraces open communication as part of this democracy (Semler, 2003:5) and seems to produce a largely happy, motivated staff.

This focus on people brought along with it an increased focus on communication which continues to this day. Modern approaches such as Peters and Waterman's excellence approach, which insists that "effective organizations continue to strive for improvement" (Pindur, Rogers and Kim, 1995:74) will undoubtedly consider communication as a factor in improving organisations, since excellence in business cannot come about without excellent communication.

Communication according to Fielding (2003:7) is essential for understanding roles and assignments, planning and carrying out activities, coordinating approaches, providing information and building a positive relationship among staff.

Lunenberg and Ornstein (1991:205) also suggest ways to promote effective communication. They recommend that a manager should view everything he does as a form of communication, be aware that communication is often the first step in preventing and solving problems, want to communicate with others, model effective communication, adapt to the communication needs of others, want others to communicate amongst themselves, provide opportunities for communication, provide in-service programmes on communication and reward effective communication.

In this section communication is regarded as an important aspect in managing people. Communication helps to keep those working together in the organisation happy. However, the establishment of effective communication in an organisation is difficult. The organisation should be able to overcome misunderstanding amongst staff. Finally, motivation of people is also regarded as an important aspect that should be considered for effective communication to take place.

## 2.4 Communication channels

Channel refers to the direction in which the message moves. According to Van der Westhuizen (2005:359) a communication channel represents the natural path along which information travels within an organisation. It is of the utmost importance that this channel be as short as possible and that it ensures a two-way flow of information. Further, the communication channel of almost any organisation is matrixed in its organisational structure.

As Van der Westhuizen (2005:168) indicates, the matrix organisational structure was developed to make use of the strong points of the bureaucratic structure such as hierarchical structure, while aspects of a functional organisation structure may be combined with it. This is a fairly new development and is used, in particular, when various projects or matters take place simultaneously.

The channels of communications need to be known in order to ensure effective communication. Van der Westhuizen (2005:206) mentions that communication follows a pattern or a series of steps which may be called the act of communicating (process of communication) and the following steps have been identified; the source, transfer and receiver.

- Source – this refers to an idea and may originate with a person or group or may even be an electric device. The idea should be something to say or transfer and should be coded by the communicator in terms which he understands and which the receiver understands.
- Transfer – this refers to the way the message has to be transmitted in a certain direction through a specific medium. Without this medium the message cannot reach the receiver. Directions are channels that may be downward, upward and horizontal communication. There is also verbal communication which may be of a written or oral kind and may consist of verbal messages, circulars, meetings, and the aid of apparatus such as telephones, radios and electronic media. In non-

verbal communication use may be made of facial expressions, body language, eye contact, gestures and appearance.

- Receiver – this is the person or group who receive the message or become aware of it and must interpret it. The message which is being transmitted and received by ear or eye is decoded by the receiver's mind into thought- a similar action to that taking place in the communicator. The message now has to be decode (interpreted) as the transmitter or communicator intended. Then there should be feedback which is referred to the reaction to the message and should determine how successful the transfer and interpretation of the message was.

Open channels of communication are important because by talking to a supervisor, a staff member can convey any special interest, talents, training or hobbies they might have. Furthermore, channels of communication should be clear because they can help to reach an understanding of different background, experience, values, culture, religious and other factors which might affect their working relationship (Van der Westhuizen, 2005: 207).

Another important aspect of open channels of communication that enables a person to ask for clarification on tasks when an assignment is misunderstood, such a person must also be able to confront the supervisor with concerns that he/she might have. In this regard, Fielding (2003:42) indicates that managers need to be careful about setting goals for employees. Employees, on the other hand may consider that no matter how hard they work, they will not be able to reach the set goals. As a result, managers and staff need to communicate effectively find out what employees goals are and what managers expectations are.

There are, however a number of other methods using modern technology which some organisations have explored. These according to Clarke (2007: 179) include electronic mail (e-mails), short message service (sms) and websites. E-mails as stated by Clarke (2007: 180) have their advantages as they are quick and simple to send. Further, the advantage of e-mail over paper copies of documents is that the message or document will be delivered promptly to the address to which it is assigned. They are a very effective and efficient way of keeping members informed of issues which might arise, and of sending

reminders to members and other groups about forthcoming meetings. Perhaps the biggest disadvantages of e-mails is that the server may lack signal or be unavailable because the service provider has not been paid.

The bulk distribution of short messages through short message services to the employees according to Clarke (2007: 181) is also likely to be effective way of connection especially after working hours. However, one disadvantage of short messages is that the message communicated must of necessity be relatively short. The use of short message services is the ideal way of reminding officials of coming events or submissions. The employees will be alerted to its arrival by the ringing of the cell phone.

As stated by Clarke (2007:181) websites are another option to provide information to the employees. Organisations with sophisticated Information Technology systems and specialist skills and support structure to manage them can use websites to help provide employees with information that they need to empower them in their work. But the disadvantages are that people need to log on to get the information that they need and there is no guarantee that they will do so. It also requires a considerable degree of sophistication as well as technical and managerial support, if it is to be maintained at a level where it becomes the primary source of information and communication.

Just as communication skills are important listening skills are also needed for effective communication. According to Nkonyane (2007:85) effective communication involves listening carefully and understanding what the other person is communicating. What makes it difficult to be effective is the tendency to want to tell other people what to do without listening to what they say or feel.

Managers need to strive towards two-way, rather than one-way communication. Communication should be regarded as a transaction in which participants create meaning together in an atmosphere of trust. Effective listening skills need to be cultivated, as well as the ability to write clear messages ( Fielding,2003: 42).

In this section, communication channels have been identified to indicate the direction in which the message or information travels from one point to the other , in an organisation. The channels should be known to every employee in order to promote effective communication. However, the involvement of the employees in using channels of

communication well requires good listening skills. Good listening skills will promote good communication exchange.

## **2.5 Communication strategies**

Ramsey (2006: 156) defines communication strategies as ways that managers and leaders can use to improve communication. These managers and leaders have to communicate openly, honestly and often. They understand that words are the lifeblood of leadership. They know that people who are afraid of words are usually afraid of ideas as well (Ramsey,2006:145).

Van Staden, Marx and Erasmus – Kritzinger (2002:23) suggest several hints for more effective communication across levels in organisations and schools. These include: constantly keeping communication routes open; encouraging and enabling lower-level staff to gain access to their superiors; and a shorter communication chain that avoids the broken-telephone effects and flattens the communication hierarchy pyramid.

Another strategy that is suggested in communication is effective meetings. According to Smith (1995:142) meetings are of critical importance in co-ordinating efforts and effecting change. Meetings are a very important part of a manager's role and can ensure effective communication rather than confusion and frustration. Smith (1995:143) highlights the criteria for judging a meeting's effectiveness. These include the following aspects: everyone invited must understand the reason for holding the meeting and have a vested interest in being there; the purpose of the meeting should be reflected on the agenda which is circulated in advance; the venue must be appropriate and the starting and finishing time must be observed. The meeting must also have an outcome which should be reflected in the agenda for the next meeting to help with continuity. Most importantly minutes should be taken. The minutes must not only reflect what the meeting was about but have to indicate what jobs or tasks need to be done and who is responsible for completing them. By doing this, it is possible for all those who were at the meeting to see what actions need to be taken as a result.

Fielding (2003: 81) supports effective meetings as a way of ensuring effective communication but he goes on to make a difference between a formal meeting and an

informal meeting. Formal meetings are called by means of a notice or invitation, work according to the agenda and minutes are recorded. In an informal meeting employees may engage in small talk releasing some tension.

Another communication strategy which is pointed out by Adey and Andrew (1990: 33-34) is that managers must use face-to face communication, be sensitive to other people's background, use direct, unambiguous language, repeat instructions if necessary, be a good listener, and be supportive. Fielding (2005:21) stresses that face-to-face communication calls for good control of language, good listening skill, sensitivity to non-verbal communication, and tolerance. Thornhill, Lewis and Saunders (1996:19) recommend that consistent, credible and employee-focused communication be practiced in order to obtain a commitment to quality.

According to Fielding (2003:44) in face-to-face communication feedback will be direct. Both sender and receiver will be giving constant feedback to each other as they exchange messages. If the sender is delivering a speech, she or he needs to be sensitive to the audiences' reactions and questions, as these are ways of receiving feedback.

Giving feedback, according to Fielding (2003: 18) is another communication strategy. Feedback on written communication is not often as direct. If the writer is lucky she or he might receive immediate feedback. However, feedback is more likely to come from the result of the message. She or he might also receive feedback from other people. This is called indirect feedback. The good communicator should always be sensitive to feedback, and should constantly adjust his or her message as a result of the feedback.

Fielding (2003: 18) mentions that senders and receivers should always arrange for feedback, and be prepared to receive feedback, even if it is negative. Feedback tells the sender how the receiver has interpreted the message and plays an important role in team efforts. It allows people to know how they are doing things and the important information about own performance.

Ramsey (2006:10) shares ideas on how to improve communication. The following strategies are given: establish regular communication with all employees, distribute regular downward communication at least once a week, have a publication including in-

depth coverage of internal and external issues, issue a special management publication to address the special needs of team managers, emphasise subjects relating to cooperate objectives, hold regular meetings between management and employees and encourage questions and open discussions, especially regarding the bigger picture, give employees information regarding the finances etc, encourage supervisors to meet regularly with employees, communicate information about the organisation to employees no later than it is distributed to outside news, encourage employees to ask questions, conduct surveys to evaluate communication effectiveness and evaluate the objectives annually to ensure they are in line with organisational objectives.

This implies that no organisation is any better than the quality of its internal and external communication. Communication is the nutrient that nourishes all healthy organisations. It is the leader who always has primary responsibility for maintaining and improving this communication. Anything that you do to improve communication strengthens the organisation and makes you a stronger leader at the same time (Ramsey, 2006:146).

The examples of strategies mentioned can promote effective communication in an organisation because the point is to keep communicating. Communicate when there is good news. Communicate when there is bad news. Even communicate when there is no news. When communication stops, the life of an office or organisation will stop.

Van der Westhuizen (2005:209-210) states that the interest in communication in education has arisen from the interest in using sound communication to prevent numerous misunderstandings and misinterpretations that occur in human relationships. Therefore, there should be communication strategies to be followed for transferring instructions, commands and receiving feedback.

Clarke (2007:179) indicates that newsletters and notice boards play a role in promoting communication. Newsletters need to be newsy and sufficient if they are to be read and include information about achievements. The only thing is to avoid lengthy items on administrative and other matters as they are less likely to be read.

In this section strategies for communication have been highlighted. These include open communication systems, face- to- face communication, consistent and regular

communication. Effective meetings with all their characteristics have been indicated to promote proper handling of meetings. Newsletters and notices on the notice boards are also regarded as strategies for good communication in an organisation. Finally giving feedback is also an important strategy for effective communication.

## **2.6 Communication Barriers**

This section examines what can go wrong in the communication process so that instead of understanding, there is misunderstanding or a communication breakdown. The causes of these misunderstandings are referred to as barriers.

According to Cleary (2004:11) communication barrier is defined as any factor which hampers or prevents the smooth flow of the message from the sender to the receiver. These are obstacles that interfere to limit the receiver's understanding and the accuracy of information transfer results in the breakdown of effective communication.

Van der Westhuizen (2005:208) mentions that communication may be obstructed by various barriers. For instance, in the case of the transmitter or communicator it may, for instance be a case of having insufficient information and speaking indistinctly.

In transferring a message, matters such as poor communication media, insufficient information or noise may cause poor reception. As far as the recipients are concerned, factors such as people who do not listen or who are selective listeners and only hear what they want to hear, may result in no contact being made or poor motivation for executing the message.

Van der Westhuizen (2005: 208) also mentions two other factors which should be taken into account and which could strengthen or weaken the act of communicating. These are, the principles of line of distortion and the principles of the power of emotions.

The principle of line of distortion reveals that the more people there are through whom the message has to pass, the greater the danger that the message will be distorted. This may also be called the filtering effect which means that in the process of transferring the message, misconceptions, sentences and facts are left out so that the message which

reaches the fourth or fifth person is weaker or less complete than the original. Therefore personal and/or written contact should be used whenever possible to prevent filtering and to eliminate misconceptions.

The principle of the power of emotions reveals that if the person's emotions are involved, there is usually greater interest because emotion rules reason and in this way, a person's attention is more easily held. Therefore people should be made aware of the fact they are personally involved in a matter and that the matter is of importance to them (Fielding, 2003:16)

Fielding (2003:15) mentions that there are physical and psychological barriers which can affect the result of communication. An example of a physical barrier may be a noise created nearby which might drown out certain parts of the communicator or speech. The audience itself might be so noisy that the speech cannot be heard properly. The lighting or air – conditioning might be faulty or seating arrangements poor. In case of a written message the reproduction of a fax message could be so poor that the message cannot be read.

The examples of psychological barriers that are mentioned by Fielding (2003:17) reveals that the receiver might not like the message being sent because it carries information that she or he does not like. She or he will then become defensive and not pay attention to the message. Cultural backgrounds may also cause a psychological barrier to communication because the sender and the receiver may come from different cultural backgrounds and may not understand each other's values. The attitudes of sender and receiver are crucial because if attitudes are wrong very little communication will take place.

Perceptions of both the sender and receiver will see the world, the workplace and specific tasks differently. They therefore, have to be sensitive to these perceptions to ensure that communication takes place.

Barriers are revealed by the needs and goals of the sender and the receiver. If they understand these needs and goals, they will become more sensitive towards each other. For example, one may have a strong need for recognition, whereas another may have a

need to get the work done as quickly as possible. Their goals would therefore differ and communication might, therefore, be difficult (Fielding, 2003:17).

Pressure is also revealed as a communication barrier. Both the sender and receiver of the message could be working under different pressures. One might for example, be a union member and under pressure to strike, at the same time she or he knows the financial sacrifice that this will mean. The other, on the other hand, may be very worried about the company's finances and therefore desperate to get a job done. These pressures will make communication difficult (Adey and Andrew, 1990: 24).

Adey and Andrew (1990: 26) mention that in communication there is misunderstanding which mostly occurs due to noise. Noise, as it has been mentioned, is a barrier which can be external, for example, every day background office noise, internal (within one's own head) or interpersonal (between people). When a message is sent (or encoded) noise may creep in between the ideal meaning of the message in the sender's head and the words they utter. When the receiver tries to decode (interpret) the message noise may again intersperse itself between the sender's intended meaning and the receiver's own perception of the words. Hence the two speakers' different perceptions of reality and other noisy influences can cause the message to become distorted, affect their understanding of the message and cause the message to become distorted, affect their understanding of the message and cause them to react in different and unpredictable ways.

Interpersonal exchanges carry a great risk of potential misunderstanding because the psychological features that any human carries to a meaning exchange, i.e. 'motives, thoughts, decisions, skills, knowledge, attitude and socio-culture' differ widely between conversationalists. Power differences add further complications and together with other types of noise they can cause reality gaps- 'radical differences in the way people perceive situations'( Elgin, 2000: 9).

In this section, communication barriers have been highlighted to show that even when the organisation strives for effective process of communication, there are, however, things that can make communication fail. Communication barriers prevent the smooth flow of the message. Barriers to communication such as noise, poor equipment, distortion of

message or information, influence of emotions, pressure and misunderstandings have been discussed.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion the literature examined various information and perspectives on the nature and functioning of communication. The importance of communication in educational organisation, channels and strategies of communication have been highlighted. Communication barriers have been included in the study in order to highlight the things that can prevent a flow of communication.

As Peters (1999:268) comments “there are no sure signs in communication, only hints and guesses. Our interaction will never be a meeting of cogitos but at its best may be a dance in which we sometimes touch”. Effective managers can learn to harness the power of effective communication to make a difficult meeting of words, worlds and cultures into a symphony of shared meanings.

Sims (2002:135) also comments that effective communication is a basic prerequisite for the attainment of organizational strategies and managing behaviour. Ineffective communication is detrimental for organisations; it can lead to poor performance, strained interpersonal relations and high level of stress. Employees at all levels need to be good communicators in order for an organisation to be effective.

## **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter focused on the nature and functioning of communication and the perceptions of ensuring effective communication strategies in educational organisations. The main purpose of this chapter is to explain the rationale behind the methodology that will be used in this study and also how the research will be conducted. The chapter further outlines the steps that will be taken, among others, to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. As such, the aims of the study as stated in Chapter 1 are the guiding principles for research

### **3.2 Research design**

According to Floyd and Fowler (2002: 166) a research design refers to a plan for selecting subjects or respondents, research sites and data collection procedures to answer the research question(s). The design shows which individuals will be studied and when, where and under which circumstances they will be studied. According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2000: 166) the goal of a sound research design is to provide results that are judged to be credible. Mouton (1998: 175) mentions that research design is a plan and structure of how the researcher plans to execute the research problem that has been formulated.

The research design of this study is interpretive, and involves qualitative data collection methods. According to Cohen and Manion (1994:36) the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. Interpretive researchers begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them.

Further, Glesne and Peshkin (1992:19) maintain that interpretive research is concerned with description that goes beyond the mere or bare reporting of an act, but describes and probes the intentions, motives, meaning, contexts, situations and circumstances of action.

It can be concluded that interpretive research involves an understanding and interpretation of the perceptions of both the researcher and the research participants. In this study the managers and staff members were interviewed, documents to support communication activities were examined and observation made. All these steps allowed the researcher to understand and interpret communication as perceived by the managers, staff members and the researcher.

### **3.3 Qualitative Research**

Glesne and Peshkin (1992:6) maintain that qualitative methods are generally supported by the interpretive paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and ever changing.

Respondents make their own meaning of events or situations, and the researcher interprets the data they generate using interviews as a starting point for interpretation. To speak of respondents as generating data, and hence as “data generation”, rather than “data collection” is an ideological position which implies that participants create data, rather than data being something “out there” that can be picked and chosen as if from a tree. This term comes from Gummesson (2003:486) who explains it as follows:

I prefer the term data generation to data collection, as data in social setting are not objects that are ready for collection. Instead data are generated, meaning that they are the creation of the researcher in interaction with, for example, a respondent in an interview.

#### **3.3.1 Data collection**

According to Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006:548) and Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 24) three data gathering techniques dominate in qualitative research: participant observation, interviewing and document collection. Ideally the qualitative researcher draws in some combination of techniques to collect research data, rather than a single

technique since the more sources tapped for understanding the more believable the findings. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, participant observation, interviewing and analysis of written documents would be used as data collection methods.

### **3.3.2 Participant observation**

According to MacMillan (2001:41) participant observation is an interactive technique of 'participating' to some degree in naturally occurring situations over an extended time and writing extensive field notes to describe what occurs. Further, Cohen and Manion (1994:114) maintain that one of the advantages of participant observation is that investigators are able to discern ongoing behaviours as it occurs and are able to make appropriate notes about its salient features. In other words, it means that it becomes clear that during participant observation, the researcher needs to take note of what he hears, sees, experiences and perceives while engaged in and involved in a particular situation.

For the purpose of this research, observation took place at the research site, namely Bojanala District Office of Education. The researcher observed the way communication is being implemented among the employees (managers and staff). In order to maximise the effectiveness of the observation, the researcher made field notes.

### **3.3.3 Interviews**

The research interview according to Cohen and Manion (1994: 271) has been identified as 'a two – person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information and focused by him / her on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation.' This according to MacMillan (2001: 268) simply means the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals.

In qualitative research, interviews can be classified into two main categories, namely closed or open interviews. Closed type interviews are usually characterised by responses which require YES / NO or Agree or Disagree type of responses, while open ended interviews allow for greater interviewee responses.

Open ended interviews according to Patton (1990:280) can be categorised according to the following approaches:

- **Informal conversational interview: (unstructured)** – relies on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction.
- **General interview guide approach: (semi-structured)** – involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins. The interview guide simply serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered.
- **Standardised open – ended interview (structured)** – consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words.

The standardised open – ended interview reduces the possibility of bias that comes from having different interviews for different people, including the problem of obtaining more comprehensive data from certain persons while getting less systematic information from others. The advantage of open - ended questions according to Cohen and Manion ( 1994:277) are that open ended items 'supply a frame of reference for respondents' answers, but put a minimum of restraint on the answers and their expression'.

For the purpose of this study, the semi- structured interview was used ( refer to Appendix A for format of the interview schedule). The interview schedules for both the managers and staff members consisted of five items which were based on the nature and functioning of communication, the importance of communication in educational organisations, channels for communication, strategies for communication and barriers to communication.

### **3.3.4 Analysis of documents**

According to MacMillan (2005:42) documents are records of past events that are written or printed; they may be anecdotal notes, letters, diaries, and documents. Official documents include internal papers, communications to various publications, students and personal files, programme descriptions, and institutional statistical data.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992:52) further state that documents corroborate your observation and interviews and thus make your findings more trustworthy. Patton (1990:10) maintains that document analysis in qualitative research yields excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organisational, clinical or programme records, personal diaries, and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and survey.

For the purpose of this study, the following documents of the District, Provincial and National documents were scrutinised.

- Strategic planning documents – the strategic plan document of Bojanala Education District office indicates the overview by the district executive manager. The vision and mission of the office, situational analysis, challenges , measurable objectives and the operational plan.
- Manuals and policy documents – the district office has a collection of most government gazettes, policies on matters of service delivery and manuals to outline procedures for procurement matters.

- Budget matters – information on budget and allocation of funding to different sections are contained in a document.
- Staff Development Programmes - these programmes are compiled annually to address the needs of the employees. Skills and programmes offered to employees are indicated.
- Job descriptions – copies of job descriptions indicate the duties each employee has to perform according to his or her appointment. Reporting procedures are also indicated for employees to report to their managers monthly.
- Reports- these refer to monthly, quarterly and annual reports that are written by different sections to report their performance, challenges and achievements.
- Circulars and memos- these are documents containing instructions or requests for information from different sections internally. The circulars and memos are sent to different offices and the staff members are expected to respond. Some of the circulars are issued from the office of the district executive manager. Circulars and memos from head office and external stakeholders are also communicated to the district staff without delay.
- Invitations to meetings - copies of invitations for staff members to attend sectional meeting and district meetings indicate the date , place, time and agenda of the meeting.
- Minutes of the meetings – minutes of meeting are written indicating decisions taken, actions to be taken and the people responsible. The minutes are circulated to the staff members three days after the meeting was held.

### 3.3.5 Population and Sampling

According to William and Zikmund (2000: 45) population is a complete group of entities sharing some common set of characteristics. Powers, Meenaghham and Toomey ( 1985: 235) also define a population as a set of entities in which all the measurements of interest to the practitioner or researcher are represented.

Sampling involves the selection of a portion of a population as a representation of the population to ensure that the sample is representative. Therefore, the purpose of sampling is to enable a researcher to estimate some unknown characteristics of the population ( William and Zukmund, 2000: 567). Sampling helps the researcher to limit the population rather than covering the whole population. De Vos et al (2005: 194) say the use of a sample may therefore result in more accurate information than might have been obtained if one had studied the entire population.

MacMillan (2001:169) also emphasised that, one of the first steps in designing research is to choose the subjects. Subjects are the individuals who participate in the study and it is from them that data are collected. As a group, subjects are usually referred to as a sample. Therefore, sampling involves a method of choosing a small subset from the larger population. For the purpose of this study, sampling will be purposeful.

MacMillan (2001:175) states that in qualitative research purposeful sampling (sometimes- called purposive) the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest. Patton (1990:169) also confirms that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich- cases for study in depth. Information rich – cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance. In this way, researchers build up a sample that is satisfactory for their specific needs.

For the purpose of this study, stratified purposeful sampling was used where the population (Bojanala District Offices employees) is divided into strata (managers, staff) and participants will be selectively chosen in order to obtain candidates who would be able to provide a rich source of information in relation to the objectives of the study.

Taking into account the principles of stratified and purposeful sampling, the participants were chosen from the following divisions:

- Manager - professional services (involved with professional matters and support services).
- Manager – human resource (involved with human resource management and development services).
- Manager - communications (involved with special programmes and events management).
- Staff member - auxiliary services (involved with infrastructure, internet technology and database).
- Staff member – Employee and Labour services (involved with maintenance of good working relations in order to secure peace in the workforce and sound conduct management).
- Staff member - Groundsman (deal with upkeep of the grounds as well as planting and maintaining the beautiful gardens)

In total six participants (three managers and three staff members who are not supervisors) were interviewed to investigate their perception on ways to ensure effective communication in Bojanala District Offices.

The interviews helped to gather in-depth, detailed information from participants who understand the importance of communication in education management. Lindloff (1995: 245) says that “qualitative research involves the production of knowledge, not its discovery”. Therefore, the interviews with participants helped the researcher to obtain

knowledge in combination with interviewees to produce knowledge about their communication situations in order to help gain understanding from both perspectives.

### **3.3.6 Qualitative Data analysis**

Data analysis involves organising what you have seen, heard and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with data, you create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your stories to other stories. To do this, you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret the data you have collected (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992: 127).

Glesne and Peshkin (1992:127) further suggest that data analysis done simultaneously with data collection enables one to focus and shape the study as it proceeds. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that data analysis is an ongoing process, therefore the researcher in the present study consistently reflected on data received, work to organise them, and try to discover emerging patterns.

The following specific procedure was used: developing units, developing categories, developing patterns as well as theorising.

#### **3.3.6.1 Developing units**

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990:61) developing units involves placing conceptual labels on discrete happenings, events and other instances of phenomena. By breaking down and conceptualizing, we mean taking apart an observation, a sentence, a paragraph and giving each discrete incident, idea, or event a name, something that stands for or represents a phenomenon. Each unit or concept should be the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself and still be meaningful, without any information being added to it.

### **3.3.6.2 Developing categories**

Categorization refers to the grouping of similar concepts as well as separating unlike concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:60). Naming of categories is important so that the researcher can remember it, think about it, and most of all begin to develop it analytically.

### **3.3.6.3 Developing patterns**

Patterns according to Strauss and Corbin (1990:130) refers to repeated relationships between properties and dimensions of categories. It is very important to identify such patterns and to group the data accordingly, because this is what gives the theory specificity. When this occurs, one is then able to say: Under these conditions (listing them) this happens; whereas under those conditions, that is what occurs.

### **3.3.6.4 Theorising**

The process of data interpretation which involves speculating about meanings, making conjectures about significance, and offering hypotheses about relationships is synonymous to theorizing (Patton, 1990: 423: and Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 133). It is used to confirm explanations for how and why things happen as they do.

According to Patton (1990: 423), interpretation, by definition, involves going beyond the descriptive data. It means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meaning, imposing order, or dealing with rival explanations.

Merriam (1991:141) and Patton (1990: 422) further note that speculation is the key to developing theories in qualitative research. It involves researchers making guesses about future happenings based on their first hand experience with the data from the field, and knowledge about the patterns and themes that run through the data.

### **3.4 Reliability and validity**

Validity and reliability of research are important in all research regardless of disciplines and the methods employed. Collected data must be accurate, authentic and represent reality ( Sherman and Webb, 1990: 87).

#### **3.4.1 Validity**

Validity in qualitative research refers to the degree to which participant observation achieves what it purports to discover, that is the authentic representation of what is happening in a social situation ( MacMillan 2001: 181). In essence, a study is valid if it tests what it says it is testing. There are two forms of validity namely, internal validity and external validity.

##### **3.4.1.1 Internal validity**

Internal validity refers to the credibility of results within the confines of an investigation (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 172). It is further noted that without internal validity an experiment cannot possibly be externally valid. Therefore, in this study, greater emphasis will be placed on attaining internal validity as this will ensure external validity.

The use of multi- data collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of data. This is commonly known as 'triangulation' (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992:26; Patton, 1990:90). According to Berg (1995:5) by combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these elements. The use of multiple lines of sight is frequently called triangulation.

### **3.4.1.2 External validity**

External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to the other situations, this involves the generalisability of the results. According to Cohen and Manion (1994: 172), the results must be generalisable beyond the confines of the particular experiment; they must be externally valid also.

The validity of this study was tested by interviewing the target group with questions which were based on the aims of the study. The managers and staff members were equally asked about the role of communication in their work environment, strategies of communication and what they perceive to be communication barriers. This encouraged the researcher to see how the managers and staff members responded to their own situation.

### **3.4.2 Reliability**

Reliability refers to the repeatability of a given study by researchers other than the original participant observer, the extent to which independent researchers discover the same phenomena in comparable situations (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 174).

According to MacMillan (2001: 181) and Sherman and Webb,(1990:80), measures to enhance reliability, involve a complete description of the research process, so that independent researchers may replicate the same procedures in comparable settings. This includes a delineation of the physical, cultural and social context of the study; an accurate description of the conceptual framework of research, and a complete description of methods of data collection and analysis.

This study has taken into account the measures mentioned and in so doing, the researcher is confident that a similar study, using similar methods of data collection and analysis would reveal results which closely resemble those of the present study.

Further, the multiple data collection methods used in this study namely, direct observation, interview and document analysis will help to eliminate any researcher bias and thereby make findings more reliable.

In order to ensure reliability and internal validity in this study, the researcher used triangulation of data methods. This refers to the use of two or more methods of data collection. In this study three methods are used namely, participant observation, interviewing using an open - ended interview schedule and analysis of written documents.

In this study there is a likelihood of similar and different responses from managers and from staff. Frequent communication, ability to listen and show of some respect, the success factors in manager and staff members communication are issues of central importance when getting the message across and developing successful business relationship.

### **3.5. Ethical considerations**

MacMillan (2001: 411) and Miles and Huberman (1994: 265) maintain that the presence of the researcher can, at the outset, create social behaviour in others that would not have occurred ordinarily. That behaviour can in turn lead to the researcher making biased observations and inferences. The researcher is aware of this possibility of bias which may contaminate the research data and will employ the suggestions made by Miles and Huberman (1994:266). These include, making known to the respondents the actual reason for the researcher's presence and intentions and also how the data will be collected and for what purpose it will be used.

### **3.5.1 Status**

The researcher is one of the employees of Bojanala Education District office in a management position. There is a strong possibility of the researcher becoming biased in the interpretation of the research data, partly because of his preconceived ideas and knowledge in relation to the topic. However, the researcher is well aware of this limitation and took every precaution not to influence the responses of the interviewee during the interviews, and also interpreted the research data without any personal judgement. For this reason, all interviews were tape-recorded and full transcripts drawn up and the researcher based interpretations strictly on the documented data.

In order to overcome any intimidation, threats or inferiority complex, the researcher stressed the point with participants that she is a student doing research and is looking for information that will help her understand a concept which she has some interest in. It was also emphasized that their responses are important and will make a significant contribution to the researcher's work.

Holding the position of a manager is an advantage to the researcher as she was able to communicate on the same level of understanding with other managers. However, with regards to ordinary staff members, the researcher once again stressed her role as a student seeking information just as any other student, thus reducing her position of seniority during the interview.

### **3.5.2 Access and orientation**

Gaining access to the Bojanala District offices was not a problem for the researcher since the researcher is also an employee in a management position and interacted with many employees in different sections. Secondly, permission to carry out observation in the offices, interviewing of managers and staff and the examination of official documents was granted to the researcher by the District Executive Manager.

Thirdly, the manner in which the questions are phrased in the interview schedule (refer to Appendix A/B) are non- threatening and not intimidating. The questions are phrased in such a manner so that the informants will be able to respond honestly since they are made to feel important.

Finally, all the interviewees were made aware that their responses were used for research purposes only and that all information would be kept confidential. They were further given the assurance that the research report will be available to them for scrutiny so as to check that no additional or false information has been included which might implicate them in any way.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter looked at the research design and methods. It included the research design, qualitative data-collection methods, sampling, reliability and validity in research, methods of data analysis and the design of the present study. The research design of the study is interpretive and qualitative methods are used, namely, participant observation, interviewing and analysis of written documents. An account was also given as to the measures that would be taken to ensure reliability and validity of the research. A brief exposition was given as to the steps that would be used to analyse the data. Finally, the chapter ended with the design of the present study. This included data collection methods, statement of subjectivity, access and orientation.

The following chapter deals with data –displays, data- analysis and research findings.

## **Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to give a report on the results of the empirical investigation conducted to determine the perception of managers and staff of ways to ensure effective communication strategies in Bojanala Education District office. The qualitative data collected through observation, examination of documents and interviews is summarised and discussed in this chapter.

### **4.2 Interviews, Observation and Examination of documents**

The purpose of conducting interviews, and observation of activities such as meetings and examination of documents, was to determine the perception of managers and staff of ways to ensure effective communication in Bojanala Education District.

The interviews were conducted with both managers and staff members. The responses of the managers and that of staff members are given separately. Three managers and three staff members were interviewed and for the sake of anonymity the managers are labelled Mr A, Mr B and Ms C. The staff members are labelled Ms X, Mr Y and Ms Z.

**Item 1: The nature and functioning of communication.**

The table below indicates the responses of managers and the staff members with regard to item 1.

Table 4.1 Responses of both managers and staff members on the nature and functioning of communication.

Table 4.1

Question topic	Managers	Staff members
What is the primary role of communication in organisations?	Mr A : Communication should aim to build a satisfactory working relationship.	Ms X: The role of communication is to deliver instructions. Give information in order to do their job.
	Mr B: Maintain a two way channel of dialogue which will encourage feedback, informing one another, sharing motivating, guiding, deciding resolving issues, planning etc.	Mr Y: I believe the primary purpose of communication in any situation is to develop relationships. Without maintained relationships which result in trust and respect, any information is useless. If you don't trust your manager then you will not put value to his/her communications.

	Ms C: Without communication, nothing can be done- work related and in one's personal life. Working together as a team.	Ms Z: When people communicate in the office they tend to have team spirit and build a strong team.
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The responses in Item 1 reveal that Mr A, who is a manager, mentioned that communication should aim to build a satisfactory working relationship. Mr B who is also a manager, indicated that communication should be a two-way channel of dialogue which encourages feedback, informing, sharing, motivating, guiding, deciding, resolving issues and planning. Ms C who is also a manager indicated that without communication, nothing can be done in work related matters and in one's personal life. She further stressed that communication encourages working together as a team.

On the other hand the staff member Ms X, regards the role of communication as a way to deliver instructions and give information in order to do the job. Mr Y, a staff member, indicated that communication helps to develop relationships in order to build trust and respect. He further said that if there is no trust between the manager and the staff member there will not be any value to their communication. Ms Z, also a staff member, stresses that communication develops team spirit and builds a strong team.

According to these responses, the following points may be summarized as primary roles of communication:

- To enable dialogue and team building;
- To deliver instructions;
- Providing facts and information needed to do basic job;
- Motivate staff;
- Resolve work related issues and

- Resolve interpersonal issues.

From the responses given by the managers and staff members the researcher is able to note that both parties are aware of the roles and the importance of communication in an organisation such as the district office.

As one of the manager respondents commented:

‘Communication involves interaction with every employee, both formally and informally. Furthermore, important functions include informal education, modelling of techniques and attitudes, extension of general knowledge about the world, etc’.

During observation, the researcher was able to note that communication does take place in the Bojanala District office. In the morning staff members exchanged greetings and they seemed to be happy to arrive at their work place. In one section the staff assembled for a short briefing, as there were urgent matters to be submitted to the District Manager. The observation also proved that managers and staff are aware of the importance of communication and they seemed happy with that morning’s activity.

In relation to the role of communication in the district office the following documents were examined to determine the effectiveness of communication in the district office:

Job descriptions of employees – the copies of job descriptions of about four staff members were examined to find out what they really mean. The job description indicated the roles and responsibilities of employees and how the duties are carried out and reported to the managers.

The Staff Development programme was also examined to look at how staff development programmes have been planned. There was evidence of a programme that had taken place and a plan for the coming programmes. These are organised according to the needs of the section.

Bojanala District Strategic planning documents of 2007/8 and 2008/9 were also examined. The documents showed that quite a large number of employees were invited to strategic planning sessions that took place for three days.

Proof of resolved cases- these were examined at the labour section but the researcher could not go into the details of the cases. They proved that when there are issues of serious non- performance the labour section helps the district office to solve the matter.

Skills development programme- all the names of the district officials and the skills which need to be organised were collated in block form, for the staff who indicated a need to be trained in particular skills.

The responses of the interviewees, documents examined and observation indicated that communication in the district office is taking place and every employee is involved in the activities of the process of communication. However, there are instances where some staff members do not have copies of their job description. There is also a situation where not all members of the district are invited to strategic planning meetings.

**Item 2: The importance of communication in educational organisations – How much information is passed from manager to staff members.**

The key issue was the subtle relationship between giving too much information, contextualising things, and expecting staff or managers to find things out for themselves.

The table below indicates the responses of managers and staff members with regard to the amount of information given to the staff members by the manager.

Table 4.2 .Responses of both managers and staff on the amount of information given to the staff members by the managers.

Table 4.2

Question topic	Managers	Staff members
How much information is passed from manager to staff member?	Mr A:I believe that the more people know and the more included they feel, the better the team will function'. It is too much. On the other hand the information I receive from the staff members is just fine, I think.	Ms X: Sometimes my manager forgets to tell me information.' He seems to think that keeping us in the dark and not consulting us gives him an edge and keeps us off balance. Too little. I am not sure, but I think I give my manager enough information.
	Mr B: I don't have a lot of time explaining everything in details. I give the staff enough information, What is required is what is given to them'. Just enough. What I receive from staff is just fine to respond to another person who want information on a particular issue.	Mr Y: Sometimes my manager gives me too much information at the time to such an extent that I get confused.' Too much. The information I give to my manager is enough.
	Ms C: I should explain more in order for the staff to grow.	Ms Z: My manager provides sufficient

	<p>I expect them to take initiative also. Generally overloading people with information is counter productive to getting the work done'. Too little.</p> <p>The information that I receive from my staff is fine.</p>	<p>information but does not overload me. This, I believe it is good because a lot of information is also negative as it may cloud the important issue.</p> <p>Sometimes my manager gives me confidential information that makes a bigger picture appear clearer and this motivates me to go further to please and serve. Just enough.</p>
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The responses reveal that Mr A, who is a manager, believes that people should be given a lot of information in order to feel included in the team and allow the team to function well. So he gives his staff too much information. On the other hand Mr B believes in giving the staff members enough for them to do their work. So he gives enough information to the staff members. Ms C indicated that she should explain more to the staff in order for the staff to grow. She expects the staff to also take the initiative. Overloading people according to her is counter productive to getting the work done. So she gives too little information.

The responses from the staff members reveal that Ms X indicates that her manager forgets to tell her information. He seems to think that keeping the staff in the dark and not consulting them gives him the edge and keeps the staff off balance. So, too little information does not help. Mr Y indicated his manager gives him too much information. Ms Z indicated that her manager gives her sufficient information and does not overload

her. This according to her can be good because superfluous information is also negative as it may cloud the important issues. Further she indicated that her manager gives her confidential information in order to make the bigger picture clearer and motivates her to go further to please and to serve.

The question asked about the amount the information given by the manager and received by the staff member. The managers responded that they believed they gave more information than required while staff believed they received just enough. The key issue was the subtle relationship between giving too much information, contextualising things, and expecting staff or managers to find out things for themselves. Many managers feel that giving 'the bigger picture', or contextualising their staff members' jobs within the role of their section or division plays in the organisation helps them to do better a job.

However, there seems to be a fine line between giving staff enough information to contextualise their role and tasks within a broader picture and a need not to overload people with information. There is an issue of information overload in some sections which may be a feature of task- overload as well. Some managers are coping with too many demands and do not have the time available to give a lot of information or spend a lot of time on giving information. There is also an element of managers expecting their staff to find more if it is required and expecting their staff to be proactive in seeking out information.

During observation the researcher was able to note that in one office there were documents which piled on the desk top or table. It seemed that the staff member using that office, does not have time to file and tidy up the table. In another office, a manager's table was clean with very few documents on the desk top.

Documents such as government gazettes and other policy documents are kept in the offices and are well kept. Newly issued information is also duplicated and the copies are quickly issued to the staff. If the staff member is not there it is put on the table or pushed under the door if the office is locked.

The responses of interviewees, observation and documents examined indicate that the managers need to review the amount of information that they give to the staff. There should be consistency in giving information so that the staff can carry out their duties successfully. Documents should be filed neatly and regularly interpreted by the staff and their managers.

**Item 3: Channels of communication.**

This question was designed to find out how managers and their staff are communicating with one another. The table below indicates the responses of managers and staff members with regard to item 3.

Table 4.3. Responses of managers and staff members on how managers and staff members communicate with one another.

Table 4.3

Question topic	Managers	Staff members
How do managers and staff members communicate?	Mr A: We have fortnightly staff meetings to prepare for extended management meetings of the district. We talk over tea and also as we are working. My door is open for any staff member to contact me if there is any problem.	Ms X: There is one-on-one communication with my manager. He always passes at my desk to say something or make a reminder. Bulk e-mails are sent to all staff because they have now been provided with computers and each one has an e mail address.

	<p>Mr B: As a manager my door is open, Staff members know that they can approach me at any time to discuss work related and issues unrelated to work.</p>	<p>Mr Y: We hold monthly management meetings and emergency meetings are called when there are urgent issues. The manager pops in every morning to give informal verbal updates.</p>
	<p>Ms C: We have regular monthly staff meeting where issues are discussed and decisions made. At tea break we also have something to talk about either work related or not. But sometimes it is not easy to hold meetings as planned because of uncoordinated activities of the district.</p>	<p>Ms Z: Communication in our section is important and besides meeting , it is usually face- to- face communication. E-mails have also started to run.</p>

The responses in Item 3 reveal that Mr A, who is a manager, indicated that he holds team meetings fortnightly to prepare for the extended management meeting of the district. He further indicated that communication also takes place over tea and continuously as they are working. He has indicated that he has an open door policy for the staff member to contact him if there are any problems. Mr B, also a manager has an open door policy and the staff can approach him anytime to discuss official or unofficial matters. Ms C, also a manager, indicated that her team hold regular staff meetings where issues are discussed

and decisions are made. She also mentioned that at tea break the manager and staff can talk about work or issues not related to work.

Responses from the staff members reveal Ms X confirming that there is one-on one communication with her manager. She further indicated that her manager always passes her desk to say something or make a reminder. She confirms that bulk emails are used to communicate to staff because they have been provided with computers and email addresses. Mr Y has indicated that in their section they hold monthly management meetings and emergency meetings. Their manager also brings informal verbal updates everyday. Ms Z indicated that in their section they hold meetings and face-to-face communication also takes place. E-mails are also used as means of communication.

An emphasis was made on the importance of face-to face communication as well as the vital role that formal and informal meetings and tea- time play in successful manager and staff communication relationship. Having an open door policy, having the time and taking the opportunity to discuss personal issues or topics unrelated directly to work ( as it occurs during group tea times) as well as being able to discuss things openly and immediately are also success secrets that contribute to an effective working relationship. Meeting or discussing issues frequently as well as regular interaction, the ability to interact in one another's space and the use of e-mail were also pointed out as keys to successful communication.

During observation the researcher was able to observe the finance section holding an urgent meeting to finalise issues on unpaid claims of service providers. This was an emergency. The staff members were called by phone to assemble in five minutes in the boardroom next to their offices. The meeting seemed very critical because the manager looked very serious.

At tea break one or two staff members would sit together and later be joined by their manager in their small talk. In another instance there was a face-to-face communication between a manager and a staff member discussing the issue of perpetual leave that the

staff member was taking. Their conversation seemed pleasant because the meeting ended without a quarrel. Employees have been provided with computers and the researcher observed some of them accessing e-mails, responding and printing them.

The documents which related to how the managers and the staff communicate included invitation letters to the formal meetings of the team or section. The invitation letters or notices were short and indicated the time for the meeting, place, date and agenda points. In most of the invitations the agenda points were five or six.

Invitation letters to the formal extended management meeting of the district were in most cases accompanied by the minutes of the previous meeting and the list of activities to be done by people appointed to do so. The invitation also showed the time, date, place and agenda of the meeting.

The employees have been provided with computers and e-mail address, so they are able to access their emails, print them or send responses. Copies of such e-mails were examined. These were either reminders, invitations or other information of relevance to their work. The researcher also noted that employees received e-mails from their colleagues as ice breakers for the day. These are also circulated to make other people happy for the day

The bulk of messages sent through the short messages services are also sent to the employees in order to remind them of a submission date or submission which is overdue. There were messages not yet deleted from a staff member's inbox.

The responses of the interviewees, observation and documents examined indicated that there is communication between the manager and staff that promote healthy relationships and interactions. This also indicates that by having staff meetings and other interaction the staff feel that they are also part of the organisation. Therefore they will work as a team and achieve success.

However there is a challenge of uncoordinated activities. More often, they derail the smooth running of scheduled meetings.

#### Item 4: Strategies – Feedback

The managers were asked to comment on the types of feedback that they give to the staff and the staff were also asked to comment on the types of feedback they receive from the managers.

The table below indicates the responses of managers and the staff members with regard to the feedback they receive from each other.

Table 4.4. Responses of both managers and staff members on the feedback they receive from each other.

Table 4.4

Question topic	Managers	Staff members
What sort of feedback do managers give to the staff members.	Mr A: Feedback from Head office meetings is usually arranged for the staff'. Disciplinary encounters when necessary but I try to be constructive.	Ms X: There are allegations that staff members are not performing but without specifics of who and when.
	Mr B: For achievements photographs are taken and given to communication section to include in the quarterly newsletter.	Mr Y: Well done or positive feedback is very seldom used or given.
	Ms C: A word of congratulation on the work	Ms Z: Errors are often highlighted and

	<p>well done is always used as a type of feedback. Sometimes something more subtle- a kind of constant affirming- showing personal interest in others' work is hugely motivating. A way to remind people why they are working here.</p>	<p>continually used as a measuring stick. There is a formal structure for formal feedback and evaluation but the development and incentives are not forthcoming. I am referring to PMDS (performance Management Development System).</p>
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Item 4 responses reveal that Mr A who is a manager, arranges to give his staff feedback of the meeting held by the senior members of the Department and the MEC for Education. In some instances he institutes disciplinary encounters which are constructive. Mr B indicated that he gives feedback on achievement by taking photos of the team and allows publication in the quarterly newsletter. Ms C indicated that 'congratulations on the work well done 'is always used as a type of feedback.

The responses of the staff member Ms X, reveals that in her section the staff members receive blanket allegations that they are not performing but without specifics of who and when. Mr Y indicated that positive feedback is seldom used. Ms Z indicated that errors are often highlighted and continuously used as a stick. There is a formal structure for feedback and evaluation but the development of staff and incentives are not forthcoming. She was referring to the Performance Management Development System.

With regard to the feedback that the managers give to the staff members and the feedback that the manager receives from the staff the following was noted, that staff members are given feedback of the meeting of the senior managers of the Department of Education

with the MEC. The feedback is given in a formal meeting. Formal meetings are held and minutes are recorded. These minutes are then made available to the staff and managers to carry out their responsibilities as suggested in the meeting. Copies of minutes are available. At the entrance of the office there are displays of photos and messages of congratulations to show achievements of teams. There are also notices of the events such as employee wellness day, closing dates for application for employment when advertisements have been issued internally and externally.

Documents which were examined by the researcher to determine how feedback was given included reports from the senior management team meetings. These included matters of infrastructure, human resource management, professional and auxiliary services, legal matters. The feedback is usually given to the senior management of the district two days after the SMT. Then the managers of the district will also arrange to give the same feedback to his or her staff.

The researcher was able to examine the newsletters available in one of the offices. There was a newsletter from the provincial office entitled Inclusive@ North West dated June 2009. It revealed achievements of the province in terms of Inclusive education and the role that Bojanala office is playing is also highlighted. A copy of a newsletter produced by the district communication section in 2008 was also examined and it revealed achievements of the district.

The responses of the participants, observation and documents examined indicated that feedback is taken seriously. There are measures in place which support the notion that feedback has a platform in the communication activities of the district office even though there is no consistency.

**Item 5: Barriers to communication.**

Table 4.5 below indicates the responses of managers and staff members with regard to communication barriers in their office.

<b>Question topic</b>	<b>Managers</b>	<b>Staff members</b>
What are the barriers to communication	<p>Mr A: Time. I think I don't have enough time to getting the messages across. I could share more but I am often too busy and preoccupied to unwind and chat.</p> <p>Stress is another issue that can affect communications. Power of emotions. If emotions are not settled stress level will affect communication amongst staff negatively. I think this whole office needs training of some sort with regard to communication processes.</p>	<p>Ms X: My manager is over-busy so does not have time to discuss tasks in any more detail. Again people feel stressed. They are generally over-worked so the stress level goes up.</p> <p>Stress makes a person less eloquent. I know I want to communicate but don't do so clearly.</p>
	<p>Mr B; I don't have time in my daily working hours to do research on how we are doing because I have chosen to spend time developing my staff. At the same time I am not able to focus on my weaknesses because there is not enough time.</p>	<p>Mr Y: Due to time constraints the interpersonal bonding factor can often be ignored because it simply can't be fitted into the schedule'. My manager sometimes stays away from the activities of our section for quite some time. This causes breakdown on communication.</p>
	<p>Ms C: Time is not a problem. I believe that if you don't have time then you have to make time. One needs only ten or fifteen minutes to see a co-worker and improve his or her bad mood or something.</p>	<p>Ms Z: Sometimes there isn't enough communication, because the manager has too many other things on her plate'. So communication</p>

	<p>One concern that disturbs the flow of communication is the machinery or these equipment. When service providers are not paid in time the photocopying machines, faxes and computers do not work, as a result every section struggles to communicate as expected.</p>	<p>becomes sporadic.</p> <p>Noise in front of our building is also affecting communication. As you can see there is continuous noise from the main road. At the back of the building there is continuous noise from the bakery of some factory.</p>
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Item 5 reveals that Mr A who is a manager, indicated that he does not have enough time to get the messages across to the staff. He feels that he could share more but he is often busy and too pre-occupied to unwind and chat. He also mentioned stress as another barrier to communication. Unsettled emotions can affect communication amongst the team members badly. Finally he suggested internal training for all employees. Mr B also indicated that he does not have time in his daily schedule to do research on how they are doing because he has chosen to spend time developing his staff. At the same time he is not able to focus on his weaknesses because there is not enough time. On the other hand Ms C who is also a manager, indicated that time is not a problem. She believes that time should be created because a manager needs only ten to fifteen minutes to attend to a co-worker. Ms C indicated that photocopying and fax machines, computers and payments to service providers should be maintained.

The responses from the staff members reveals that Ms X is concerned that her manager is over-busy so he does not have time to discuss tasks in any more detail. Ms X also indicated stress as a barrier to effective communication. Mr Y indicated that due to time constraints interpersonal bonding is ignored. His manager sometimes stays away from the activities of the section and this causes breakdown in communication. Ms Z complains that there is not enough communication because the manger has too much on her plate. As a result communication becomes sporadic. She also mentioned that there is

continuous noise from the main road and behind the office there is a bakery operating the whole day.

Insufficient time makes managers give insufficient information. This is often a problem when managers are aware of the need to communicate. There is a common conception that 'time is money and talk is cheap'. Making time to talk to your staff is a choice.

During observation the researcher noted the influence of traffic noise from the main road which passes in front of the district office. The disturbing noise made the attendees of a meeting close the windows and stay in an uncomfortable room without a working air conditioner.

Equipment such as a fax machine was temporarily out of order because there was no toner. As a result, most of the documents had to be delivered by hand from one office to the other or other sections were asked to help with the faxing of documents. The Internet service was also out of order because the local server was down.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

The chapter outlined the findings of the empirical investigation conducted to determine the perception of managers and staff members of ways to ensure effective communication strategies in Bojanala Education District office. The results of the participant observation and the examination of documents were also demonstrated. These results indicated that communication does take place even if there are situations that need to be improved. There was also an indication that there is cooperation between managers and their staff and instructions are observed to carry out duties.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Summary, findings, recommendations and conclusions**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief summary of the previous chapters' findings on both literature review and the analysis of the empirical data. It also suggests some recommendations that would be useful to enhance ways to ensure effective communication in Bojanala Education District Office. Communication is a very important part of managing people and organisations while enhancing productivity and keeping workers happy.

#### **5.2 Summary**

**Chapter 1** outlined the background and context of study, the statement of the problem, the aims as well as research methods used. The main concern of the study was to determine the perception of managers and staff members of ways to ensure effective communication in Bojanala Education District office.

**Chapter 2** dealt with literature review. The review covered the following areas: the nature and functioning of communication, the importance of communication in educational organisations, channels and strategies of communication, as well as communication barriers.

**Chapter 3** dealt with a detailed methodology of the empirical component of the study. Observation, examination of documents and interviews were used to gather empirical evidence on ways to ensure effective communication as applied in Bojanala Education district office. Also discussed are the interpretive orientation, ethical issues surrounding the research, issues of reliability and validity, and the design of this research. Literature was also consulted to obtain a better understanding of the methods employed to collect data.

In **Chapter 4**, the data collected from the empirical study was analysed and interpreted to determine the perception of managers and staff members on ways to ensure effective communication as applied in Bojanala Education District Office. A summary of the interview responses of managers and staff members, observation results and examination of documents were summarized and interpreted.

### **5.3 Research Findings**

The findings were based on two aims as follow:

#### **5.3.1 Findings on aim 1**

The aim was to determine from literature the nature and functioning of communication, the importance of communication in educational organisation, channels and strategies of communication as well as barriers to communication.

The following findings were made from literature:

- Communication is an important method that managers use to influence and persuade staff members to give their best to the organisation ( c.f 2.2 )
- Communication is important in enhancing productivity and keeping workers happy ( c.f 2.3).

- Feedback in communication is important because it determines how successful the transfer and interpretation of the message was ( c.f 2.4 )
- Meetings are regarded as effective strategies of communication ( c.f 2.5 ) and
- In communication there is misunderstanding which mostly occurs due to noise. ( c.f 2.6 ).

The following findings were made from empirical study:

- Managers and staff are aware of the roles and importance of communication in the organisation such as their education district office ( item 1).
- Job descriptions, staff development programmes and strategic planning enhance good communication ( item 1).
- Giving feedback is a recognised aspect to enhance communication (item 4).
- Meetings are conducted according to the required standards – date, venue, place agenda.( item 4)
- Traffic noise coming from the main road disturbs meetings in the boardroom (item 5).

### **5.3.2 Findings on aim 2**

The aim was to determine empirically the perception of managers and staff members on ways to ensure effective communication in the district office.

The following findings were made from literature:

- Communication is a process involving the acquisition and use of information for planning, organising, leading and control in a work place (c.f 2.2).
- Motivation of staff is important in developing effective communication exchange (c.f. 2.3).
- Communication channels should be open to enable the staff to ask for clarification when tasks are misunderstood (c.f.2.4).

- Effective meetings are an important aspect of communication (c.f. 2.5).
- In transferring a message, poor communication media, insufficient information or noise may cause poor perception ( c.f.2.6).

The following findings were made from empirical study:

- Formal and informal activities of communication do take place in the district office to enhance planning activities (Item 1).
- The managers and staff members regard communication as an important factor to motivate them and make them feel they are part of the organisation (Item 1).
- Small talk at tea break allows the managers and staff to discuss issues that are either related or not related to work (item 3).
- Managers and staff members attend sectional meetings and extended district management meetings to discuss operational matters (Item 4)
- Noise, stress and space are identified as barriers to effective communication (Item 5).

## **5.4 Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

Managers and their staff members should be trained on the role and importance of communication.

#### **Motivation**

Both managers and staff members should be given training on site in order to clarify to them the importance of communication in their organisation. Most of the employees are aware of communication taking place in their offices but are not sure of the means of ensuring effective communication.

### **Recommendation 2**

The staff members should be engaged in the development of their job description in order to be motivated.

#### **Motivation**

Involvement of staff in the development of their job description will make them feel involved in the communication activities of the work place. They will be happy and perform successfully.

### **Recommendation 3**

Giving feedback should be a consistent practice.

#### **Motivation**

Feedback should be given to the staff members and the staff members should also give members feedback. This will make communication regular and open.

#### **Recommendation 4**

The district management should develop a common policy for formal sectional meeting and extended management meeting.

#### **Motivation**

The policy will ensure that formal meetings take place in different sections to keep teams informed and do certain tasks together. There will also be consistency in the way sectional and extended management meetings are called. Minutes and a list of activities to be done should be written by the secretaries and be made available to the staff three days after the meeting to ensure continuity of performance and finalisation of issues. Managers will achieve consistency in providing enough information to the staff members.

#### **Recommendation 5**

Maintenance of machinery and equipment should be done regularly.

#### **Motivation**

All the resources should be maintained regularly to avoid frustrations. Payment to the service providers should also be regular.

### **5.5 CONCLUSION**

This study has revealed that communication is an important aspect in the running of an organisation. Managers and staff members should equally make efforts to make communication process in the offices work positively. Formal and informal settings of communication should be taken seriously in order to achieve the results they deserve.

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## **Appendix A**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR MANAGERS: Bojanala District Offices**

I have been given permission by the District Manager to conduct research into the effectiveness of communication in Bojanala District Offices as part of my Masters Degree. The aim of my research is to gather a range of perspective on the importance of communication and ways to enhance communication in Bojanala District Offices.

#### *Instructions to all participants*

**Kindly note that the responses to these questions will be confidential and used for the research purposes only. You are therefore encouraged to answer as honestly as possible.**

I would appreciate it if you would take time to respond to the interview questions as honestly as possible.

Please note that all information will be treated as confidential and your anonymity will be preserved throughout.

## **Questions to ask during interview:**

**Interview with – Managers (Those who manage staff)**

- **Item 1 : The nature and functioning of communication**

What, in your opinion, is the primary role of communication in your division or section?

- **Item 2 : The importance of communication in educational organisations**

How much information do you feel you give to your staff?

- **Item 3: Channels of communication**

In your section how do you communicate with your staff?

- **Item 4. Strategies of communication**

Comment on the feedback that you give to your staff?

- **Item 5: Barriers to communication**

Comment on the barriers to communication in your district office.

## **Appendix B**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STAFF MEMBERS: Bojanala District Offices**

I have been given permission by the District Manager to conduct research into the effectiveness of communication in Bojanala District Offices as part of my Masters Degree. The aim of my research is to gather a range of perspective on the importance of communication and ways to enhance communication in Bojanala District Offices.

#### *Instructions to all participants*

**Kindly note that the responses to these questions will be confidential and used for the research purposes only. You are therefore encouraged to answer as honestly as possible.**

I would appreciate it if you would take time to respond to the interview questions as honestly as possible.

Please note that all information will be treated as confidential and your anonymity will be preserved throughout.

## **Questions to ask during interview:**

**Interview with – Staff members (those who are managed and do not supervise any staff.)**

- **Item 1 : The nature and functioning of communication**

What, in your opinion, is the primary role of communication in your division or section?

- **Item 2 : The importance of communication in educational management**

How much information do you feel your manager gives you?

- **Item 3: Channels of communication**

In your section how do you communicate with your manager?

- **Item 4: Strategies of communication**

Comment on the feedback that you receive from your manager.

- **Item 5: Barriers to communication**

Comment on the barriers to communication in your district office.

Appendix C - Letter to request for permission

P. O. Box 1609

Mogwase

0314

25 August 2009

The District Manager

Bojanala District

Rustenburg

Sir

**Request:** For Permission to conduct Research.

I kindly request your permission to conduct research at Bojanala District offices.

I am currently registered at the University of North West for my Master of Education Degree in Educational Management. In order to fulfil the requirements for this degree, I am required to undertake a research project and submit a mini dissertation related to it.

My research topic is: The Effectiveness of Communication in the Bojanala District Offices. I need to carry out participant observation, conduct interviews and examine documents related to communication. All these activities will be arranged in such a way that working atmosphere and normal working hours are not disrupted.

I hope my request will meet your favourable consideration.

Thank you

Dandashe I.M.S