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An Investigation into the Impact of Organisational Communication on Employee Performance at an Educational Institution

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Abstract

The primary objectives for this research study were to investigate the impact of organisational communication on employee performance and to provide recommendations on how organisational communication can be improved at the institution. The secondary objectives were to investigate the different forms of communication practised there as well as to investigate the employee perceptions of the organisational communication. This research study contributed to the existing body of knowledge around this subject area by establishing the nature and testing the extent of the impact of organisational communication on employee performance. Results showed that email is predominantly used at the institution to disseminate information to its employees and news is released in a timely manner to its employees. The majority of the respondents confirm that co-workers do not share information that is critical for enhancing performance. The findings from this study indicate that management should have frequent meetings and constant feedback on performances of their employees. The study also recommends that management communicates more with their employees in less informal surroundings.

Keywords: Organisational Communication; Employee Performance; Information Dissemination.

1. Introduction

Organisational communication is evidently one of the major factors on which the achievement of organisational goals and employee performance depends. This is mainly because for any employee in an organisation to perform any task, there is need for communication. It is therefore difficult to imagine any organisation functioning without communication taking place between or among employees. According to Cheney, Christensen, Zorn and Ganesh (2004:6) organizational communication encompasses the following concepts: "symbols, messages, media, interactions, relationships, networks, persuasive campaigns, and broader discourses in an organization". This definition implies that organisational communication is a multi-faceted paradigm consisting of hierarchical relationships. This structure hence determines the level of achievement of organisational goals and more importantly employee performance. In the majority of organisations, the system consists of several individuals who send and receive messages from other individuals around them. These information transactions are usually governed by organisational rules, regulations and policies. It follows therefore that the quality of the products and services that one gets from an organisation, to a considerable extent, depends on the effectiveness of the communication that takes place in that organisation. One sector in which the flow of organisational communication is critical is the tertiary education sector. This is because as a service sector, stakeholder satisfaction and performance hinges on interactions between the service providers and the stakeholders. Employees, both academic and non-academic are key stakeholders of any institution of higher learning. This study will determine the impact of communication on employee performance at an educational institution.

1.1 Background to the Study

Organisational communication is a key aspect of any organisation. It defines how tasks and other activities are to be carried out in an organisation. For these reasons, organisational communication is believed to have a direct impact on the performance of employees in an organisation. The educational institution has quite a diversity of stakeholders both internally and externally. The internal stakeholders include students and members of staff. The external stakeholders include industry, commerce, government, research institutions and other universities both within and outside South Africa. So communication has to take place for the organisation to achieve its intended goals. Currently at the institution, one of the challenges is related to delays in distributing important information for employees to perform their responsibilities and as a result this in turn impacts on the overall performance of the organisation. Every organisation in this world, including this one, requires communication in order to thrive. Communication is very important for the performance roles within an organisation. Organisational communication is the communication that takes place between an organisation and its stakeholders, both internal and external. Communication is the foundation to the functioning of organisations because for employees to perform certain functions, communication has to take place first. Internal communication is considered a strategic tool for binding an organisation, promoting transparency, enhancing employee morale and reducing attrition. Ineffective communication can damage the organisation and may also lead to decay within the organisation (Hansen, 2004:61). The study provides recommendations to management at the institution regarding ways of improving communication to enhance employee performance.

1.2 Problem Statement

The institution has over the past few years gained a significant increase in numbers and it has opened more campuses across Gauteng and the Free State Province. This led to the massive increase of employees at the institution. All employees rely on communication to perform effectively. All the campuses need to interact or communicate with one another for the organisation to achieve its goals. Similarly, even within each campus, there is need for communication to take place amongst employees and management for coordination. The way communication is carried out by any organisation, has the potential to impact on employee performance. The organisational communication system at the institution is poor and needs to be investigated. This research will explore the impact of organisational communication on employee performance. For the operations of the institution to run smoothly, the communication between it and its various stakeholders, especially the internal ones, must be effective which in turn will assist some of the stakeholders achieve their individual and organisational goals. A study carried out by Hashim (2002:18) found out that any organisation without communication, support and loyalty among employees may vanish. It is for these reasons that the study will seek to find out how communication at the institution is carried out and how it affects employee performance.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the impact of organisational communication on employee performance and to provide recommendations on how organisational communication can be improved at the institution.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The four research objectives are:

- To investigate the different forms of organisational communication practised

- To investigate employee perceptions of the organisational communication

- To determine the impact of organisational communication on employee performance; and

- To make recommendations to management on ways to improve organisational communication.

1.5 Research Questions

From the stated objectives above, the following research questions were formulated:

- What are the forms of organisational communication practiced at the institution?

- What are employees' perceptions of organisational communication at the institution?

- What is the impact of organisational communication on employee performance?

- What recommendations can be made to improve organisational communication at the institution?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study contributes to the body of knowledge of education research on organisational communication in higher education institutions. It is hoped this study provides a basis for further academic research into the relationship between organisational communication and organisational performance.

2. Literature Review

One activity which takes up much time at work is communication, especially for managers who have to pass messages or information to their employees on regular basis (Ober, 2009:21). According to Eisenberg, Goodall and Trethway (2007:7), organisational communication balances creativity and constraint which focuses on how people use communication to work out the tension created by organizational structures through providing change and creativity. In contrast, Robson, Skarmeas and Spyropoulou (2006:34) define organisational communication as a process that enables people to learn from one another and also as a process that allows groups within the workplace to develop and maintain good working relationships. Kelly (2010:72) defines organisational communication as the process which involves the exchange of words or information between two or more people with an intention of influencing behaviour. These definitions imply that for communication to take place there is need for two or more people in the process.

2.1 Principles of Employee Communication

Communication is a fundamental component: communication is seen as contributing to employees performing their functions as well as understanding the organisation goals. According to Engel, Warsaw and Kinnear (2004:17), the following are principles of communication:

Commitment by Top Management: top management designs the guidelines for managers and therefore should be well committed to open communication with employees.

A Communication Strategy is Necessary: there should be an organisational strategic plan for communication which should be reviewed annually.

Managers are the Key to Success: managers are middlemen for effective communication in an organisation.

Priority Issues form the Content: the communication in an organisation should be discussed in an open and understandable manner through various channels of communication.

Regular Evaluation will Ensure Effectiveness: evaluation of the communication process regularly is important for employee performance and awareness of key issues. The evaluation is also important to give directions for improvements.

2.2 Role of Organisational Communication in Business Relationship

Allard (2001:5) states that "information is a dynamic commodity and poor systems of delivery result in information imbalances." These imbalances lead to problems with serious negative consequences. He furthermore states that communication plays a pivotal role in employee performance. An organisation with effective communication practices will create greater employee engagement and commitment which boosts productivity and retention of employees which in turn results in superior financial performance (Watson Wyatt, 2006). Martin (2005:1) conducted a study at a private organisation and found out that 94% of about 2000 executives and seniors rank communicating well as the number one priority. Murphy (2005:67) found out miscommunications in organisations leads to reduced employee productivity and employee morale. Communication skills are paramount for effective leading, organising, planning, coordinating and supervising others. The communication model has 5 elements namely, the sender, the message, the medium, the receiver and the feedback. The sender transmits information or a message to the receiver through a medium which can be a telephone or email. The sender will need feedback to check whether the message was received and/or understood. Feedback is important in effective communication. However, from the model above it is important to understand that any component missing might lead to miscommunication. Some miscommunication in most organisations is caused by breakdown in communication especially if one of these components is missing (Certo, 2012:61). The research conducted by Ober (2009:10) shows that although emails is the most frequently used medium of communication (90%), it is not considered the most effective medium. The most effective medium was employee publications which show 70%. According to Schuitema (2004:38), most employees at the mine receive most of their information through union meetings and union representative and less information from their supervisor, signs, noticeboards, newsletter and public address system. According to Certo (2012:395), the index of the effectiveness of communication refers "to the percentage of the reaction to the intended message over the total number of messages sent". Certo (2012:395-396) further explains that an organisation can use this formula to evaluate the individual employee effectiveness in communicating at the workplace. He further states that managers with low Index of Communication Effectiveness

score over a period of time should evaluate their communication process in order to make improvements in communication. Sobo and Sadler (2012:14) further suggest that for organisational communication to be improved, the management support and employee innovative ideas should not be underestimated, otherwise they should be encouraged.

2.3 Methods of Communication

There are various communication methods an organisation can use. Some organisations use a combination of these methods (listed below).The methods include:

Written - this method of communication includes organisational memos, reports and letters. Usually they are written following organisational procedures.

Oral – this communication medium refers to employees interacting in many ways within the same organisation. For example, a lecturer may telephone his/her manager about the stationery requirements.

Non-verbal - this includes body postures and/or spatial positioning.

Electronic - this includes the use of email, video conferencing and fax machine. The advantage of this form of communication is that it allows employees to keep information for reference purposes for example reports rather than hard copy paper filing. The disadvantage of this method is that employees are overwhelmed with the volume of emails.

2.4 Media for Internal Communications

All media for communications have some advantages

Medium	Principle advantages
Employee indications	Treat subjects in depth, visual attractive
Manuals and booklets	Flexible, complete in details
Newsletter	Easily prepared, low cost coverage
Posters	Colorful, dramatic, attention-getting.
Noticeboards/info racks	Timely and strategically placed.
Exhibits and displays	Highly flexible, attention getting.
Teleconferencing	Dramatic, compelling, involves audience, good for training.
Motion pictures and videotapes	Inflexible, good for demonstration of processes, impersonal.
Grapevines	Informal, timely.
Speeches and meetings	Two-way communication treats problem in depth.
Advisory groups	Two-way communication, takes advantage of expertise.
Internet/intranet/extranet	The technology of the future: allows one-to-one, one-to-many one-to-few, few-to-few, formal and informal, multi-media, synchronous and synchronous forms.

Source: Engel et al., (2004:83)

The above table indicates that the different methods of communication have advantages and disadvantages which may have an impact on employee performance.

2.5 Factors that Influence Communication

Conradie, Konig, Koti, Pillay and Valkhoff (2009:13) explained the following important factors that influence communication that is; personality, frame of reference, reasoning and emotions.

Personality: Personality within workplace context means the unique way employees behave, react, interact and cope with work situations. The unique traits include the psychological, social, moral and intellectual characteristics. Conradie et al., (2009:13) observed that workers who have confident, pleasant, talent and friendly personality generally communicate better with great ease than those employees who are shy, unpleasant, intolerant or unfriendly.

Frame of reference: If the employees share reality about some issue, it is easier to communicate because they all hold a set of standards, norms, ideas, options or perceptions. An example of how communication occurs within a frame of reference is illustrated below:

Reasoning: Reasoning means the mental process of logical, ordered thinking. Managers should think logically before making decisions. Any message sent out must not lack logic.

Emotions: Conradie et al., (2009:25) state that employees need to control their emotions at work as this can have disastrous results if uncontrolled. They suggest that the following emotions should by all means possible be avoided: loosing temper, sulking, moodiness or irritability. They further suggest ways of counteracting emotions especially at workplace: accepting criticism as useful feedback, curbing moodiness and sulking, never bringing personal problems to work and maintaining a consistent careful disposition.

2.6 Organisational Communication Patterns/Channels

Downward communication: This refers to the process of sending information or messages from top hierarchy in an organisation to the lower level employees within the same organisation (McShane and VonGlinow 2008:15).

Upward communication: This refers to communication that flows from lower level employees to the upper levels management within the same organisation. Grensing-Pophal (2001a:45) suggests that to solicit upward employee communication, "the use of formal channels such as suggestion programmes, internet forums and feedback forms should be encouraged".

Horizontal or lateral communication: This refers to communication that happens at the same organisational level. This form of communication allows employees at the same level to communicate directly allowing problem solving and sharing of information between departments.

Cross-Channel communication: Refers to communication that happens among employees in different work units who are neither subordinates nor superiors for example the Human Resources department sends out an email to all organisational employees for updated information about changes of salary dates. However, the four methods described above are formal communication.

Informal communication: This refers to a form of communication that does not follow proper channels of communication for example an informal grapevine. According to Cook and Hunsaker (2011:280), "informal communication patterns are not sanctioned by management and do not follow formal patterns of communication. However, informal communications are often seen by employees as more believable than those received through the formal patterns". McShane and VonGlinow (2008:17) found out that approximately 75% of employees usually receive organisation news from informal channels (grapevine). The advantage of this form of communication is that information is transmitted very fast in all directions within the workplace. The major disadvantage of this form of communication is that the grapevine in most cases exaggerates important points of the message and usually distorts information by deleting some finer details of the original message.

2.7 Characteristics of Grapevine as a Form of Informal Communication

Ober (2009:15) acknowledges the following characteristics of grapevine:

- Information moves quickly;

- The grapevine is most active when big changes at an organisation are likely to take place for example mergers and layoffs;

- The grapevine is in every organisation and is normal;

- Grapevine exists at all levels in an organisation; and

- Most communication passed via grapevine is around 80% correct and business related. Abdullah (2012:45) suggest that formal communication such suggestion boxes, internet forums and feedback forms is still the best form of communication.

2.8 Effective Communication and Employee Performance

A study by Hansen (2004:66) proved that effective organisational communication incites employee productivity. He further states that for managers in an organisation to influence performance through communication, they must be guided by three main truths of effective communication as follows:

- Managers must communicate work information relevant to each specific employees;

- Communication needs to be "face to face" for quick feedback, dialogue and expression; and

- Managers should communicate to employees through their supervisors.

Shortell (2011:87) identified various key elements to effective communication. The key elements are purpose, content, sender, credibility and timeframe. He further states that effective communicators must have desire to communicate and understand how others learn. The receiver of information must understand the purpose of the message as well as the content.

2.9 Main Categories of Business Communication

According to Lasikar et al., (2008:5-7), communication falls into three main categories namely: internal-operational, external-operational and personal.

Internal-Operational Communication: This refers to all communication done by employees or management in conducting work within an organisation. This form of communication takes several forms. It may include employees taking orders and instructions from their supervisors.

External-Operational Communication: This form of communication involves work related communication with people outside the organisation such as telephoning and advertising.

Personal Communication: This involves non-business related exchange of information and feelings among employees. This form of communication helps make and sustain the relationship upon which business depends. Personal communication affects employee attitudes which in turn affect employee performance. This is in line with Sobo and Sadler (2012:5) in that personal communication in the workplace improves innovative ideas, motivation which ultimately increases performance of individual employees.

The literature reviewed showed that effective organisational communication is linked to employee performance and organisational performance at large. Different scholars cited overemphasise the importance of effective communication in driving performance.

3. Research Methodology

The research approach chosen for this study was quantitative survey method. According to (McKinney, 2011:77), one of the characteristics of qualitative research is that it adopts a naturalistic enquiry theory. This means that situations are studied in the real world or as they unfold naturally. However, Easterby-Smith (2009:63) argues that in qualitative research the procedures are not as strictly formalised as in the quantitative research. Creswell (2004:18) describes quantitative studies as those "based on testing a theory composed of numerical variables and are analysed with statistical procedures". Fortune and Reid (2012:93) added that the quantitative approach studies are focused on relatively specific questions or hypotheses that remain constant throughout the investigation. Quantitative research methodology was considered more appropriate in this study because addressing the research problem depended on the analysis of quantitative data collected on a number of survey questions around organisational communication and employee performance at the institution. Moreover, the quantitative approach was adopted because it was very difficult to interview all 105 participants using a qualitative approach.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Easterby-Smith (2009:8) distinguishes between two fundamental opposed views on research. These are logical positivism and phenomenology. Logical positivism encourages the use of quantitative and experimental methods to test hypothetical–deductive generalizations. Researchers who are led by this view of research believe in the need for the researcher to separate himself or herself from the subject he or she will be studying hence the use of experiments to arrive at conclusions on what is being researched. Phenomenology, also known as interpretivism, on the other hand makes use of qualitative and naturalistic approaches to inductively and holistically understand human experiences in their unique contexts. The logical positivist research strategy (descriptive survey) was chosen for this study because this approach is highly formalised and more explicitly controlled than the phenomenology (Robson et al., 2006:237).

3.2 Research Strategy

Since a quantitative approach was utilised for this study, the most common available research strategies were:

- Experimental design - this design seek to identify causal relationship. This involves the selection of a sample of subjects, random assignment of these subjects to experimental and group control, the exposure of the experimental group to the independent variable which is held from the group and finally the evaluation of the two groups on the dependent variable.

- Quasi-experimental design – in this design the researcher has no control over the independent variables.

- Surveys – "the survey is a positivist research design in which a sample is selected from the population and studied to make inferences about the population". The survey questionnaire was adopted in order to determine the opinions and percentages of employees regarding communication at the institution (MANCOSA, 2015:57-58).

3.3 Target Population

Schindler (2010:8) defined population as an entire group of items that allows data to be sourced and investigated. Neuman (2006:224) also defined a target population as the "specific pool of subjects that the researcher is interested in studying". The population of this study consisted of all academic and non-academic employees of the institution's main campus, In total; the main campus has approximately 637 employees which constituted the target population.

3.4 Sampling

Robson et al., (2006:135) defines sampling as "the process of selecting few from the targeted population". Sampling is necessary in research because it is difficult to investigate the whole population in most cases. Sampling is therefore used in the search for typicality and is linked to external validity or generalisability. In other words, in research, samples are used to draw conclusions about the populations from which they are drawn. Robson et al., (2006:136) distinguishes between two broad categories of sampling. These are probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

Probability Sampling: In probability sampling, the probability of the selection of each respondent is known. The various methods under this sampling technique include simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling (McKinney, 2011:34). In simple random sampling, each sampling element in the population has an equal chance of being selected (Neuman, 2003:78). Systematic sampling is a process where a sampling element is selected after every nth number using a sampling interval. Stratified sampling involves dividing the population into groups known as strata, and then uses a random sampling technique to select cases from each category. Cluster sampling makes use of multiple stages and is mostly used to cover wider geographic areas. Samples are drawn from aggregated units or clusters (Neuman, 2003:78).

Non-Probability Sampling: In non-probability, the probability of the selection of each respondent is not known. The various methods include quota sampling, convenience sampling, purposive sampling and snow ball sampling (Neuman, 2006:220). In quota sampling, the researcher first identifies general categories into which cases will be selected and then selects cases to reach a predetermined number of cases in each category (Derica, 2014:65). Convenience sampling means selecting any group of individuals who are available for a study (McKinney, 2011:34).This form of sampling has several disadvantages in that those surveyed might be of the same age, gender or background (McKinney, 2011:34). Purposive or judgemental sampling uses judgement of an expert in selecting cases whereas in snowball sampling, the researcher select a sample that is connected to one another thus interrelationship. In this research study with respect to the questionnaire, non-probability sampling was used. Non-probability sampling in the form of purposive sampling was used to select employees from each category. Robson et al., (2006:141) says "the principle of selection in purposive sampling is the researcher's judgement as to typicality and interest. A sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy the special needs in a project". This explains why this sampling technique was chosen in a current research like this one. As such probability sampling technique was not suitable for various reasons. Bias might have been introduced in the sense that some categories have more employees than others. In probability sampling each case has an equal chance of being selected. Purposive sampling method was chosen because it was easy to judge the subjects that were representative of the phenomena being studied (McKinney, 2011:34). The sample size for this study was 102 participants.

3.5 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was chosen as the research instrument. Denzin and Lincoln (2005:242) postulate that the benefits of utilizing questionnaires are the cost is low, produces quick results and some respondents would prefer to write rather than talk. Denzin and Lincoln (2005:243) say one of the disadvantages of questionnaires is that "the data are, necessarily superficial". This stems from the fact that there is little or no check on the honesty or seriousness of responses. Furthermore, the construction of the questions and responses is not a task that the average researcher finds easy. Because of the above benefits the questionnaire was selected despite its disadvantages.

Questionnaire Construction: A questionnaire with 17 questions and statements was distributed to the institution's employees across all the four faculties as well as other units such as the Centre for Academic Development. The questionnaire used in this study consisted of five sections. General demographic information such as gender, category of employment and the length of employment with the institution was requested. The intention here was to determine whether there was any correlation between such factors as gender, category of employment and the length of employment on one hand and the employees' views on the impact of organisational communication at the

institution. A pilot study was conducted with 10 respondents from the Communication Department at the institution.

Administration of Questionnaires: The questionnaire was administered by a face-to-face survey method. The advantage of this method is that, it is less expensive than other methods. It was able to give quick results or feedback in a short space of time. The questionnaires were distributed to all categories of employees at the institution. The categories include management, lecturing, administration and technical. The questionnaires were distributed one at a time. This was done to ensure that employees' perceptions of the impact of organisational communication would be captured from as wide a spectrum of the employees as possible. The rationale behind distributing the questionnaire to employees in specific categories at the institution was to get the relevant information from them which the researcher expected they would be able to give.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data collected from the questionnaire survey was presented in frequency distribution tables and bar graphs. The percentages were calculated using the number of responses to particular questions on the questionnaire compared to the total number of questionnaires that was returned. Cronbach's Alpha equalled to 0.944, which indicates reliability. The SPSS version 20 was used for data analysis.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity refers "to the degree to which evidence supports any inferences a researcher makes based on the data" (McKinney, 2011:6). According to Litwin (2005:34-36) there are four types of validity namely: face validity, content validity, criterion validity and concurrent validity. Face validity is based on cursory review of items by untrained people. Face validity is a much more casual assessment of questionnaire appropriateness. Content validity is a measure of how appropriate the questionnaire seems to set of reviewers who have knowledge of the subject matter. (Litwin 2005:34-36). Criterion validity is a measure of how well the questionnaire stacks up against another research instrument. Concurrent validity refers to the situation where the questionnaire can be judged against some other method that is acknowledged for assessing the same variable. The questionnaire covers all parts of the research questions or objectives of the study. To ensure face validity, the research study used several experts who are communication lecturers in the Department of Communication at the institution to judge the questions independently. The researcher had a group discussion with the lecturers to brainstorm questions. Reliability measures the quality of the research instrument used, in this case, the questionnaire (Sarantakos, 2005:88). There are three types of reliability: parallel forms of reliability, test-retest reliability and inter-rater reliability (Litwin, 2005:06).On test-retest method the same subjects are tested and retested with the same instrument. In parallel forms of reliability two similar instruments are administered in one session and are assessed by the degree of correlation between the scores of the two groups. Inter-rater reliability also known as inter-observer measures how well two or more respondents agree in their assessment of a variable (Litwin, 2005:06). In order to maximise reliability each respondent received the same questionnaire. The errors and omissions were dependent on how each employee responds to a set of questions/statements in the questionnaire. Reliability, in this research was also ensured since only one research instrument, namely the questionnaire was used. Cronbach's Alpha equalled to 0.944, indicates reliability.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

The limitations for this study are that a single institution cannot represent all the South African universities, therefore these results should be interpreted with great care. It would have been desirable to have other stakeholders such as students, unions and other external bodies working closely with the institution as participants in this research. The results of the study are therefore only a reflection of the employees' perception of the impact of organisational communication. They may thus not be taken to be necessarily a true reflection of the situation obtained at other institutions of higher learning either within or outside South Africa. They may, however, be used to gain useful insights into the role of communication in the management of any of these types of organisations. The researcher acknowledges the limitations. The study could have overcome these limitations by studying two or more universities as well as including students but this was not possible because of time constraints.

3.9 Elimination of Bias

The researcher avoided identifying participants by race or ethnic group. In fact this was irrelevant to the current study. To avoid language that suggests evaluation or reinforces stereotypes, a pilot study was conducted with experts in the field of communication and languages. Checking and rechecking was done to improve the credibility of the findings.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ensuring participants have given formal consent: All respondents signed a formal consent form before completing the questionnaire.

Ensuring no harm comes to participants: The study was able to reduce the potential of distress or physical harm by using anonymous, self-administered questionnaires and also by re-wording some sensitive questions carefully (Babbie, 2013:40). Therefore the study was careful in not revealing information that would embarrass participants.

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity: Information provided by participants or respondents was treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity was fully guaranteed. The names of respondents did not appear on the questionnaire or data, since anonymity was promised to all respondents. The informed consent forms were kept apart from the questionnaires collected to avoid linking the data (Sarantakos, 2005:21). The data was securely stored on the researcher's desktop and no one had access to it.

Ensuring permission is obtained: A formal written approval to carry out this research study was granted by the institution's Research Ethics Committee

4. Results

A total of 105 employees across the institution were selected for this study and all of them completed the informed consent form prior to completing the questionnaire the following day. Only 102 employees managed to complete the questionnaire as 3 employees were on leave and therefore were unable to complete the research instrument. The response rate was therefore 97,1% which according to Saunders et al.,(2011:84) should be regarded acceptable since it is over 50%. The results of this study show that among the 102 sample of the employees, 48(47%) were male and 54(53%) were female. This was a true representation of the population gender. At the institution there are slightly more women than men. The highest qualifications of respondents revealed that 50% possess a master's degree. Very few respondents (4%) had PhD's, 2% certificates and 5% diplomas. The respondents with a general degree constituted 24% and those with an honours degree 15%. The majority of the respondents (42%) marked 10-<15 years of service at the institution and 25% stayed there for a period of 5-<10 years, with 9% of employees having worked at the institution for 15 years and above. This meant that most of the views and opinions about the communication and employee performance at the institution were obtained from employees who were in service for a long time (over 15 years). The majority of respondents (41%) who completed the survey were full time, followed by part time employees who constituted 36% of the sample and the least were contract staff with 23%. This was a true representation of the population because the organisation has more full time employees than contract and part time staff. This meant that most of the views and opinions about the communication and employee performance were obtained from employees who were full time at this institution.

What are the different forms of communication practised at the institution? The first objective of this study was to investigate the different forms of communication practised at the institution. All respondents mentioned the communication forms of email, telephone, posters, meetings, and newsletters which are used to disseminate information to employees. It is evident that the institution does not use other forms of communication such as video conferencing in delivering information to their employees.

What are the employees' perceptions of organisational communication? The second objective of this study was to investigate employee perceptions of organisational communication at the institution. Employees were presented with a questionnaire designed using Likert–type statements. The majority of respondents (50%) were neutral that information sent via grapevine at the institution is true. Those who agree to the statement were 23% and with those who strongly agree constituted 9%. Some respondents (12%) strongly disagree with the statement with 9% disagreeing to the statement. This implies that to some extent there is a grapevine form of communication at the institution. It is seen that majority of respondents (59%) were neutral on the statement that they receive most of the information they need to work through grapevine. 25% of the respondents agree to the statement that they receive most information via grapevine to perform their work. This implies that there is really some form of grapevine at the institution. The majority of respondents (74%) strongly agree that most communication at their institution is mainly by email with another 23% agreeing to the same statement. None of the respondents were neutral, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. It can be concluded that the institution is mainly using one form of communication, to communicate with their employees. The findings are so important to the organisation in that the institution must employ a variety of forms of communication other than the emails. According to McKinney (2011:26), using a variety of communication methods in an organisation, employee performance may be enhanced since they are exposed to different ways of communication. Results showed that 38% were neutral to the statement that management communication is clear and concise. Those who agree and strongly agree were 22% each. Very few (3%) strongly disagree with about 15% disagreeing to the statement. The deduction here is that most of the communication by the management is clear and concise though majority were neutral. Some respondents (24%) strongly disagree that news is released in a timely manner. A further 20% also disagree to the statement with 8%

being neutral to the statement. Majority of respondents (31%) agree to the statement with a further 17% strongly agreeing. This implies that on average the organisation releases news in a timely manner. According to McKinney (2011:26), releasing news in a timely have a direct impact on employee performing their chores.

4.1 What is the Impact of Organisational Communication on Employee Performance?

The third objective of this study was to determine the impact of organisational communication on employee performance. The majority of respondents (49%) agree to the statement that management communicates about organisational goals regularly with a further 23% strongly agreeing to the statement. This implies that management communicates its organisational goals to employees although a few employees disagree. When the organisation clearly states its goals and communicates well in advance to its employees, the performance of employees and the organisation as a whole is likely to improve (Lasikar et al., 2008:83). The findings are very important for the organisation in that it needs to keep communicating regularly with its employees about the organisational goals. The majority 70% strongly disagree to the statement that employees receive enough guidance to improve their performance. A further 12% also disagreed with the statement. This implies that majority of employees do not get enough guidance to improve their performance at work. Employees of any organisation need enough guidance in order to perform their chores (Derica, 2014:65). The findings of this study imply that management needs to provide their employees with enough guidance in order to achieve individual goals and organisational goals as well. The majority of respondents (78%) agree to the statement that they receive information they need most of the time to effectively perform their chores. This implies that management are giving out information to their employees more often to perform their roles. Without information from the superior, one cannot perform the job (Certo, 2012:156).So this implies that information is very important for performing any task in an organisation. Very few respondents (7%) agreed that co-workers share important information. Majority of respondents (56%) strongly disagree and a further 37% disagree to the statement. This implies that at the majority of employees do not share information that is critical for enhancing employee performance.

4.2 What Recommendations Can Be Made to Improve Organisational Communication?

The last objective was to make recommendations to management on ways to improve organisational communication. The majority of respondents felt that although email is the most predominant form of communication at the institution, it is very effective in improving their jobs. Respondents also felt that posters were not as effective as emails, meetings and manager/colleague face-to-face communication. Some respondents indicated on the research instrument that for posters to be effective, they need to be authorised by management (an authorised stamp must be placed on a poster). The findings contradict Schuitema (2004:38) and Martin (2005) who found out that union meetings and team briefings are effective in those organisations studied. Forty-eight respondents emphasised that frequent meetings will help in improving communication at the institution. Also 10 respondents representing 10% mentioned that management should do something to repair strained relationships amongst employees for better communication. Some respondents felt that with frequent meetings strained relationships might be resolved and may also limit the amount of information that is passed along through the grapevine. Another 5 respondents representing 5% felt communication can be improved by training managers since their main job is directing, leading, controlling and coordinating, which involves a lot of communication. Some respondents felt managers need to possess good communication skills in order to improve performance of employees. 17 respondents representing 17% felt that management should introduce an organisational communication policy since no policy exists at the moment. They felt this will go a long way in improving the communication at the institution. About 22 respondents representing 21% mentioned that regular feedback on what employees are doing is very important and should not be overlooked. "People tend to feel unappreciated when they receive little information about plans, activities and achievement of their team or departments" (Yukl, 2006:336). Derica (2014:61) found out that management who communicates with their employees regularly and give them feedback on their performance, obtain more effective results. The findings from this study is that management should have frequent meetings and constant feedback on performances of their employees.

5. Findings and Recommendations

The findings show that different forms of communication are practised at the institution but most preferred method is the email. The importance of effective organisational communication is crucial in improving the performance of employees in organisations. Findings from this study also confirm that for employees to work hard, effective organisational communication plays a pivotal role. The study also shows that positive impact of good organisational communication may lead to improved employee performance at a workplace. In general, management must pay particular attention to the way communication is being practised, as communication is one of the key factors when considering ways of improving overall employee performance. The management is advised to take steps to develop and implement an organisational communication policy. This policy might help in guiding employees and even reduce the use of the grapevine in the organisation. This is because the study showed that most employees are using informal communication. The research study recommends that management must allow open and clear

communications (Mosley et al., 2001:290) as this may likely reduce the grapevine (informal communication) at the institution which the majority believes exists. Open communication allows supervisors and subordinates to openly discuss organisation-related issues such as goals and conflicts. Open communication is also important for improving employee morale and increasing employee productivity (Certo, 2011:34). Management should also adopt an organisational policy on communication so that proper channels can be followed and adhered to. The study also recommends that management communicates more with their employees in less informal surroundings in order to avoid the prolific use of grapevine information which the majority confirmed as a source.

5.1 Conclusions

The study sought to determine the impact of organisational communication on employee performance at the institution. The study was successful in providing evidence to the theory and literature reviewed. From the results of this study, it is concluded that organisational communication is a key organisational factor in that it plays an pivotal role in influencing employee performance and the organisation as a whole. It is important for management to keep their employees informed in time and in the right manner about what they should know for efficient and effective work. This will enable an improvement in employee performance.

In conclusion, effective organisational communication in the workplace such as this institution is critical in the establishment and maintaining of quality working relationship in the organisation.

5.2 Areas for Further Research

It would be beneficial for an additional research study focusing on the students' perceptions of organisational communication so as to check whether they correlate with the employees' perception. There is no abundance of research studies focusing on students' perception on this subject matter. Most of the studies around the world focus on management and employees. Instead of carrying out a study with only a quantitative method, it would be beneficial for an additional research study focusing on a qualitative method or a mixed approach so that deeper explanations and a thorough understanding of communication issues faced by the organisation can be revealed. A further research study is also needed on the factors affecting employee performance with respect to organisational communication. It is also suggested that future research replicates this study in other developing countries in order to compare results. Further studies in comparing communication in the education sector and industry specific samples would also be interesting.

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