

Communication

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Abstract: W. Fox and Ivan H. Meyer [1995: 23] maintain that communication is: the exchange of thoughts, ideas or information in a written, verbal or non – verbal way; perceptions, based on shared values. Chester I. Barnard holds that formal authority is nothing more than the willingness to communicate and it is through the communication process that the executive authority conveys the objectives of the organisation and gouges the needs of the employees or interest groups or votes and that the effectiveness of decision – making and organizational performance are dependent on adequate communication.

Keywords: communication, exchange information, process, executive authority, and shared values

I. Introduction

Communication, as an important principle of organization, and most essential for realizing its objectives; is seen as the blood stream of an administrative organization; and it is the heart of management. All this forms the subject of this article.

II. The Purpose Of This Article

The purpose of this article is to concisely explain the concept of communication; its meaning, significance, types and media.

III. Communication

1.1 Significance

Communication is an important principle of organisation and is essential for realizing its aims, objectives and targets. J. M. Millet describes communication as the blood stream of an administrative organisation. According to Pfiffner, communication is the heart of management.

Chester I. Barnard remarked: The first executive function is to develop and maintain a system of communication. He called it the foundation of cooperative group activity.

According to Peter Drucker, good communication is the foundation for sound administration. Norbert Weiner said, communication is the cement that makes an organisation. Terry observed: communication serves as the lubricant, fostering the smooth operations of the management process.

1.2 Definitions

The word communication is derived from the Latin word *communico* which means common. Hence, communication means sharing of ideas in common.

Keith Davis:	Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another.
Newton and Summer:	Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons.
Koontz and O'Donnell:	Communication is an intercourse by words, letters, symbols or messages; and is a way that one organisation's member shares meanings and understandings with other.
McFarland:	Communication may be broadly defined as the process of meaningful interaction among human beings. More specifically, it is a process by which meanings are perceived and understandings are reached among human beings.
Cunning:	The word communication describes the process of conveying messages (facts, ideas, attitudes and opinions) from one person to another so that they are understood
Ordway Tead:	The underlying aim is communication is the meeting of minds on common issues.
Lois A. Allen:	Communication is the sum of all the things one person does when he wants to create an understanding in the mind of another. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding.

Chester Barnard:	A communication that cannot be understood can have no authority
Peter Drucker:	Communication is the ability of the various functional groups within an enterprise to understand each other and each other's functions and concerns

Thus, the above definitions make it clear that the essence of communication is understanding information, not transmitting information.

1.3 Typologies

Organisation communication has three aspects, viz. internal communication, external communication and inter-personal communication.

1.3.1 Internal communication is concerned with the relationship of the organisation with its employees.

It can be *upward, downward and across*

- a. **Upward communication** is concerned with the employees' relationship with the management.
- b. **Downward communication** is concerned with the management's relationship with the employees. The former consists of performance reports and work problems, while the latter consists of *orders and direction*.
- c. **Across communication** is concerned with relationships between co-equal authorities in an organisation. Thus, unlike the upward and downward communications which are *vertical* in nature, the *across communication is horizontal* in nature.

1.3.2 External communication deals with the relationship of the organisation with the public. Hence, it is shown as public relations; whereas inter-personal communication is concerned with the relationship among employees.

1.4 Media

Media of communication are of three main types, namely, *audio, visual and audio-visual*.

- Audio media is conference, interviews, and so on.
- Visual media comprise circulars, reports, pictorial forms and others,
- Audio – visual media is *television, sound-motion pictures*, and so on.

The *conference method* of communication has attained popularity in public administration. This method avoids delay, reduces red tape and minimizes correspondence. According to J. M. Millet, the conference method:

- a. enables to gain awareness of a problem
- b. helps in problem solving
- c. enables to gain acceptance and implementation of decisions,
- d. promotes a sense of unity among the officials working in the organisation,
- e. encourages an exchange of information among administrative personnel, and
- f. helps in appraising personnel.

1.5 Theoretical contributions

The following scholars are relevant: *Henri Fayol; C. I. Barnard; H. A. Simon; and N. Weiner*. Their contributions have led to the growth of communication as an important aspect of organizational behaviour.

Henry Fayol: is the first administrative thinker to give a comprehensive analysis of the problem of communication in an organisation. He highlighted the importance of speedy communication and provided a meaningful solution in the form of gang plank. This novel concept implies the system of horizontal communication to avoid delay in the disposal of business.

Chester Barnard: viewed organisation as a cooperative system having three elements, viz. common purpose, willingness to contribute, and communication. Thus, he viewed communication as a vital dynamic of the organizational behaviour and believed that is a major shaping force in the organisation. In his words, the absence of a suitable technique of communication would eliminate the possibility of adopting some purposes as a basis of organisation. Communication techniques shape the form and the internal economy of an organisation.

Herbert A. Simon: defines communication as any process whereby decisional premises are transmitted from one member of the organisation to another. He says, it is obvious that without communication there can be no organisation, for there is no possibility then of the group influencing the behaviour of the individual.

Like *Barnard*, *Simon* also stresses the *informal channels of communication* (also known as the grapevine) for the transmission of information. According to him, the informal communication system is built around the social relationships of the members of the organisation.

Simon highlighted the importance of informal channel of communication when he said; the grapevine is valuable as a barometer of public opinion in the organisation. If the administrator listens to it, it apprises him of the topics that are subjects of interest to organisation members, and their attitudes toward these topics.

Norbert Wiener: pioneered in the field of cybernetics is derived from the Greek term *Kyberneted*, meaning steersman or helmsman. This has greatly influenced the contemporary approach to communication. *Weiner* says that organizational systems move in the direction of positive entropy, that is, the organisations have a natural tendency towards disorder, disintegration and self –destruction. This tendency of organizational systems can be arrested through methodical information processing. Thus, information is an antidote to positive entropy and enables the organizational systems to reach a state of negative entropy that is, moving towards order and integration.

As observed by *Hicks and Gullett*, *Weiner’s* concept of systems control by information feedback directly contributed to development of the electronic computer. He described an adaptive system including an organisation as utterly dependent upon measurement and correction through information feedback.

3.6 Process

The most widely used model of communication process [Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver] developed, consists of eight components as follows:

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| • source, | • channel, | • feedback, and |
| • encoding, | • decoding, | • noise |
| • message, | • receiver, | |

This is shown in the diagram below:

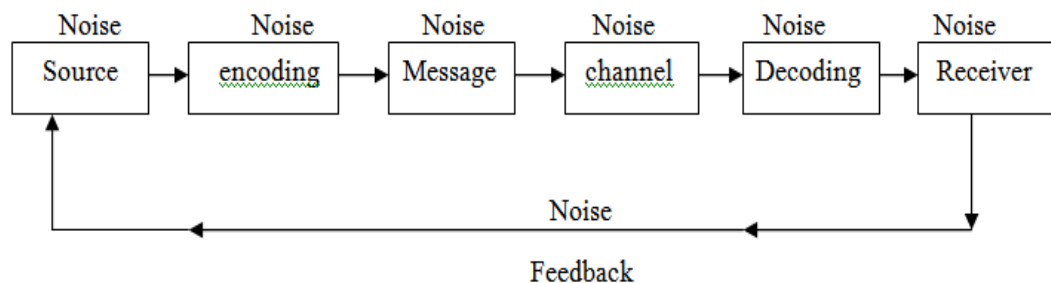


Fig 1.1 Shannon and Weaver’s Model of Communication Process

An elaboration of the model of communication process

- The **source** is the initiator of communication, who wants to transmit his ideas, thoughts, needs, intentions or other pieces of information to another person.
- Encoding** is a process in which the ideas to be conveyed are translated into a code or set of symbols or some other format of expression.
- The **message** is the actual physical product from the source – encoding. It represents the meaning which the source wants to convey.
- The **channel** is the medium through which the message transmits. It is connecting link between the sender (the source) and the receiver.
- Decoding** is the process which translates the message into a form that can be understood by the receiver.
- Receiver** is the person to whom the message is directed (conveyed).
- Feedback** is the response from the receiver which enables the sender (the source) to determine whether the message was received and understood as originally intended.
- Noise** includes those factors in each of the components of communication that reduces the accuracy or fidelity of message. Thus, it can occur at any stage in the communication process.

1.6 Channels or networks

The channels also know as networks of communication are of two types, viz. formal and informal.

A formal channel of communication is deliberately established by management for the transmission, of official information.

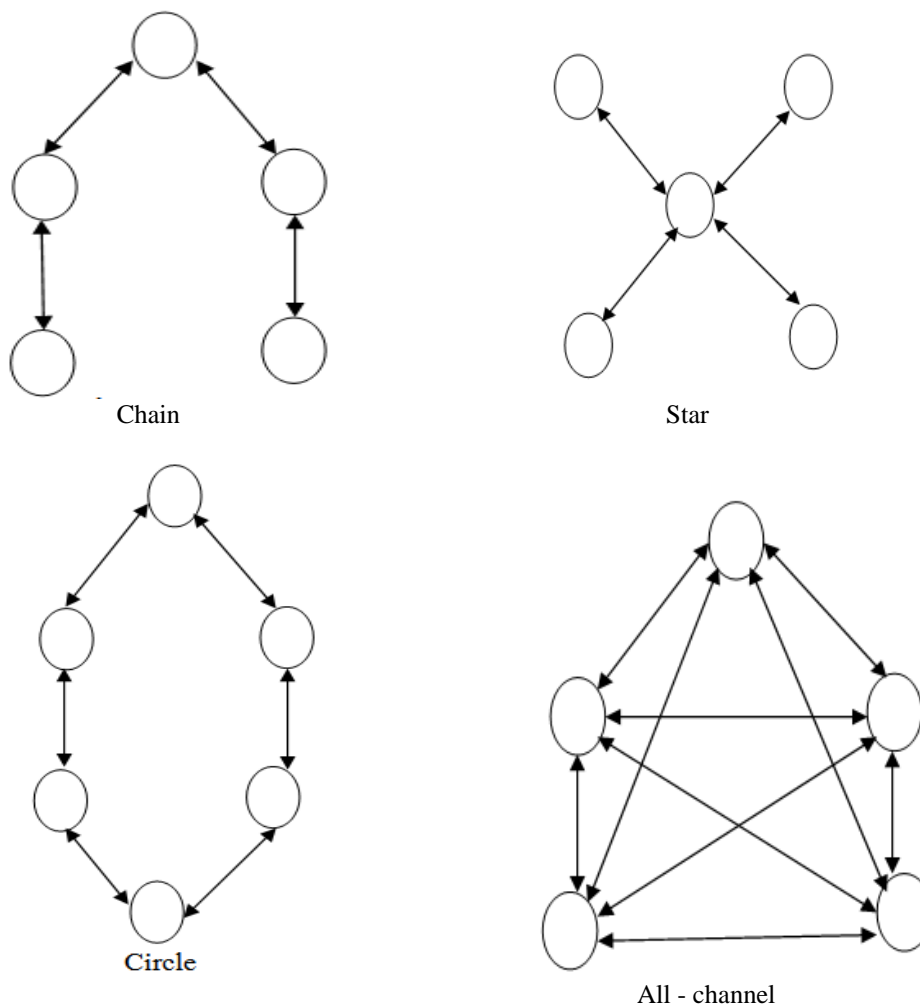
An informal channel of communication, on the other hand, is an unofficial channel and is the result of the operations of social forces at the workplace. It is also known as the grapevine and supplements formal communication

There are *six types* of formal communication networks, namely, chain, star, circle, all-channel, inverted V and Y.

These are diagrammatically shown in fig.1.3 below

- a. Under the *chain network*, the information and message flows only up or down in a hierarchical chain of command. In other words, the chain network rigidly follows the form chain of command in the organisation.
- b. Under the *star network*, the information and message flows among the group members through a leader, that is, the central point. In other words, the group members do not communicate with each other directly but rely on the leader to act as the central conduit. It is the most centralized type of formal communication network. It is also known as the wheel network.
- c. Under the *circle network*, the group members interact with the adjoining members only. In other words, the information and message is transmitted laterally among the group members.
- d. Under the *all – channel network*, all the members of a group actively communicate with each other freely. It is the most decentralized type of formal communication network. It is also known as the completely connected network.
- e. Under the *inverted V network*, a sub-ordinate communicates with his immediate superior as well as second superior that is, his superior. However, the matters on which information and message can be sent in the second case are specified.
- f. Under *Y network*, two sub-ordinates through the hierarchical chain communicate with a superior. In turn, the superior communicates with two superiors which are above him. This network is less centralized than the star network.

Fig 1.2 Types of formal communication networks



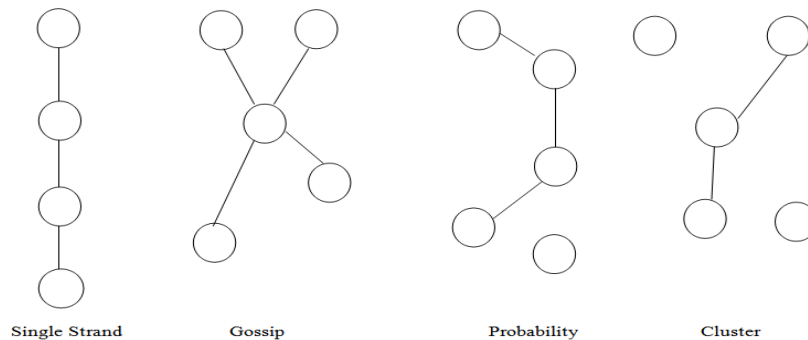


Keith Davis has investigated the phenomena of grapevine informal communication in organizations. He observed that the grapevine cannot be abolished, rubbed out, hidden under the basket, chopped down, tied up, or stopped. If we suppress it in one place, it will pop up in another. If we cut off one of its source, it merely moves to another one – quite similar to the way we change from one channel to another on a television set. In a sense, the grapevine is man’s birthright, because wherever men congregate in groups, the grapevine is sure to develop. He identified four types of grapevine networks, viz. single strand, gossip, probability and cluster. These are diagrammatically shown in Fig. 1.3

- i. Under the single strand network, the information passes from one to one, that is, one member communicates to another member who in turn communicates to another member, and so on.
- ii. Under the gossip network, the member communicates to another member, and so on.
- iii. Under the probability network, information passes according to the law of probability, that is, one member communicates randomly with others who in turn communicate to some others.
- iv. Under the cluster network, the information passes selectively, that is, one member communicates with only those members whom he trusts and they in turn pass it on to some other selected members.

According to Keith Davis, the cluster type of grapevine network is the most popular and widely prevalent in organisation.

Fig 1.4 Types of informal communication (Grapevine) networks



IV. Barriers And Problems

The communication process is organization’s face the following barriers and problems

Semantic barriers

These barriers are concerned with the language difficulties. These occur due to the differences in the individual interpretation of words and symbols used in the process of communication. Rudolf Flesch in his article More about Gobbledygook (1945) observed all official communications develop a curiously legalistic ring, humorously called Gobbledygook language, which becomes impossible for a layman to understand. In a desire to be over-exacted, over –abstract, and over-impersonal, official language can become quite curt and even disagreeable.

Similarly, G. R .Terry observed, intentional words do not refer to something that can be pointed out. They neither always connote an identical meaning to different persons nor the same meaning to be same person at all times.

Ideological barriers:- The members of the organisation do not share the same ideological perspectives and orientation. This affects the effective communication process. Pfiffner said, differences in background,

education and expectation result in different social and political views. These are probably the greatest handicaps to effective communication and probably the most difficult to overcome.

Filtering: It refers to the sender's purposeful and deliberate manipulation of information to be passed on to the receiver. It may be due to various factors. However, the extent of filtering is determined mainly by the number of levels in the organization's structure. Thus, more the vertical levels in a hierarchy, the more scope for filtering and vice – versa.

Dogmatism: This means that the attitudes, opinions and beliefs possessed by a person prevents him from accepting accurate and additional information as it conflicts with the current situation.. This obviously affects the effective communication.

Halo effect: As explained by Hicks and Gullet, The halo effect is the result of two valued thinking. In this situation, we see things only as dichotomies – good and bad, right and wrong, white and black, and so forth. The danger here is that most situations are not dichotomous and, therefore, such thinking may over – simplify most real situations.

Stereotyping: This means that the content of communications is determined by the expectations due to inadequate distinctions of objects and events. This interferes with effective communication.

Other barriers: In addition to the above, that communication process is affected by the following factors:

- i. lack of will to communicate due to the attitudes of superiors
- ii. absence of definite and recognize means of communication
- iii. the size of the organisation and distance between members
- iv. cultural barriers
- v. feedback barriers

V. Elements Or Principles Of Communication

Millet identified seven elements essentials or principles of effective communication. These are:

- i. *Clarity* – communication should be clearly and precisely stated.
- ii. *Consistency* – communication should be consistent with the expectations of the receiver
- iii. *Adequacy* – information in the communication should be sufficient, neither over – burdening nor too little.
- iv. *Timeless* – communication should be timely, neither too late nor too early
- v. *Uniformity* – communication should be uniform and not discriminatory for all those who are supposed to behave similarly
- vi. *Flexibility* – communication should not be rigid either in the form or character.
- vii. *Acceptability* – communication should stimulate acceptance and positive response in the receiver.

According to Terry, the following eight factors make the communication effective.

- a. Inform yourself fully
- b. Establish a mutual trust in each other
- c. Find a common ground of experience
- d. Use mutually known words
- e. Have regard for context
- f. Secure and hold the receiver's attention
- g. Employ examples and visual aids
- h. Practice delaying reactions

VI. Conclusion

It is concluded that the newly developed management information system (MIS) has improved the organisation communication. The MIS means the application of information technology to the communication process in organisations. It involves generating, processing and transmitting information. It assists the managers in problem – solving, decision – making and strategic planning

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1. Profiles of contributors and photographs



Samson Brown Muchineripi Marume: a former senior civil servant for over 37 years serving in various capacities of seniority and 10 years as deputy permanent secretary; thirteen years as a large commercial farmer; well travelled **domestically** within Zimbabwe; **regionally** [SADC countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Mauritius, Swaziland, South Africa, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and DRC]; and **Africa** [Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, Nigeria, Ghana, Libya, and Uganda]; and **internationally** [Washington, New York and California in USA; Dublin and Cork in Irish Republic; England in United Kingdom; Netherlands, Frankfurt in Germany; Lisbon in Portugal; Spain (Nice), Paris in France, Geneva in Switzerland, Belgrade in former Yugoslavia-; Rome and Turin in Italy; Nicosia – Cyprus; Athens – Greece; Beijing and Great Walls of China; Singapore; Hong Kong; Tokyo, Kyoto, Yokohama, and Osaka, in Japan]; **fifteen** years as management consultant and **part – time lecturer** for BA/BSc and MA/MBA degree levels with Christ College- affiliate of Great Zimbabwe University and National University of Science and Technology; six years as PhD/DPhil research thesis supervisor, internal and external examiner with Christ University, Bangalore, India [2011 – 2016]; and Zimbabwe Open University; external examiner of management and administrative sciences at Great Zimbabwe University (2016 – 2019); currently senior lecturer and acting chairperson of Department of Public Administration in Faculty of Commerce and Law of Zimbabwe Open University; **a negotiator; a prolific writer** who has published five books, twenty five modules in public administration and political science for undergraduate and postgraduate students, and over sixty referred journal articles in international journals [IOSR, IJSR, ISCA – IRJSS, IJESR, MJESR, IJESI, IJBMI, IJHSS and Quest Journals] on constitutional and administrative law, public administration, political science, philosophy, Africa in international politics, local government and administration, sociology and community development; vastly experienced public administrator; and an eminent scholar with specialist qualifications from University of South Africa, and from California University for Advanced Studies, State of California, United States of America: **BA with majors in public administration and political science and subsidiaries in sociology, constitutional law and English; postgraduate special Hons BA [Public Administration]; MA [Public Administration]; MAdmin magna cum laude in transport economics as major, and minors in public management and communications; MSoc Sc cum laude in international politics as a major and minors in comparative government and law, war and strategic studies, sociology, and social science research methodologies; and PhD summa cum laude in Public Administration.**



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