



ISSN 2348 - 0319

Journal home page: <http://www.journalijar.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF INNOVATIVE AND
APPLIED RESEARCH

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effectiveness of Organizational Communication channels used by Hwange Colliery Company to communicate with its Publics to enhance corporate reputation. (2010-2012)

***Caven Masuku¹ and Perseverance Zulu²**

1. Lecturer, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe.
2. Media and Society Studies Department, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe.

.....
Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to assess the Effectiveness of Organizational Communication channels used by Hwange Colliery Company to communicate with its Publics to enhance corporate reputation. This is because effective communication has been the pillar to the success of many big corporate organizations and this prompted the researcher to study a local organization, Hwange Colliery Company. In this study literature was reviewed from scholars that had prior knowledge on the topic of organizational communication and its importance in the day to day running of organizations. The theoretical framework in the study focuses on the process of communication; this was done to enable the researcher to have a better understanding of the importance of organizational communication in at Hwange Colliery Company. The study would be informed by four theories namely Lasswell model of communication, Shannon and Weaver's communication transmission model, Schramm's model of Communication and bureaucracy theory. Furthermore, the study implies triangulation that is the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods to attain information closer to reality and validity. The research methods used include interviews, questionnaires and participant observation as data gathering techniques as they were the most suitable in collecting data from the different publics at HCCL. Recommendations were made to enable the organization to achieve maximum efficiency in communication. Improvements that are required are mentioned so as to help future research.

Key Words:

Corporate Affairs, communication, organisational communication, channel, corporate identity, corporate reputation, stakeholder and sustainability.
.....

Introduction

Communication is a crucial component that sustains relationships between an organization and its internal and external publics (McCroskey 2005). The paper seeks to assess the importance of communication in an organizational set up like Hwange Colliery. This is because organizational communication has seen to play a crucial role in the management of any corporate organization. The term "organization" is defined as a consciously coordinated social unit composed of two or more people that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals (Robbin 2001:4). In this study organizational communication can be perceived as the sending and receiving of messages among interrelated individuals within a particular environment or setting to achieve individual and common goals. Individuals in organizations transmit messages through face to face, written, and mediated channels (Deetz 2001). It is imperative to assess how Hwange Colliery uses face-to-face, written and mediated channels to communicate with their publics.

Corporate reputation in the study refers to the function of the perceptions and attitude toward it held by individual members of a particular stakeholder group. A corporate reputation rests on assessment made by individuals outside an organization (Highhouse et al. 2009, Schwaiger 2004, Wartwick 2002).In addition, Zyglidopoulos (2001:418) says that a set of knowledge and emotions held by various stakeholder groups concerning aspects of firm and its activities is part of corporate reputation. Corporate reputation has emotional appeal, vision, leadership and integrity, social responsibility, and a work place environment supporting performance (MacMillan 2005). The study would assess empirical to find out whether organizational communication at Hwange is mainly guided by those principles mentioned by MacMillan et al (2005). The success and growth of a company depends on the effectiveness of their communication channels. Organizational communication is thus perceived as central to organization success

(McCroskey *ibid*). Malan and Estrange (1988:2) articulate that a company may have all the good qualities in the world, but, unless they are known, they will never be appreciated and supported. The above declaration by Malan and Estrange (1988) suggest that the unique and special features of an organization can be made known to its stakeholders through communication. Communication plays a significant role in any organization; therefore, it is important to understand its role in overall organizational success cited in (Turkalj and Fosić 2009:34). To what extent do different channels of communication used by Hwange Colliery Company enforce effective organizational communication?

However, the study seeks to respond to multiple questions as follows; Do different communication channels used by Hwange Colliery Company enforce effective Organizational communication? Are channels of communication used by Hwange Colliery Company effective in communicating with both their internal and external publics? Does Hwange Colliery Company have social communication platforms and how effective are they?

Organizational communication focuses on the place of communication in an organization set up and has been defined by various scholars as a process where an organization sends, receives, encodes and decodes messages amongst its internal and external publics. Turkalj and Fosić (2009:33) assert that organizational communication implies communication among employees, as well as communication between different hierarchic levels in the same organization.

Thus the study would be influenced by four theories which try to explain the flow of information within and outside an organization. These theories included the concept of, Lasswell (1947) model of communication, Shannon and Weaver (1949) Communication Transmission Model, Schramm (1954) organizational model and Bureaucracy Theory. The theories chosen helped in assessing the effectiveness of the different channels of communication used by Hwange Colliery Company. Each theory emphasizes the way information gets to its intended audiences and how they interpret it. Furthermore, in a bid to assess the effectiveness of the channels of communication, the research employed triangulation. This approach assisted in the collection of relevant information on the channels of communication and their effectiveness in disseminating information to the public's at Hwange Colliery Company. This method assisted the researcher in getting a critical and rich understanding of both the external and internal publics of Hwange Colliery about beliefs, concerns, and preferences regarding the channels of communication used in the company.

Hwange Colliery Company Limited is the name of a mining company in Zimbabwe, which was established in 1899. HCCL is Zimbabwe's leading fossil fuel producer and its core activities consist of the exploration, mining, processing and distribution of coal, as well as of the production of coke and related by-products in Southern Africa, and the mining operations are located in Hwange in the province of Matabeleland North. The company is the largest coal company in Africa outside South Africa and is listed on the Zimbabwe, Johannesburg and London stock exchange (www.hwangecolliery.net).

The Public Relations department at Hwange colliery was established in 1989, and Christened Corporate Affairs in 2011. The department is in charge of all the communication functions of the organization. The department interacts with the different publics of the organization regarding its position and goals by informing them through the different channels of communication that have been adopted. The Corporate Affairs department conveys the value of an organization or product to a targeted audience, liaisons with the company's publics through effective communication to secure the survival of the organization.

There are a number of communication channels which have been adopted by Colliery through its Corporate Affairs department. These channels include company intranet and internet, notice boards, inter office memorandums, functions\events, workers representative council and workers committee, newsletters, magazine known as Malasha, company Website, Drama group, Human Resources department, electronic and print media. Basing on the above, the researcher assessed the importance of communication at Hwange Colliery, critical analysing the different channels of communication and how effective they are and how they have benefited the company.

Concept of Communication

One way to understand the communication process is to study it as a system. A system is any entity that is composed of interdependent parts working together to achieve an intended goal, (Steinberg 2007:12). She further alludes that in trying to study communication it is important to identify its components, or elements and analyzing how the components affect one another during the communication process. Therefore it is important for one to have a better understanding of what happens during communication and so as to be able to improve the communication knowledge and skills.

“Communication is referred to as a process to emphasize that it is always changing, always in motion.” In its simpler terms communication is the transmission of message from the sender to the receiver through a channel (DeVito 1986:239). Communication can be traceable to Lasswell (1947) who develops a model for communication drawn as follows: Who Says what---in which channel---to whom –and with what effect? Rosenbaum (2005:1) defines communication as a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs and behaviour. That is communication can take place among people of similar or who share same cultures .for example the use of semiotics, it needs one to understand the sign for communication to be understood and complete.

This research is going to help Hwange Colliery Company to ascertain whether or not they have been communicating well with their various publics.

Stakeholders/Publics in an organization

Newsom (1999) cited in Reddi (2009:68) defines the public as a group of people sharing a common interest or common values in a particular situation. He goes on to say that in public relations, public encompasses any group of people who are tied together, however, loosely by some common bond of interest and who have consequences for an organization. Every organization in the corporate world has a public. These publics are divided into two broad categories as internal and external publics.

Cornelissen (2008:39) defines stakeholders as ‘persons or groups with legitimate interests in aspects of corporate activity; and they are identified by these interest whether the corporation has any direct economic interest in them or not’. In the same vein, Freeman cited in Cornelissen (2008), identify stakeholders as ‘any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s purpose and objectives’. Publics can interact with an organization personally by accessing its goods and services or through the mass media such as press, radio, television and other media. The reputation of an organization can be bolstered or damaged by its communication with or among its publics.

Organizational Corporate Reputation

Corporate Reputation is an individual’s collective representation of past images of an organization (induced through either communication or past experiences) establishes over time (Broomely 2001). Companies have become very sensitive about their reputation. Kitchen (1997) observes that the reputation of an organization or company is influenced by people’s experiences with an organization in many ways. They may personally interact with it by accessing its goods and services. More often, people interact with an organization through the mass media such as press, radio, television and other media.

In relation to this study, understanding the corporate reputation of Hwange Colliery Company was inevitable. This helped the researcher to gauge how effectively they have communicated with their publics to secure the type of reputation they have. This also ascertained whether communication is effective as a tool for the establishment of a good corporate reputation.

Methodology

The study made use of qualitative analysis as the sole research paradigm for organisational communication; it offers the best approach in that it explains deeply the communication interaction process. It delves deeper into issues that the quantitative method cannot explain. This research is therefore largely qualitative but would also borrow from the quantitative tradition. This method is going to be used in collecting relevant data on the channels of communication and their effectiveness in disseminating information to the public’s at Hwange Colliery Company. The study also

made use of Qualitative case study. The advantage of a case study is that since it is a detailed examination of a subject, it enables the researcher to give generalization about a wider unit to which it belongs.

In this regard, Hwange Colliery Company was studied as a representative of organizations that are concerned with effective organizational to enhance their reputation. As a former intern and with the existence of a Corporate Affairs department within the organization made it easier for the study to achieve its objectives. The sample size was 50 people of which 10 people were randomly selected from Corporate Affairs and Human Resource department. This sample (HCCL stakeholders) was chosen because it is a familiar environment that the researcher grew up in and has a base knowledge of the organization. The study implored convenience sampling because some of the targeted population like the employees were not available or too busy thus the researcher had to work with those most convenient to her. Again purposive sampling was used in the research to get rich information for in-depth analysis of the core issues being studied above.

In terms of methodology, the study used triangulation which integrates qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to attain results that are closer to validity and reality (Keyton 2001). The study therefore used questionnaires; interviews and documentary analysis for data gathering. Questionnaires made it easy to collect large quantities of data from considerable number of people who are the PR workers at Hwange Colliery, together with other targeted population. The results collected through questionnaires were quantified. On the other hand, interviews enable the study to extract simple factual information on various organisational communication channels used by Corporate Affairs at Hwange Colliery Company. The questionnaires incorporated both open-ended and closed ended questions that both probed the attitudes and behaviour of respondents and sought to quantify results. Out of 90 questionnaires distributed, only 75 were adequately responded to and returned.

Findings of the study

This chapter would thematically present and analyses data from the study largely using qualitative techniques though quantitative techniques are also used where necessary. The data was generated to establish the effectiveness of organizational communication channels used by HCCL to communicate with its Publics. The data presented here was gathered through the triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative methods. These include face to face interviews, use of questionnaires, observations and other relevant documents. Again triangulation has been employed in presenting and analyzing data through content analysis and discourse analysis. However, theoretical framework in the study was integrated with gathered data to indicate the thread that existed.

5.1 Response Rate

The researcher used three sets of questionnaires and a total of fifty (50) were administered across three disciplines. The rate of return of the survey questionnaires was 84%. Respondents, as indicated in chapter three were HCCL top management, employees and the external publics of the organization, mainly the Deka community and Empumalanga community. Of the five questionnaires that were administered to the Corporate Affairs department, all of them were returned and the respondents expressed satisfaction at the way communication was being carried out at HCCL. Although, satisfied attaches felt that a lot could be done to improve the effectiveness of the channels of communication used. The response given by the Corporate Affairs team is somewhat biased because as the communication hub of the organization they were probably defending themselves. The top management, which included the HR Manager, Opencast Manager, Underground Mine Manager, Processing Plant Manager and Finance Manager, out of five questionnaires administered only four were returned and all of them were content with the way the company was communicating with both its internal and external public. The communication function of the company was accorded to the Corporate Affairs department by all the managers. This implies that there are not qualified to carry out the communication function and thus it is given to the Corporate Affairs department.

Table below is a representation of the population sample breakdown and response rate to each category.

Table 1: Sampled population and the return rate of questionnaires

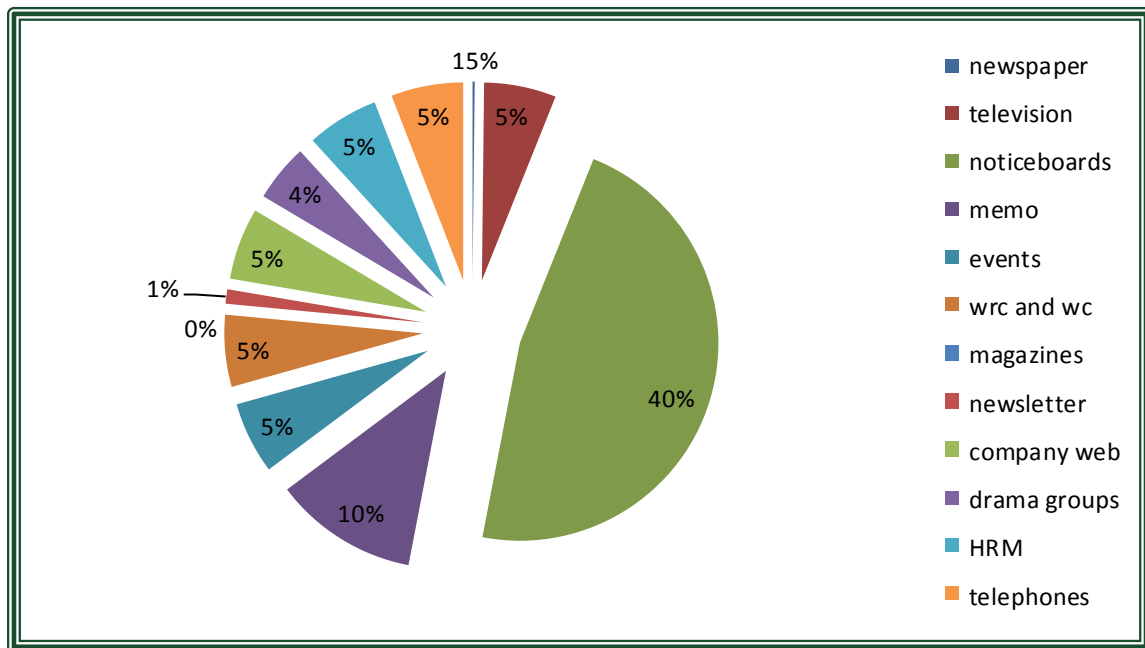
Description of respondents	Number of questionnaires administered	Number of questionnaires returned	Return rate
Corporate Affairs	5	5	100%
Top Management	5	4	80%
Employees	25	20	80%
Empumalanga community	10	10	100%
Deka community	5	3	60%
TOTAL	50	42	84%

Of the twenty five questionnaires administered to the HCCL employees, twenty were returned. Ten employees expressed dissatisfaction at the way communication was conducted in the organization, the other ten were content but felt that more could be done to improve some of the communication channels used by the company. The community sample of Empumalanga all expressed contentment, although they felt a lot more could be done by HCCL to keep them informed. In the Deka community, only three questionnaires were answered due to poor literacy rate in the area. Thus the researcher had to rely on interviews. Through interviews the sample of Deka prophesied awareness of the communication efforts that were being made by Hwange Colliery Company, but the only problem they had was reading English. The overall response rate was very good and led to the success of the research. Furthermore, thirty interviews were set up but twenty (66.6 per cent) were conducted as other targeted interviewees were unavailable at their respective offices on the interview dates selected. The bar graph below represents a summary of the response rate from the questionnaires administered and interviews conducted.

5.2 Channels of Communication used by Hwange Colliery Company

There are a number of communication channels which have been adopted by Hwange Colliery Company through its Corporate Affairs department. These channels include company intranet and internet, notice boards, inter office memorandums, functions\events, workers representative council and workers committee, newsletters, magazine known as Malasha, company Website, Drama group, Human Resources department, electronic and print media. Shannon and Weaver (1949) articulate that for every message, the sender chooses a medium. The choice of a medium often influences the messages thus HCCL has a wide range of communication channels which its uses to reach out to the different publics at a given time.

Different Communication channels used at HCCL



Pie Chart 1

The chart above is a summary of how communication is distributed in the company using different channels of communication. As represented in the chart, *noticeboards* are the largely used medium of communication at Hwange Colliery Company. Notice-boards constitute forty percent (40%) in terms of usage as a medium of communication. Through observation, during the researcher's one year placement at the company, she observed that in every building at HCCL, there is a notice-board. This shows that notice-board is widely used as a best medium to reach out to all employees and publics despite their position in the company. The notice-board is easily accessible to everyone that is why it has been chosen as the most suitable mode of communication. The Corporate Affairs department as the information hub of the organization possesses two notice-boards, one for the employees and the other for the general public's. This is due to the fact that a lot of people visit the office and thus having such a notice-board helps in disseminating information to other people who have no access to the other means of

communication. However, through questionnaires administered to five employees at the underground mine, one of them said:

Colliery inolebeleka nhasu nokubhala pazubhakani zozunhu zumutikana.Isu banamfundo yapasi atitozushupa kubala zwababhala, tobunjwa nabamwe banohwisisa chikhuwa.Ngana babhala nechiNambya kana zunwe nechiNizi talohwisisa

(Colliery speaks to us through the use of notice-board on issues taking place in the company. Some of us are not educated and we cannot read what is written and thus we depend on the educated to tell us what will be written in the notice-board. If only the notices could be written in Nambya or any local language to cater for some of us)

These employees appreciated the use of notice-board by the company to communicate with them. The study findings reveal the use of English in writing the notices as the handicap to the employees. The employees advocated for the use of the Nambya language or any other local language in some of the notices to cater for the less educated employees. The use of English in these notices forced some of the workers not to bother looking at notices, resulting in them relying on others for information. This brings to the light the issue of the hegemonic dominance of the English being a contested terrain. According to Simala (2001:310) cited in Charamba (2012) participants in African Linguistic Nationalism (African Languages Nationalists) have resorted to advocacy and lobbying in their bid to challenge the hegemony of English for they have a strong feeling that, the hegemony of English is disabling the Africans in different ways. The reliance on other employees for information brings about a barrier in achieving effective organizational communication, therefore disadvantaging the individuals as well as the organization. Most employees who relied on others ended up getting distorted information which has also been subjected to filtering. The study findings indicate that, on behalf of the general public, the *media* are also interested in the activities of the organisation so that they can inform them of any interesting developments. The newspaper reaches a wide audience, not only people in Hwange but also outside the town. The study also established that in order to communicate with its external publics, HCCL uses press statements, contributes to newspaper supplements, which are relevant to its area of operations or publishes exclusive supplements on anniversaries (Kamandama Mine Disaster), supplements on national events, developments and challenges in the company. Hwange Colliery Company uses the newspaper to publicize the company's policies, services and explains its position on pertinent issues that affect its relationship with its different publics.

However, the media is a controlled form of communication as the company through media relations can decide what to publish and in what manner. Therefore, the effectiveness of a newspaper in disseminating information is questionable. One interviewee from the Empumalanga community echoed the same sentiments.

The mine communicates with us through newspapers and television. Hwange is a very small community and information circulates very fast. The employees have not been paid in two months, but you see this newspaper I am holding, HCCL has invested sixteen million dollars in buying machinery. People are starving at the mine but they pretend as if they have the money.

This supports that the company only publishes information that projects the image it wishes its different publics to have about them. Again, HCCL does not use the newspaper on a daily bases but only when they feel the need to. Thus the media does inform the public but its effectiveness can be questioned.

Furthermore, *inter office memos* occur ten percent (10%) and are also another means of communication that has been adopted by HCCL. Memos are mostly circulated amongst the different PAs in the organizational structure. These memos are sent via email. They are used to inform secretaries on the developments in the management, take for example in the absence of the Corporate Affairs Advisor, his assistance has to take his place until his return. Therefore, the PA to the CAA has to send a memo to all the secretaries in the organization to inform them of his absence and that his vice will be acting on his place. This method of communication is used on a daily base by the secretaries. The research also established that the impact of the messages loses value as it goes down the chain of command. Employees only take seriously memos communicated directly from the MD's PA. Memos from secretaries are given little recognition by most employees. Hwange Colliery Company takes the issue of hierarchy seriously.

The study findings reveal that most employees are afraid to communicate with top management and thus they look to such groups to speak for them. Ivancevich and Matteson (1999) postulate that effective organizational communication can be achieved through the use of both upwards communication and downwards communication. This is supported by Shannon and Weaver (1949) communication model which stresses that giving and receiving

feedback in communication is an ongoing process. During communication, it is of paramount importance for the receiver to reply the message after decoding. Feedback focuses on the response that is given after a message is sent to the receiver. Thus the fear by the employees to freely air their views saves to show that upward communication is not entirely practised in the organization and feedback is not a priority in the company.

The study also shows that Hwange Colliery Company also makes use of the *company website* to communicate with its different publics especially those outside Zimbabwe and the African continent. www.hwangecolliery.net is the name of the website. The Corporate Affairs department and the ITC department are in charge of the website through maintenance and updating the website with prominent developments taking place. This gives people outside the reach of the company to learn more about the organization. To the public's outside the company's reach the *telephone* also plays a significant role in communication. The telephone can work hand in hand with the website to cater for those who have questions regarding information posted on the web page.

Again, the telephone has been regarded as the quickest mode of communication which has been adopted by both the external and internal publics of HCCL. However, the findings of the study reveal that the Corporate Affairs, Estates, Finance, MD's office and HR manager's office are the only offices that have Telone lines. The rest of the departments have colliery lines which cannot be accessed using a Telone line. All these departments cannot communicate with the outside world besides through the switch board, which is also not reliable.

The *HR department* is responsible for the recruitment and retention of workers. It basically deals with the issue of industrial relations and the corporate affairs department chips in and works with the human resources department to create harmonious relations, avoiding clash of interest by averaging interest. The HR department has created enmity with most of the employees, as they are accused of not communicating with the employees.

The HR department should be given to Burzil, as he seems to be the only person who is worried about keeping us informed in this company. Do you remember the issue to do with ERP, Burzil's department is the only one which made an effort to inform us of what was taking place.

The study findings indicate that the HR department has not been effectively communicating with the employees and has left everything to the Corporate Affairs department. The issue regarding the ERP brought about too many speculations in the company. During this period, the Hwange Colliery Company featured the MD giving out a press statement on television regarding the new coal markets in Asian. The ERP was ignored totally leaving people to give in to grapevine information. Once more, the use of television is questionable, as it is not used frequently and if ever they do it is used for propaganda purposes. The company only uses the television to present themselves in good light thereby miss informing its publics. Thus television is not being utilized as a means of achieving effective communication in the organization.

The *Workers Representative Council and Workers Union* also play a crucial role in communicating with the internal publics of the organization. These Unions are interested in the way Hwange Colliery Company handles labour disputes with its employees and to ensure that employees' rights are not compromised. However, the study established that these unions are the least favored and least effective is communicating with the public.

The unions are supposed to stand up for and inform us on what is going on and what will be done. We have not been paid for two months now but these unions have done nothing for us, they are as blank as we are concerning this issue of pay.

The findings of the study also indicate that the Unions have not achieved much in communicating and standing up for the employee. This has been worsened by the fact the representatives are also HCCL employees and thus are not in a position to question the running of the organization in fear of their jobs.

The *newsletter and the magazine (Malasha)* have not been effective in communicating with the publics. The Malasha magazine was shelf in 2002 due to the economic challenges that were being faced by the company. The magazine targeted both the internal and the external publics of the company. It was published quarterly and reaches a wide range of audiences as it was distributes in Hwange, Bulawayo offices and the Harare office. The online newsletter was also shelved but no details were given on why they stopped producing it. The newsletter only catered for the employees who had access to computer thereby was criticized by most production employees who spent their time in the field.

The study findings indicate that most respondents were satisfied with the way communication is conducted at Hwange Colliery Company, although there was need to improve a few things which were hindering the attainment of effective organizational communication.

Enforcement of effective organizational communication by HCCL

The study found that, Hwange Colliery Company employees rely on the flow of information from top to bottom. Downward communication is achieved through the use of suggestion boxes and the study reveals that

downward communication is not really practised. People in the management make decisions for the workers and their input is not really considered. The study also shows that three quarters of the employees who worked in offices were content with the way communication was carried out in the organization from top to bottom. This was because with the introduction of technology, employees in offices spend their times glued on their computers. Channels of communication like emails, online newsletters and official memos benefited them the most. According to a secretary at the Estates department:

We communicate through the use of intranet, email and telephones and I am personally satisfied with the way communication is carried out. The messages are clear and understandable but the intranet is sometime slow but since there are alternatives it is not a problem but a hiccup.

The study findings reveals that all the employees who had access to computer sang praises about the way communication is carried out by HCCL. However, employees from the production areas have no access to computers and relied most on notice boards for information. Moreover, in as far as communication was concerned, the Deka community was well aware of different ways in which HCCL tries to reach out to its publics. The only handicap was the use of English in writing their messages. Hwange Colliery Company did not only enforce effective organizational communication but also carried out surveys to measure the effectiveness of their communication strategies. Through customer feedback, CSR programmes, the company is able to access whether they have enforced effective communication.

Use of Communication for good Corporate Reputation

HCCL uses the media both print and electronic to communicate with the publics to enhance their corporate reputation. The worker felt that through the use of the media, the company was ignoring issues at hand when selecting what is to be published. This to some extent has bolstered the reputation the organization enjoyed with the employees. The workers were calling upon Burzil Dube to tell the truth in newspapers and not side with management. This is supported by Bromley, (1993) and Grunig & Hung, (2002) cited in Grunig (2009) when they assert that the reputation of an organization is what members of different publics think and say to each other, not something that organizations can create or manage. Thus HCCL can think that their reputation is intact because of the constant communication that exists, but the public's are telling a different story.

Furthermore, an organization can contribute to newspaper supplements, which are relevant to its area of operations or publish an exclusive supplement on anniversaries or on days that mark special events such as official openings. Hwange Colliery Company has managed to maintain a good corporate reputation amongst its various publics through the implementation of all these communication channels. Mawerera (2002) emphasizes that nowadays, a company's reputation has a significant bearing on the success of its business operations. The only way to establish a good corporate reputation is through effective communication.

Social Communication platforms used by Hwange Colliery Company

The research found that in Hwange Colliery Company there are a number of social community platforms that an organization can use to increase the number of their communication channels with their various publics. These include twitter, Facebook, Google to mention a few. The ICT department is in charge of all online publication. The department has only managed to create the company's website where different publics can reach about the company despite their geographic location. The ICT Manager, Mr Tongogara said:

As a department we have manage to create a company website known as www.hwangecolliery.net to reach out to our different publics. We have not yet created accounts like twitter or facebook to allow our publics to communicate freely and openly with us.

The study also found out that the company is behind in terms of some of these technological advancements that have been adopted by most corporate organization today. However, the study findings indicate that the people of Hwange had opened their own facebook page called *Hwange colliery kumalasha*, which they use to post all the burning issues about the company. The company still uses suggestion boxes. The researcher observed that in almost all the departments in the company, there were suggestion box. This on its own saves to show that the company was very much comfortable with this traditional method of upward communication.

Use of communication for good Corporate Image

The study also set out to ascertain whether communication is effective as a tool for the establishment and maintenance of a good corporate image. The study found that the management of the company's image is assigned to the Corporate Affairs department. Through media relations the Corporate Affairs department at HCCL looks out

for the company's image, by disseminating information. The corporate affairs department has constantly maintained relations with stakeholders by having them involved in the company's events such as the Hwange/ Chaferfly Golf open and the Long service awards. By such interaction the organization can build a good corporate image amongst its publics.

However, employees expressed a few concerns which the researcher drew conclusions from that the image of the Hwange Colliery Company was under threat. The organization was being accused of ignoring the employees and not attending to their plight. One employee at the opencast Mine in an interview said:

I have worked at Colliery from the time I was seventeen years old. My father also worked at Colliery and from the time I have known this company, there have been many challenges faced but we always found a way to survive. Right now we have not been paid for almost three months but the company is silent. They do not even bother to tell us what is going on but instead Burzil is busy writing about buying new machinery for the

The statement serves to show that the image that is portrayed by HCCL in newspapers is not the image that the employees on the ground have. Hwange Colliery Company is effectively communicating with its employees but the information being communicated is not what the employees want to hear. The researcher found that the company has created a bad image amongst its internal publics. The employee's views the company as being deceptive to the outside world. The study found out that although HCCL was enjoying a good corporate image with its external publics, the internal publics were not happy with the way the company was conducting their communication. They felt that the organization was not using communication to relate the important information affecting them but instead was focusing on the good information only.

According to Chihanga (2002:3) the mission statement of Hwange Colliery Company states that:

Hwange Colliery Company Limited is dedicated to the exploration of coal related products in a sustainable manner to the satisfaction of local, regional and international stakeholders.

The mission statement outlined above has been the basis of the organization's culture between January 2010 and December 2012. This is the image that HCCL wishes its stakeholders to have of it through different methods of interaction. The study found out that up to 2011, the image that the company sought to cultivate among its publics was consistent with its corporate identity. However, from 2012, the situation changed for the worse because of different reasons some of which included poor returns to investors due to poor performance and negative internal dynamics.

In-house publications such as magazines, newsletters are not exclusively for corporate image building but also informative and instructional. They also promote the corporate culture of the organization carrying stories calling for the observation of safety regulations, promoting hard work and loyalty and publicizing the company's appreciation of these. This is because the portrayal of the organization's image through the behavior of its employees and officials is expected to come from being informed and understanding the culture of the company.

The study, however, found out that, HCCL is not fully using all the media available to portray its image among its publics. The company is not using electronic media to publicize its policies, explain developments that affects its relations with some of its publics. The company does not use television to portray its image, but instead, it tends to over-rely on the print media. The researcher observed that Hwange Colliery Company could use a television documentary to publicize its history, its varied operational areas such as its geology, survey, quality assurance, mechanical, electrical, civil and mining engineering sections, human resources, marketing and sales, accounting and estates department.

Reinforcement of Corporate Identity through Communication

The researcher observed that HCCL still enjoys a steady identity in the Hwange community as well as amongst its employees. Item 5.7.1 and 5.7.2 outlines how the different publics of HCCL feel about the identity of the company. The study found out that HCCL has enjoyed a favorable identity amongst its different publics. The researcher observed that Hwange Colliery Company logo is something which everyone wants to associate with. Most internal interviewees took pride in wearing HCCL regalia. Despite some bad publicity, everyone wanted to be in possession of a Hwange Colliery Company t-shirt or anything with the company logo. Thus Ind (1997) cited in Brønn (2002) refers to identity as the outward manifestation of an organization. The study reveals that HCCL has established and maintained a good corporate identity despite the short comings that the company is facing.

The external publics of Hwange Colliery Company, in the sample which comprised of the Empumalanga residents and Deka residents were happy with the corporate identity of HCCL. The researcher observed that most people in

these communities wore Hwange Colliery Company t-shirts. The findings showed that the Colliery brand was something that everyone wanted to associate with. They took pride in owning any HCCL regalia.

Corporate Affairs department's use of Communication Channels

The study finding also shows that HCCL has to a certain extent managed to enforce effective organizational communication with its various publics. This has been achieved through the use of different channels of communication. As indicated by the eighty percent (80%) of respondents in the top management, they all expressed satisfaction in the way communication is carried out in the organization through the Corporate Affairs department. The Corporate Affairs is the department that specifically exists for the management of organizational communication of HCCL. The Corporate Affairs department was rendered the main department in charge of the communication function in the organization. The HR Manager, Mr Fathi Mpofu said:

Our communication is managed at the Corporate Affairs department. It is in charge of all communication and I am sure you read newspapers and all information that is communicated by HCCL comes from a person called Burzil Dube. He is charge of everything and personally I feel he and his team have done a great job in disseminating information to our various publics.

The statement above by the HR Manager at HCCL implies that Corporate Affairs department is in charge of all the communication that takes place within and outside the organization. The department sets out to communicate the company's stance and objectives through information dissemination. A critical analysis of the statement above also suggest that those that are in other management functions are not necessarily professional communicators and rely on this department for information. Besides disseminating information the company also seeks to receive feedback on its reputation through effective organizational communication. As indicated in the questionnaires administered to top management, the corporate affair is the information hub of Hwange Colliery Company. The department is made of the Corporate Affairs Advisor, Assistance CAA, PA to CAA, the messenger and four attachés.

The research findings established that the department uses different communication channels which target different publics at a given time and by so doing effective organizational communication is enforced. According to the CAA, Burzil Dube

There are different channels of communication that are used by the organization and each method used reaches out different employees at different levels, as well as our external publics. The messages are presented clearly and made easy for all different levels of the publics to understand even though the messages are decoded in the English language.

The statement above serves to imply that the communication channels used by Hwange Colliery Company are appropriate and help in the attainment of effective organizational communication. The research findings reflect that the corporate affairs department as the information hub of the organization, has successfully fulfilled its position in the area of communication. This is traceable to Lasswell (1947) who develops a model for communication drawn as follows: Who Says what---in which channel---to whom --and with what effect? .The theory emphasizes the importance of the communicator, the type of communication channel chosen, the target audience and the kind of effect the message is going to have on the recipient.

The importance of choosing a type of communication channel used to a specific target audience was established in the study. The research established that the company uses mostly the prints, which are newspapers which fall under the Zimpapers stable and the ZTV to communicate with their external publics. Again newspapers and the use of television is a good communication strategy for the organization as it reaches a wide audience. The study also reveals that the reputation that an organization wishes its public to have of it specifically HCCL, can be constructed through media such as in-house magazines, newsletters, shareholders annual reports, which can be used to disseminate information within the organization.

Through the different channels of communication shown in pie chart 1, the Corporate Affairs department has safely managed to communicate with the various publics of the company. The department is supported by the company in carrying out its communication function as shown by the department being allocated a personal account to fulfill all their responsibility in communication. This money is used to purchase company regalia, which the Corporate Affairs gives out to publics as a way of showing, appreciate to their publics. This has created a good corporate image, identity and reputation not only for the department but for the company as a whole. The support that the department is getting saves to show that the company as a whole understands the role and contribution of effective communication in the organizational. This then supports that HCCL has managed to achieve effective organizational communication through the supports it renders to the information hub of the company, the Corporate Affairs.

References

- Babbie, E. and Mouton, J. (2005), *The practice of Social Research*, Cape Town, Oxford Southern Africa Press.
- Bak, N. (2005), *Completing your thesis: A Practical Guide*, Pretoria, Van Shak.
- Baran, S.J. (2006), *Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture*, 4th Edition, New York, McGraw Hill.
- Berger, A. A. (1995), *Essentials of Mass Communication Theory*, London, Sage
- Black, T.R. (1999), *Doing Quantitative Research in Social Sciences*, London, Sage
- Bryman, A. (2004), *Social Research Methods*, 2nd Edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Cooper, D.R. and Schindler (2006) *Business Research Methods*. 9th Edition, New York
- Corbin. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Prentice, New Delhi.
- Cornelissen, J. (2008), *Corporate Communication: A guide to theory and practice*, 2nd Edition, London, Sage
- Cresswell, J.W. (1994), *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, London, Sage
- Cutlip, S. M et al (1994), *Effective Public Relations*, USA, Oxford Press,
- Deacon, D. et al, (2007), *Researching Communication*, USA, Oxford University Press
- DeVito, J. A. (1986), *The Communication handbook: A dictionary*, New York, Harper and Row
- Dwyer, F.R. and Tanner, F.T. (2009), *Business Marketing: Connecting Strategy, Relationships and Learning*, New York, McGraw Hill.
- Duplooy ,G.M. (2002), *Communication Research: Technique, Method and Applications*, Cape Town Juta and Company Ltd,
- Fielding, M. (2005), *Effective Communication in Organizations*, 3rd Edition, Juta and Company Ltd, Cape Town
- Fiske, J. (1982), *Introduction to Communication Studies*, London, Routledge
- Fourie, P. (Ed.) (2001), *Media Studies. Theories, Institutions and Issues*, Lansdowne, Juta.
- Franklin, B, et al (2009), *Key Concepts in Public Relations*, London, Sage.
- Grunig, J. (1992), *Systematic Systems Of Internal Communication*, Hillsdale IABC Research Foundation
- Grunig, J. (1975), *A Multi-Systems Theory of Organizational Communication: Communication Research*, Sage
- Hallencrentz, C. (1988), *Church and State in Zimbabwe*, Gweru, Mambo Press
- Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. (2008) *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, 7th Edition, London: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd.
- Johansson, C. (2007), *Research on Organizational Communication*. Mid Sweden University
- Keyton, J. (2001), *Communication research Asking questions, Finding answers*, US, McGraw-Hill
- Kitchen, P.J. (1997), *Public Relations – Principles and Practice*, London, Thompson Business Press.
- Kreitner, R. and Kinicki, A. (1995), *Organizational Behaviour*, 3th Edition, USA, IRWIN
- Krippendorff, K. and Bernejo, F. (2009), *On Communicating, Otherness Meaning and Information*, New York, Routledge.
- Kotler, P. (2002), *Marketing Management Analysis Implementation and Control*. Prentice Hall International.
- Kotler, P. and Armstrong, G. (1999), *Marketing Management: Planning and Control* 5th edition, Prentice Hall Englewood Cliffs NJ
- Kumar, R. (2005), *Research Methodology; a step by step guide for beginners*, 2nd Edition, London, Sage
- Lippman, W. (1922). *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- McQuail, D. (1983). *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. London: Sage
- O’Leary, Z. (2004), *The Essential Guide To Doing Research*. London: Sage.
- O’Leary, Z. (2010) *Essential Guide to doing Your research project*, London: Sage.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990), *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*: Newbury Park London New Delhi. Sage.
- Polonsky, M. J. and Waller, D.S, (2005), *Designing and Managing a Research Project: A Business Student’s Guide*, California, Sage.
- Punch, K. F. (2005), *Introduction to Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* 2nd Edition. London: Sage .
- Ray, G.L. (1999), *Research Methods in Social Sciences and extension Education*, Ludhiana, Kalyani Publication.
- Reddi, C.V.N. (2009), *Effective Public Relations and Media Strategy*, New Delhi, PHI Learning.
- Robbins, S. P. and Barnwell, N. (2002), *Organizational Theory: Concepts and Cases*, 4th Edition, Australia, Pearson Education.
- Robbins, S.P. (1990), *Organizational Theory: Structure, Design and Application*, 3rd Edition, USA, Prentice Hall.
- Rosenbaum, T. (2005), *Effective Communication Skills for Highway and Public Works Officials*. New York: Cornell University.
- Saunders, M, et al (2009), *Research Methods for Business Students*, 5th Edition, London, Prentice Hall
- Seitel, F. P. (1995), *The Practice of Public Relations* 6th Edition. London: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Somekh, B. and Lewin, C. (2005), *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, London, Sage
 Stanford, N. (2005), *Organization Design: The Collaborative Approach*, London, Elsevier Butterworth.
 Steinberg, S. (2007), *An introduction to communication studies*, Cape Town, Juta and Co
 Steinberg, S. (1995), *Communication Studies*, Cape Town, Juta and Co
 Teddli, C. and Tashakkori, A. (2009), *Foundations Of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioural Sciences*. London: Sage
 Tuckman, B.W (1994), *Conducting Educational Research*, New York, Harcourt Brace.
 Wilcox, L.D. and Nolte, L.W, (1995), *Public Relations- Writing and Techniques*, New York, Harper Collins Publishers.

Journals and Research Papers

Charamba, T. (2012), Challenging the hegemony of English in post-independence Africa –An evolutionist approach, University of South Africa, <http://www.pdfcomplete.com/wp-content/uploads/2012-paper>, accessed on 22 May 2013
 McCroskey, R. (2005), *Organizational Communication for Survival: Making Work Work*, <http://www.pdfcomplete.com/cms/hpplce/tabid/272/Default.aspx?r=q8b3uige22>, accessed on 19 October 2012
 Shuttlesworth, M. (2009), *what is a literature Review*, www.explore.com/what-is-a-literature-review
 Sleutels, J. (1999), *What is Communication*, Faculty of Philosophy, Leiden University, P.O.Box9515,2300RALeiden,Netherlands,<http://www.pdfcomplete.com/cms/hpplce/tabid/272/Default.aspx?r=q8b3uige22>, accessed on 20 October 2012.
 Sook Kim, H. (n.d), Organizational Structure and Internal Communication as Antecedents of Employee, Organization Relationships in the Context of Organizational Justice: A Multilevel Analysis, <http://www.wiloludjournal.com/pdf/edures/2008/1-5.pdf>, accessed on 21 October 2012

Unpublished Works

Nkomo, P. (2004), *How an organization can use communication to shape its reputation or corporate image: Case study of Wankie Colliery Company (1992-20003)*. Gweru: Midlands State University.

Hwange Colliery Company Documents

Chihanga, S. (2004), *'Questionnaire filled for researcher'*, Hwange
 Chihanga, S. (1997), *'Malasha- Christmas Edition'*, Wankie Colliery Company, Hwange
 Hwange Colliery Company Limited Quality Policy Manual.
 Hwange Colliery Company Limited Corporate Brochure.
 Maponga, J. (2009), *Presentation at the 5th Annual Mining in Africa Conference*, Hwange cation, Uppsala University.