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The perception and experiences of employees about the nature of communication in the North Rand region of the Department of Social Development.

Matema, Tsholofelo Glodia

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The study focuses on the experiences and perceptions of employees about the nature of communication in the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region. This chapter provides a general overview and a problem statement to provide a rationale for the study. Subsequently, the research problem that the study will address is identified, accompanied by research design and methodology.

Communication serves as the basis for control and coordination in an organisation and provides the information essential to effective completion of the organisational mission. It is not possible to have good human relations without communication. Effective communication is required not only for human relations, but for good and successful businesses. Communication is very important in the world of business in order to meet the organisational objectives. A breakdown in communication between employees can lead to problems that can be unresolved. In practice, there is no organization which can be considered successful without communication (Gillis 2006).

Communication takes a central position in organisational action, control, coordination, and organisational survival. Communication is said to be “the lifeblood of every organisation" (Wheatley 2005, p.18). Communication has an important role in the organisational processes by increasing agreement on organisational ideas, norms, values, behaviours, and goals. Communication is very important between employees to have good internal organisational relation.

According to Robbins, Judge, OdendaalandRoodt, (2010) no individual, group or organisation can exist without communication: before communication can take place a purpose, expressed as a message to be conveyed, is needed. It is passed between a sender and a receiver.

1.2 Rationale for the study and statement of the problem

Very few studies have been published about the communication channels available to employees of the Department of Social Development. A study done by Phoofolo (2007) focuses on the social factors that affect employee well-being. In this study, Phoofolo also defines and discusses communication as the major factor that affects employees daily. One of the roles of the occupational social worker is to assist employees to manage the outcomes of communication which might affect their well-being.

According to Jay (1999) good communication will benefit everyone involved in the process. It produces well-motivated and productive staffs, which in turn leads to

increased loyalty and lower staff turnover. Jay further stated that, when information is flowing freely between employees (top management, middle management, line management, and junior staff), it is far easier for managers to work effectively, because they are able to communicate on important matters, and to obtain the necessary support from employees.

According to Ashford (1996) acceptable levels of communication and performance by employees are a priority for every employer. When this is not the case, it impacts relatively on productivity and efficient service delivery. The researcher has observed that effective communication in a Department of Social Development seems to be challenging. If employees do not adhere to the presented communication protocol, and some are not aware of the existing protocol and channels of communication, there is a lack of communication within the Departmentof Social Development and information flow is disseminated incorrectly. Ineffective communication results in low morale and the researcher therefore explored whether or not the existing communication protocol and communication channels are utilised by employees of the Department of Social Development. There is no formal circular or policy that speaks specifically to communication channels and protocols within the Department of Social Development; however, there is a structural hierarchy that describes the protocol.

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of employees about the nature of communication in the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region. It seems that employees' unawareness of the existing communication protocols and channels is a major barrier in the Departmentof Social Development. The dilemma faced by the Departmentof Social Development is that although internal communication is central to managing the Department successfully, managers tend to regard it as optional to their real jobs. Despite the fact that most managers readily agree that communication is a good thing and extremely important, there seems to be a low level of understanding of what communication really involves, and little commitment to getting it right is shown. In most cases, managers seem to share information among themselves and they neglect the important task of sharing information with all levels of employees within the organisation.

Quirke (1996) states that for an organisation to create a responsive, creative and innovative organisational culture it is necessary to foster new communication protocols and channels. Within the Department of Social Developmentthe majority of existing channels are designed for effective downward communication, however, there is little opportunity for bottom-up and horizontal communication.

On-going training should be conducted to ensure that corrective measures are followed to the benefit of employees and to improve the existing communication channels and protocols within the Departmentof Social Development.

It is hoped that the findings of the study will broaden insight and understanding of communication protocols and channels with all employees within the Departmentof Social Development. The study is likely to highlight opportunities for the occupational socialworkeron a macro level, tofocus on interventions regarding communication that will facilitate organisational change and enhance the effectiveness oforganisational communication within the Departmentof Social Development.

It is also likely to assist policy makers and implementers in reviewing the existing internal policy on communication protocols and channels, to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy and to implement the revised policy on communication protocols and channels within the Department of Social Development. Hopefully, a participative process will be followed that will allow employees the opportunity to provide inputs before the revised policy is implemented.

1.3 Research approach

A qualitative research approach was followed in order to get more inside information and facts on the perceptions of employees about the nature of communication in the Departmentof Social Development. Research design is described as a plan according to which we obtain research participants and collect information(De Vos, Strydom, Fouche& Delport 2005).

The study employed exploratory anddescriptive research in that it explored and described the perceptions and experiences of employees about the nature of communication in the Department of Social Development. Babbie(1992) describes exploratory research as the attempt to develop an initial understanding of some phenomenon anddescription asthe precise measurement and reporting of the characteristics ofsome population or phenomenon under study.

1.4Significance of the study

The study is likely to highlight opportunities for organisational change and to establishmore effective techniques for organisational communication. Modern organisations are increasingly using various communication methods to achieve organisational goals. Research has shown that some methods are more effective than others, depending on the situation and demands of the task (Darlington & Dorothy 2002).

On-going training should be conducted to ensure that corrective measures are followed to the benefit of employees and to improve the existing communication channels and protocols within the Departmentof Social Development. The findings will assist in the implementation of corrective measures with regard to correct communication channels. It will also assist policy implementers in reviewing internal policy on the correct protocols or channels that would be effective to all employees, including management. Moreover, it

will ensure that employees are given a chance to provide inputs before corrective measures are implemented.

The research is important to the discipline of occupational social work because without communication the Departmentof Social Development will not successfully achieve its goal; communication skills play a major role in the success of an organisation. Communication channels and protocols play a vital role in achieving the goals and objectives of the Department of Social Developmentand also in motivating employees to be productive.

It is hoped that the findings of the study will broaden insight and understanding of communication protocols and channels to all employees and assist them in practising the right protocols and channels. It is therefore important to ascertain how communication affects service delivery in the North Rand Region of the Department of Social Development.

1.5Organisation of the report

After completion of the research, the collected material was integrated and coordinated. The results were divided into chapters forming a logical continuation unit; the chapters are described as follows:

Chapter One of the research report provides a general introduction and the background of the study. The statement of the problem and rationale for the study, research approach, the significance of the study and the limitations of the study are addressed.

Chapter Two provides a literature review and the theoretical framework underpinning the research study. Concepts, theories, approaches and other relevant information necessary to understand the role of communication in an organisation are dealt with.

In Chapter Three, attention is given to the research methodology, the aims and objectives of the study, research questions, sampling procedures, research tools, pre-testing of the research tools, methods of data collection and analysis, and the limitations and ethical considerations are described.

ChapterFourexplains the analysed data and findings of the study.Lastly, the main findings of the study, conclusions andrecommendations in terms of knowledge and practice are highlighted in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

According to Wheatley (2006), successful organisational change is possible if we look at our organisational experience with new eyes. She further states that, in most organisations, employees often interpret their disinterest as a failure to communicate.Corrado (1994) maintains that communication is the glue which bonds people working together towards a common goal.

Communication is the lifeblood of an organisation; if we could somehow remove the flow of communication in an organisation, we would not have an organisation (Mersham&Skinner 2001). According to Staden, Marx andErasmus-Kritzinger (2001) the organisational structure helps to make the flow of information or organisational communication more effective. This is supported by MershamandSkinner (2001), who state that organisational structure determines communication behaviour.

Communication in an organisation occurs within a highly structured context. The organisational structure limits and guides communication flow, especially in government organisations. According to Mershamand Skinner (2001) when there is contact between individuals of different status, communication from the superior to the subordinate takes place more easily than communication from the subordinate to the superior.The chapter entails a review of the importance of organisational communication, functions of communication, different types and channels of communication, barriers to effective communication, the nature and role of internal communication and different theoretical approaches to organisational communication.

2.2. The importance of organisational communication

According to Nieuwmeijerand Hall (1992) organisational communication is defined as a collection of seminar papers aimed at improving mutual understanding in the workplace. It is also aimed at improving the complex process of mutual understanding in the workplace.

Good communication is as much about listening as it is about talking. It does not matter how much information you give your staff or how effectively you impart it, if they are not able to respond, you do not have an effective communication system going, but merely a communication channel (Jay, 1999). He further states that good communication is essential for everyone in an organisation, and leads to less gossip, better motivation, higher productivity, increased staff loyalty, and a lower staff turnover. Communication leads to greater effectiveness, it gets people involved with the organisation, increases

motivation to perform, increases commitment to the organisation, and builds a better relationship between supervisors, superiors, subordinates, and colleaguesMershamand Skinner(2001). The researcher support the views of the above-mentioned authors in that communication leads to greater effectiveness and it gets people involved with the organisation.

According to Ludlow andPanton (1992) communication can be considered a personal process that involves the transfer of information and some behavioural input. It is something people do; it does not exist without people taking some form of action. It also has to do with relationships between people. It can be formal or informal, complex or simple. Effective communication is critical to the success of an organisation. In today's organisations, government legislation requires managers to interpret the changing implications of policies for practice in their own organisations. Employees are also expecting more from their employers; not just higher wages, but also job satisfaction.

Organisations can also agree on the channel of communication or where communication will take place. Channel choice involves the issue of what should be put in writing and what should be communicated orally or electronically, for instance per fax, telephone, email, or facetoface exchange (Beamer & Varner, 2008).

According to Wheatley (2006), participation is not a choice.Organisations need to invite and engage employees' creativity and commitment in the process of rethinking, redesigning, and restructuring the organisation, because their involvement will create a future that already has them in it. She further states that networks of communication develop from the constant interaction among employees. The researcher agree with the author that organisations need to invite and engage employees in the decision- making processes to ensure the success of the organisation.

2.3 Functions of communication

According to Robbins (2003) communication serves four major functions within an organisation.These comprise of control, motivation, emotional expression, and informationsharing. Communication acts to control employees' behaviour in several ways. Organisations have authority hierarchies and formal guidelines that employees are required to follow. To ensure that employees adhere to the policies and procedures within an organisation these documents are communicated to them through different channels. The hierarchies and formal guidelines also assist in monitoring compliance within an organisation. Communication fosters motivation by clarifying for employees what must be done, how well they are doing it, and what can be done to improve performance.For instance, employees should be given feedback on production and be communicated with at all times in order to improve performance. It also provides information for employees to make informed decisions, for example, decisions regarding changes in their job

description or contracts, and other issues that contravene their stated duties. The opportunity to receive feedback also provides an avenue for expression of emotions and the fulfilment of social needs. Employees should also be given resources to render service delivery, such as computers, and a platform to raise their concerns on issues pertainingtoservice delivery.

2.4 Types and direction of communication

Communication within an organisation can either be formal or informal. There are formal and informal guidelines that employees are required to follow. Formal communication is described as a communication protocol that has to be followed by employees, for instance, when employees are required to first communicate any job-related grievance to their immediate supervisors to comply with organisational policies, communication performs a control function (Fielding, 2006).Informal communication springs up by virtue of common interests between people in the organisation, and these interests may be due to work, or caused by social or outside relationships (Jay, 1999). The researcher agrees with the statement that informal communication springs up by virtue of common interests between people in the organisation.

According to Armstrong and Stephens (2005) there are three different directions of communication within an organisation.Communication can flow vertically or laterally and the vertical dimension can be further divided into downward and upward directions.

For communication to be effective, the three different directions which formal or informal communication can take have to be open and unblocked at all times(Fielding, 2006).The different directions of communication will be discussed in more detail.

2.4.1. Downward communication

Fielding (2006) mentioned that downward communication flows from one level of a group or organisation to a lower level. Downward communication is a message sent from managers to subordinates and its purpose is to provide information or feedback to the departments and employees. It is used by group leaders and managers to assign goals, provide job instruction, and to inform employees of policies and procedures, point out problems that need attention and offer feedback about performance. According to Robbins (2003) downward communication does not have to beverbal,nor involve facetoface contact. He further states that when engaging in downward communication, managers must explain the reason why a decision was made. When communicating downward within the Department of Social Development, examples of messages used are verbal and written instructions, policy manuals, reports, notices, and in-house newsletters.

2.4.2 Upward communication

Upward communication flows from a lower to a higher level in the group or organisation. It is used to provide feedback to higher-up to inform them of progress toward goals. Upward communication also keeps managers aware of how employees feel about their jobs and about the organisation in general (Fielding, 2006).For instance, employees communicate to their immediate supervisors during consultation regarding work progress and challenges encountered, supervisors elevate the message to the next level until it reaches the top level. In the Department of Social Development employees also give feedback on progress in the form of monthly production reports to their immediate supervisors, who then escalates the feedback to the top level.

According to Robbins (2003), managers rely on upward communication for ideas on how things can be improved. He further states that upward communication is increasingly difficult because managers are overwhelmed and easily distracted due to their expanded job responsibilities.Fielding (2006) states that managers need to encourage a two-way flow of information, so that they can continuously judge how well the message is being received by employees. Upward communication serves to receive feedback about employees' performance, and to receive employees' suggestions and proposals. Feedback from employees is normally received through verbal and written reports and spoken and written suggestions. The researcher concur with the statement that managers rely on upwards communication, however they need to encourage a two way flow of information and ensure that the message is being received by employees.

2.4.3 Lateral communication

According to Jay (1999) lateral communication implies communication between equals/peers/people on the same level or in the same positions,such as department heads, senior managers, and managers, or between similar departments. Much of this communication will take place through face to face discussion, meetings, reports and memoranda. Fielding (2006) argues that lateral communication can lead to problems because different departments might have different tasks and that could make communication difficult. Robbins (2003) concurs with Fielding (2006) by saying that lateral communication can be bad or beneficial, since strict adherence to the formal vertical structure for all communication can impede the efficient and accurate transfer of information. It is further stated that lateral communication can create dysfunctional conflict when the formal vertical channels are breached, when members go above or around their superiors to get things done, or when superiors find that decisions have been taken without their knowledge (Fielding, 2006; Robbins, 2003).

2.5. Different types and channels of organisational communication

Circuits and channels refer to information pathways that guide the flow of information in an organisation (Greenwald, 2008). Flow of information may take place in a single direction, for instance a single person (supervisor) may transmit information to more than one person through written memos. He further states that all organisations develop mechanisms that encourage a selective exchange of information. Selective channelling ensures that all members have the type of information they need to fulfil their role expectations.

According to Greenwald (2008) communication channels and circuits in an organisation reflect its structure. Communication channels differ according to the direction in which they allow information to flow. The vertical channel is practiced in most government departments because the vertical channel links two individuals who are clearly in a superior/subordinate relationship.An important feature of communication channels is the degree of symmetry they create between the roles at either end of the linkage. Greenwald (2008) indicates that symmetrical communication takes place when roles at each end of the channel receive and transmit the same volume of information. Asymmetrical communication channels permit most messages to originate at only one end of the linkage, for instance, employee communicating to supervisor and supervisor to manager, until it reaches the top level. The most asymmetrical channels are found in strictly hierarchical organisations.

Communication circuits connect multiple individuals or sub-units. Communication takes place among all individuals in a circuit. Information circuits reproduce the basic structure of the organisation or specific sub-units. The different channels of communication used in formal and informal communication in organisations will be discussed in more detail.

2.5.1. Channels forformal communication

Formal communication includes memos, letters, electronic mail, fax transmissions, organisational periodicals, notices placed on bulletin boards, and meetings. Formal communication is practised in most organisations(Fielding, 2006).

Communication in today’s organisations is enhanced and enriched by computer technology and techniques. These include electronic mail, intranet, and video conferencing.According to Corrado(1994) video conferences bring the corporate faithful together by satellite across the nation or around the world to hear about new programmes and what they mean for their employees. It can point out highlights and deliver the company’s message on correct benefit use.

Electronic mail, for instance, has dramatically reduced the number of memos, letters, and phone calls that employees used to communicate among themselves. Electronic mail as a

communication tool has many benefits. It can be quickly written, edited, and stored, and can be distributed to one person or thousands. Emails can be read at the convenience of the recipient and the cost of sending email messages to employees compares very favourably to the cost of printing and distributing a comparable letter to employees. The disadvantage of email is that reading, absorbing, and responding to email messages can consume an employee's entire day, and in most instances employees encounter difficultyin distinguishing important emails from junk mail and irrelevant messages.

According to Robbins (2003), the intranet, which is a private, organisation-wide information network that looks like a website but which only allows access to people in an organisation,is another valuable communication channel to most organisations. The intranet and electronic mail are rapidly becoming the preferred means for employees within government organisations to communicate with one another.

Computer-aided communications are reshaping the way communication in organisationsoccurs. It is no longer necessary for employees to always be at their work stations. Cellular phones, computers and other personal communicators allow employees to be reached when they are in meetings, during lunch breaks or while visiting clients or customers.

2.5.2 Channels for informal communication

The formal system is not the only communication network in an organisation. An informal communication channel known as the 'grapevine' is always present in any organisation and iscreated when people work closely together. According to Robbins (2003), the grapevine has three main characteristics.Firstly, it is not controlled by management but by the people within the organisation, despite their level or position.Secondly, it is perceived by most employees as being more believable and reliable than any formal communiqué issued by top management. People within organisations always believe the grapevine and in most cases communication from the grapevine is true. Thirdly, the grapevine is used as a channel to serve the interests of employees. Employees might spreadrumours to colleagues for example informing them about performance bonuses, without any written proof.

Grapevines are likely to be the most popular form of verbal communication within organisations and they are most active when great changeis taking place in an organisation, because especially in times of uncertainty,facetoface communication is preferred. It seems that grapevine communication helps employees to make sense of what is going on in an organisation(Robbins, 2003).

Seeing that the grapevine communication is mostly verbal, Robbins (2003) mentions that one of the biggest disadvantages of a grapevine in an organisation is that the more people a verbal message passes through, the greater the potential for distortion. Another

disadvantage of the grapevine is that it might carry damaging rumours that could affect and reduce the effectiveness of formal communication. To lessen this potentially powerful and destructive force, a manager should make good use of formal channels of communication in conjunction with the grapevine to regularly communicate the relevant and accurate information that employees seek.

2.6 Effective communication

Fielding (2006) indicates that managers need to strive towards two-way rather than one-way communication. Communication should be regarded as a transaction in which employees create meaning together in an atmosphere of trust. Effective listening skills need to be cultivated, as well as the ability to write clear messages. Employees should be sensitive to each other's nonverbal communication, and should become experts in the preparation and delivery of verbal and written messages. Organisations need to establish the best possible conditions for communication, for instance messages should be accurate and clear, the procedure for giving and receiving of messages should be very clear, and organisations need to test the flow of information regularly and use different channels of communication to enhance the effectiveness of communication within the organisation. Messages should give all the information essential to decisionmakers at each stage or level within an organisation, and the procedure for the giving and receiving of messages should be very clear(Fielding,2006).The researcher is in agreement and supports the statement that managers need to strive towards two way communication to create a meaningful atmosphere of trust.

2.7 Barriers to effective communication

According to Fielding (2006) messages can be distorted because of a lack of understanding of the meaning, even when people communicate with the greatest goodwill. Robbins (2003) concurs with the above-mentioned author by saying that anumber of barriers can retard or distort effective communication. Some of the barriers to effective message flow will be discussed in more detail.

2.7.1 Filtering

Filtering refers to a sender purposely manipulating information so it will be seen in a more favourable light by the receiver. Factors such as fear of conveying bad news and the desire to please one's boss often lead employees to tell their superiors what they think those superiors want to hear. Robbins et al., (2010) mention that the major determinant of filtering is the number of levels in an organisation's structure; the more vertical levels in the organisation's hierarchy, the more opportunities there are for filtering. Fielding (2006) also mentions the number of stages through which a message has to go, the amount of time allowed for the message to move through the organisation, the lack of understanding and the shortening of messages because people cannot be bothered to share

detailed information with others, or information underload, as hampering effective communication within an organisation.

2.7.2 Information overload

According to Robbins (2003) individuals have a finite capacity for processing data, when information received exceeds their processing capacity, the result is information overload. With the array of communication channels that employees are exposed to, for example emails, intranet, phone calls, faxes, meetings, they complain that they are suffering from information overload. Information overload results in employees tending to ignore or forget information. They sometimes put off further processing until the overload situation has passed and this in turn leads to lost information and results in less effective communication. Fielding(2006) supports these views on information overload, and argues that they are a major barrier to effective communication.

2.7.3 Emotion

How the receiver feels at the time of receiving a communication message will influence how he or she interprets it. A message received when one is angry is often interpreted differently from when one is calm. Extreme emotions such as fury or depression are most likely to hinder effective communication. Robbins (2003) mentionsthat emotion and language are clear barriers to effective communication. Due to extreme emotions employees might misunderstand or misinterpret what is expected of them, which might negatively affect service delivery.

2.7.4 Communication apprehension

Robbins et al., (2010) argue that it is estimated that 5% - 20% of the population suffer from debilitating communication apprehension or anxiety, which is a major barrier to effective communication. Although many people experience problems with public speaking, or dread speaking in front of a group, communication apprehension is a more serious problem as it might affect differentcommunication modes. People who suffer from it experience undue tension and anxiety in verbal, written or both forms of communication. Those with verbal apprehensionfind it difficult to talk with others face to face, or may even become anxious when they have to use the telephone,while those with written communication apprehension may also find it difficult to communicate with people.

2.8The nature and role of internal communication

Nieuwmeijerand Hall (1992) maintainthat the purpose of internal communication is to communicate the vision for the organisation and make all employees aware of the organisational mission statement. Therefore, the value of effective internal

communicationwithin organisations should not be underestimated. Quirke (1996) confirms that the high impact areas of successful internal communication are morale, commitment, productivity and quality of relationship within organisations.

While there is common agreement that effective communication is a vital part of change, management within organisations who have the opportunity to tap into employees' energy and ideas, their organisations or departments, hardly ever achievewhat they intend to with their internal communication(Quirke1996).In every organisation people seem to believe that communication could be better, but to enhance communication seems difficult to achieve.

According to Quirke (1996) the nature and role of internal communication is changing and is mainly driven by changes taking place in an organisation. For departments to understand how communication should be helping them and how they should be using it, it is necessary to understand how change is affecting themNieuwmeijer and Hall (1992).

Quirke (1996) states that Directors or Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) must be able to juggle a set of constituents rather than control a set of subordinates; they have to bargain, negotiate and sell, instead of making unilateral decisions and issuing commands. The dilemmafaced by departments and organisations is, according to Quirke (1996), that while internal communication is central to success, managers tend to regard it as optional and not integrated with their real job. Although most managers will readily agree that communication is a good thing and important, there seems to be a low level of understanding about what communication involves and there is little commitment to getting it right.

According to Quirke (1996), in most instances managers seem to concentrate on absorbing information themselves and communicating with their counterparts or peers; however, they neglect communicating effectively with the rest of the employees within the organisation and therefore do not include them in the business or organisations' journey, which negatively affects the optimal functioning of the organisation.

It seems that there is a belief among management that employee communication is something that can be turned on and off, which leaves employees with the clear message that internal communication is a low priority. The majority of existing communication channels within organisations are designed for effective downward communication and upward communicationseems not to be encouraged. For developing responsive, creative and innovative cultures in departments, organisations need to foster new communication protocols and channels.

2.9 Theoretical approaches to organisational communication

2.9.1 McGregor's X and Y Theory

According to Gerber, Nel and Van Dyk (2004) the McGregor X and Y theory is based on the followingself-fulfilling prophecy:that because a manager's assumption about the nature of human beings impacts on the manager's behaviour towards employees, his behaviour then influences the employee's behaviour, which in turn serves to reconfirm the manager'sassumption. McGregor identified the two sets of assumptions that managers have about employees asthe X and Y theory. The X assumption is negative and includes the perception that people are lazy, dislike work, require close supervision, and do not want responsibility. The Y theory is a modern and positive set of assumptions about people. In this theory, leaders believe that employees are hard-working.

2.9.2 Humanistic approach

According to Mershamand Skinner (2001) the humanistic approach recognises that poor communication occurs in organisations, especially when certain management principles are not followed correctly.Should the span of control of a manager become too wide, because he/she has more than five or six subordinates reporting to him/her, his/her ability to communicate effectively with subordinate staff will be affected negatively. One of the principal assumptions of this approach is that increased worker satisfaction will lead to increased productivity, because a happy worker is a productive worker.

2.9.3Karl Weick'stheory of organising

According to Miller (2006) Weick's theory has an impact on organisational theory, particularly in the area of organisational communication. Weick's theory on organising is the idea that organisations exist within an environment, and this environment is not merely a physical environment, but is also an information environment. He further states that the information environment exists without individuals; individuals create the environment that confronts them through the process of enactment. The process of enactment suggests that different organisational members will imbue information inputs with different meanings, and hence will create different information environments.

According to Weick's model, the major goal of organising is the reduction of equivocality in the information environment. Miller (2006) describes equivocality as the unpredictability inherent in the information environment of an organisation. When equivocality in the environment is high, and there are many possible explanations for such an event, employees engage in communication cycles. Through communication cycles, employees react to ideas that help to make sense of the equivocal environment.

2.9.4 Classical approach

Miller (2006) argues that the classic theory viewsorganisations through the lens of a machine metaphor. The communication process has taken on particular characteristics in this machine-like organisation. Communication channels are considered to be the way of how messages are routed through the organisational system. Miller (2006) explains that there are a number of possible directions in which communication can flow, for instance, vertically up or downthe organisational chart, with supervisors talking to subordinates and vice versa, or horizontally, with employees at the same level talking to each other andlastly, communication can be free- flowing, in which case all employees are encouraged to talk with one another.

However, Miller (2006) confirms that in the classic theory, the most important route for communication is vertical,which implies that communication takes place in accordance with the organisational hierarchy and in the form of orders, rules and directives. Therefore it is a top-down flow of formal information, from managers to employees, which does not necessarily encourage open communication.

2.9.5 Systems Theory

According to Ivancevichand Matteson (1990) systems theory enables one to describe the behaviour of organisations both internally and externally. It describes how people within organisations perform their individual and group tasks. Organisations are dependent on this environment not only for its inputs but also for the acceptance of its outputs. It is critical that the organisation develop means of adjusting to environmental demands. The means of adjustment are information channels that enable the organisation to recognise these demands.

Ivancevichand Matteson (1990) explain that systems theory emphasises two important considerations for the ultimate survival of an organisation. Firstly, it depends on the ability of the organisation to adapt to the demands of its environment and secondly, in meeting those demands the total cycle of the input-output process must be the focus. Therefore, the effectiveness of communication within an organisation is crucial in meeting these two criteria.

Within the Department of Social Development a combination of the Humanistic approach and System Theory is applied to manage the organisation.

2.10 The effect of organisational structureon communication

According to Greenwald (2008) organisational structure operates primarily as a chain of command, it presents official reporting relationships. The structure ensures that each role reinforces the contributions made by other roles to the achievement of objectives in the

end.Greenwald (2008) further explains the differences between tall and flatorganisational structure. A tall organisational structure has many levels of decision making and supervisors between top management and operational staff. The Department of Social Development is characterised by a tall structure, which is indicated as a structure with many levels of decision making and supervisors between top management and junior staff.

Hierarchy is the most visible dimension of organisational structure. It comprises a system of successive levels of supervisors within an organisationin the form of a pyramid (Greenwald, 2008). A single boss on top makes major decisions; middle managers are required to act in a manner consistent with these decisions, and line managers and the rest of the staff have to follow suit.

Hierarchy in the organisational structure is highly visible in government departments, of which the Department of Social Development is an example. Stohl (1995) argues that hierarchy is created, recreated, sustained and changed through communicative practices.

Stohl (1995) further describes hierarchy as a relational matrix of status of authority ranking. In organised social systems, hierarchies are constituted by networks of relationshipsand people who occupy high positions in a hierarchy tend to be those who have larger networks that are more central and influentialin the flow of communication.

Stohl(1995) observes that hierarchies serve multiple functions;they might tend to marginalise specific groups and are often blamed for organisational ills. For instance, the large amount of red tape in departments within the Department of Social Development is often blamed on the hierarchy. In the ideal hierarchical system each successive layer of the hierarchy supervises the work of those below and transmits enquiries, policy and plans downwards (Greenwald, 2008).

The ideal bureaucratic model or hierarchical structureis commonly associated with chain of command and span of control. Stohl (1995) mentions that chain of command refers to the formalised prescription of responsibility, describing appropriate patterns of communication activity within a bounded system, meaning that the hierarchy is designed in such a way that each individual is directly responsible to one immediate superior. According to Stohl (1995) span of control refers to the designated number of subordinates reporting to any given supervisor and it is a critical building block in organisational networks. Many people enter the workplace unaware of or uncertain about the functioning of the communication protocols which may impede their establishment and mobility in the given hierarchy. Cushway (1993) explains that the concept of integration in an organisation refers to the degree of coordination and interdependence among the diverse parts or departments within the organisation. Integration of various degrees may be observed in relationships among people and among organisational roles,

and might be seen to be a natural feature of organisations. Integration within an organisation is a rather complex and challenging process.

Greenwald (2008) argues that the organisational structure dictates and influences the communication within an organisation by using processes of instruction and information. These will be explained in more detail.

a. Instructions

An instruction is an easily observed process through which organisations assign tasks and monitor their performance. People receive instructions verbally or in writing and according to the prescriptions of the organisation. Structure becomes clearly visible when instructions are given. Supervisors give instructions and negotiate with subordinates in terms of the accomplishment of the instructions' objectives or outcomes and subordinates implement a similar process with people working for them (Greenwald,2008). For instance, instructions given to an employee, if not clear or not interpreted correctly are subject to the possibility that they might not be carried out as expected, due to misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

b. Information

Information includes facts ranging in importance from crucial knowledge of opportunities for advancement and those of interest to managers. Information often includes action. Access to information reflects standing in the organisational structure. The person at the bottom is usually the last to know about important developments. The volume of information transmitted and received varies according to the organisation's degree of integration. Information includes actions and facts told.

According to Greenwald (2008) thesending and receiving of information is a crucial organisational process. Information is a powerful commodity within an organisation therefore communication is a very powerful tool within organisations. Theorganisational structure greatly affects human behaviour because it determines and influences the flow of information.

2.11Summary

The chapter conceptualised the literature in order to address the research problem, which is the perceptions and experiences of employees about the nature of communication in the Department of Social Development in the North Rand Region. The chapter provides a thorough and comprehensive discussion of the different literature and theoretical frameworks which underpin communication within organisations. The literature will also be integrated with Chapters Four and Five in order to support or contrast the findings of the study.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter outlines the methodology used to explore experiences and perceptions of employees about communication within the Department of Social Development in the North Rand Region.

The chapter describes the research questions, aims and objectives as well as the approach and design that were applied. It also outlines the sampling procedures used, research instrumentation utilised as well as the methods of data collection and analysis. The limitations of the study and the ethical considerations are highlighted.

3.2Purpose of the study

The primary aim of the study was to explore how the existing modes of communication are perceived and experienced by employees and how these modes affect all employees (top, middle, line management and juniorstaff) in the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region.

3.3Secondary objectives of the study

The secondary objectives were:

3.3.1 To establish whether employees are aware of the existing communication protocols within the Department.

3.3.2 To establish whether employees understand the existing communication protocols within the Department.

3.3.3 To explore to what extent communication protocols are utilised.

3.3.4 To explore which communication channels employees prefer to utilise for communication.

3.3.5 To determine the challenges employees are experiencing with the existing

protocols.

3.3.6 To gather information on suggestions to address the challenges with the existing protocols.

3.4 Research questions

The research attempted to answer the following research questions:

3.4.1 In which ways do employees utilise the existing communication protocols in the Department of Social Development?

3.4.2 What are the perceptions of employees about the communication channels utilised in the Department of Social Development?

3.4.3 How does the nature of communication affect the service delivery of employees?

3.4.4 How does the nature of communication affect the productivity of employees in the Department of Social Development?

3.5 Research approach and design

Research design is described as a plan according to which we obtain research participants and collect information (De Voset al., 1998).A qualitative research approach was followed in order to get more inside information and facts on the perception of employees about the nature of communication in the Departmentof Social Development.

The researcher followed a case study as a research design. According to Creswell (1998) cited in De Voset al. (2005) a case study is regarded as an exploration or in- depth analysis of a bounded system, or single or multiple case over a period of time. The exploration and description of the case takes place through detailed in depth data collection methods involving multiple source of information which includes interviews and observations (De Voset al., 2005).

The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Babbie (1992) defines exploration as “the attempt to develop an initial understanding of some phenomenon and description as the precise measurement and reporting of the characteristics of some population or phenomenon under study”.

3.6 Sampling procedures

The sample was drawn from the North Rand region of the Department of Social Development representing top management, middle management, line management, and junior staff.

The sample was purposively composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative, or typical attributes of the population (Rubin&Babbie, 2005). Purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, was used to select a group of eighteen employees of the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region. The criteria for participants were employees employed for more than six months at the Department of

Social Development. The sample consisted of females and males ranging from 20-60 years of age.The methods of data collection were face to face interviews with 10 participants and questionnaires consisting of only open-ended questions were completed by eight individual respondents.

According to Bless, Higson-SmithandKagee(2006) purposive or judgemental sampling is when a sample is selected based on the researcher's own knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research. It is also based on the researcher's judgement and the purpose of the study. The researcher had deliberately involved employees from different directoratesrepresenting different levels within the organisation, in order to obtain different opinions.

Bailey (1987) further states that the advantage of purposive sampling is that the researcher can use his/her research skills and prior knowledge to choose respondents.

Once ethics clearance had been obtained, the following sampling procedures were followed to find the respondents and participants. The researcher emailed a letter to the Deputy Director of the North Rand Region of the Department of Social Development requesting permission to conduct the study. A meeting was arranged with the Regional Director and management of the North Rand Region of the Department of Social Development. The researcher conducted a presentation on the purpose of the study andfurther explained the criteria for the selection of respondents and participants. The management ofNorth Rand Region of the Department of Social Development granted the researcher permission to conduct the study. A convenient venue, date and time were arranged prior to conducting the study.

All participants were provided with a participant information sheet (Appendix A). They were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any time. They were also informed that they hadthe right to refuse to participate in the study and that refusal would not result in negative consequences and that the information would be kept confidential. On the day of the study participants were requested to sign the consent form (Appendix B).

3.7Research instrumentation

Due to the sensitivity about communication within the Department of Social Development and because the researcher is employed by the Department of Social Development, the decision was made to utilise a questionnaire (Appendix C) and a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix D) as research instruments. The questionnaire had only open-ended questions which gave the respondents the opportunity to share their views and experiences. The semi-structured interview schedule that was guiding the individual interviews gave the researcher the opportunity to facilitate the conversation with the participants to share their experiences and views, and it also allowed the

researcher to probe for more information. Since the study was exploratory and descriptive, participants were encouraged to express themselves openly and freely. Dey(1993, p.16) indicates that open-ended questions are used to encourage participants to express themselves freely and are more likely to reflect a person's own thinking.

The semi-structured interview schedule consisted of thirteen questions. Questions were asked to explore different matters,and responses were noted by the researcher. Darlington and Dorothy (2002) emphasise that it is important to record or take notes during interviews because ithelps with the accurate analysis of data.

3.8 Pre-testing of research tool

Pre-testing comprises the testing of one or more aspects of the research instrument, as mentioned by Babbie (1990) cited in De Voset al., (1998). The pre-testing of the instruments must be executed very carefully and in exactly the same way as envisaged in the actual study. Babbie further states that this method can identify deficiencies in the research instruments, help the researcher to better plan the contents of the different interviewing, and help the researcher to decide whether to increase or decrease the number of interviews or questionnaires in light of the findings in the pre-testing.

Grinnell (2005) also states that pre-testing is concerned with participants' answers and the difficulties they may encounter when answering the questions that have been posed. Pre-testing enhances the reliability of the study and its results.

The pre-testing of the questionnaire and interview schedule was conducted prior to the actual study. The aim was to uncover gaps and establish any difficulties that respondents and participants were likely to encounter in responding. The researcher pre-tested instruments with employees at the Department of Social Development, Johannesburg Metro Region, who are not included in the actual study. Feedback from this process was noted and no modifications were made.

3.9 Data collection

The method used to collect data for this study included individually completed questionnaires and individual face to face interviews in order to obtain participants experiences, thoughts and views. The questionnaires were administered and interviews were conducted at the North Rand Region of the Department of Social Development.

The data was collected from members of top, middle and line management as well as from junior staff members. Eight employees of the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region, completed the open-ended questions questionnaire, and ten employees were engagedin face to face semi-structured interviews. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes per participant. The researcher explained the purpose of the

research to allrespondents and provided them with the participant information sheet (Appendix B) and consent form, which they signed to give their consent to participate in the study (Appendix C).

Due to the sensitivity of the matter, the questionnaire with open-ended questions gave respondents the opportunity to share their views and experiences without holding back information from the interviewer, who is an employee of the Departmentof Social Development. Neumann (2006, p. 287) mentioned that “open-ended questions permit an unlimited number of possible answers, adequate answers to complex issues and creativity, self- expression and richness of detail”.

The researcher utilised semi–structured, face to face interviews in conjunction with questionnaires. According to Welmer, Kruger andMitchell (2005) semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to probe for the elaboration of incomplete answers. It also provides opportunity for explanation and clarification of misunderstanding and gives the interviewer an opportunity to establish rapport and observe nonverbal behaviour.

Darlington and Dorothy (2002) maintain that in-depth interviewing is the most commonly used data collection approach in qualitative research. He further states that the in-depth interview takes seriously the notion that people are experts on their own experience and so best able to report how they experience a particular event or phenomenon.

Darlington and Dorothy (2002) indicate that the advantage of interviewingis that interviewers can probe for more specific answers and can repeat a question when the response indicates that the respondent has misunderstood. The interview tends to have a better response rate than individually completed questionnaires and the interviewer can ensure that all of the questions are answered. The disadvantage is that an interview offers less assurance of anonymity to the participant than the completion of a questionnaire.

3.10 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data (De Voset al., 2005). The process involves data management and analysis. The transcribingof note offers another point of transition between data collection and analysis as part of data management and preparation.

Darlington andScott (2002) indicate that qualitative data analysis involves becoming familiar with the data, which means immersing oneself in it and getting a fuller sense of what the data is about. It also entails coding, which is described as a process of creating categories and assigning them to selected data. The researcher took notes during the interviews to record the data. Coding was done through classifying data into categories, themes and patterns. Dey (1993) describes coding as a process of identifying bits and

pieces of information and linking these to concepts and themes around which the trial report is organised.

3.11 Limitations of the study

- It was difficult for the researcher to get participants from other units due to organisational bureaucracy and some directorate that failed to honour their commitment, and others who declined to participate in the study.
- Interview schedule was designed in English, although all participants were not fluent in English.
- Participants could withhold important information from the researcher which they might regard as sensitive.
- The bureaucratic process within the Department delayed the process of data collection.
- The researcher is an employee of the Department of Social Developmentthis could cause participants to give social desirable answers or withhold information.
- The study is limited to the Department of Social Development in North Rand Region, therefore the findings might not be generalisableto the other regions such as Sedibeng, East Rand, West Rand, Johannesburg Metro in Gauteng, or to the Departments of Social Development in other provinces.

3.12 Ethical considerations

According to De Voset al., (2005) research ethics is defined as a set of widely accepted moral principles that offer rules for behavioural expectations of the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other research assistants, and students.

According to Bless, Higson-Smith, andKagee (2006) the study of research ethics helps to prevent research abuse, and assists investigators in understanding their responsibilities as ethical scholars. They further state that research ethics places an emphasis on the humane and sensitive treatment of research participants who may be placed at varying degrees of risk by research procedures.

The study involves focus on human beings as participants of research. The researcher has a responsibility to respect the rights and dignity of the participants by adhering to the following principles:

Avoidance of harm

According to Darlington and Dorothy (2002) the researcher must ensure that the study will not cause harm and that adequate safeguards are put in place. The respondents were thoroughly informed beforehand about the potential impact of the study and its aims and objectives, sincethe information offered them an opportunity to withdraw from the study if they so wished. The dignity of participants was maintained throughout the research process.

Informed consent

The participants signed informed consent before participating in the study. The participants were not forced to participate in the study.

Deception

The researcher informed participants about the nature of the study and that the research was undertaken as a requirement for completion of amaster's degree. The aims and objectives of the study were also disclosed to the participants. No form of deception was inflicted on the participants. The participants were neither mislead nor provided with incorrect information.

Coercion

Participants were not coerced to participate in the study and participation in the study was voluntary.

Violation of privacy

Participants' identifying details will be kept private. Confidentiality was maintained and participants were assured of their rights to privacy. Participants were assured that onlythe researcher and her supervisor would have access to the data. Ethical approval with certificate protocol number H100 1103 for the study was received from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-medical) (Appendix E).

The researcher obtained permission from the Research Unit of the Department of Social Development'sprovincial office to conduct the study at the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region (Appendix F).

3.13 Summary

The chapter has outlined the aims and objectives of the study as well as the research methodology and design that were applied. Furthermore, the sampling procedures and research instrumentation was described as well as the pre-testing of the research tool. The methods of data collection and analysis were explained and ethical considerations were

highlighted. Limitations of the study were presented. The findings of the study will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR:

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The primary aim of the study was to explore how the existing modes of communication are perceived and experienced by employees and how these modes might affect all employees (top, middle, line management and junior staff) in the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region.Key aspects such as communication, communication protocols and channels were delineated in order to make recommendations for effective communication in the Departmentof Social Development. This chapter focuses mainly on the presentation and discussion of the research findings in relation to literature on communication within the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region, and in accordance with the research questions and objectives of the study. The findings will be presented in two parts. Part A is composed of, and reflects the summarised biographical data as given by participants, whereas Part B is composed of,and describes the findings in the research study in relation to the research questions.

4.2 Profile of respondents and participants

The study was undertaken with employees who have been in the employ of the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region, for more than six months. The perceptions, experiences and views were captured in face to face interviews guided by a semi-structured interview schedule and through individually completed questionnaires for those who were not comfortable with participating in interviews. The demographic details of respondents and participants are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 4.1: Demographic profile of respondents and participants (N= 18)

GENDER	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
MALE	1	2	3	1
FEMALE	1	6	4	
TOTAL	2	8	7	1

A total of ten participants wereinterviewed and eight respondents completed questionnaires;all participants and respondents were from the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region. Eleven of them were female and seven male. Two

respondents were between 29 and 30 years of age, and eight(four participants and four respondents) were between 30 and 39 years of age; five, (three respondents and two participants) were between 40 and 49 years of age, and only one was between 50 and 59 years of age. The majority of the participants were between 30 and 49 years of age.

TABLE 4.2: Yearsof Service (N=18)

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	MALE	FEMALE
1-6	3	1
7-12	3	4
12-18	2	2
19-24	1	2

All of the participants hadmore than six months of experience in the employ of the Department of Social Development. The majority had between 7 and 18 years of experience in the Departmentof Social Development. This implies that they have knowledge, experience and expertise in their scope of service delivery and of the policies and procedures within the Departmentof Social Development. Most of them were professionalsfrom different fields of study.

4.3 Knowledge and understanding of communication

The understanding of communication brought about various responses from the employees. Of the respondents and participants, 30% had a similar understanding of the concept of communication.

One respondent described communication as "***a way of communicating messages between two or more people through verbal, written, or telephone, and ensuring that the person receives the message*".**

Another respondent postulated communicationas"***a constant flow of information in the organisation to ensure that everyone working there is aware at what is going on and what is expected of them".***

One respondent described it as "***a way of conveying a message to the next person and a way of expressing one's opinion".***

Nieumeijer (1992) describes communication as a process by which people attempt to share meanings. It also means that the message must be sent, perceived, understood, and the desired response must be provoked.

Another participant indicated that "***communication is a two-way stream from one person to another",*** she further elaborated that "***it is a way people speak and listen to one another to reach certain understanding".***

Another respondent commented as follows:" ***oh yes, there is communication breakdown in this department; people are no longer following the right protocols as required by the Department. Some people also use power to threaten others. Information flow is a major problem in this Department".***

From the respondents' and participants' views it seems that the trend is the same,as they all have a good understanding of communication as a two-way process. It seems that all of them understand the value and importance of effective communication. This confirms the contribution of effectivecommunication to a successful organisation. It is possible that employees and managers might ignore the negative consequences of ineffective communication whichmight affect the success of the Departmentof Social Development in achieving its goals. Mershamand Skinner (2001) concur with the above statement by saying that communication is the lifeblood of an organisation; if we could somehow remove the flow of communication in an organisation, we would not have an organisation.

Communication is a two-way process that needs to be acknowledged in the workplace or organisation. This is verified by the statement from one respondent "***communication is a relationship between two people or a group working together to achieve common goals".***

4.4 Perceptions on the main conditions for communication

When participants were asked about their perceptions on the main conditions of successful communication in the organisation, 60% had common and similar views regarding the main conditions of successful communication. Their views centred on the following:

"***Seek first to understand before you are understood."***

"Allow questions and provide clarity."

"Communicate a clear message."

The respondents and participants perceived that the main conditions for successful communication in the Departmentof Social Developmentare through understanding of

one's own role, and that communication should be open and without limits in its process. They further stated that it is imperative in the organisation to have a sound communication if the objectives, aims and goals are to be achieved.

Jay (1999) indicates that good communication is as much about listening as it is about speaking. It does not matter how much information you give your staff or how effectivelyyou impart it. Therefore, it seems that employees' perceptions on the main conditions of successful communication in the organisation are consistent with the literature. Employees need to be communicated with at all times and be provided with clarity.

Another respondent said "***my perception about the main conditions of successful communicationis through emails or writing of reports because you can track down paper trails as evidence, and with verbal communication to clarify misunderstandings***".

Two participants commented that to have a successful organisation "***free flow of information should be encouraged and monthly meetings should be conducted to exchange ideas and thoughts*****"**.Corrado (1994) supported the above statement by saying that a meeting with employees, individually or in groups, is the classic employee communication tool.

Another participant suggested that "***management should actively listen, respect and respond to their (employees) concerns with immediate effect, to ensure successful communication".*** Others prefer to use computer-aided mechanisms such as emails, telephones, faxes and group discussion as a means of interaction.

These findings demonstrate that a large portion of participants and respondents perceived that communication should be open, using different channels, and involving all employees. The findings also confirm that transparency and regular face to face meetings are feasible ways to maintain good and successful communication in the Departmentof Social Development.

Two respondents were of the opinion that "***all the tools for communication must be available at all times, there should be a responsible person who relays the information and one who receives and understands it***".They further stated that "***the message should be clear and simple".***

Another indicated that there should be "***strict internal communication systems, managers should provide employees with information on procedures and tasks, and always give feedback on performance".*** She further stated that "***the Departmentof Social Development should have mechanisms for employees to express frustrations, feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction".***

4.5 Methods of communication

According to Ludlowand Panton (1992) communication can be considered a personal process that involves the transfer of information and some input. It is something people do; it does not exist without people taking some form of action. It has to do with relationships between people.

There are different forms of communication which are practised in different organisations which are formal and informal depending on the organisational culture. Formal communication includes memos, emails, meetings and faxes and other forms of written and verbal communication. Employees' preference was written communication since it is valid proof. One respondent argued that "***written communication has the disadvantage of getting lost if it was kept on the electronic system and there is a system crash".*** Some of the respondents preferred emails because "***they can be used as an action plan and as evidence that shows information requested was responded to".***

Verbal communication was also valuable to the respondents and participants. One of the respondents said that "***verbal communication is helpful to clear up the misunderstandings and misinterpretations"***. Another supported this argument by mentioning that "***it ensures that one has opportunity to seek clarity on tasks and it also clears one's conscience and allows for adequate understanding of the expectations, roles, as well as timelines, if need be***".

Another respondent mentioned that: "***communication should be clear, timeousand free- flowing, sometimes information is conveyed in a short period of time and inputs/ responses are needed in a short space of time. I therefore need to be given enough time to gather all the relevant information for proper planning***".

One of the participant indicated that "***with the technological advances communication can happen almost immediately and I prefer to be communicated with via email because it is convenient and one is able to respond immediately with no hassles***". From most of the respondents' and participants' responses it was clear that "***to read huge circulars and documents is time consuming and we end up not reading them".***

From the findings it is clear that participants and respondents prefer different kinds of channels to be used to communicate with them. The majority prefer verbal communication since it gives them the chance to seek clarity where required. It also gives them a chance or opportunity to express themselves freely and openly and to reach mutual understanding. However, 10% of the respondents and participants favoured communicationvia email because emails are fast and reliable. Although emails are fast, they realise that they aredependent on the availability of the server,

and if the server is down and emails are the only communication channel, employees could not be communicated with.

4.6 Barriers to effective communication

According to Fielding (2006) messages can be distorted because of a lack of understanding of their meaning, even when people communicate with the greatest goodwill. The following themes were identified by the participants as major barriers to effective communication in the Departmentof Social Development.

4.6.1 Bureaucratic process of communication

According to Greenwald (2008) organisational structure operates primarily as a chain of command, it represents official reporting relationships. The structure ensures that each role reinforces the contributions made by other roles to the achievement of final objectives.

One participant felt that the process of communication is too bureaucratic. He stated that "***bureaucratic commands dilute the original intent of the communicated information*"**. He also lamented the fact that *"**some managers do not cascade the information to employees*".**

Another respondent commented that "***it is frustrating not to be communicated with on time***" and "***I am commenting on this both as a manager and an employee, the process is bureaucratic and sometimes it is very difficult to understand what causes delays and in most cases, written memos and circulars do not provideenough clarity on certain matters*".**

4.6.2 Withholding Information

One respondent responded by saying that "***managers keep information among themselves anddo not cascade it to their subordinates, some managers and staff deliberately and conveniently forget, or keep information for a long time***". Robbins (2003) pointed out that employees tend to ignore, pass over, or forget information and this might lead to sharing lots of information at the same time which hampers the effectiveness of communication.

4.6.3 Disrespect

Respect is one of the basic values in the social work profession. It is a two-way process and through respect we can successfully reach our objectives. Some of the respondents and participants mentioned that employees,when communicating with one another,tend to sometimes find themselves in the predicament of personality clashes and experience disrespectful behaviour during

communication. One participant commented "***some use power, people tend to look down on others due to their rank, some of the managers do not communicate with junior staff they only communicate with those at their own level. Thiscauses many emotions like anger andsadness in employees***". As observed by Robbins (2003) emotions are most likely to hinder effective communication in an organisation.

Other participants supported the above view and stated that disrespect is the major problem in the Department. It was confirmed by another participant who mentioned "***disrespect impacts negatively and it hinders effective communication".***There also seems to be a tendency among employees to sabotage each other by withholding information and refusing to carry out delegated tasks, which also impacts negatively on production and work-related relationships.

Other participants also highlighted that "***there is lack of supervision; supervisors are not communicating information to employees. They sit on the information until it is overdue and expect employees to stop everything and attend to their requests at the eleventh hour".***

4.6.4 Lack of resources

Two participants mentioned that lack of resources is a major barrier to communication. According to them "***limited resources like telephones, computers, and access to data lines are major barriers to effective communication***". They further highlighted that "***some new employees takes three months to have access to emails due to late creation of email lines… management is failing us, they have to review or introduce new technology systems so as to improve service delivery"***.Corrado (1994)explains that managers have a responsibility to talk to their employees about the business and look at communication systems that will be conducive to efficient communication.

4.6.5 Language and cultural differences

Robbins (2003) mentions that languagemight be one of the barriers to effective communication. The language of the communication might affect how the receiver interprets it.

Some of the participants were of the opinion that language influences and contributes to the way they communicate in the organisation. One acknowledged that "***diversity has to be taken into consideration***". However, he argued that English is the official business language because we have eleven languages in South Africa. Therefore "***employees have to compromise and use the acceptable***

***working language*".**He indicated language as a barrier and also referred to the challenges when all employees want to bring their cultural practices and beliefs to the workplace, which might be in conflict with the organisational culture. According to Corrado (1994) in the workplace, workers are diverse and multicultural, have different values,different cultural backgrounds and we must understand the nature of those differences and try to modify our interpersonal behaviour to cope with them.

4.6.6Protocols and red tape

When exploring the protocols it was clear that employees do understand the importance and value of them. However, one respondent responded by saying:***"I understand the issue of protocols and that they should be correctly followed, we are returning documents on time but then documents lie in an executive manager's office for months awaiting his/ her signature, which delays service delivery".***He further stated that "***things must be simplified and that the long chain of bureaucracy should be streamlined***".

4.6.7 Planning

One respondent indicated that "*poor planning among employees leads tocommunication not being achieved within a short period of time" for instance employees should plan their work accordingly as per project plan*. She further indicated that "***the wording on memos and circulars should be clear, because not all employees are familiar with theterminology in the circulars".*** Another respondent also mentioned that "***leaders do not have time to communicate frequently with all relevant parties and sometimes they send information toirrelevant people".***

4.7 Suggestions on effective communication

The success of an organisation is based on its communication levels, flow of information and how its people interact. Organisational communication is linked to managerial effectiveness, the integration of work units across organisational levels, and job performance satisfaction. Jay (1999) commented that it is easier for managers to work effectively when information is flowing freely between employees and that they are able to communicate about important matters and obtain the necessary support from employees.

Five participants suggested "***management must share information with all relevant officials which ensures proper planning and more open lines of communication***".

Another respondent suggested that *"**there must be regular meetings with staff whereby management provides feedback to ensure the involvement of staff in the planning and decision making".***He further maintained that "***regular feedback from management about new directives will improve communication".***

Managers should more often ensure that employee's channels of communication, for instance telephones and emails, are well maintained. One respondent shared his suggestion that "***it is imperative to have training on communication models, including all communication channels and protocols***". He further stated that "***management and sectional meetings should be encouraged to ensure effective communication among employees".***

One participant indicated that "***the department can ensure effective communication by copying all memos and circulars to all staff that are indirectly affected, to ensure that all receive the same information".*** He also mentioned that "***written communiqués should at all times encourage people to seek clarity with the originator of the message to avoid diluting of the original message".***

Four of the respondents supported the above argument by saying that "***the employees can ensure effective communication by making sure that the message is understood between the communicator and the receiver, and that the receiver must react and give feedback immediately or ask for clarity to clear of the misunderstandings".***

Another participantwas of the opinion that "***there must be proper planning by management, by the provision of resources or tools of communication to all employees to maintain effective organisational communication***".

Another respondent commented **"management** ***should continuously give feedback to employees in order to ensure effective communication at all times***".

Many misgivings were expressed by the participants and respondents, ranging from management having to give feedback to employees regularly and training on communication models to improve the quality of communication practised in the Department of Social Development. The Department of Social Developmentshould ensure that communication tools and equipment are well maintained and that all employees are equipped with the necessary equipment for communication.

4.8 Role of communication in motivating employees

Communication plays a major role in inspiring and motivating employees. It also assists in clearing up misunderstandings within the organisation. Robbins (2003) confirms the statement that communication serves four major functions within an organisation, these comprise control, motivation, emotional expression and

information. Communication fosters motivation by clarifying for employees what must be done, how well they are doing it and what can be done to improve performance. It also provides information that employees need to make decisions, and provides an avenue for expression of emotions and fulfillment of social needs.

Wheatley (2006) also commented that organisations need to invite and engage employees' creativity and commitment in the process of rethinking, redesigning and restructuring the organisation, because their involvement will create a future that already has them in it. She also states that networks of communication develop from the constant interaction among employees.

One respondentshared his opinion "***it is key that when employees are being communicated with, they should be addressed in a respectful manner***". He further maintained that "***it is important to praise employees for good work done***".Respondents had common opinions that employees need to know about new developments and different activities that take place in the Departmentof Social Development.

Another participant stated that"if ***employees know what is expected of them they will be more goal-oriented and empowered***". A respondent indicated that "***when communicating, employees feel that they are part of the management and of the Department and that their input is critical to shaping the future".***He further elaborated that "***if employees are informed during the development stage rather than during the implementation stage, or they are asked to participate, it will motivate employees and they will feel that their opinions and inputs are being valued".***

One participant also highlighted that "***when information is shared in a transparent way employees feel acknowledged, respected and motivated as part of the Departmentof Social Development"***. She further explained that "***employees should be communicated with on new developments in the Department of Social Development".***

One respondent commented that "***if people know that their voices are heard and they feel part of the decision making process they will be happier, loyal, and supportive of new ideas and also give feedback on performance***".

Another responded commented that "***communication plays a role in motivating employees, if employees are continuously informed about issues that affect them, if managers consistently, stick to return dates and communicate the delay of service delivery if encountered, employees will be motivated at all times".***

Another respondent argued that "***human beings are not robots and therefore they need feedback on performance which will motivate them, management has to listen effectively to the needs of employees, respect employees and engage them in decision making*".**

4.9 Effective communication and productivity

According to Quirke (1996) effective communication is a vital part of change and can help tap into employees' energies and ideas.

The following findings are a contribution on effective communication by employees. One respondent explained that "***effective communication within an organisation can contribute positively towards employees' productivity***".

Two participants felt that "***employees can plan effectively and meet required targets, ensuring that the best possible work performance can be delivered, if they are communicated with effectively*"**. The respondents acknowledged that effective communication can contribute to employees' productivity. Their views centeredon the following:

"***Informed or communicated with, appropriate decisions can be taken***".

*"**Good communication in guiding employees to be creative can help employees to achieve departmental objectives*".**

***"Effective communication helps employees to know what is expected of them, when and how*".**

***"If employees are motivated by managers and have access to time saving devices they can do their work more effectively*".**

"*All understand what needs to be done the same way and collectively harness their energies for attainment of the same goal*".

" **If** ***misunderstanding and dysfunctional conflict are minimised, if there is clear communication from bottom, top-to-bottom and bottom-up, all will have a clear picture of what is expected of them".***

***"Staff get a sense of belonging and security if consulted and involved in the implementation and decision making process*".**

One respondent indicated that "***there should be improved planning within the Department, and with increased motivation employees will also increase their performance which will lead to high productivity, open and free communication increases staff satisfaction*".**

One respondent commented "***oh yes, employees should be kept informed on the developments of the Departmentof Social Development, it will make their life and work easy because they will know what is expected of them, no one must be taken for granted as all information must reach all the employees of the Department, from junior staff to management, or topdown*".**

Effective communication changes organisational morality and production in a positive way so that if employees are communicated with continuously, they will be more productive. Employees need to be acknowledged at all times. Fielding (2006) indicates that managers need to strive towards two-way rather than one-way communication. Communication should be regarded as a transaction in which employees create meaning together in an atmosphere of trust. Effective listening skills need to be cultivated, as well as the ability to write clear messages.

A humanistic approach also emphasises the importance of productivity and employee satisfaction. One of the principle assumptions of this approach is that increases in worker satisfaction will lead to an increase in productivity, as a happy worker is a productive worker Mershamand Skinner (2001). Therefore, the importance of communication and interpersonal communication needs to be considered in an organisation.

4.10Communication protocols

According to Greenwald (2008) communication protocols in the departments operate according to departmental structure, andorganisational structure ensures that each role reinforces the contribution made by other roles, being the achievement of objectives. It also presents an official reporting relationship.

Most of the respondents and participants seemed to have similar ideas on the protocols, although a few of them were not clear. The protocols are described according to the following themes:

4.10.1 Internal protocols

One participant indicated that "**the *bureaucratic chain of command on protocol issues gets raised with the immediate supervisor/manager and is elevated to the next higher level until it is resolved*".**

The following statement is confirmed by the classical approach: in classical theory the most important route for communication is the vertical flow according to the organisational hierarchy in the form of orders, rules and directives.

Miller (2006) characterised communication as a way to consider how a message is routed through the organisational system. Another respondent pointed out that "***all employees should follow the correct protocols and adhere to them".*** She elaborated by saying that***"officials should report to their immediate supervisor, the supervisor should elevate it to the assistant director, then to the deputy director, until it reaches the director's office***". Another respondent supported the above argument that "***all the protocols have to be observed, for instance an employee cannot send out a memo without the supervisor's approval".***

Organisations have formal and informal guidelines that employees are required to follow. Formal communication is described as a communication protocol that has to be followed by employees, for instance, employees are required to first communicate job-related grievances to their immediate supervisors, to comply with organizational policies (Stohl, 1995).

According to Armstrong and Stephens (2005) for communication to be effective the three different directions of formal communication have to be open and unblocked at all times. They further indicate that communication can be downward and upward. Downward communication flows from one level of a group or organisation to a lower level. It is used by group leaders or mangers to assign goals and provide job instruction. Its purpose is to provide information or feedback to the departments' employees.

4.10.2 External protocols and media communication

External protocols are protocols which involve other stakeholders and must be signed by the regional director or delegated manager. One respondentindicatedthat***"communication with the media must be made by the communications unit***".

External communication is classified under lateral or sideways communication; it is implies communication between equals such as departmental heads, or between similar departments Fielding (2006).

4.11Importance of protocols

Fielding (2006) is of the opinion that upward communication serves to receive feedback about employees' performance and to receive their suggestions and proposals. Managers need to encourage a two-way flow of information, so that they can judge how clearly messages are received by employees.

One respondent was of the opinion that "***protocols are useful because one is able to know where and how to report".***Anotherrespondent indicated that "**protocols** ***are important in ensuring that there is formality in the way information is shared***". She further stated that "***protocols help to maintain order and ensure that issues are addressed properly".***

Another participant described the importance of protocols*as****"toensure awareness and synergy; protocols protect integrity in the department and ensure accountability****"*.

One participant indicated that *"****protocols are very effective, as the message gets across and officials are able to reach the objectives set by management, and officials also have the time to raise their concerns after receiving communiqués".***

One respondent commented "***I am aware that we have to follow protocols but protocols sometimes delay the process of service delivery and in most instances managers do not followthem.All employees are not following the correct protocols, from junior staff to managers".***

Another respondentmentioned that "***protocols are useful to reach the objectives and goals of the Departmentof Social Developmentt, they help to maintain order and ensure that issues are addressed properly, they increase respect for each other and minimise the gossip****"*.

One respondent felt that "**protocols** ***are not always effective, they hamper service delivery and the chain of reporting; sometimes you spend half a day waiting for approval****"*. She furtherindicated that *"****mangers should always delegate authority when they are not available to do so".***

Most of the respondents and participants agreed that protocols are useful, whereas some indicated that they are time consuming. The protocols are useful because they ensure accountability and responsibility by employees (managers and junior staff). Protocols also ensure that departmental information is protected. Some participants seemto be unaware of the existing protocols within the Departmentof Social Development. These have to be emphasized during induction sessions, particularly to the newly employed, or training has to be conducted on communication protocols.

4.12 Suggestions on improving communication protocols

Participants suggested that the Departmentof Social Development should emphasise adherence to the protocols, managers should not sign off documents that are of incorrect format and they should monitor compliance by all, irrespective of rank.

One respondent indicated that "***protocols must be observed at all times, information must be communicated to relevant officials as per protocol***". She further stated that "***employees should also be consulted at all times".***

Another respondent suggested that "***the Departmentof Social Development should clarify the powers delegated to managers or their subordinates by allowing employees to freely go to the next person in authority when the need arises".***

Another respondent supported the above view and stated that *"**delegation of authority is very important, as managers are not always available to respond to some matters, and that employees must be informed".***

Wheatley (2006) states that organisations need to "invite and engage employees' creativity and commitment in the process of rethinking, redesigning and restructuring the organisation, because their involvement will create a future that already has them in it". In order for the Department of Social Developmentto improve on the existing communication protocols or to implement the new protocols, they need to interact with employees, get employee inputs and suggestions

Two of the respondents commented that "***time management can be one of the fact*ors for *improvement of the Department's protocols***" they further stated that ***"time management for reporting is very important in improving protocols, there should be a time frame in terms of submission of reports and feedback, and there is lack of consistency in the Departmentof Social Development".***

4.13. Communication channels

The focus will be on formal networks or different channels of communication. Formal communication includes memos, letters, electronic mail, fax transmissions and meetings.

TABLE 4.3: Communication channels

Themes	Quotes reflecting themes	
Formal communication	Formal communication is the best, because through formal communication the message is delivered in an appropriate manner, one can seek clarity and it also clears upmisunderstandings. Formal communication also includes meetings.	5
Informal communication	Informal communication like short-noticeinstructions, overturn employees'plans and hamper service delivery in most instances.	3
Electronic systems	Computer-aided channels are real life contact, such as emails"	4

Note: number does not add up to eighteen as individual participants and respondents gave more than one response.

Table 3 represents communication channels as mentioned by participants. The channels were categorised into three themes, namely the formal and informal channels and computer-aided mechanisms.

a. Formal communication

Formal communication is a communication network within an organisation, and it includes meetings, staff meetings, individual consultation with employees, unit meetings and consultation with supervisors.

One participant indicated that he was *"**aware of formal channel of communicationmeetings**".*Similarly, meetings are formal communication channels that are practiced in most organisations to effectively communicate with employees.

Another respondent mentioned that "***one has to report to the immediate supervisor or manager through individual consultation***". He also emphasised that "***unit or staff meetings are an important form of effective channel of communication*".**

One respondent felt that "***meetings aretime consuming, managers like to call urgent meetings which are unnecessary and which hamper service delivery*".**

Another participant indicated that "***formal communication channels, like circulars, are time consuming and noone has the time to read thick documents that are not easy to understand".***

b. Informal communication

The formal system is not the only communication network in an organisation. An informal communication system, known as the grapevine, is always created when people work closely together. According to Robbins (2003) the grapevine has three main characteristics: it is not controlled by management, it is perceived by most employees as being more believable and reliable than formal communiqués issued by top management, and is also used to serve the interests of employees.

c. Electronic systems

Corrado(1994) indicated that electronic channels offer the best hope for communication. He further stated that electronic systems such as emails can provide every linked employee with a daily electronic newsletter and management memos.

Five participants and ten respondents indicated that "***they are aware of electronic systems and prefer to use them, since they are more advanced***". Theymentioned***"email, telephone, fax, news bulletins and notices from communication units***".

4.14 The importance of communication channels

Six participants were of the opinion that "***channels are effective as one can be clear about the instructions and raise concerns on time; employees receive information on time through computer-aided tools".***

One respondent indicated that "***through computer-aided channels it is easy to reach to all employees at the same time and get feedback immediately***".

Email as a communication tool has a long list of benefits. It can be quickly written, edited and be distributed to one person or thousands. It can be read at the convenience of the recipient, but the reading, absorbing and responding can consume an employee's entire day, and sometimes employees encounter difficulties indistinguishing an important email from an irrelevant message.

Another respondent said "***emails ensure that everybody is made aware of what is happening in the Departmentof Social Development, staff members receiveinformation, and they are effective and offer good results".***

One respondent indicated that "***computer-aided channels are extremely useful***". He further stated that "***technology is challenging and some people are technologically***

challenged, however, channels like email are extremely useful if you know how to operate them".

Another participantindicated that"*they* ***are cost effective in rand value and in time saving, they reach a wide spectrum of officials, they provide guidance on the development of staff, ensure proper accountability and transparency****"*.

Robbins (2003) pointed out that computer-aided communications are reshaping the way we communicate in organisations. It is no longer necessary for employees to always be at their workstations or on their cellular phones; computers allow employees to be reached when they are in meetings or while visiting clients.

One respondent is of the opinion that "***weekly meetings are very important, because employees get an opportunity to discuss weekly plans and get feedback on production and challenges".***

4.15 Employees' suggestions on improvement of channels

From the data analysed it seems that 40%of participants were not clear as to what can be done to improve the protocols within the Departmentof Social Development. As one indicated, "***We should have a basic understanding of our work".***

Three participants said that "***employees must know how to use the channels and understand the importance of communication channels***".

Onerespondentsuggested that "***the Departmentof Social Development should emphasise adherence to the protocols, managers should not sign off documents that are of the incorrect protocols or format of the Department and it should monitor compliance by all, irrespective of rank****"*.

Another respondent was of the opinion that "***the Departmentof Social Development should stick to the protocols and be strict in terms of communication".***

One participantsuggested that ***"time management for reporting is very important to improving protocols. If there is a given time to submit a report, it should be consistent, for instance, when the report is submitted to thesupervisor, the supervisor should report within a stipulated time to his/her management".***

One participant suggested that "***communication channels could be improved through inspiring and ensuring adherence by all staff and managers and by monitoring compliance".*** The Department of Social Developmentshould ensure that all officials have the necessary tools, such as computers and phones, in order to improve effective communication in the Department. All channels of communication should be well known to all employees.

Another participant indicated that "***there are officials who have not been allocated the necessary communication tools, such as computers. They are thus unable to communicate through emails and are not provided with necessary information*".**

Fielding(2006) commented that organisations need to establish the best possible conditions for communication, for instance, messages should be very clear, and the organisation needs to test the flow of information regularly. Corrado (1994) mentioned that the only effective technique is to make communication a major accountability in the performance measurement.

4.16 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the study as collected by individual, face to face interviews and questionnaires for those who were uncomfortable with the interview process. Therefore, the results obtained reflect the participants' and respondents' knowledge and experience in accordance with the research questions and objectives of the study. In some instances there were differences and in some, similarities on information provided by the respondents and participants.

It can be concluded that participants were knowledgeable and aware of issues pertaining to communication protocols and channels. They were also concerned about the way information is flowing and the chain of command that has to be followed in the Departmentof Social Development. Some were not aware of the existing protocols. The level of knowledge and understanding they showed during the study indicated that there is still more that needs to be done to put systems in place so that service delivery is not hampered. An optimistic attitude was demonstrated by the participants in addressing the issue of communication, and offering training on the communication model. Participants and respondents were also concerned about leadership style within the Departmentof Social Development, for instance, some mentioned lack of supervision by supervisors, managers not delegatingauthority and not communicating information to all employees.

CHAPTER 5:

MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The following chapter briefly discusses the study's main findings in terms of the themes and the possible implications of the study. The chapter also highlights the recommendations for practice, policy makers, applicable departments and research. Final conclusions will also be addressed.

5.2 Main findings

Firstly, the study revealed that most of the respondents and participants are aware of the existing communication protocols and communication channels in the Departmentof Social Development. Most of the respondents seemed to have a clear understanding of communication and the barriers to effective communication, as a majority of them gave clear indications of what they understand about communication and the barriers to effective communication in the Departmentof Social Development.

Secondly, in terms of employee's perceptions to successful communication, the study revealed that employees' perceptions are that all parties involved must be proactive, that clear messages should be communicated to all employees, that employees have first to seek understanding, allow for questions and provide clarity and lastly, understand the relationship role of manager to subordinate. However, misunderstandings and misinterpretations were identified as major contributing factors to effective communication. From the participant's point of view, the communicator must use the tools provided proficiently so that there is no miscommunication. The study revealed that there is lack of understanding of relationship roles and that employees communicate without understanding and that sometimes they do not seek clarity.

Thirdly, it was clear that participants and respondents have mixed views on barriers to effective communication. This is due to bureaucratic commands which dilute the original intent of communicating information and as a result, some managers do not effectively communicate with their staff or cascade information to their staff. The study revealed that twenty percent of participants are not aware of the existing protocols and communication channels. However, most of the participants wereaware and perceive that training on communication should be conducted. Supervisors seemed to be ineffective in communicating with subordinates. Hence it is argued that if information was cascaded to

the junior staff immediately, they would have been fewer issues relating to communication. Communication between managers and junior staff is very limited and in most instances they are not informed on time about issues that are work related, which also hampers services delivery. Therefore there is a need to address manager/employee interaction, since communication is key to a successful organisation.

Fourthly, employees indicated that they prefer communications to be clear and concise with clarity provided where required, which allows for adequate understanding of the expectations and timelines. They further stated that they prefer to receive communications via email because emails are quick, and they also prefer meetings because they then get to discuss issues, tackle challenges, brainstorm ideas and reach solutions. Therefore, from the participants' view, communication is a real problem in the Department of Social Development. It seems that employees are aware of what communication entails and the procedures that they have to follow. They also indicate that managers should provide them with the necessary communication tools such as computers and phones, so as to improve effective communication within the Departmentof Social Development.

Fifthly, employees acknowledged that effective communication can contribute to employees' productivity. It assists them with effective planning and meeting required targets and efficient service delivery. It was clear from the findings of the research that effective communication helped employees to understand what is expected of them. They also indicated that good communication guided them to be more creative and helped employees to be more focusedin achieving the departmental objectives.

Sixthly, employeesindicated that the formal protocols are sometimes time consuming, and delay the process. The formal protocols are a bureaucratic chain of command where issues get raised with their immediate manager before moving to the next level. Some seemed to be aware of the existing protocols and although some of the participants were not fully aware, the majority of the respondents seemed to be knowledgeable about the protocols. However, it was found that despite the fact that some had full knowledge of the protocols, they hardly ever followed them.

Lastly, in terms of the existing protocols the Department of Social Development should introduce notice boards, implement new technology systems and ensure that they are well serviced. The Department of Social Development should stick to the protocols and ensure adherence by all staff. They also indicated that managers delegate authority at all times and that management and leadership styles should be reviewed in order for the Department of Social Development to successfully achieve its goals and objectives.

5.3. Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for practice/intervention

It is clear that intervention within the social development framework can happen on a macro level. The intervention should be supportive and educative in nature.

The process of organisational change through macro practice can be applied when working with employees (top, middle, and line management as well as junior staff) focused on organisational change and with suggestions for more effective techniques for organisational communication within the Department. Managers and some employees can be involved in the process of organisational change. Ongoing training should be conducted to ensure that the corrective measures are followed to the benefit of employees and to improve the existing communication channels and protocols within the Department of Social Development. The success of an organisation is based on its communication level, flow of information, and how people interact. The focus of intervention should be on putting systems in place. Corrado (1994) commented that organisations should develop communication strategies to achieve business objectives, with the support of top management.

5.3.2 Recommendations for policy makers

It is recommended that the departmental policy makers and implementers review the internal policies and procedures on the most effective and efficient protocols and channels, and ensure that employees are given a chance to provide inputs before corrective measures are implemented.

5.3.3Recommendations for further research

- More research should be directed at effective communication in the different public sectors (government departments).
- More research should be conducted on managers' experiences and perceptionson the nature of communication in the public sector(government departments).
- More research should be conducted on the perceptions on management and leadership style in the public sector.

5.4Conclusion

The study was undertaken to explore the perceptions and experiences of employees on the nature of communication. The researcher gathered and interpreted experiences employees have had concerning the nature of communication in the Departmentof Social

Development. This assisted the researcher to gain knowledge and a better understanding of the challenges faced by employees in the Department of Social Development.

Some participants were not clear in distinguishing between communication protocols and communication channels, but most respondents had a good understanding and were aware of the existing protocols and channels in the Department of Social Development and of how they could be successfully implemented.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Good day,

My name is Tsholofelo GlodiaMatema. I am registered for MA Occupational Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting research on the perceptions and experiences of employees about the nature of communication within the Department of Social Development, North Rand Region. It is hoped that this information may assist management to enhance and improve communication channels within the Department.

I therefore wish to invite you to participate in my study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against you in any way. If you agree to take part, I shall arrange a time and place that is suitable for you, to administer the questionnaire. The questionnaire will last approximately 45 minutes. You may withdraw from the study at any time and you may also refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with answering.

The data gathered will be analysed and **no one other than myself and my supervisor,DrEdmarie Pretorius (work number 011 717 4476),will have access to the questionnaires anddata**. The data will be kept for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. No identifying particulars form part of the questionnaire therefore confidentiality will be adhered to. **Anonymity cannot be guaranteed because employees know each other and will participate in the group-administered questionnaire.**Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the study. I shall answer them to the best of my ability. I may be contacted on 0825569627. Should you wish to receive a summary of the results of the study; an abstract will be made available to you on request.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in the study.

Yours sincerely,

T.G. Matema

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

I hereby consent to participate in the research project. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to answer any particular items or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. I understand that my responses will be kept confidential.

Name of Participant:……

Signature:……..

Date:……..

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYEES ABOUT THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION

PLEASE NOTE:

Thank you for taking your time to complete the questionnaire. The information will be treated as confidential and no identifying particulars are requested. Your honesty in answering the questions will contribute to the value of the study and is likely to result in improving the existing communication channels and protocols within the Department.

PART A: Biographical Data

Please complete the section below by ticking the appropriate box with X or writing the answer in the applicable space. Please answer all the questions in this section.

1. **Age**

19	
20- 29	
30- 39	
40- 49	
50- 59	
60- 65	

2. **Gender**

Female	
Male	

3. **How many years of service do you have in the Department of Social Development?**

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4. **What is your occupational title?**

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PART B

Please answer all questions.

1. **How do you understand communication?**

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2. **What do you perceive to be the main conditions for successful communication in an organisation?**

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3. **How do you prefer to be communicated with? Please motivate your answer.**

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4. **What in your view are the major barriers to effective communication in the Department?**

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5. **Share your suggestions on how the Department can ensure effective communication.**

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6. **In which way do you think communication plays a role in the motivation of employees?**

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7. **In what way does effective communication contribute to employees' productivity?**

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8. **Which formal communication protocols are you aware of in the Department of Social Development?**

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9. **Given your experience, explain how useful these protocols are.**

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10. How would you suggest the Department of Social Development improve these protocols?

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11. Which formal communication channels are you aware of in the Department of Social Development?

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12. Given your experience, explain how useful these channels are.

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13. How would you suggest the Department of Social Development improve these channels?

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TO EXPLORE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYEES ABOUT THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION

PART A: Biographical Data

1. Age

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20- 29	
30- 39	
40- 49	
50- 59	
60- 65	

2. Gender

Female	
Male	

3. How many years of service do you have in the Department of Social Development?

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4. **What is your occupational title?**

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PART B

5. **How do you understand communication?**

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6. **What do you perceive to be the main conditions for successful communication in an organisation?**

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7. **How do you prefer to be communicated with? Please motivate your answer.**

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8. **What in your view are the major barriers to effective communication in the Department?**

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9. **Share your suggestions on how the Department can ensure effective communication.**

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10. In which way do you think communication plays a role in the motivation of employees?

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11. In what way does effective communication contribute to employees' productivity?

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12. Which formal communication protocols are you aware of in the Department of Social Development?

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13. Given your experience, explain how useful these protocols are.

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14. How would you suggest the Department of Social Development improves on these protocols?

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15. Which formal communication channels are you aware of in the Department of Social Development?

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16. Given your experience, explain how useful these channels are.

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17. How would you suggest the Department of Social Development improves on these channels?

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

APPENDIX E

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

APPENDIX F

PERMISSION LETTER FOR RESEARCH